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Case Study: Exploring the Presence of Trust in One Suburban Christian School Climate

by

James Drury

A dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Case Study: Exploring the Presence of Trust in one Suburban Christian School Climate

by

James Drury

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

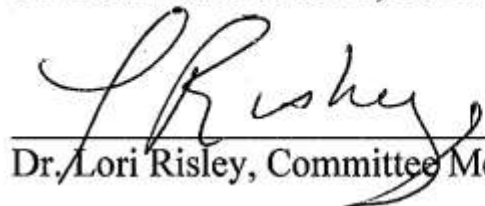
degree of

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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Dr. John Henschke, Dissertation Chair Date

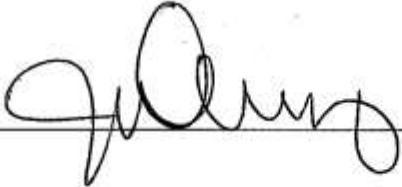
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Dr. Beth Kania-Gosche, Committee Member Date

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Dr. Lori Risley, Committee Member Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: James Kent Drury

Signature:  Date: 7/28/17

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Abstract

Trust is a topic that has been written about hundreds of times, still it is hard to define. In the literature, trust and relationships are grouped together as going hand-in-hand. In Christian education circles, trust is something that is implied to be present. This research explored the presence of trust in a suburban Christian school in the Midwest. The research explored trust from the perception of three different stakeholder groups (staff, parents, and board) from the study school. The researcher used data sets that included: The Visible Elements of Trust Inventory (VETI)- online survey, focus groups-by stakeholder type, and secondary data from the study schools annual surveys. In this case study, the study school's stakeholders' perceived trust was demonstrated and hindered through communication and relationships.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---|
| IPI | Instructional Perspectives Inventory |
| MIPI | Modified Instructional Perspectives Inventory |
| NCES | National Center for Educational Statistics |
| TCA | Trust Christian Academy |
| VETI | The Visible Elements of Trust Inventory |

Chapter One: Introduction

My favorite scripture verse as a child was, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6 King James Version). I am unsure why I chose this as a favorite, other than the fact that I am still comforted today as I recite this passage. Maybe it is because I have realized that no matter what I do in life, I have to trust those around me to a certain extent, because that is something that people do (Godfrey, 2012). Raised in the home of a minister, going to a Christian college, serving in administrative roles, and working at a Christian organization, trust is a familiar word. In all of the above examples, there is an implication of trust that exists—that is, trust surrounded by things labeled as Christian. In every theistic religion—in this case, Christianity—trusting in God is a central component (Godfrey, 2012). Covey and Merrill (2006) posited that “trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year. It undergirds and affects the quality of every relationship, every communication, every work project, every business venture, every effort in which we are engaged” (p. 1). Trust is a topic worthy of more discussion. Trust is also “the least understood, most neglected, and most underestimated possibility of our time” (Risley & Petroff, 2014 p. 3). According to Godfrey (2012), “Trust is central to human living” (p. 2).

From my very first teaching assignment, I have pondered the impact that trust has on schools, especially Christian schools. “Trust is lived out daily in countless ways in ministry life” (Busby, 2015, p. 19). In my work in and with numerous Christian organizations over the years, I observed a unique atmosphere in each of them, and in particular, unique levels of trust. A 2012 educational survey found that graduates from

Christian schools had higher levels of trust compared to graduates from Catholic schools and independent nonreligious schools (Pennings, Sikkink, Van Pelt, Van Brummelen, & Von Heyking, 2012). At one school where I was principal, I noticed not only an atmosphere of (organizational) trust, but there were clearly some levels of distrust (in leadership) as well.

Purpose of the Dissertation

This study explored the presence of trust in the school's climate from the view of the stakeholders (parents, board, and staff). This mixed-methods study (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012) was designed as a case study to look at the "particularity and complexity" of a single school (Stake, 1995, p. xi) by allowing its stakeholders to (a) respond on their perception of visible trust, and (b) allowing them to be a part of a focus group designed to look at trust through the lens of the climate at the school.

Rationale

Because the school is considered a Christian organization, there was a level of implied trust, because trust is a prominent component in Christian practice; it "is at the base of prayer, devotion, and worship" (Martin, 2010, p. 40). Trust is also important in education settings (Hoy & Tarter, 1997), and when combined with educational settings and the Christian organization together; there is an assumption that there will be a certain level of trust. Hoy (2002) and Henschke (2011) noted the importance of trust as related to climate. There was also literature available on principal trust and leader trust (Covey & Merrill, 2006; Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2007; Henschke, 2011). At this point, the researcher has not found a single research study which examined a trust relationship in a

Christian school setting. However, Busby (2015) published a work on trust involving Christian ministry settings.

Trust is a component that needs consideration when looking at what impacts the learning environment (climate) of the adults that principals are supervising (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). After exploring the visible (what was observed) perspective of trust from the stakeholders in one suburban Christian school setting, the study may serve as a model for other Christian schools and Christian organizations that want to examine between its stakeholders and the people that work for the organization.

People have assumptions based on trust. One such assumption implies that individuals expect people to trust them because they view themselves as trustworthy people (Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale & Hackman, 2010). The shared assumptions in schools in general, not just the study school, make up the schools' individual cultures, bringing the people together. Hoy and Tarter (1997) claimed the climate of the school drives the "personality" of the school, and when "a pattern of shared beliefs exists, it defines the organizational culture" (p. 4). The continual commitment of the teachers, staff, and families drove the culture and the climate of the study school.

Research Questions

This research study explored the presence of trust in one particular school based on the perceptions of the stakeholders from the case study school using the following question and subquestions:

How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school?

- 1) How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust?
- 2) How do the stakeholders perceive that the school demonstrates trust?

3) What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?

Background of the Study School

This research is a case study of one Christian school, Trust Christian Academy (pseudonym [TCA]), located in a suburban community in the Midwestern United States. All the participants in the research study were associated with TCA. Established in 1980, TCA was started by several groups of parents who witnessed a need for a school to serve the educational and spiritual needs of their children. Once the school was founded, the mission statement of TCA set the pace for how staff would educate children: “The mission of TCA is to assist Christian families in equipping students with a Christ-centered education, empowering them to impact the world for the glory of God.” Since its founding year, TCA has been “assisting Christian families” (Researched Institution, 2016, p. 1) in the education of their students.

There were several Christian schools in the same general vicinity as TCA, though most of the schools’ affiliations were with a church denomination or other religious group, whereas the study school had no such support. All of these other Christian schools in the nearby and surrounding suburban area were grade-level specific, in that they catered to either elementary or secondary education. However, the school chosen for this case study, provided education programs that ranged from various pre-K options through grade 12. At the time of the study, the school consisted of two campuses. The elementary campus included the pre-K through fifth grade, and the high school campus included grades 6 through 12, with the separation of the middle school (grades 6–8) and high school (grades 9–12) in the high school building.

Based on the findings of a Private School Universe Survey presented by National Center for Educational Statistics (Private school enrollment, 2016), TCA was considered to be a large private school or nonpublic school. The findings showed the average private school size during the time of the study was approximately 141, with an average elementary school population of 106, and 283 students in secondary grades. If a school had both elementary and secondary grades, the average size was 180 students (Broughman, 2011). TCA had enrollment numbers of over 700 students before the study began. There were peak years and years of lower enrollment numbers at TCA, even though the NCES (Private school enrollment, 2016) study reported enrollment in private schools had dropped since the beginning of the 21st century. The report predicted enrollment will continue to decline, with about 300,000 less students enrolled by 2025 (Carr, 2016).

During the time of the study, I, the primary researcher, was part of the school administration. There were several changes during my time at the school that could have had negative impacts on TCA. The following changes occurred at TCA from 2005-2015:

- There had been changes in head administration through turnover (two principals at the high school and two at the elementary level over a seven-year period).
- There were several campus changes, including the following:
 - The high school built a separate campus and even expanded the building by adding a gymnasium.
 - Ten years after the second elementary campus was open, the two elementary schools were consolidated back to one.

- Accreditation began with grades 7 through 12 receiving accreditation for the first time in 2007, and reaccreditation again in 2014, with initial accreditation for kindergarten through sixth grade.
- The tuition schedule was restructured to allow for needs-based aid rather than automatic discounts for multi-student families and staff.
- Tuition continued to rise each year (3–7% based on grade level).
- Other Christian schools that were closing (or going to close) were absorbed into the population (staff and students).
- The pre-K and elementary campus were first separated into different buildings, then later moved back together.
- A full-time superintendent was added (previously, this responsibility was shared among the three principals).
- The pre-K and elementary schools were moved from separate locations into a combined campus in a building a few miles away from its first permanent location.

McLagan (2002) would support the argument that all of these changes, and the beliefs about the changes, had an impact on school culture. In her work concerning change, she declared the beliefs about change are more important than the techniques used to bring about the changes. The participants in the study school provided perceptions about some of the changes (shared in a later chapter).

The school has done very little advertising in the past, yet as I began to examine the school population, I noted that the study school had a large zip code range. This was

in stark contrast to public schools, whose populations are determined by census data (United States Census Bureau, n.d.), whereas the study school had no such geographical restrictions. At the time of the study, the school had families from 27 different area zip codes covering more than five counties. With close to 500 families in their pre-K–12 school system, only one-fourth of those families lived in the same zip codes as either the elementary or secondary campuses. When asked at the time of enrollment by the admissions office of TCA how families heard about the school, most of the time the answer was word of mouth.

Hoy and Tarter (1997) claimed, “Everyone knows that schools are different in both tangible and intangible ways” (p. 2). The culture, often used to “describe the feel or atmosphere of an organization,” made the study school a unique place, as was reflected by the nearly 500 families from five different counties (Hoy & Tarter, 1997, p. 2).

Historically, Christian schools were informed by two schools of thought in regard to admitting families. The first school of thought was that the Christian school, often an arm of the church, had an “evangelical” admission policy, meaning one of goals of that particular school was to add growth to the church membership by reaching people through the ministry of the church. The other school of thought, which was the case for the study school, was the “discipleship” model school, meaning that one parent had to be a committed Christian by way of a covenantal approach, which comes from a biblical promise to agree to worship God (Covenantal, 2017). To provide verification that a family fit the discipleship model, each family signed a statement of faith and supplied a letter from their pastor stating the family was a member of the church. Another unique quality of the study school was its nondenominational structure—an independent school

not connected with any particular church. As of 2016, the study school had more than 100 different churches represented in the school's population, according to the study schools data base. The school operated as if it was interdenominational (comprised of several churches), but continued to market itself as a nondenominational school, because that was a word more commonly understood in "Christian spheres of influence" (McCarthy, Oppewal, Perterson, & Spykman, 1981, pp. 38-39).

Parent involvement was an integral component in shaping school culture. Parents in the study school were required to donate their time (20 hours per family each year) to different projects throughout the year, though there was also a buyout option (i.e. \$10 = one hour work) available if a family was unable to give the time in hours. The school preferred that parents opted to donate their time, as they historically used this program to build relationships with the school families. Parent involvement also played an important role in the makeup of the school board; the majority of the board (two-thirds, according to the board policy manual) had to be parents of current TCA students. The study school often promoted the idea that activities and events were a success because of the participation of the parents. McLagan and Nel (1995) cited the positive impact of participation on the productivity of an organization. The involvement of the parents at the research site was evidence that participating in activities (i.e. annual auction, grandparents' day, banquets) and events was crucial to the school's success.

TCA placed emphasis on the religious component of the school. The very nature that all the families shared similar beliefs where religious values were concerned (the statement of faith each family signs) influences the culture of the school. Religion played out in several ways at the school: (a) each of the subject areas were approached from a

biblical worldview (the Bible is the lens for looking at the world); (b) discipline issues were handled using biblical principles; (c) prayer was part of the normal school day, often several times during the day; (d) weekly worship service (called Chapel) provided another way that spiritual growth was accomplished; and (e) moral development was taught using biblical principles. According to the school board (Researched Institution, 2016), spiritual and academic growth were the two most important “pillars” of the school; these two were said to go hand in hand in order for the school to maintain its vision.

The longevity of the teachers at the case study school was an area of particular interest to the researcher. A 2013 *Education Update* article claimed that teacher turnover was close to 20% in most school districts, though the study school did not have a very large turnover in teaching staff (“Focus on retention,” 2013, p. 1). Out of 65 teachers, the study school only replaced four teachers (two at each campus) in 2016. The majority of the staff had a tendency to stay with the school, even though some of the changes (tuition discounts, administration) mentioned earlier had an impact on them and their families. The staff had not made a commitment to the school based on financial gains. Salary, though important, was not the drawing point for the teachers at the school, as the school was not able to compete with the salaries offered by public school districts. The staff from the study school often reminded each other that they were there for the ministry (act of serving God), not the money. As for the gap in income, the NCES reported that public school teachers could earn from 25% up to more than double what a Christian schoolteacher could earn (Broughman, 2011, p. 2). The report also mentioned that conservative schools, like the study school, and Catholic schools are the poorest paid among private schools (*The Patterns*, 1996).

According to another NCES report on teacher career choice, more than 50% of teachers still leave the profession after five to seven years, and half of the teachers that quit teaching leave based on dissatisfaction or a better career (Anderson & Carroll, 2008, p. 1). At the time of the study, the average tenure at TCA for a teacher at the elementary campus was 11 years, and 33% of the teaching staff had more than 15 years of experience at the school, not counting previous experience as educators in other schools. The secondary school had a lower teaching tenure with an average of seven years, but 72% of their teaching staff has more than 8 years of experience at the school. During the founding years of TCA, there had not been a secondary campus for as long as the school had been open. The study school did not have a graduating class until 1998.

Limitations of Study

This research study began with several known limitations:

- 1) This study on trust only focused on one suburban private school.
- 2) The study's primary investigator was also one of three principals of the school involved in the study. In order to reduce coercion and bias in the study, all collected data was anonymous to the researcher.
- 3) Some of the participants of the study were employees of the study school at the time of the study, who reported to the principal, with the primary researcher as their direct supervisor. The participation from employees was voluntary and anonymous to the researcher.
- 4) The research study did not investigate other words that are interchangeable with the word trust (such as *faith* or *belief*).

- 5) I, as the research, assumed that the stakeholders (staff, parents, and board) would have a general understanding of what trust means, therefore a definition of trust was not provided to the participants.

Definition of Terms

The terms in this study that may be unclear to the reader are described as follows:

Christian school. For this study, the definition for Christian school fit the definition for Christian universities and colleges, which state their identity in the current mission statement and align their polices in the light of their Christian identity (Glanzer, Carpenter, & Lantinga, 2010).

Department chair. The study school's administration placed the department chair in various leadership roles (i.e. budgeting, planning curriculum). On the secondary level, the departments were divided by academic discipline.

Discipleship school. Discipleship school, sometimes referred to as a covenantal school by some church schools, comes from a biblical promise to agree to worship God (Covenantal, 2017). In this study, discipleship refers to at least one parent being active in a local church congregation, which was confirmed by way of a pastoral reference.

Independent school. For this study, an independent school was a school not connected to any one church, but operated as a nonprofit organization.

Nondenominational. The term nondenominational is a term used by evangelical Christians. The dictionary defines denominational as "founded, sponsored, or controlled by a particular religious denomination or sect" (Nondenominational, 2011).

Matthew 18 principle. In this study, addressing concerns/issues by going directly to the person before speaking about the offense to someone beforehand is the basis of this principle taken from a Bible reference of Matthew 18: 15–17 (ESV):

15) If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16) But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Lead teacher. The study school referred to *lead teacher* as elementary teachers serving certain administrative duties, similar to that of a department chair. Instead of being divided by academic discipline, the lead teacher served by grouped grade levels.

Legalist. For the purpose of this study, legalist means strictly following the rules, with an absence of grace.

Parent-operated board. A parent-operated board for the school in this study means that at least two-thirds of the school board members had to be current or alumni families of the school. As of 2016, the number of board members can range from seven to 12 members, with no more than four members being from the same church congregation (Researched Institution, Board Policy Manual, 2016).

Staff. In this study, *staff* was used to refer to all employees of the study school. This research did not view faculty and staff in separate roles. Grouped together for this study, faculty and staff became one group of stakeholders. The idea here was to create a unified group that was separate from a class system (faculty and staff).

Trust. Definitions of trust were explored in the literature review section of this study. For this study, a simple dictionary definition of trust was chosen. Trust was defined as “assured reliance on character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” (Trust, 2016). However, a definition of trust was not provided to the study participants.

Summary

This research study was a case study on one private Christian school. The study contained five chapters. Chapter One includes an introduction, background of the study school, rationale, the research questions, and terms unique to this study. Chapter Two includes a review of literature on the heavily populated topic of trust. This chapter also provides literature on the background of Christian education in North America.

Chapter Three provides the methodology used in the case study, including the process for recruiting participants for the study and the tools used for data collection. In Chapter Four, the results from each data source reveals the common themes of the study.

In the final chapter, an overview and interpretation of the results provided connection to the research questions from the study. Provided by the researcher, were the implications and the opinions of the primary researcher. Chapter Five, the final chapter, also closes with recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

At the time of this study, the body of research on the topic of trust was plentiful. Samier (2010b) claimed that the literature on trust is too large to contain in a single chapter. Because the school for this case study was a private Christian school, the literature review for this study included a history of Christian education, a sampling of literature on trust models used to define trust, trust types, mistrust, and validation for the instrument used in the study.

History of Christian Education

The traditions and cultures of the people living in the American settlements influenced the history of education in the American colonies. Many came to America for “adventure, money, love of God, and a desire to convert the Indians” (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1995, p. 11). Since the time settlement began, Americans have depended on their schools. From the time early American settlers arrived in the New World, they realized that schools and schoolteachers were essential. Due to the amount of time the settlers spent building their colonies, the role of the school was great. One of the first education laws established by the colonies was in Massachusetts in 1642. It was a law that required each town to provide a school and schoolmaster (Perkinson, 1995).

Faith and education went hand in hand in the beginning days of the American colonies, “whether it [was] a belief in God and a formalized religion or a sense of national pride and In God We Trust” (Cooper, 2009, p. 239). Schools taught biblical morality, even using the Bible as a textbook. Teachers in early colonies were usually ministers, without a church in which to serve (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1995).

According to Wilhelm and Firmin (2009), in our pluralistic American society, faith combined with education was not as common as it was previously. The early 20th century brought with it changes in the way values were taught in the classroom (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009). These changes were moving away from the required elementary curriculum where religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic, known as the four R's, were the most important (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1995).

The concept of private schools in American education was not new. Before the schools were established, parents would home school or pay for tutors to educate their children (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009). Even after the development of the school system, several schools referred to as "quasi-public" opened. These "quasipublic" schools received support by some tax money, but the parents were charged a tuition rate (Perkinson, 1995). Throughout the history of the United States, there have always been private schools and universities that have had religious sponsorships (Cooper, 2009). The United States began with Protestant (Puritan and Anglican) communities in the beginning, which also included banning Catholics from township positions. Catholics, at this time in American history, started their own private schools to educate their children out of necessity (Perkinson, 1995).

As America grew and changed with the times, public schools creation became the responsibility of each state. Once public school was truly free to all, and private schools denied public monies, the private schools eventually became elitist because only the wealthy could afford them (Perkinson, 1995). Public education, sometimes referred to as a civil religion, and since the government cannot practice religion; some writers believed "public education had become its own religion" (Cooper, 2009, p. 239). Christian

parents, in general, lost their attraction to public schools with the many changes that took place, such as removal of the gospel [Bible] and cultural peer pressure (Greene, 1998), which began in the early 1960s. Many fundamentalist and evangelical Christian families demanded an alternative to public education and in the end withdrew their children; this fueled the Christian day schools movement (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009).

According to Boerema (2011), in a study that surveyed Christian school leaders, it was reported that more than 6 million students attend private schools in the United States and 6% of Canada's student population attend private schools. In the United States, about 21% of those private school students are students in faith-based schools (p. 2). In the study referenced by Boerema, a vast amount of research addressed certain educational questions, which affected the North American School system, but many of those findings did not include the private school sector (Boerema, 2011).

Private schools tended to be overwhelmingly religious, and parents and religious leaders felt the perfect solution was to be public, private, and religious at the same time. If a school received tax money and still had a religious trend, it could operate as a state charter school, which is still a public school but with greater autonomy and accountability (Weinberg, 2009). The supporters of faith-based charter schools would have to deal with the legal scrutiny of the Establishment Clause, which prohibited Congress from establishing religion (Russo & Cattaro, 2010; Weinberg, 2009). Based on all the legal issues of separating church and state, supporters of a purely faith-based charter school may have to go back to the drawing board, as stated by Russo and Cattaro (2010). A charter school, said to be religious, may be religious in the fact that the charter school

could accommodate religion and be sensitive to religious families in ways the normal public schools could not (Weinberg, 2009).

In a press release from the Legal/Legislative Update from 2011, it was stated that one of the findings from a recent NCES survey noted there are currently, “33,366 private elementary and secondary schools” with close to 5 million students enrolled (*NCES Releases*, 2011). With more than 70% of full-time teachers in private schools having religious orientation, “the teachers and staff of Christian schools believe[ed] that their number one job [was] to help your children find the uniqueness, develop it, and use it throughout their lives for the glory of God” (Simmons & Rabey, 2011, p. xiii).

The Bible does not specifically mention schools, but it does refer to educating, instructing, and training. Schools, according to Schultz (2006) became “part of the fabric of today’s society” (p. 11). In his 2006 edition of *Kingdom Education*, Schultz referred to society’s cure to problems such as teen pregnancy, drugs, and alcohol was to create better education programs (sex and drug education) with God not being a part of the system. Schultz also argued that outside the home itself, a Christian school is the only place where a child will learn a biblical worldview from a teacher (Schultz, 2006). Because of these views and others about school safety, some American parents turn to private schools for the education of their children. Schools (public or private) should be places where a climate of trust exists.

Definitions of Trust

People agreed that trust was important, according to editors Cooper and Pearce, claiming that, “trust [was] widely studied yet remain[ed] elusive” (Saunders, Skinner, Dietz, Gillespie, & Lewicki, 2010, p. xix). So, what is trust? In research studies that

were tied to trust, it could be seen as a theory (Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2007; Greenwood & Van Buren III, 2010); a condition or state (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011); a continuum (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004); a belief or expectation (Ballient & Van Lange, 2012; Samier, 2010b); and culturally complex (Khodyakov, 2005). As said by Pope (2004), the term trust was “used arbitrarily in daily conversation with consensus about its true meaning” (p. 75). Trust as defined by the dictionary was “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” (Trust, 2016). According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary (Trust, 2016), the first uses of the word trust came as early as the 13th century. Henschke (2013) claimed the foundation of trust (as a concept) originated in biblical scripture.

In an article about straining toward trust, Fichman (2003) mentioned the “broad array” of work on trust, which scholars in various fields such as psychology, organizational behavior, political science, and many others all have useful insights. In the research for that study, a vast amount of literature covers trust and researchers defined trust uniquely. Fichman (2003) claimed trust as a lens for viewing organized life. According to Schmidt (2010), the “definitions of trust are typically outside the realm of educational literature” (p. 50). The definitions are focused on interpersonal relationships and between the family and school.

Also argued by Greenwood and Van Buren (2010), trust had a moral aspect to it. In that, the “existence of trust implies[ed] a moral obligation” (p. 427). From the perspective of the philosophers and religious writers, there is a moral dimension to trust related to who we are and how we live with people (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Godfrey, 2012). In a world that has become more complex in its institutions and technology, “trust

becomes an indispensable strategy to deal with the opaqueness of our social environment. Without trust, we would be paralyzed and unable to act” (Sztompka, 1999, p. 13). How people live or react with people seemed to be the basis for the way other researchers define trust.

In the 2011 work of Forsyth and colleagues, trust was referred to as “a state in which individuals and groups [were] willing to make themselves vulnerable to others and take risks with confidence that others [would] respond to their actions in positive ways” (pp. 19–20). Another definition, closely related to the previous, defines trust “as a belief or confidence that one party has about another party’s characteristics that may increase willingness to take risks” (Ferrin et al., 2007, p. 469). Later in Chapter Two, while looking at models of trust, a few of the words (risk, vulnerable, confidence) in these definitions resurface.

In the literature on trust, there are many definitions and aspects of trust. Authors Covey and Merrill (2006) stated that, “Simply put, trust means confidence” (p. 5). However, most of the literature does not define trust with such a simple definition. In fact, when trust research centered on the field of education, the majority of authors cited Hoy. In a journal, Hoy (2002) made the statement, “Trust is like water—we all pay little attention to it until we need it, but don’t have it” (p. 88). When looking at trust and its impact on the success of leaders and their organizations, which all have interpersonal relationships, it was said trust was the keystone, or simply the “glue that holds the organization together” (Forsyth et al., 2011, p. 111). People chose to trust and made judgments to trust on evidence that has been cultivated through various ways in our organizations. Trust does not become an easy thing to define because it is so complex.

Trust could also vary based on context (Tschannen-Morgan, 2004). People tend to trust based on their feelings and intuition.

After researching several different definitions and measurements of trust, Watson (2005) noticed that there was a need to define the different types of trust and how they were similar or how they were unique from each other. Her conclusion was that there may be just one type of trust, but applied differently to interpersonal trust and interorganizational trust, thus requiring different types of measurements and models.

Models of Trust

In this section of the review of literature, the different trust models were grouped together as a way to separate trust made up from several factors or components. Later, the literature covers a section on the different types of trust set apart by the individual(s) displaying the trust.

Facets of Trust. The first of these models examined for this study, presented by Hoy (2002), who spoke of the complexity of trust, and referred to “the many facets of trust” (p. 89). The components of trust mentioned in this publication were referenced in other works (Forsyth et al., 2011; Goddard, Tschannen-Morgan, & Hoy, 2011) in which Hoy has been a part. In addition, Tschannen-Moran (2004) referenced these same facets in her definition of trust. Another author, Pope (2004), referred to the facets as the dimensions of trust. In other trust-based literature, Pope (2004) claimed the facets in which Hoy referred appear 79 times. According to Hoy (2002), the facets of trust are as follows:

- Benevolence, which has to do with confidence in those in charge
- Reliability, which is a combined sense of dependability and predictability

- Competence, which is an assured confidence that people have the ability to perform what is necessary
- Honesty, which is the truthfulness of a person
- Vulnerability, which is taking calculated risk
- Openness, which is making one vulnerable by sharing. (pp. 89–92)

Pope (2004) stated the four components of trust regularly referenced in literature are competence, reliability, benevolence, and openness. Hoy (2002) listed two not mentioned by Pope. Those facets or components were honesty and vulnerability. In a 2010 research study by Cosner, these facets of trust were placed in a category called knowledge-based trust. It was suggested in the study that the facets could “serve as lenses for considering the actions of others” (Cosner, 2010, p. 119)

Similar to the four trust components (competence, reliability, benevolence, and openness) by Pope (2004) mentioned above, the journal, *Principal Leadership*, printed an article, “The Four Elements of Trust,” where the author argued that trust was made up by these four areas: Consistency (in message), compassion (care and vulnerability), communication (feedback) and competency (fulfilling responsibility). Put together these items are necessary for a trust relationship (Vodicka, 2006). In the opinion of the author, four elements summed together were what developed trust.

According to Sztompka (1999), we cannot view trust from the natural world, “Trust belongs to humans” (p. 21). Sztompka presented trust as sociological theory. He placed emphasis on the foundations, functions, and varieties of trust. Ortloff (2011) noted the Sztompkian Framework for trust based on the Sztompka’s 1999 trust theories. These theories were presented as an interrelated model of trust: The elements influencing

trust, manners of trust, and varieties of trust are the basis of the Sztompkian Framework. Each of these stated trust areas were influenced by several factors in each of the areas. The following table, display the factors making up the different aspects of Sztompka's model as presented by Ortloff's 2011 figure.

Table 1

Aspects of the Sztompka's Framework of Trust

| Elements Influencing Trust | Manner of Trust | Varieties of Trust |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Risk | • Anticipatory | • Personal |
| • Expectations | • Responsive | • Categorical |
| • Commitments | • Evocative | • Positional |
| • Agency | | • Group |
| | | • Institutional |
| | | • Commercial |
| | | • Systemic |

Relational Trust. Often research on trust includes relationships (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009; Kezar, 2004; Samier, 2010b; Scherer, 2016; Sztompka, 1999). Kezar (2004) suggested that placing focus on relationships; furthermore, he asserted, “leadership, trust, and relationships supersede structures and processes in effective decision making” (p. 44). Trust is always part of relationships; it is either a direct or indirect exchange (Sztompka, 1999). According to Burmeister and Hensley (2004), school leaders must be able to have and build “on solid relationships based on trust,” (p. 30) in order to reduce the isolation that can exist between principal and people that work with them. In referring to the idea of student trust, Toshalis (2016), stated “in human

relationships, trust has to be earned,” because the trustworthiness involves observation, experience, and “good old-fashioned time” (p. 19).

On college and university campuses, relationships between the administration and faculty are important to the success of the institution (Del Favero & Bray, 2005). The same was true in primary and secondary schools, “Trust is a critical factor in determining whether principal-teacher working relationships are positive or negative” (Macmillan et al., 2004, p. 275). Each level of education (Hoy & Tarter, 1997) required a trusting relationship if the goal was effectiveness.

Khodyakov (2005) presented a paper on trust where he proposes looking at trust as a process. The author combined interpersonal trust, which he calls thick and thin, with trust in institutions. He concluded by suggesting not to look at trust through levels but by “building, developing, and retaining trust” (p. 22).

Forsyth et al. (2011) stated that scholars agree that there were common elements of trust. Whereas the definition of trust listed above had to do with a process that was active, these researchers proposed “a more complex definition of trust” (Forsyth et al., 2011, p. 16). According to the authors, the seven common attributes or features of trust include the following: (a) multiple levels, (b) different referent roles, (c) multiple facets, (d) interdependence, (e) confident expectations, (f) risk, and (g) vulnerability (p. 17).

In order for trust to exist, interdependence, risk, and vulnerability are necessary (Forsyth et al., 2011). Risk and vulnerability are also mentioned in other literature (Bolton & English, 2010; Tschannen-Morgan, 2004) as being a factor of trust. Sztompka (1999) stated that risk is “intimately related” to trust. The act of trust comes into play by

making ourselves vulnerable when we forfeit “control over some valued object” (Sztompka, 1999, p. 32).

Boundaries of Trust. Henschke (1998) wrote about the Modeling Principle, which consisted of four ingredients: andragogy, attitude, congruence, and trust. Trust was something that Henschke argued had to be initiated with the learner because the “lack of trust seriously hampers the learning process” (p. 13). Henschke listed 11 boundaries of trust in which trust takes form:

- Purposefully communicating to learners they are unique,
- Believe that learners know their own goals,
- Expressing confidence the learner will develop the needed skills,
- Prizing the learner to learn what is needed,
- Feeling the learners need to be aware and communicate thoughts and feeling,
- Enabling the learner to evaluate their progress,
- Hearing the learner indicate what their learning needs are,
- Engaging the learner to clarify their own aspirations,
- Developing a supportive relationship with the learner,
- Experiencing unconditional positive regard for the learner, and
- Respecting the dignity and integrity of the learner. (pp. 12–13)

Waves of Trust. In their book on trust, Covey and Merrill (2006) mentioned a Harris poll study on trust completed in 2005. The poll demonstrated that people in the United States do not trust media, political parties, government, and big companies. Two of the percentages that Covey and Merrill mentioned were 51% of employees have trust

in upper management and 36% believe the company leaders have integrity and honesty. Covey and Merrill continued on to say that “trust [was] one of the most powerful forms of motivation and inspiration,” as people want, respond, and thrive on trust (p. 29).

The Speed of Trust (Covey & Merrill, 2006) presented a model of trust, referred to as the “5 Waves of Trust,” that have a ripple effect. Covey and Merrill’s (2006) model began with the idea of self-trust, which the authors claimed dealt with credibility. The second wave, relational trust, had to do with having consistent behaviors. Organizational trust, the third wave, alignment becomes the focus. The fourth wave, market trust, is where Covey and Merrill said that the reputation of the organization is impacted. Societal trust is the final or fifth wave, which deals with the idea of contribution or giving back. Covey and Merrill suggest that in these waves or levels, trust is established. For an organization to be successful, trust is vital.

Mistrust and Distrust

Risley and Petroff (2014) posed these questions while addressing an experience of distrust, “Is the lack of trust important to education? Does trust have an impact on learning? Do students/learners even care or notice its presence?” (p. 13). Trust is understood to be an element of human interaction, which often goes unnoticed until that trust is betrayed (Godfrey, 2012). Exploring the theme of trust in literature revealed references to mistrust (Samier, 2010b; Sztompka, 1999), distrust (Tschannen-Morgan, 2004), and lack of trust (Goddard et al., 2011). When compromised, trust, as one journal mentioned, works to undo the relationships (Esolen, 2008) that exist. “Trust lies at the heart of interpersonal relationships. Without [trust] schools are subject to destructive personal agendas, suspicion, and manipulation” (Hoy & Tarter, 1997, p. 11). Since

organizations have people in them with shared values, trust can be problematic for the organization (Fleckenstein & Bowes, 2000). When the leaders of the organization, who hold the greatest responsibility of creating a trusting environment, become the source of mistrust, the “loss of trust is doubly distressing” (Samier, 2010a, p. 63). While trust is the premise for healthy school leadership, Samier (2010) suggested the loss of trust place stress on “professional roles and relationships, compromising academic integrity, standards, freedom, and collegial governance” (Samier, 2010a, p. 93).

The social institutions of today are scrutinized by the stream of media attention that occurs when a scandal is reported. These newsworthy themes “erode the trust we once held for these institutions” (Tschannen-Morgan, 2004, p. 8). The items seen in the news cause trust to decline, but when the individuals of an organization, as Tschannen-Morgan (2004) suggested, do not share the same key cultural values, distrust begins to arise. “The cohesiveness of a school community” can be disrupted when low levels of trust and distrust are present (Forsyth et al., 2011, p. 130).

Mistrust, not always defined as a loss of trust; was sometimes referred as a neutral trust or suspended trust. As stated in Sztompka (1999),

mistrust is either former trust destroyed, or former distrust healed. The concrete qualities of mistrust are path-dependent, related to its alternative origins. It seems that mistrust, resulting from the breach of trust, easily leads to full-fledged distrust, whereas mistrust resulting from the withdrawal of unjustified distrust, will build toward full-fledged trust much more slowly. (p. 27)

In cases where trust is lost, destroyed, or betrayed, one study's responders stated, "while trust may take a long time to build up, it can be destroyed almost instantaneously" (Rodriguez-Lluesma, Companys, & Ruiz, 2013, p. 32).

Types of Trust

Different from the previous section dedicated to the models trust, this section refers to trust by grouping it with the individual or group the trust is referencing. Just as trust has many components that are difficult to define when attempting to separate them, there are many different types of trust. Organizations, if they want to be successful, have to understand that trust comes in different forms. The literature on trust covers many areas and types of trust: organizational trust, social trust, and leader trust. In addition, for this study, there is information on school trust, which includes teacher trust and principal trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Morgan, 2004), organizational trust (Covey & Merrill, 2006; Vatcharasirisook, 2011), and andragogic trust (Henschke, 2011; Risley, 2012).

Organizational Trust. Trust in an organization is directly related to how satisfied the employees feel as the stakeholders of the organization. Organizational trust is built from indirect and impersonal experiences (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010, p. 20). Concern and care for the stakeholders resulted in a higher levels of trust in the organization, creating more productive and loyal employees (Covey & Merrill, 2006; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010).

The Cambridge Companions to Management series on organizational trust published a chapter dealing with the complexities of trust. In this chapter, authors Dietz, Gillespie, and Chao (2010) stated how trust had been covered in several discipline areas:

“psychology, sociology, economics, political science, and moral philosophy” (Saunders et al., 2010, p. 9). That research referred to the impact of trust on the individuals and organization. The goal was to unify the research on trust over cultures. The book claimed that there is a gap in the understanding of cross-cultural trust building (Saunders et al., 2010).

From a Christian perspective, author Busby (2015) wrote about trust in Christian organizations, which he referred to as ministries. He claimed, “Trust changes everything” (Busby, 2015, p. 1), which was supported in other literature on trust (Covey & Merrill, 2006; Henschke, 2011). Trust is carried out in many ways in organizations. Busby (2015) argued that trust began with truth telling, and ministry organization leaders need to focus on building trust every day. While referencing companies where trust has waned, Samier (2010b) noted that once trust is lost in an organization it may not be able to be recovered. When dealing with people in an organization with their own cultures, it should be easy to interpret trust within that culture, given that the members all share common values (Dietz et al., 2010). People tend to have higher levels of trust when they are around people with a similar background as themselves (Pennings, et. al, 2012; Rodriguez-Lluesma et al., 2013).

Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2010) claimed that in an organization, trust is the main thing. Their definition of trust for an organization is “the overarching belief that an organization in its communication and behaviors is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and worthy of identification with its goals, norms, and values” (Shockley et al., 2010, p. 12).

Leader Trust. A leader, no matter what organization, needs credibility, which begins with what Covey and Merrill (2006) referred to as self-trust. According to Covey and Merrill, leaders can ask two questions of themselves: (a) Do I trust myself? and (b) Am I someone that others can trust? The authors referred to the things needed for self-trust—integrity, intent, capabilities, and results—as the “4 Cores of Credibility” (Covey & Merrill, 2006, p. 57). In the 2011 study, relationship roles were examined between supervisors and subordinates by using a modified version (translated into Thai) of the Modified Instructional Perspectives Inventory (MIPI) (mentioned later in Chapter 2). The study noted that “trust between supervisors and subordinates can be created in different ways” (Vatcharasirisook, 2011, p. 81). The study found that there is a correlation between trust and the supervisor and employee satisfaction. If trust, empathy, and sensitivity are present, employees are more likely to stay with the company (Vatcharasirisook, 2011).

When looking at trust in a global sense, Cardona, Morley, and Reiche (2013) arrived at a definition of trust “as an affective state that entails an expectation about a referent’s genuine care, concern, or emotional reciprocation” (p. 2). For their study, a reciprocal model of hierarchical trust was developed to be used across world cultures. This global study included qualitative data from 14 countries exploring the manager-subordinate relationship concerning trust. When this model was used in the United States, Rodriguez-Lluesma et al. (2013) reported a tendency to trust those in a similar job, where the manager and subordinate were concerned. The work of Ferrin and Gillespie (2010) concluded their findings by suggesting there are some culturally specific things that are able to determine trust: a country’s wealth, income equality, education,

government, formal institutions, and ethnic homogeneity. In contrast, the same study stated a few universal determinants for trust: ability, benevolence, and integrity.

Upon comparing the finding from each of the countries, the combined works of Cardona et al. (2013) revealed several themes that emerged concerning trust as referenced by the managers and subordinates. The idea that trust was built over time was documented in the finding in 12 of the countries. Adding to that, seven of the countries reported that trust comes from those that are closest to the individual, starting with family or those close as family.

Table 2

A Global Sense of Trust

| | <i>Relationship Essential to Building Trust</i> | <i>Length of Relationship</i> | <i>Over time</i> | <i>Education</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Length of Experience on the job</i> | <i>Trust is built in families or close like families</i> |
|---------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------|--|--|
| United States | | * | * | | | | |
| Greece | | * | * | * | | | |
| Norway | * | | * | | * | * | |
| Spain | * | | * | | | | * |
| Poland | * | | | | | | * |
| Romania | | | * | | | | * |
| Russia | | * | * | | | | * |
| Columbia | | * | * | | | | |
| China | * | * | | | | | |
| Thailand | | * | | | | | * |
| Pakistan | | * | * | * | | | * |
| Philippines | | * | | | * | | |
| West Africa | | | | | | | * |

When asked if gender and age were a factor in the manager-subordinate relationship, three countries reported age of an old manager as a trust builder, and the

study completed in West Africa showed that women were more trustworthy than men. The West African study was also the only country to list Christians as one of the areas where trust levels would be higher.

Principal Trust. A leader's first job is to inspire trust and create a foundation on which to build relationships that can be successful (Covey & Merrill, 2006, p. 286). Trust in schools is essential so it becomes part of the culture of the school. Schools that are promoting reform need to look at trust between the principal and faculty. When there is teacher-principal trust, the principal is able to introduce what is needed for advancement and the teachers feel like valued professionals (Kochanek, 2005). The actions of the principal set the tone of trust in the school. In order to be trustworthy, a principal must be a person of good will and be fair and honest with those he or she is in contact (Tschannen-Morgan, 2004). Schmidt (2010) claimed the examination of trust among principals and their staff is one of the common examinations in the school setting. The school leadership or principal has to build a relationship of trust. Tschannen-Morgan (2004) suggested that there are five functions of leadership (visioning, modeling, coaching, managing, mentoring) that build a matrix with the five facets, mentioned previously, (benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, competence) of trust. In addition, these were combined with five constituencies (public, parents, students, teachers, administrators) of schools.

Modeling the behaviors (Henschke, 1998; Kochanek, 2005) desired by the principal can build trust. A principal can demonstrate the "role they envision" through the interactions made with parents and teachers during the day (Kochanek, 2005, p. 25).

Forsyth et al. (2011) claimed that when a principal shows trust to the teachers that these teachers will likely trust each other.

Researchers stated, “Teachers need to be able to trust that the principal will support them in their work, and principals need to be able to trust teachers to teach” (Macmillan et al., 2004, p. 283). If the principal wants to see success in the school that result in advancement of student learning, then he or she has to place trust in the teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). A trustworthy principal can facilitate higher levels of productivity through supervision. Tschannen-Morgan (2004) stated that one of the principal’s roles is supervision, which can establish trust at different levels. The trustworthy leader is the key component in the success of the school. They are responsible for uniting the school community together.

Andragogic Trust. In addition to K-12 literature, trust appears in adult education literature, according to Henschke (2013). When writing about adult education, Henschke claimed that the most important aspect of the learning climate was mutual trust. “Trust, a focus in recent andragogy research is a common and the strongest element in education, learning and relationships that when absent will destroy influential leadership, greatest friendship, strongest character, or the deepest love” (Risley & Petroff, 2014, p. 3). Andragogy, as understood in America today is the “art and science of teaching adults” (Knowles, Houlton III, & Swanson, 2012, p. 342). The environment has to be a safe place for the learner, and trust is needed to help build the confidence in that learning environment. After a climate of trust is created, “learning begins to unfold in the classroom” (Risley & Petroff, 2014, p. 8).

The literature on adult learning, which may not always use the term andragogy, does make a separation in the way adults learn (Maehl, 2000) and the way children learn. Much of K–12 education learn through pedagogy (the art and science of teaching children) (Knowles, 1984). The climate and environment of trust is an important aspect for the adult learner, according to the literature on adult education (Galbraith, 2004; Henschke, 2009; Knowles, 1984; Maehl, 2002; Risely & Petroff, 2014). Even though, in this case study, the school is a pre-K through 12th-grade setting, this research study explores the perceptions about a trusting climate through eyes of the stakeholders (adults) of a particular school.

Andragogy facilitator and scholar, Henschke (2013) shared that trust is subjective because it does not mean the same to each person. Trust in andragogy, or adult learning is the foundation of relationships. Henschke’s research and instruments (explained in the next section) have proven that when trust is a dominant factor, learning can be successful.

Instrument Validation

Exploring the presence of trust was the topic of this study. The survey tool used at the study site was developed by Risley (2012). “This inventory focuses on trust in a learning experience. The inventory identifies eleven elements of trust that if visible in a learning experience can help establish a trusting relationship, thus, a trusting learning environment” (Risley & Petroff, 2012, p. 5). The Visible Elements of Trust Inventory (VETI) was created to serve as a complement (Risley & Petroff, 2014) to the 1989 version of Henschke’s MIPI. According to Risley and Petroff (2014), the VETI, became a tool for two dissertations, which examine trust from the perspective of the instructor. The VETI has also been utilized in several classroom settings and training including: a)

nursing, b) adult education, c) leadership, and d) writing (L. Risley, personal communication, December 29, 2016). Henschke stated that versions of MIPI have been used in 20 completed dissertations (see Appendix A), with the factor pertaining to trust (teacher trust of learners) being the strongest of the all the factors (J. Henschke, personal communication, 2016).

Thomas (1995) used the Instructional Perspectives Inventory (IPI), originally designed by Henschke, on 94 subjects. His study used the seven factors of the IPI:

- 1) Teacher empathy with parents as learners,
- 2) Teacher trust of parents as learners,
- 3) Planning and delivery of instruction,
- 4) Accommodating parents as learners' uniqueness,
- 5) Teacher Insensitivity toward parents as learners,
- 6) Experience base learning techniques, and
- 7) Teacher centered learning processes.

Thomas's study used the IPI to gather data with parents as adult learners.

Another study, in 1997, used the same IPI format as Thomas' 1995 study on the group Kansas Parents as Teachers program (Seward, 1997). Striker (2006) revised the IPI to use for principals and teachers. Even though the IPI or MIPI has seven factors that are evaluated, in these particular studies the trust section was indicated as the most important element of each study. A 2011 study used the MIPI to investigate the experiences teachers receive during professional development. In this particular study, public elementary school teachers and public elementary school principals were used as participants (Jones-Clinton, 2011). All the above studies used Henschke's instrument in

elementary or pre-K through grade 12 settings, which is similar to the school in this particular study. However, the IPI or MIPI, as stated previously, was utilized in 20 dissertations as of 2015. Studies include various levels of academia and business and include translations for use in two non-English language studies (Thai, Mandarin). In various dissertations, the IPI has been modified or revised to be used for principals, teachers, students, supervisors, life-long learners (Henschke, 2011). At least one study has used the MIPI in part, not using all of the original 45 statements, but only the statements reflecting trust, which contained 11 statements (Risley, 2012).

Other researchers have used and revised the IPI through the years. The first version of the IPI only contained a 4-point Likert scale, but was later modified to reflect a 5-point scale in 2005. The newer version, MIPI, has recently modified used for use in a Thailand study. The revisions were made to reflect supervisor's roles (banking, healthcare, and hospitality) and the inventory was also translated into the Thai language, and making the IPI/MIPI validated three times using Cronbach's alpha (Risley, 2012; Vatcharasirisook, 2011). The most recent adaptation of the MIPI was for students reflecting on the trust of the professor. This revision, the MIPI-S (Risley, 2012), used the same factors reflected in the VETI, which became the instrument used in the research for TCA. The VETI's design is from one of seven of the MIPI factors.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter was divided into several sections. The first section of the literature review contained a background of Christian education, followed by a section devoted to different trust topics, and concluding with the a section providing a background of the instrument validation used in this research study.

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, it was suggested that trust as a topic is vastly covered. This chapter does not cover all the literature on the topics of trust, but a sampling that the primary investigator thought would be important in connecting the study school to available research. While the visible elements of trust about an organization were explored in the study, the organization itself is made up by the people in the organization that help shape its climate. The principals, teachers, staff, adult volunteers, administrative leaders, and parents are the key factors in either building trust or mistrust in the organization. Through the interdependence of these groups (Forsyth et al., 2011) trust relations can be formed.

In the third chapter, the methodology section provides details of the data collection in a mixed-methods research design used in the case study. Chapter Three includes both qualitative and quantitative data sets that make up this mixed-methods style of research. The data sets are first examined question by question from the instruments provided to the stakeholders then followed by a description of how the responses are themed together.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Overview

This study was designed to explore the presence of trust at a suburban Christian school in the Midwest from the perception of the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board). In order to gather the data for this research study, two methods, along with existing secondary data, were used which provided both qualitative and quantitative data. This chapter includes a description of the participants in the study school, the instruments used in the study, and the methods used to collect data.

Research Design

Most of the data collected from the study school came in the form of qualitative data. The perceptions of the participants were an important factor for this study, which lead to more of a qualitative approach (Maxwell, 2005). The research design chosen for the study was case study research. Case studies, commonly used in the social science of education, lend themselves to include both qualitative and quantitative collections (Yin, 2009).

The data collected for the case study was collected from the VETI set up as an online survey, three different focus groups that represented each stakeholder group (staff, board, and parent), and existing secondary data (previous school surveys). The purpose of the data collection was to answer the overall research question with its subquestions as they pertain to the climate and environment of the case study school:

How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school?

- 1) How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust?
- 2) How do the stakeholders perceive that school demonstrates trust?

3) What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?

Research Participants

The school, during the study, had a pre-K through grade 12 program and at the time of the study, had been in operation for more than three decades. Study participants were stakeholders of the study school, which consisted of parents, staff, and board members.

The stakeholders, adults above the age of 18, gave their consent to be part of the study through email invitation (Appendix B). Providing consent by following the link, the stakeholder filled out an online survey containing questions about the visible elements of trust. The invitation email provided an opportunity for two of the stakeholder groups (staff and parent) to participate in a focus group. I, as the primary researcher and holding a leadership position at the school, set up the survey to be both anonymous and confidential in order to reduce coercion. Part of this population agreed to be part of a focus group by stakeholder type (conducted by a third party). I, as the primary researcher, did not know the focus group participants. The assistant principal of the study school served as the liaison between the focus group participants and the third-party facilitator. The group of stakeholders classified as the board of directors of the study school, received an invitation to participate in a focus group from the school superintendent. The superintendent provided a version of the online invitation to the board to be included in the official minutes (Appendix D). That process allowed them to add the focus group to the agenda for a future meeting date.

A version of the first recruitment letter (Appendix C), emailed a week after the first, was sent as a reminder email to all the participants by me, the primary investigator.

After the initial emails introducing and inviting participation, I did not have any other communication with the participants. The stakeholders, participating in the focus groups were unknown to me, the primary investigator; the study school's assistant principal organized all three focus group sessions with the third-party facilitator.

Characteristics of Participants

The participants of the study school, all adults over the age of 18, consisted of more than 100 staff members, 400 families, and an average of seven board members, of whom were referred to as the stakeholders of the school. Chosen in a nonrandom format, the participants in this study created the sample population. The sample population for the study were both considered convenient and purposive (Fraenkel et al., 2012). All of the stakeholders were invited through one email. Those who agreed to participate in the research study selected what type of stakeholder (staff, parent, or board) they were at the time of the study. All of the participants in the study also shared the same core beliefs, as stated in the school statement of faith that the participants sign when becoming part of the school. Participants were recruited in an email, which created an anonymous group of respondents. The role which the participants marked (parent, staff, board) was the only characteristic gathered from the study participants. This research study was designed to gather the perspectives of the stakeholders; it did not look at other factors such as, but not limited to, gender, race, or socioeconomic level.

Instruments

Survey. The first method used in the data collection process was the trust instrument designed by Risely in 2012. Risely's VETI was designed as a tool that would provide a visible perception of the 11 self-reflection trust statements in an inventory

originally created by Henschke in 1989. The original version of Henschke's instrument was called the IPI. The original inventory contained 45 statements. The original instrument reflected on feelings, beliefs, and behaviors of those adults responsible for teaching other adults (Henschke, 1989). This research study's intention was to explore the presence of trust from the perspective of the stakeholders. Only the 11 questions Risley used to create the VETI became the basis for this study.

With permission, I revised the VETI for this case study (see Appendix E). The original version of the VETI was developed to state whether the statements were visible in the life of an instructor. The K-12 version of the VETI, used in this study, asks the stakeholders to provide perceptions about the organization (school). According to Risley (personal communication, 2016), the VETI was being used in two other dissertations at the time of the research at TCA and used in numerous classroom settings across several disciplines (nursing, adult education, leadership, writing, organizational training). The 11 questions, after being revised for this study, included the school names before each of the statements. The original VETI referred to 'instructor,' whereas this study focused on the organization and not an individual. Since the name of the study school was protected at the time of the study, the following questions generically contained the pseudonym 'TCA' in front of the each statement instead of the actual school name that appeared on the survey:

- 1) TCA communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important.
- 2) TCA expresses confidence that learners will develop the skills they need.
- 3) TCA demonstrates that learners know what their goals, dreams, and realities are.

- 4) TCA prizes learners' ability to learn what is needed.
- 5) TCA communicates to learners they need to be aware of and communicate their thoughts and feelings.
- 6) TCA enables learners to evaluate their own progress.
- 7) TCA indicates ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are.
- 8) TCA engages learners in clarifying their own aspirations.
- 9) TCA works toward developing a supportive relationship with individual learners.
- 10) TCA exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners.
- 11) TCA demonstrates respect for learners' dignity and integrity.

Each of the stakeholders (parents, board, and staff) were asked to mark whether each of the statements were *visible* or *not visible*, from their perspective. After each of the statements, the participants were provided a space for adding an example that would support their statement. The last survey question asked for a ranking of elements of trust in order of what they, the stakeholder, perceived to be the most important (Appendix F).

Focus groups. As part of the recruitment letter, a focus group option was provided for the stakeholders who wanted to participate beyond the online survey. The focus group data became the second source of data collection for this case study. Two of the stakeholder groups (staff and parent) were able to join a focus group set to their stakeholder type. The stakeholders that were considered as part of the staff (employees of the school) met one afternoon during a regularly scheduled staff meeting time, and the parent group met at the study site for an evening study group. All of the focus groups were organized through the school assistant principal and the focus group facilitator.

This design process was intentional to avoid coercion, since the primary investigator served in a leadership role in the study school. Through a third-party facilitator (the same for all three focus groups), the focus groups were asked the following questions:

- 1) What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust in a Christian setting?
- 2) What is your perception of how TCA demonstrates a trusting climate?
- 3) Tell me of a time (if there is one) when/where you have seen that TCA has not provided a supportive and trusting climate?
- 4) Consider your original expectations when you came to TCA. Compare those expectations to the reality of your experiences now that you are here at TCA. In the time since you have been part of the school, is there a noticeable change in the climate? If so please describe.
- 5) What or is there anything else you would like to share (concerning climate, trust) that was not asked or suggested on the surveys or in these questions?

(Appendix G)

Any personal identifiers were removed to maintain the anonymity of the participants. All names were changed to further protect the identity of the focus group members. The participants, at the time of the online sign-up and day of the focus group, were informed of the protection measures used to conceal the identities. The participants were made aware that I, one of the school administrators and researcher, would not be in the building during the focus group sessions.

All of the focus group sessions met on the campus of the study school. The scheduled times for the focus group were set at a time that would be the most convenient

for the particular members of each focus group. The staff focus group time was set on a regular staff meeting day and time, in order to avoid this group having to give up another afternoon. An evening time was selected, through the help of the assistant principal, after several options were provided to the parent focus group participants. The focus group time for the school board was built into the agenda as part of their monthly meeting.

All of the data gathered from the focus groups was kept by the focus group facilitator. The facilitator provided the data directly to the transcriptionist. The primary investigator for this study had no contact with any of the focus group data.

I, as the school principal and primary investigator for the study, had access to secondary data as part of the normal responsibilities of my position. The secondary data used in this case study came in the form of personal emails and previous school surveys. The study school polled the parent population during the spring of each school year to gather data. These surveys were all set up as anonymous response items in order to provide a way to get honest feedback from the school stakeholders (parents, which could also be staff or board).

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data from this study came from the VETI. These were simple ‘yes or no’-type questions on each of the visible elements of trust. On the instrument, the words *visible* and *not visible* were used. Based on the nature of the VETI responses, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data (Bluman, 2010). Secondary data gathered from surveying the stakeholders annually also provided quantitative data for the research study. A minimum of 30 participants were needed for this study. The electronic survey remained active for two weeks, with a reminder email sent after the end of the

first week. Over the two-week period, while the survey was active, 50 people participated in the online survey. Each of the focus groups, meeting only once per their stakeholder type, ranged in size from six to 12 participants.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The focus group discussions and the responses to the open-ended questions from the example spaces on the online VETI provided the primary qualitative data for the study. The focus group consisted of volunteer participants organized through the efforts of the assistant principal after the invitation to participate was emailed to all the stakeholders. The annual surveys conducted by the study school provided additional secondary data used in the study.

After all qualitative data, as primary data for this study, was received from the third-party transcriptionist. After the transcription of the focus groups, a categorizing strategy used to code the data was more of an open-coding format, where categories are developed through the reading of a data segment (Maxwell, 2005).

Summary

In this chapter, the participants were described along with the recruitment methods used to gather data from the parents, staff, and board of the study school. The instrument development and how each tool was used at the study site were documented in Chapter Three. In the following chapter, data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, is provided. The data analysis for the qualitative piece revealed the emerging themes used in grouping the data together.

Chapter Four: Results

Chapter Four includes the results from this case study. This study's goal explored the presence of trust in a suburban Christian school, and the findings presented in this chapter address the following research question: How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school? This overall question contained the three following subquestions:

- 1) How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust?
- 2) How do the stakeholders perceive that the school demonstrates trust?
- 3) What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?

The accumulated data collected through an online survey and from several focus groups became the collection tools used to answer the above research questions. The survey, which contained quantitative answers of either *visible* or *not visible*, as well as open-ended questions providing qualitative data for each of the responses, remained open for a two-week window. The focus groups, which met by stakeholder type (parent, staff, or board), provided much of the qualitative data for this study. A secondary data piece—the Trust Survey (completed prior to this study)—asked parents directly about trust. These three resources provided the data needed to respond to the research questions.

In this chapter, data from each collection source revealed themes within the instrument used as well as common themes that were spread throughout all of the collection methods. The following table represents which data summaries were used to answer the research questions and its subquestions.

Table 3

Data Elements Related to Research Questions

| Research Question | Instrument | Question |
|--|--------------|----------------------|
| How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school? | Trust Survey | Open-ended response |
| | Focus Group | Q4, Q5 |
| | VETI | Open-ended responses |
| How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust? | Focus Group | Q1 |
| | Trust Survey | Q1, Q2 |
| How do the stakeholders perceive that the school demonstrates trust? | Focus Group | Q2 |
| | VETI | Q1, Q9, Q11 |
| What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust? | VETI | Q12 |

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the open-coding process (Maxwell, 2005) used for the qualitative data segments in this study were revealed through the reading of the data, and then determined as like responses were grouped together. The quantitative pieces used in this study were not statistical in nature, but descriptive in dealing with percentage of the responses.

The analysis of the data in this chapter was divided by instrument used in the study. Emerging themes occurred through the responses, which allowed the researcher to group responses by instrument. The presentation of common themes that emerged from the study are shared at the end of the chapter along with some of the minor themes that emerged throughout the whole study.

Survey – VETI

The VETI, modified for this study from Risley's (2012) original version, was designed to gather perceptions on trust that were visible to the observer. The VETI was

used in the study school as a tool for the stakeholder (parent, board, and staff) to respond regarding their perceptions of the school organization. The online survey link for the VETI was active for two weeks. During that time, 50 responses were collected from the stakeholders. The data received from the online survey were summarized by question. Each of the VETI summaries was presented, with a figure revealing what percentage of the responders either visibly agreed with the statement or did not agree with element of trust statement. The first survey item required the stakeholder to choose the group that fit them best, which can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

VETI Responses by Stakeholder

| Stakeholder Group | Percentage of the Responses | Number of Responses |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Parent | 70% | 35 |
| Board | 4% | 2 |
| Staff (Employee) | 26% | 13 |

Seventy percent of the responses were provided from a parent perspective, and 26% classified themselves as staff (school employees). The last 4% of those surveyed were marked as board members, as illustrated in Figure 1.

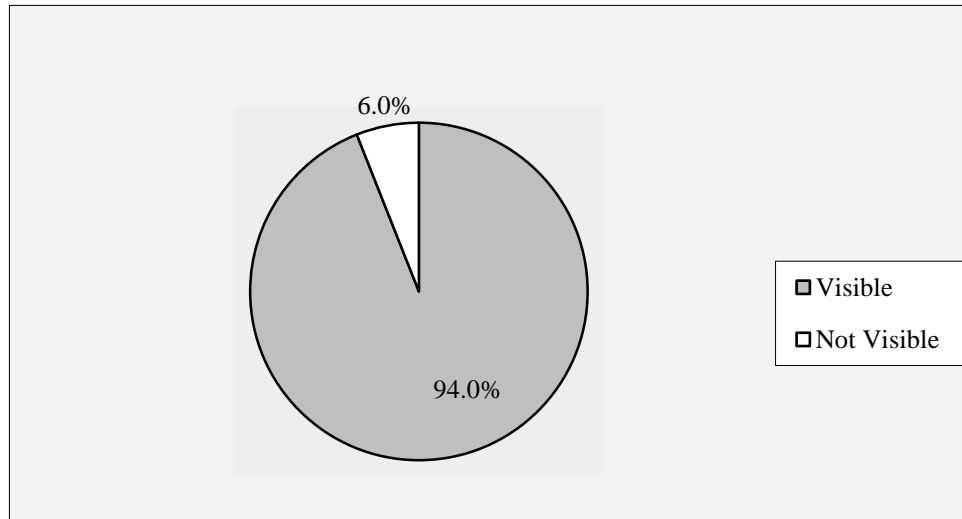


Figure 1. VETI Q1. TCA communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important.

Ninety-four percent of the survey responders claimed the study school did communicate that each of the learners are uniquely important. Three participants marked that this item was *not visible*. There were 18 comments provided for the open-ended answers for this question. One parent, though marking *visible* for the survey item, stated that this is really both *visible* and *not visible* because all of the teachers are different. A similar parent response, who also chose to mark *visible* on this item, shared, ‘I think it depends on the individual adult, teacher, or administrator. Some do very well at this, and others do not.’

Another response from a parent who supported this question stated, It’s a message that gets spoken by the [principal] and the teachers, but more importantly, I see it in their actions. I also think that little things, like knowing all the children’s names (even teachers that don’t have that student in class) and the creativity in the art program, help the children feel uniquely important.

A staff member echoes the parent's response with the comment, 'Teachers and staff regularly remind students that they are image bearers [of God], uniquely designed and created for a purpose.' One board member responded to this question with this comment: 'Given the size of the school and the philosophy of education, we try to communicate that each student is important and unique. Not a perfect system by any means, but believe this is part of our approach.' Two of the responses for this answer included the school resource program, which helps academically challenged children, as one of the ways TCA expresses the uniqueness of the students, while other responses included having a variety of levels of academics, arts, and activities outside the classroom.

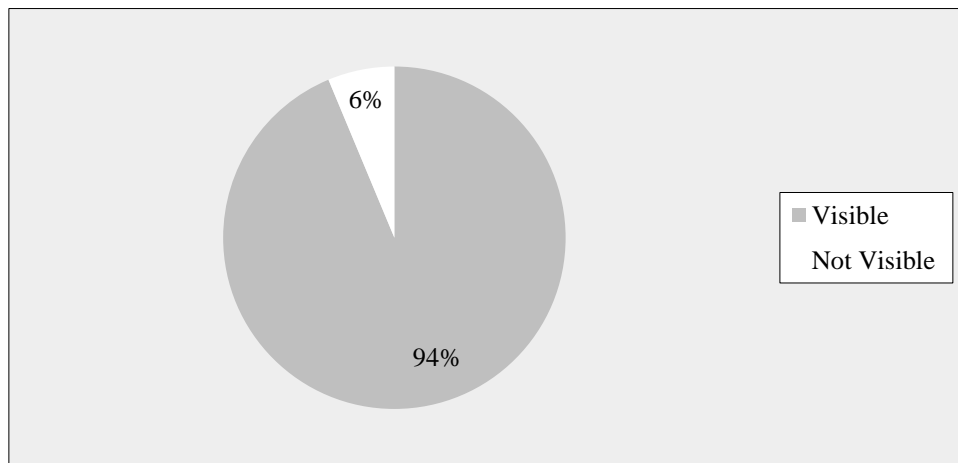


Figure 2. VETI Q2. TCA expresses confidence that learners will develop the skills they need.

Similarly, to the above question, almost 94% marked this element of trust as visible. Eight of the 15 open-ended responses for this question mentioned the teachers facilitated confidence-building for the students. Five responses were related to high standards and the curriculum of the school, as stated by a staff member: 'Faculty members do curriculum-mapping to make sure all concepts and skills are being covered

throughout the year from grade to grade.’ One parent’s response to visually seeing this statement in practice is the positive reinforcements used in the classroom for student accomplishments. There were no statements provided that provide explanations for those who chose *not visible* as their response.

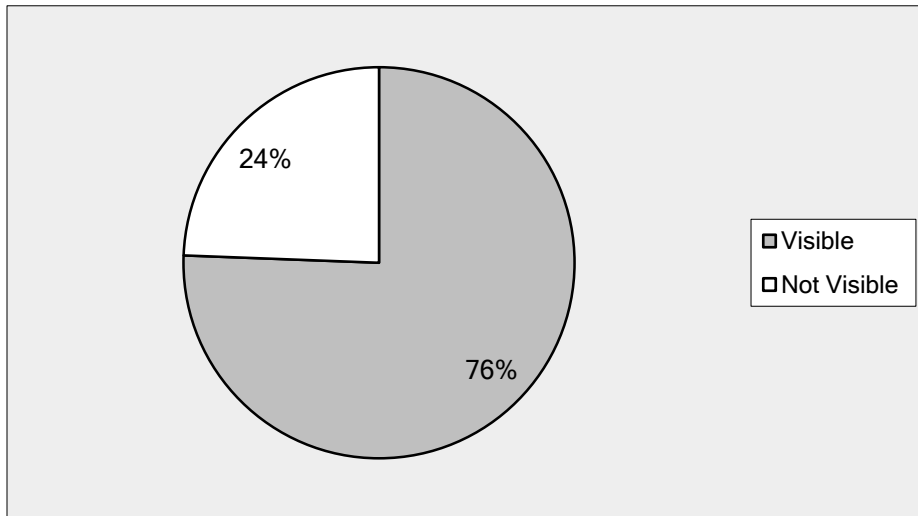


Figure 3. VETI Q3. TCA demonstrates that learners know what their goals, dreams, and realities are.

There were more *not visible* responses to this area than the first two statements. Twenty-four percent of the participants marked *not visible*, and the open-ended responses yielded 13 comments. Of these open-ended questions, two different survey responders mentioned that this area was *not visible* to them, ‘but it doesn’t mean it’s not happening.’ One parent reported that a recent consolidation with another school had a negative impact on this area by saying,

I don’t think I have ever heard this communicated effectively in the six years we have been here. I would even say it is opposite of that, especially when it came to the purchase of TCA. The families [from the purchased school] were told one

thing and the [study school] families were told another. . . . Just like a church when it grows quickly, the focus turns off of the spirituality of it and fulfilling the needs of the members, and turns into a business only.

In contrast, another parent thought this was very visible by saying, ‘but as for the learners knowing TCA goals, etc., this is very visible.’ Some of the respondents did not know if they were referring to the goals of the organization or the goals of the learners themselves.

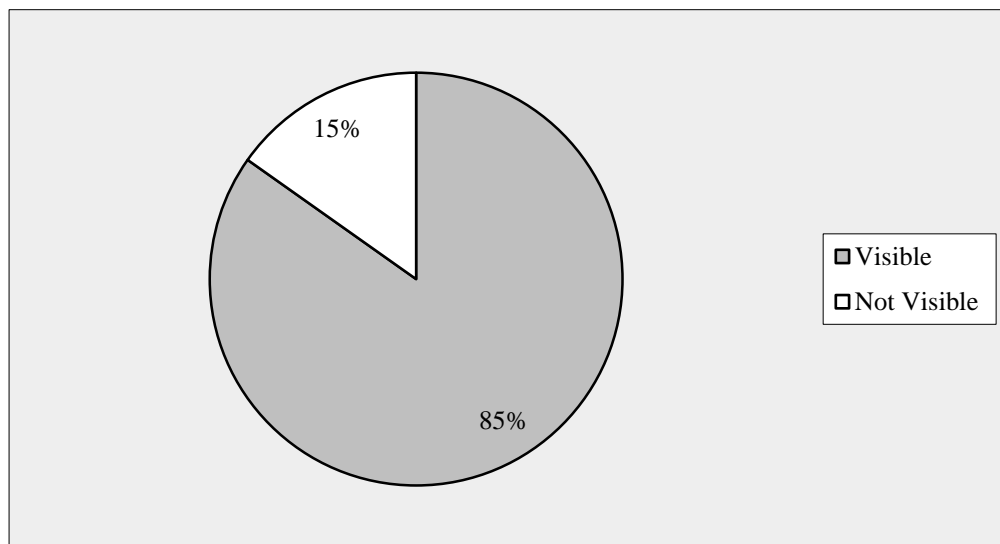


Figure 4. VETI Q4. TCA prizes learners’ ability to learn what is needed.

The responders to this item marked *visible* 85% of the time for this survey item. One parent stated, ‘This is most visible at [pre-K, elementary, and middle school]. Not so much at [high school]. There is a HUGE difference between the former and the latter . . . and not a good difference, either.’ Whereas another parent, who marked this element as *not visible*, commented,

Sometimes [abilities seem] to be taken for granted. A one-size-fits-all approach was used. Too much reliance on a canned curriculum, such as homework packets, as opposed to an individualized approach based on [a] student's ability, learning style, and need as a student.

On the opposite end, a staff member's approach to this element referenced the academic resource program of the school,

Students at TCA are not just 'passed on' if they are not ready for the next level. Struggling students can enter the [resource] program for additional help, which ensures that each student is ready for the next level of learning. Another responding parent wrote about the celebration and recognition provided by the school to the individual students as they achieve their dreams, milestones, and high marks.

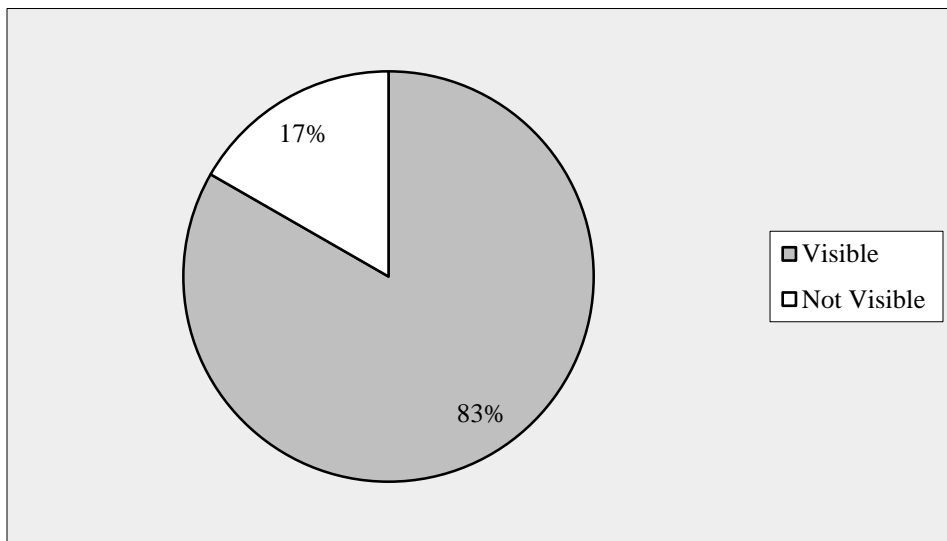


Figure 5. VETI Q5. TCA communicates to learners they need to be aware of and communicate their thoughts and feelings.

According to Figure 5, 83% of the stakeholders who responded to this item as *visible*. Unlike some of the other responses, the stakeholders marking *not visible* for this trust element chose to provide strong responses. One of the parents that marked *not visible* filled in the open-ended survey with the following,

My children have expressed themselves before and have been dismissed.

Students have been bullied, yet staff is in denial about that happening at a Christian school, and there seem to be no consequences. It needs to be taken seriously. Students stop telling, knowing that nothing will be done.

In addition, another parent, also choosing *not visible* as their response, justified the response with how the students are told what they need do and not why they need to do it. The response went on to further say, 'Too much emphasis on conformity. No real interest in thoughts and feelings. Emphasis on performance.' Not knowing if this parent's reference was concerning the student or the way the study school treated the parent, the feelings expressed that trust is *not visible* in this element was observed in the answer by suggesting there was not a difference in written or verbal conversation. They stated, 'When I communicated my feelings both in person and via email, they were essentially downplayed, patronized, and nothing was ever done about my complaint.'

A parent, one who chose *visible* as their answer to this element, stated:

Hear constant encouragement from teachers, staff, and speakers to take their thoughts, feelings, questions, doubts, and problems to an adult they trust.

Students are regularly reminded to take advantage of the safe environment they have of adults willing to talk about and explore any issue with any student.

There were several other responses provided in support of this element being *visible* at the study school. Some of the written responses included that students were encouraged to talk to teachers and that ‘teachers are always willing to listen.’ Three of the comments even included that the school encourages this element through written assignments. A repeated response revealed in the open-ended examples for this element, which are similar to some of these responses from previous elements, was the claim that at the pre-K through elementary this was *visible*, and it was *not at all* at the high school. Another recurring theme emerged in this question was that it was ‘teacher/staff-specific.’ Responders would say some teachers do it well and others do not.

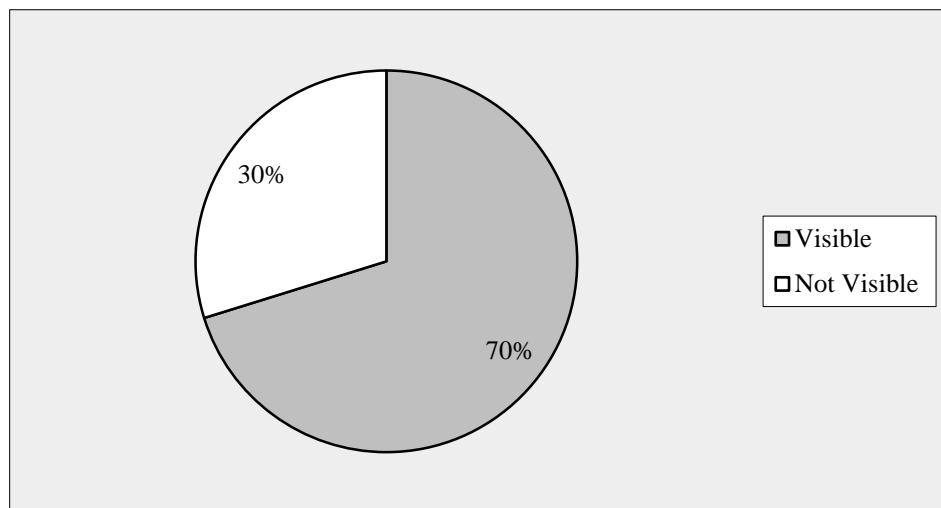


Figure 6. VETI Q6. TCA enables learners to evaluate their own progress.

In in Figure 6, 70% of the responders reported a *visible* response, and three of the responders chose not to answer this question. Six staff members and one board member thought that enabling students to evaluate their own progress was ‘not a visible element.’ The board member stated in their answer that they really did not understand the question. Seven participants referenced the school’s online data management system, referred to as

'RenWeb' (RenWeb, "n. d") Parents stated that the system is good for students and parents. In one such response, a parent commented that RenWeb is good for students knowing their progress, but did not know if the learners 'are enabled to evaluate progress.' A teacher reported to having 'ongoing student self-evaluations throughout the year for our particular content areas,' and this was a practice of several teachers. One of the parents responded about the teacher's feedback asking the students to 'describe [your answer] more fully' or 'revise your answer.'

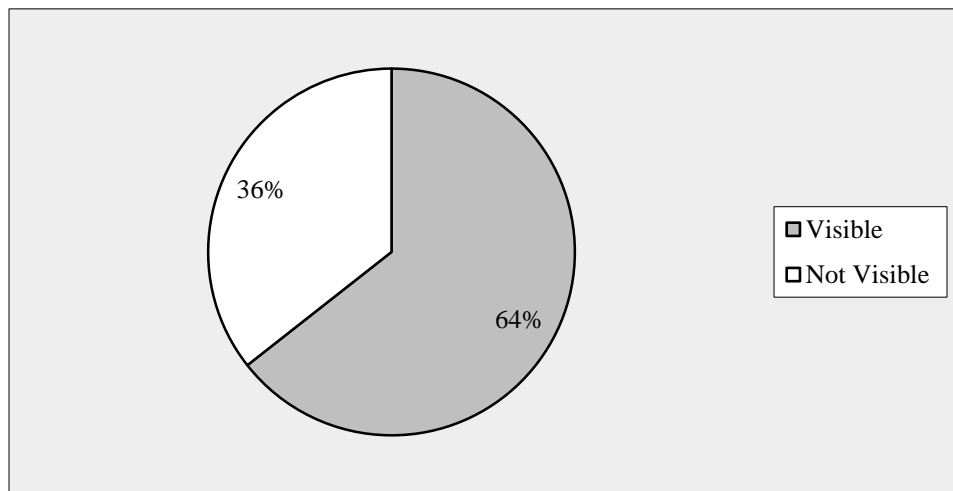


Figure 7. VETI Q7. TCA indicates ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are.

Seven of the staff responded to this question with a *not visible* response. Not all of the responders offered an open-ended response to support their answer. One of the statements provided said that the student is required to follow the pace of the teacher. However, another staff member commented, 'This information generally comes from parents advocating for their children or as teachers see their students struggling.' A staff member, marking this answer as *visible*, shared, 'I know of several teachers who do learning style/preference surveys with students to help both the student and the teacher

understand what learning needs each student has.’ This view was also echoed by a board member, who stated, ‘My experience is that teachers, staff, and the administration are willing to listen to the students and allow them to be heard.’

A parent who stated they did not understand the questions exactly mentioned that the question could mean, ‘What learners say their learning style is,’ or it could mean ‘what learners say they need to learn.’ The response continued by suggesting that it matters which direction the question was geared because her child (a freshman) did not have the ability to express this idea. The school’s resource services, mentioned by a parent responder, provided credit for additional computers available for the students with ‘classroom learning difficulties.’ At the opposite end of this answer, another parent argued the school had a ‘Tow the line attitude’ that results in getting almost no help or extra assistance ‘if student falls on either side of the bell curve.’

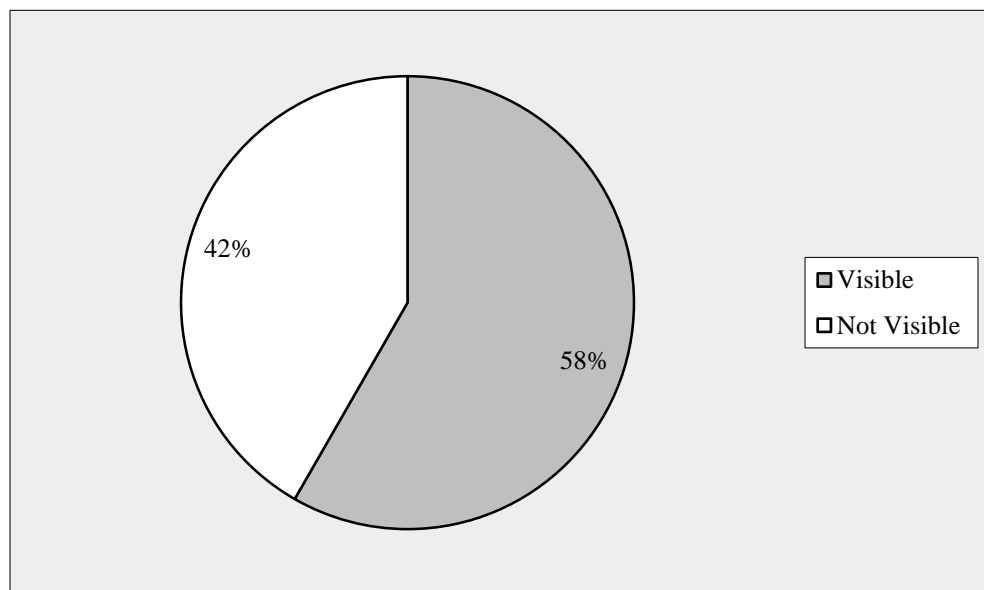


Figure 8. VETI Q8. TCA engages learners in clarifying their own aspirations.

Out of the 42% of the open-ended statements provided for this question, 22% of the responses contained answers suggesting that just because it was *not visible* by the

stakeholder; it did not mean that it did not exist. Two responders mentioned that age is a factor for this observation to take place, further suggesting that it is more *visible* in upper grades than it would be in lower grade levels. One of the *not visible* responses from a parent suggested, ‘Graduation is the only goal, it seems’ with no real guidance for the students’ personal goals. Several referenced the opportunities the school offers such as clubs, volunteerism, and career days. These responses suggested the school provided ‘lots of ways for kids to engage and express themselves.’

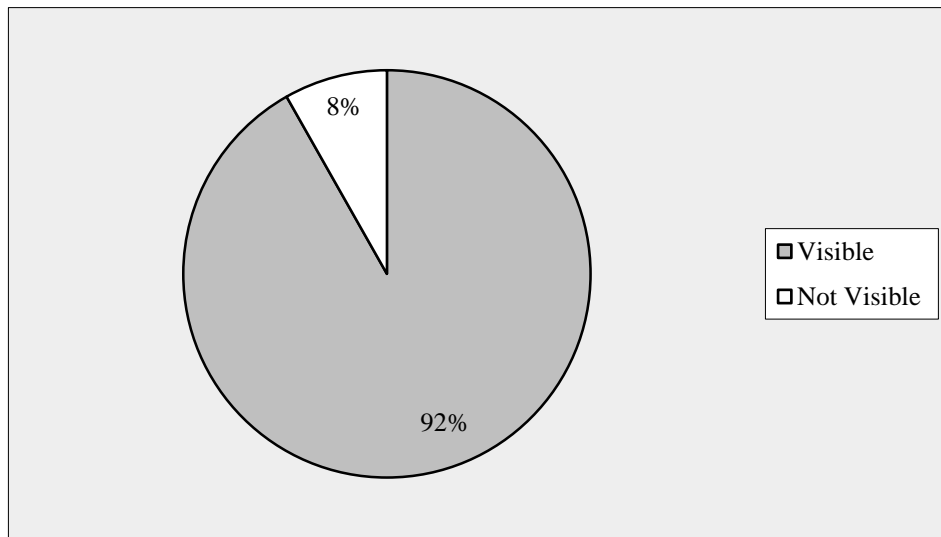


Figure 9. VETI Q9. TCA works toward developing a supportive relationship with individual learners.

Almost 92% of the stakeholders agreed that this trust element was *visible* at the study school. Only two of the *not visible* responses commented with an open-ended response. One parent’s statement said that

threats and detention are not good motivators” and another parent mentioned children telling them that teachers play favorites and do not like them. One of the

board members, though marking *visible*, responded to this item with the belief that “this is generally true, but not as good as it could or should be.

Several parents echoed what this staff member wrote with their response: ‘Almost every teacher I know at TCA has very close relationships with several students and approaches them to talk about their individual issues.’ Another comment referred to the teachers and staff knowing the weakness and the struggles of the students. Other stakeholders referred to email communication as a factor for helping struggling students, and others mentioned that the school has time built in where the teachers are accessible. The feeling that the ‘teachers genuinely care about their students’ appeared as a theme for this visible element of trust.

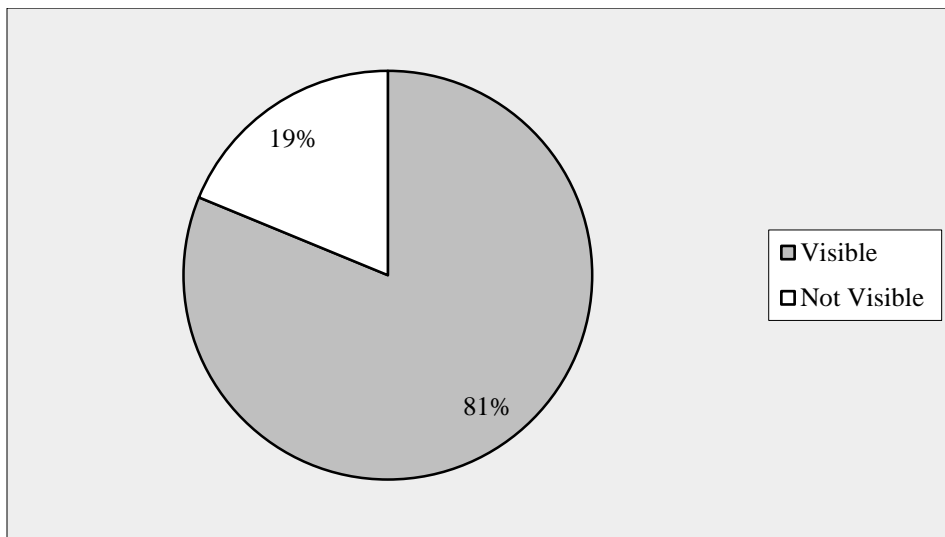


Figure 10. VETI Q10. TCA exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners.

With 81% of the stakeholders choosing *visible* for this element, the implication that this element should be visible because of the type of organization is noted by a board member’s response, ‘This should be part of a Christian worldview, and [I] believe we attempt to do this.’ Another comment also mentions a Christian worldview in the

response by suggesting through ‘communicating God’s love and tying every subject back to a Christian worldview, it communicates unconditional love for the student.’

Two parent statements presented a response of *not visible* in their answer. One reported that positive regard for learners is ‘conditional’; the other’s statement specifically mentioned the high school. From the perspective of one of the school staff members, it was stated, ‘The only negative talk I hear from teachers is expressing a frustration or issue with other teachers in an effort to figure out how to best address it and help the student.’

It is the ‘behaviors that receive positive regard’ as one person wrote, ‘rather [than] the learner as a whole.’ Another similar response speaks of this by referring to a parent/teacher conflict by saying the teacher told her that:

She finds boys easier to handle than girls. This was also reflected in the amount of times the girls would get in trouble in that room versus the boys. Lastly, it was reflected in the parents’ views of the teacher, whether or not they had a boy or a girl. So no, I did not find that unconditional at all, but again that was just one incident, and I feel that overall the school in general definitely does exemplify this!

Just as other questions contained responses that addressed both ends of the spectrum, another responded to the statement on the complete opposite end of the previous statement, claiming, ‘Children are all treated equal but taught right from wrong and not rewarded for bad choices.’

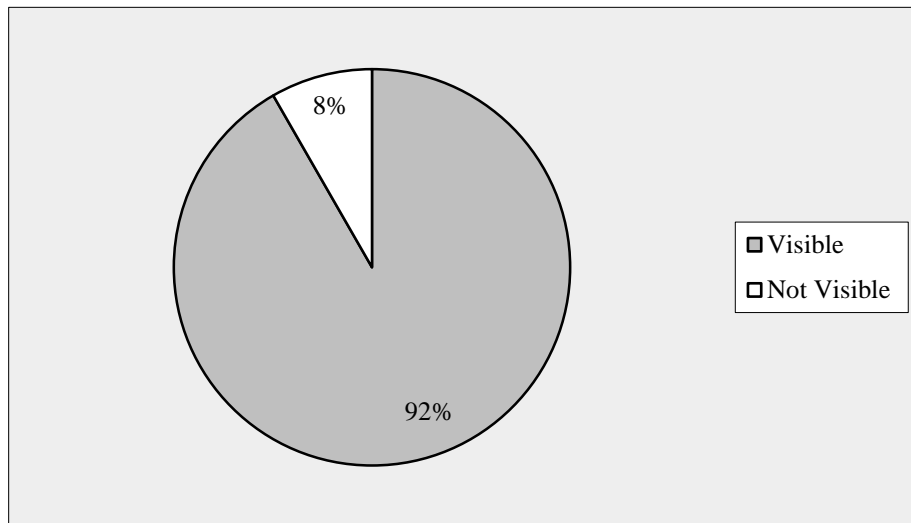


Figure 11. VETI Q11. TCA demonstrates respect of learners' dignity and integrity.

Visible was marked as the choice for 92% of the responses for this element of trust. Just as in the previous question, this is 'part of the Christian worldview' that showed up in the responses. Most of the written comments for this element are reflected in responses provided by a staff member, who shared,

TCA makes an effort to maintain privacy and confidentiality with regard to embarrassing issues or mistakes, both in the classroom and in the administration.

If information needs to be shared, it is done without mentioning names in order to protect identities.

One of the statements by another stakeholder mentioned the school resource program and explained their example by writing that students received help 'with various needs and levels of learning. Students in the [resource room] are never made to feel that they are different because they require additional help or a different structure for learning.' Dress code was mentioned in two of the response, one responder reported that this element was

visible in the school day, but not visible at the special events of the school. While the other response was marked as a *not visible* item.

The last survey item asked the stakeholders to rank the statements used in order of importance, according to their perception. The graph below displays how the statements ranked, by average, on each of the elements.

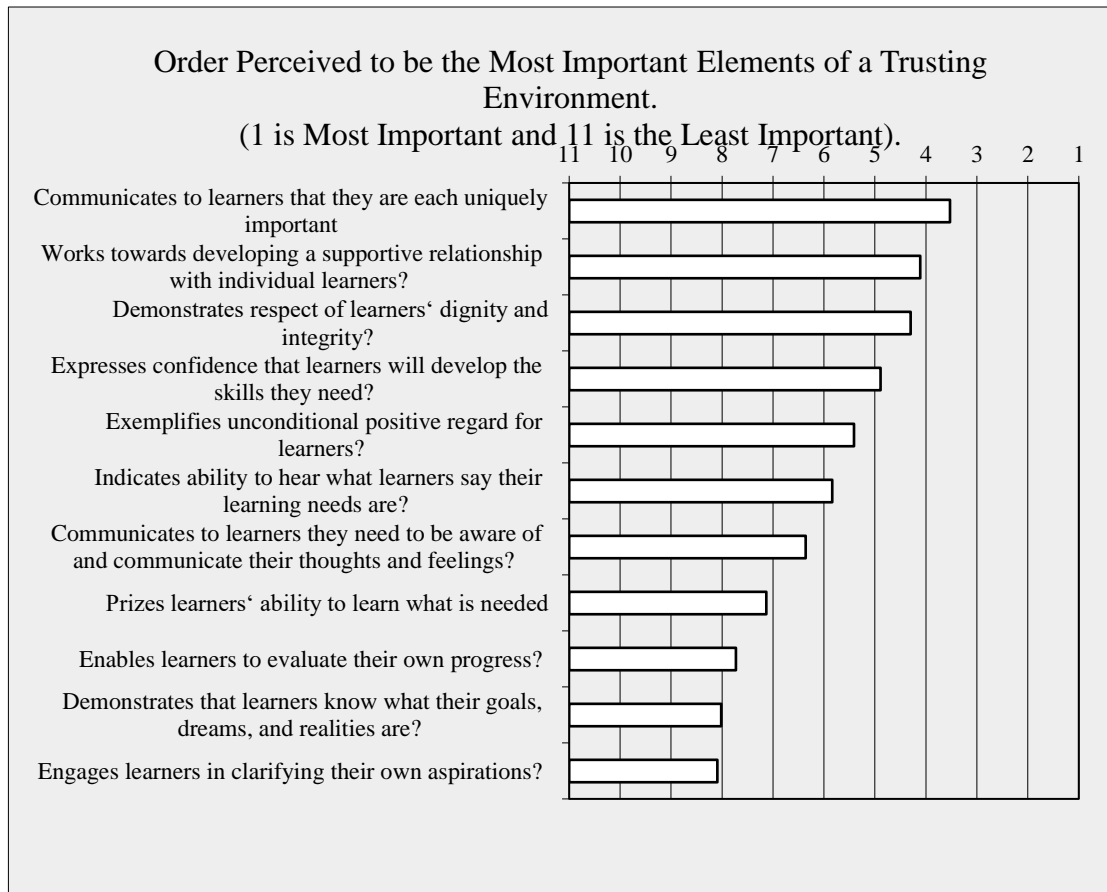


Figure 12. VETI Q12. Rank in order what you perceive to be the most important elements of a trusting environment.

Not all of the survey participants chose to provide their input by ranking the visible trust elements. Of those that chose to respond, several answers did not contain a ranking for all 11 items. A total of 50 stakeholders participated in the online survey while it was active, with an average of 45 responses for this question. This question

provided choices next to each VETI statement, which allowed the participant to give a numeric value to each visible of trust. With a ranking of 1 being the most important element and 11 being the least important, the lower the average score resulted in the item being viewed as more important than the higher averages on the VETI items.

With the lowest average of 3.53, 18 people chose as the most important element of the VETI statements, *Communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important*. The second item with a high number of votes was the element *Works toward developing a supportive relationship with individual learners*, in which 14 responses were marked that it should fall in the No. 3 ranking order, though its overall average made this statement the second-most important visible trust element.

According to this study, *engaging learners in clarifying their own aspirations* was perceived as the least important visible element of trust, and just above that was the element *demonstrates that learners know what their goals, dreams, and realities are*, which only had a 0.05 difference in the average of the two statements.

VETI Summary. Each VETI question contained an open-ended response option for the stakeholder to provide an example for each of the elements of trust. Most of the survey participants chose not to respond to the open-ended options, but based on the collected responses, the common references created emerging themes from the data. The following table displays the four main themes from the VETI open-ended responses.

Table 5

VETI – Emerging Themes Based on Open-Ended VETI Responses

| Common Theme | Number of Responses |
|--|---------------------|
| The good teachers are source for promoting elements of trust | 15 |
| School academic resource program promotes the elements of | 6 |
| Depends on the teacher (some are good, some are not) if trust is visible | 4 |
| Administrators and support staff promote trust | 3 |
| Trust is not as visible on each Campus (not the same on both campus) | 3 |

The VETI provided opportunity to identify each of the elements of trust as *visible* or *Not Visible*. Most of the responders of the survey provided positive responses as noted in the figure below. Only 5% of the collected responses reflected negative feedback or examples that a particular element of trust was not visible in the study school. The following figures represents the overall responses for the 11 VETI questions.

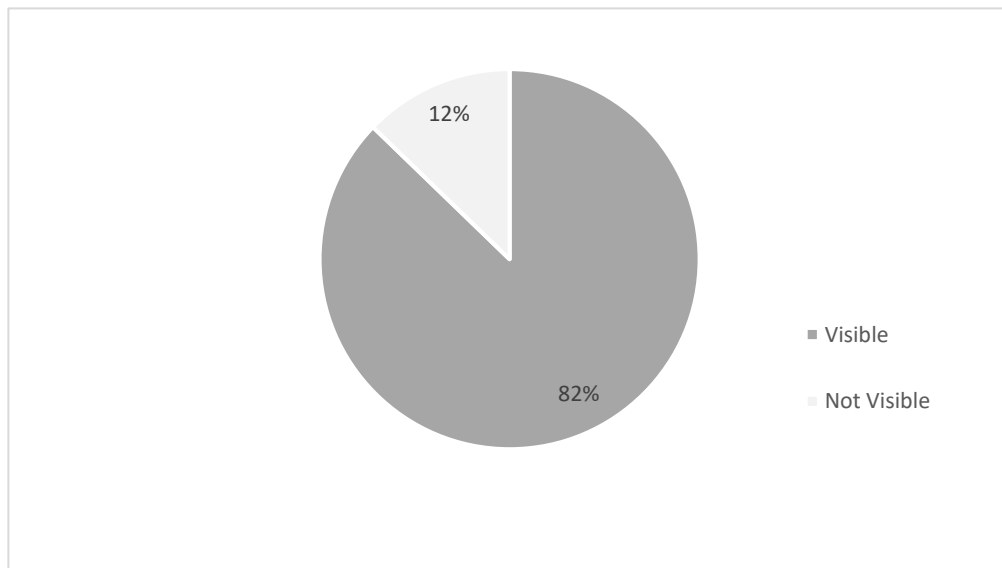


Figure 13. Overall VETI responses. The elements of trust are visible at the TCA.

Focus Groups

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a focus group option was provided for the stakeholders who wanted to participate beyond the online survey. There were a total of three focus groups, with each one focused on a specific stakeholder group. For this study, the stakeholders fell into the category of parents of current students, a group considered to be staff (employees of the school), or the school board. All of the focus groups, organized through the school assistant principal and the focus group facilitator, met outside normal school hours, and when the primary investigator, also in a supervisory role at the study school, was not on campus. This design process was intentional in order to avoid coercion, since the primary investigator served in a leadership role in the study school. The focus groups, led by same third-party facilitator, asked the same discussion questions to each group.

The results gathered from these groups were summarized by question, then by emerging themes. Through the process of open coding (Maxwell, 2005), responses yielded themselves to more than one theme. Therefore, several responses were placed in more than one category (Appendix H). The findings through the emerging themes provide the discussion for each of the focus group questions. The major themes that surfaced for each question became part of a table provided for each question, followed by the discussion of a few of those themes as mentioned by responding to the question.

What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust in—a Christian setting?

Table 6

*Focus Group Q1**What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust in—a Christian setting?*

| Theme | Number of responses |
|--|----------------------------|
| Listening is part of the climate | 9 |
| Being vulnerable/ transparent | 8 |
| Confidence had to present | 7 |
| Safe atmosphere/ environment | 7 |
| Partnership with parents | 6 |
| Not always agreeing is part of understanding | 6 |
| Teachers create the climate | 4 |
| Love/Compassion/Prayer are present | 2 |
| Support for Each Other | 2 |

The purpose of this question was to provide a general question geared to gain the perspective of the stakeholders' understanding of how a 'Christian' setting should provide a supportive climate of trust. The second question then searched for information based on their perspective of the study school. Many of the responders' answers for the first question reflected examples about the study school in the responses instead a general response that would apply to any Christian setting.

Qualitative feedback -What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust in—a Christian setting? As presented in Table 6, the responses provided for this question yielded nine themes. Stakeholders from all three focus groups shared comments about listening as being a part of supportive climate-based on trust. A

board member said, ‘It’s the idea of being able to come with a need or a problem to those who are in charge and getting their sincere assistance to get it resolved.’ In the same conversation, another board member shared a personal example of how this sincerity was played out in the study school, ‘[My daughter] trusted that this teacher loved her genuinely and she was willing to share what happened and express her frustration with the whole experience, and [kind of] got it off her chest.’ In the parent discussion, the same theme was expressed:

If my kid’s not gonna come to me for that need or that advice, I want them to go to someone that I would trust. Another friend, family member, that knows God, that is a Christian, that is going to point them in a direction that’s going to be good for them, which most people want for their kids.

An elementary teacher said that there is an element of trust with the students, because a ‘child tells us something that they probably were not supposed to tell their teacher about something happening in the home.’ This was also supported when another staff member added that they ‘think probably parents realize that; that we’re hearing things that happen at home and it’s not going any further.’

These responses were not just related to the classroom and the teacher, but the organization as well. One parent responded by reflecting on a trusting climate, ‘Based on trust here at TCA, is that I love to sit on a team of people that meet regularly to talk about how can we make things better.’

Being a Christian school, some of the comments reflected Christian beliefs.

When referencing the staff of the study school, a parent stated, ‘They know that first and

foremost they're looking out for the spirit of the child, not only academically, but the spirit, the foundation of their education.'

Another theme closely related to listening is confidence, which became strongly reflected through the staff responses. The staff felt that this confidence was important with their students. A teacher stated, 'having space for my students to confide in my knowing that I'm trusted with that from their perspective, that I am a person they can trust.' In the staff focus group, someone said, 'Because I have a similar relationship with [my] students. And I've even had parents that trust me with the details of the student, knowing that as long as they are talking to someone that's really all that matters.'

Another staff shared that confidence is reciprocal:

I'm at the teacher level and so I'm looking down and I'm looking at the way my students trust me, and I'm looking up at the way I trust both administration and the rest of faculty. And it could be horizontal or vertical. So the, I guess the vertical one, looking up [toward] the administration, I think I value that the school has its Matthew 18 policy. That there's a push [toward] talking directly to someone instead of walking a story around the building. Whether or not that happens is an individual thing, but just the idea... that's the encouragement.

'What's necessary for a supportive climate at least in a Christian setting is certainly being able to bring your vulnerabilities to bear,' was stated in the board focus group. However, this response from a board member expresses how many others felt about what should be part of a supportive climate of trust, 'It's very important that if somebody confides in you and says this needs to stay confidential that there's trust that it's going to stay that way.' His response supported a staff perception that they had 'not

heard of an incident where a teacher has broken a trust with a student who has said something.’ Being vulnerable and transparent was another of the emerging themes for this question. In the board session, one stated in this climate;

They are going to help you, promote you, you can be vulnerable, be yourself, not have to worry about putting on a Christian façade that everything is fine and you’re perfect, should be an environment that’s safe and you know people are here to help you, promote you and get you through it.

A parent responded in a similar way with this response, ‘Trust allows for a vulnerability and allows for open discussion of challenges that you may have with your student who may or may not be less than perfect. And dealing with those things and supporting each other.’ In both the parent group and board group personal examples were shared of how this is played out in the study school. A staff member referred to a daily devotion practice of the study school,

We share prayer requests. So, those are personal and you know we pray for each other and even in the summer we have like a prayer chain sent out, just text like, ‘this is going on for me, will you pray for me or this person.’

The board members’ example of a supportive Christian climate happened at a sporting event, he shared:

Without saying a word, all just started walking down the steps and crossed the field in the rain to where the football team was and went over there and just gathered around in what was a 35–0 loss in the pouring rain and thanking God. And that was a cool thing to do and that was accepted in their culture.

Another emerging theme that supported a climate of trust in a Christian setting was a safe environment, according to the focus group results. One parent simply stated, ‘Safe place, transparency . . . that you can go to staff and say what you need to say and still feel safe.’ Not only was it suggested that the students feel safe, but one parent responded more personally, ‘There’s just a safety for me in knowing that even though when I’m not there, if there’s a need, if there’s something, if my kiddo’s had a rough day, there will be an arm, there will be a prayer.’ A staff member made mention that not everything told to the teacher can be safe from others knowing. She claimed,

It’s your relationship with Christ and your knowledge of His truth that hopefully gives you the wisdom or discernment to know if it can stop with you or you know you can have a word with the student or if you need to take it to somebody else. So, I think it depends on the severity.

The mission statement of the study school referred to the idea of partnering with families, which was a theme that was clear from the focus groups. A parent made a direct reference to the mission by claiming, ‘Our school partners with our parents and I have trust that they would act in that situation how I would if I were there.’ Staff felt the way some of the parents felt about that partnership, one of them responded to the questions by saying:

I do feel like there are parents who feel like they can come to us and talk about most anything and know that if they come to us to talk about academics we’re not slamming their kid the next day or something. So, I just think that trust is there overall throughout the school to do that.

What is your perception of how TCA demonstrates a trusting climate?

Table 7

Focus Group Q2

| <i>What is your perception of how TCA demonstrates a trusting climate?</i> | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Theme | Number of responses |
| Support from people | 12 |
| Trust is demonstrated through the teacher | 9 |
| Consistency and follow through | 6 |
| Relationships with the people | 6 |
| Using the Matthew 18 principle | 4 |
| Good communication | 3 |
| Love/Compassion/Prayer | 2 |
| Support for each other | 2 |

Whereas the first question (What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust in—a Christian setting?) provided wording to gather general information, the goal of the second focus group question explored specific example of a trusting climate from the stakeholder perceptions about the school in the study. Several themes emerged through the discussions. In this section, all of themes could easily have been grouped in a communication or relationship category, but were instead grouped by more specific content, often decided by a participant's exact words during the coding process. There were eight major themes that emerged through the coding process.

Qualitative feedback - What is your perception of how TCA demonstrates a trusting climate? Support was the strongest theme expressed in the findings from the focus groups when this question was posed the groups. The responses from the participants were grouped together under the category of support from people. This topic covered several areas and groups of people at the study school. The study school was a private school where the tuition from parents created the operating budget for the year.

One parent shared their perception of the school demonstrating a climate of trust by providing an example of time when the family struggled financially:

When we've had trouble in the past, when I've had to reach out to one of the staff members in accounting which makes you want to puke. 'Hi, can you put off my deduction' or let someone into your personal struggle that you don't want someone to know about. I have never been treated with more respect.

Parents responded about the principals and administration in the same manner.

One parent mentioned the following after feeling an issue had not been resolved properly:

But I knew in my heart where I was supposed to go [to the administration]. We got to that spot where they let us in, we met with them, and it was really wonderful how [principal] came alongside us. Support, so much support from him. He made us feel comfortable again. He made us feel safe again.

The study school has a resource classroom at each campus, and throughout the focus groups the resources department came up in the conversation. When parents have a child(ren) that are in need of extra academic services, they are referred to the resource department. A parent that took advantage of these services shared her perception of the school showing support:

So, if my son gets help here [Resource class], then when he gets to middle school they will have all of that information, that his needs-his special things that he needs, that will duplicate through middle school and into high school. That part, is helpful, as far as that is concerned.

Much of the conversation referring to support being a part of the trusting climate at the research site came from the staff group. This group of stakeholders mentioned the

schools' principals the majority of the time, but expressed that the support could come from their peer leaders as well, as was reflected in the staff response, 'But I love that I have supportive [department] chairs in my world. It makes a big difference. It makes a big difference.' One of the staff participants made a reference to keeping their principal up to date on issues is a way that the administration can provide support to the teacher and staff. The scenario was described by saying, 'And we're encouraged that if there's anything we [think he needs to] know right away send it to him so he's aware of the situation so that if they—a parent does approach him that he knows what's happening.' One of the teachers provided a personal example of how the same support from the building principal made a difference for her:

A parent misunderstood something that I said and I won't go into it all because it was an abuse situation... my principal had my back and I was able to talk to him and say what really happened here and I could say I'm not really sure what happened on her end because she took it out of context... Well the structure held and it did, but the parent did come back around and came and talked to me. And they had healing to do and it's just one of those awful situations.

From the perception of another staff member, the support the principal has for the teachers became a form of promoting internal support in front of the parents. One person stated the principal 'addresses that [issue] at parent night to help parents be respectful of a teacher's time, too.' As a school that tries to promote support and communication, the administration realized the need for boundaries and scheduling time to meet with teachers. This particular staff member goes on to say,

because no teacher will tell a parent, 'Oh I can't talk to you right now, I have to make copies'...then the principal is supportive of the teachers in acknowledging that they're not going to tell you no, but please don't put them in that position.

The concept of consistency and support by following the biblical principle of Mathew Chapter 18 verses 15–17 (ESV):

15) If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16) But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

This principle (known as the Mathew 18 Principle) was also identified as a common theme for the question about demonstrating a trusting climate at the study school. One parent provided a definition in their own words of their understanding of this biblical principle:

As I understand the protocol was go to the person you have a problem with, work it out with them, and then if that's not the end result, then bring it up to me, being the administration/staff or whoever, but I found a level of trust in that.

Several in the staff focus group directly made mention of the Matthew 18 principle:

The consistency with that [Matthew 18 Principle] helped me be like, 'I can depend on this and trust that this is going to occur.' If I go to a superior and say,

‘you know, I’m having an issue with a student,’ I will know what is going to take place.

Another staff talked about how this concept ‘was so incredible’ and it ‘was one of the first things I saw as far as consistency, the consistency helps me with the trust.’

Matthew 18, as pointed out by someone in the staff group, declared the principle only works when supported by the administration:

The administration is the one that started that, they’re the ones that started it, they’re the ones that enforce it. You know, sometimes when you don’t want it to follow it. But at the same time, you know that I think it is really supportive thing.

The teachers themselves emerged as a theme for demonstrating a trusting climate in the school. There were four comments by the board focus group that directly related to the teachers. One board member connected their perception of the teachers to the school’s mission statement, where he started:

Part of our mission is that it’s the school that partners with Christian families. So, as in my family happens to be way more my wife than me, but she has lots of interactions with the teachers, too. So, there certainly is some part of ‘perception is reality’ thing, but we have first-hand experience, but most of that is going to come through what we hear through our children.

‘Most teachers we’ve been involved [with]... truly care about our kids,’ as another board member stated about the teachers, and continued, ‘they love their kids and they want the best for them.’ That board focus group added that administration can play apart, but the students will have the ‘most engagement’ with the teachers, because they ‘are the front line of defense for this perception of trust, especially for the students.’

Parents noticed a level of trust when the children trusted the teacher as well. One of the parents mentioned this in the focus group:

There was a trust that I see my children feel with the faculty, that they trust them enough to say, hey, I want to bounce this [idea] off of you or run this by you, or can I talk to you about this? That means a lot to me to know that my kids feel that way.

A teacher's personal story explains how teachers in the school assist in building a trusting climate. She was working with a parent who had come to the study school not trusting teachers:

It was interesting because that parent ended up talking with me [elementary teacher] and then ended up kind of turning [around] and became very accommodating and started trusting the situation more. And so, I wasn't sure what her background was... That was her first time with our school, her first year and so then that was the second half [of the year]. So, teaching the parents to learn to trust as well, like you know we really are watching what your children are doing let us decide some of these—like these situations may not be as bad as you think they are, give us some room to do that. So, that was interesting and good for everybody.

Although relationships were revealed in the other themes, relationships became a theme in this question because relationships showed up specifically in the discussion, and as a board member stated, 'It's just another personal relationship that [students] had outside of their parents that they could confide in. And coaches, they have had coaches that they could do that with too.' Another board member commented similarly, 'They

had some pretty close relationships with teachers who were also mentors to them through certain issues in life.’

Tell me of a time (if there is one) when/where you have seen that TCA has not provided a supportive and trusting climate?

Table 8

Focus Group Q3

Tell me of a time (if there is one) when/where you have seen that TCA has not provided a supportive and trusting climate?

| Theme | Number of responses |
|--|----------------------------|
| Being judgmental/punitive/ or too legalistic | 13 |
| Poor communicating | 9 |
| Misusing the Matthew 18 principle | 7 |
| With an individual | 5 |
| Embarrassment of student | 4 |
| Lack of relationships with the people | 3 |
| Not enough support | 3 |
| Education is an issue | 2 |

The design of this question created an opportunity for the stakeholder to share items that impact trust negatively by looking for the times and issues where the stakeholders perceived the study school did not promote a trusting climate. Several themes emerged from those conversations. The eight main themes (Table 8) share overlap with the other themes because a participant’s response would often contain more than one of the emerged themes.

Qualitative feedback - Tell me of a time (if there is one) when/where you have seen that TCA has not provided a supportive and trusting climate? Examples found in the focus group responses of the study school not providing a supportive and trusting

climate, revealed the area of being judgmental and punitive, were evenly split among the responders from the three focus groups. Even though in previous question (What is your perception of how TCA demonstrates a trusting climate?) there was overwhelming support for the teachers, these responses from this question revealed some lack of trust in the school with some of the other stakeholders of the school. In the board focus group, many of them expressed an experience, as they perceived it, from a parent perspective (all of the board members were parents of current students or graduates). One board member mentioned interaction with teachers saying some of the teachers were, 'Very punitive, more than mild, your action is in your heart and one mess up and you know, the sky is falling and you aren't even a Christian and it's a little over the top.' Another member of the board said some of this thinking came from the Bible department by suggesting, 'For whatever reason it seems to be the Bible classes ironically where there's a lot of judgment I guess it feels like, condemnation.' Being punitive in excess, as witnessed by a board member had been 'seen that multiple times in the school, again I would say there is more love; there is more grace in this school.' From a parent perspective, some of the behavior that caused them to lose trust in the school, comes from other parents. One of them shared,

And that is my lack of trust in this school because I trust that the other parents at the school will raise up their kids in a way similar to the way we are raising up our kids to be kind and polite, considerate, but they're not, they're mean.

One of the other parents who shared their child was involved in an investigation by the local police department, mentioned they did not 'know if it was necessarily anybody's

fault,' but in the end suggested, 'include me on what's going on, don't leave me in the dark. That was rather upsetting.'

From the staff perspective, under the same theme of judgment, the administration was not providing a supportive and trusting climate. One of the staff statements shared, 'A lot of times teachers feel beat up after staff meetings. Like it's more like this is what you are doing wrong, this is what you need to do better, this is what you need to change.' Even when the administration reminded the staff of things that were required of them, they felt it was 'problematic in the sense that it exhibits a lack of trust in that I know you signed this [contract] and you said you were gonna do these things, but I just want to make sure you remember.'

Another school employee echoed the same feeling by saying,

I [kind of] want to say, 'you hired me, I signed a contract, I don't know what the problem is.' So yeah, there's a lack of trust that I am going to do the things that I signed in my contract.

In the focus groups, when a lack of relationship or a harming relationship was present, it did not promote a supportive and trusting climate. The lack of relationship was revealed enough through the thread of this discussion to become a theme. Two different board members referred to the absence of relationship mentioning an issue with long-term illness. One of them said,

He was out of school for a number of months, had to miss classes and do home stuff, whatever, and there were no calls, there was no visits, there was no email, and it got almost to a deafening silence, where we got to be like, where is everybody?

Another person from the board confirmed, ‘We could do better to support people who have a [mid-term or long-term] sickness that gets them out of all the stuff that they were involved in, especially in this environment where we’re trying to be Christ-like.’ Lack of relationship, or healthy relationships statements presented by parents stated that the teacher would ‘[kind of] berate him [son] in the front of the class’ and another shared story implied, ‘Trust would have hugely eroded because they are basically making a spectacle out of that particular student.’

Another major theme in the discussion revealing a nonsupportive trust climate emphasized poor communication, which led to other situations where the study school was not showing a supportive climate of trust. One of the parents documented their perception by saying:

It’s not a real strong feeling, but a lack of follow through on communication does not instill trust in an environment when you ask for help and with a special need or something and you have to keep asking to get it, then that demonstrates—I lose trust that way. It’s minor, I’m not saying there is a bad job being done, but it’s a way that trust would be harmed.

In the dialogue, there was a feeling a gap existed in the communication, which resulted in a loss of trust in an individual or the school as a whole. A focus group parent commented, ‘But I have been a little disappointed and I would say it is a lack of trust in the individual, but it’s trusting that TCA is doing everything as much as they can, to provide the best education possible.’ Providing support for that comment, another parent reflected on a current low of level of trust:

So, I don't trust at all right now that TCA is doing everything that they can to make sure their teachers [know what they need], but I don't believe that the teachers are getting [proper information]. I don't feel that the communication happened from last year's teacher to this year's teacher to fully know who [the teacher] was getting in her class.

One of the parents who utilize the school's resource class, said:

You met with [Principal] who said, 'We'll figure out how your kid learns and we'll adapt for that kid.' I don't fully trust that that's happening in the classroom. I trust that the administration would like that, but I don't yet see that happening.

From the comments made by many of the staff during their focus group, communication is vital. Communication or lack thereof emerged as the primary source for a non-supportive climate of trust. Commented by one staff member, there was a lack in the 'trickle-down theory' when information was coming from the administration. Another staff believed some of the loss of trust where it pertained to communication issues resulted when, according to the staff member, 'the merger occurred.' The statement goes on to say, 'I believe a lot of the trust issues came from that because they didn't feel like they were being given all the information, or enough information to really understand what was even occurring at that point in time.' The 'merger' (The official term issued by the study school board was 'acquisition purchase') in this reference meant the blending of two schools (student, staff, and board) into the existing culture.

Mentioned in the previous question (What is your perception of how TCA demonstrates a trusting climate?) was the biblical principle of Matthew 18. The principle became its own theme for this question, even though the concept itself related to

communication. However, all the references made in this discussion about the biblical principle were all brought out during the staff conversation about the study school not providing a supportive climate. The Mathew 18 ideas shared, as a previous theme for actually supporting a trusting climate, referenced a positive aspect of using the principle. The biblical principle referenced while answering the current question contradicted the previous responses. A staff member's argument about using Matthew 18 in the manner the Bible described, created negative impacts on the climate of the school. The scenario reported the reflection of the stakeholder:

The other thing that I would add is I have seen evidence of not using the Matthew 18 and it's somewhat destructive at our site, and an example would be, in a broad sense, not going directly to the person involved, but skirting around that or going above. And, it's been very detrimental to relationships with that parent possibly, or things like that. It has caused some problems there because there's no trust that an administrator would have a teacher's back in a classroom setting type of things.

One perception held by some in the staff focus group included that the biblical principle of Matthew 18 was presented differently on each school campus. One of those participants shared,

And to add to that, for me, I guess that's why I'm [kind of] sitting here hesitating because I've dealt with that [the school not supporting Matt. 18] at the high school level a little bit. Like get the [high school] like the [elementary].

One of the staff participants corroborated the feeling of a parent by expressing, ‘As a parent I’ve dealt with that [the school not supporting Matthew 18]. So, I’m having a hard time.’

Consider your original expectations when you came to TCA. Compare those expectations to the reality of your experiences now that you are here at TCA. In the time since you have been part of the school, is there a noticeable change in the climate?

Table 9

Focus Group Q4

Consider your original expectations. . . . Compare . . . to the reality of your experiences. In the time since you have been part of the school, is there a noticeable change in the climate?

| Theme | Number of responses |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| School evolved over time | 15 |
| Change in culture | 15 |
| Staff In-service | 15 |
| Schools core values | 8 |
| Matched expectation | 5 |
| Mergers and consolidations | 5 |
| More resources | 4 |
| School is not perfect | 4 |

The school involved in this case study had been educating students for almost 40 years, at the time of the research. Many staff and families observed their children go all the way through the school from beginning until graduation. The study school demographics revealed staff with employment at the school for 20 years or more. The research site also had a younger generation of families with only a short time invested with the school. The goal for this question was to find a change in perception of the

stakeholders from when their family became part of the school environment. The themes for this question had higher response counts than the first three focus group questions. Reiterating again, question themes continually overlap as they have in all other question summaries. The above table reported the top eight themes emerged from the data.

Qualitative feedback- Consider your original expectations when you came to TCA. Compare those expectations to the reality of your experiences now that you are here at TCA. In the time since you have been part of the school, is there a noticeable change in the climate? Many of the responses to this particular question referred to the changes over the course of the life of the school and even some more recent changes. An example of the school evolving over time appeared as a positive change for the study school. The responses of the stakeholders acknowledged the school to be less legalist (pertaining to strictly following the rules with an absence of grace) than the school's beginning. A board member explained the change from legalism by stating:

It is interesting the original founding of the school was fairly legalistic, so there was some of that sentiment in the early years of the school, that has changed and the school is growing and is becoming. I guess what I would call more main line Evangelical, nondenominational school, but even that legalism did exist in the high school to some degree several years ago.

Another member of the school board simply said, 'I think that we are trying to transition to being less legalistic, or trying to be more grace driven.'

According to the participants, school size and the growth provided credit to some of the changes the study school experienced. A staff member spoke of the change at TCA by suggesting:

I think the school is going through an adolescent phase. I think that we were a small school and we operated really well as a small school because we were a family and when everyone knows everyone it's easy to do. It's easy to trust when you know every single person in the building, but we are headed to being a big school, and it's like we see where we need to go, and we are trying, and I give a lot of credit for the trying.

One of the other staff participants referred to changing size of the school by saying, 'Easier to be close to 85 families than it is with 300. I'm making up numbers but the growing pains are right.' Catching up with the growth has not happened according to the staff who claimed, 'We've never caught up with our growth. It's continued, it's elusive. We grow, we're behind, we grow, we're behind.' Relationships had been affected by the growth according to this statement by a staff member, 'The shift has been in your relationship with the parents, but it could be viewed, like what [Teacher Name] said, that we've grown so much that that's obviously going to change.' One of the teachers of the staff focus group, who had been with the study school for close 20 years, talked about the family atmosphere being different at that point in time:

I came to the school 17 years ago, and the way the school has changed. It is not like it used to like. I became friends with all my student's parents. It was just like the family atmosphere and I miss that a lot. The closeness with the parents, just how involved they were. You know now parents are involved, maybe more parents are working now, maybe that's part of it. I do miss that family atmosphere, like I feel like this school really is my family, like the teachers here and they've gotten me through some really dark times and the support and the

prayer ...teachers gave me their sick days so I could still get paid. So, I feel a family with my colleagues, but not necessarily feel that closeness with the parents, overall like it used to be. But I'm in a different position now too, so maybe that's why.

As the study school evolved through the years and gained a larger population, the core values of the school, as observed by the stakeholders, remained the same. Though one staff felt as if the doctrinal statement changed, which created a 'more allowing of different views' to be part of the school. One of the parents stated that they 'love that for those core issues, at least from my perception, those remain the same. We are all still focused on God first and foremost, and that is just awesome to me.' Another parent complimented the previous statement with the claim that as the school improved, but did not lose its values by recalling,

So far I feel like it's the same when I came in, they're not just stuck in their ways as a school. You know, they've got their values and then they are like how can we improve, and I feel like that's still an open and moldable thing.

The size of the school had changes, and the perception existed that care values the same, but the staff focus group argued a change in culture over the years. One staff member responded by claiming, 'The clientele that we have now is very different.' A staff member contributed the change in clients by remembering:

There was a much more intense interview process, and statements that students and parents had to make to attend our school. And, now, that's not the case and so the students that are now in our system are there, it seems to me, so that we can grow our numbers, not for the character of the student and the family.

The study school, in the beginning years had many families that had a stay-at-home parent, but as a staff respondent noted, ‘Everything’s changed. People have to work to pay for their kids to come in.’ The idea that most of the parents working changed the volunteer culture of the study school, as was presented by this staff member:

I think the one thing we’ve seen this year start to happen, it’s going to get worse, is parent involvement. We depend heavily down here on volunteers in elementary. We almost could not have hot lunch this year because we did not have [enough] volunteers and I have seen that across the board for volunteers, they just they say no, they won’t do it and I am curious if it has to do with the type of people that are coming in.

According to the findings from the staff focus group, volunteering looks different in the school now than it did years ago. This participant shared their thoughts on volunteers:

It’s volunteers versus not volunteers. And, so, I think we are probably at that point. And, I think parents do pay to send their kids to a private school and they think why should I have to volunteer? I mean I’ve even had students say I don’t know why I have to clean tables at lunch my parents pay for me to go here, they aren’t paying for me to come here and work.

Another staff responder seemed to echo the previous statement:

I do think it’s growing pains because the problem that we have now is, so you’ve got we are post-recession, more people are working. We grew a size and then all the sudden less people could afford private school and so now we are trying to get as many people as possible, and so you have the institution going, ‘oh no, what do

we do,' but then also trying to deal with the size. And, so, you even have the problem of now we have the appearance of a big school and a big school can provide things, so volunteer. [The parent says], 'No, you should provide that.'

A recurring theme of commentary regarding changes in the size and culture of the study school pointed to a connection to the different consolidations and mergers with other schools. The staff still feel the trust levels are not where they need to be, because of the changes caused by the school's transition. One of the teachers made this statement about combining with other schools:

But, I feel like when I came in it was stable and we trusted people, everybody, and everybody was really a very tight community and then we [kind of] fell apart. It was like there was a little explosion and there were huge trust issues for two to three years. [After the consolidation, it] got really tough between parents and teacher.

One of the high school teachers responded to the merger of different schools with the following response:

Because I think when a lot of those big mergers happened, it was like it all hit the fan and we [kind of] realized something has to change, something has to happen. And so, I've seen different things be put into place to help create that trust again. Like a year ago, we started doing a mentorship program at the high school for new teachers, because there is this idea that you need the support, you need to be folded into the community. It didn't work that great, but the fact that we tried it was a really big deal, talking about the new people coming in from the merger. It was really rough, because they tried to hit the ground running.

One of the teachers felt like there was progress made on the part of the school since the last consolidation with this reflection:

I [kind of] feel like this year, we are coming back around from where I started. I feel good about where we are heading now, where I didn't feel very good about where we were heading a couple of years ago.

An identified theme from the perception of the staff claimed the topic of staff in-service caused a noticeable change in the environment of the study school. In-service, mentioned 15 times by the staff participants, emphasized the feelings of the staff regarding in-service activities. Most of the staff who responded to the questions with thoughts about in-service activities did not have a problem with the study school doing in-service with the staff, but many of them had issues how the time was spent. A teacher's thought on in-service indicated the participant did not know 'how well they are used to make us better teachers.' Another member of the staff focus group commented the in-services appeared 'to have the goal of the administration getting us to a certain point. So, there's not a sense that it's really for me, it's so that they met their goals.'

The school in this study had completed a required self-study and received accreditation for kindergarten through sixth grade and reaccreditation for grades 7 through 12 in spring of 2015. Some of discussions from the focus group reflect accreditation confirmed and stated by a teacher that stated, 'When we started having these [in-services] it was more about first year just getting ready for accreditation, so it wasn't like we were developing, we were doing assignments basically.'

Some staff felt a lack of trust in communication comes from the administration, one of the teachers said:

We all in our own building have trust issues with different people, let's not throw more people into that mix and create a tense uncomfortable environment and I just think that is a little bit of a problem for the trust issues. I think it would get a lot more trust and a lot relationship and a lot more family atmosphere [if we did not force all the staff together for in-service activities].

The theme that TCA was not perfect emerged through the data. These responses, mostly from the parent perspective, noted that nothing is perfect:

So yeah, it's been great—and I'm not saying everything is perfect, I've had my bumps, I've had teachers I didn't agree with, I've gone to the higher level with some things, but that's because I fight for my kids. So, that's my—I love the climate, and I feel like if I have a problem or a question, I do feel like I can approach whoever and be heard.

Another parent also responded to their entire experience at TCA by saying: You know, not everything has been perfect by any means, but as a whole. And, I have the privilege of knowing some of the board members and they are just godly people who hold those values and have the same expectations and it's just awesome to see.

What or is there anything else you would like to share (concerning climate, trust) that was not asked or suggested on the surveys or in these questions?

Table 10

Focus Group Q5

What or is there anything else you would like to share (concerning climate, trust) that was not asked or suggested on the surveys or in these questions?

| Theme | Number of responses |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Communication | 9 |
| Faith and trust | 4 |
| Load equality | 3 |

The last question for the focus group participants provided a question, which allowed participants to respond to anything not covered concerning the climate of trust as it pertains to the study school. All of the themes that emerged from this question came from either the board focus group or staff focus group. There were no additional themes revealed in the responses provided by the parents. Table 10 shows the three themes that emerged in the from the focus group response.

Qualitative feedback - What or is there anything else you would like to share (concerning climate, trust) that was not asked or suggested on the surveys or in these questions? Communication emerged as the main theme in responses for this question. The board focus group, which met after a school board meeting, referred to proactive communication as a way to build trust by suggesting, ‘Many times if they are just to some degree, like tonight is a good example, if there had just been proactive communication that both helps build trust and diffuses a flare up of reactions.’ Another board member felt a lack of people at the meeting was a ‘sense and a sign that they are trusting, that we are kind of [heading] in the right direction.’

The staff provided other examples of communication, or the lack of good communication. One such comment shared by a teacher about the transition from elementary school to middle school (which would be a campus change for the study school) referenced a gap in communication stating:

I think another trust issues aside from that, this is totally different, that I have seen in talking to parents on both levels, is that down in the elementary level it is like a family and you've got the teacher who is like the mom of that classroom and we mother those kids, and then all the sudden they go to sixth grade and they are in middle school and it's like communication goes away. You know? And maybe down here [elementary] it's communication overload because they have the newsletters they have all these different things, and then they get up there and they have all these different teachers and I think parents feel a little bit like they don't trust anymore because they don't have that one teacher to talk to.

Other communication comments reflected in the data referenced workload equality. One employee referred to the school human resource department to validate his lack of trust in the system:

You see there is inside the multiple hats and problems of communication like there is also a problem of knowing whose role is what. So, if you are a department chair, if you are an admin person, whatever your position is because we wear so many hats it's hard to know who to go to for things.

The staff viewed the unbalanced sharing of the workload produced a negative impact on trust. One staff member claimed people who were not carrying any of the extra duties that need to be done 'depletes trust.' One of the other responses stated:

If you look at the duty rosters, it's the same core 20% of people who are doing most of the duty rosters and then there are these other teachers that just don't show up on any of the lists. And I can see that dis-balance.

It was the perception of the staff that the unequal balance they observed with the duties not being share equally, was also true of the volunteer parents.

Trust Survey

The study site posted a survey on the schools' database management site, entitled 'Trust Survey.' The 2012 survey, used in this study as secondary data, contained 10 questions gathering 'perceptions on trust,' which supports the research for this study. After the study school collected the data for the Trust Survey, nothing happened publicly with the information. Of the 10 questions, two of them contained opened-ended response items. This survey, having a 3-week response window, was set as an anonymous survey. The questions provided for that survey were as follows:

- In thinking in terms of "trust" for an organization, do you feel that TCA has a reputation of trust in the community? (a. No, b. Yes, c. Undecided)
- Do you feel it is important for TCA to have a reputation of trust? (a. No, b. Yes, c. Undecided)
- Is there a time, if trust is ever broken, that you would likely move your children? (a. No, b. Yes, c. Undecided)
- If you answered yes to [above] question, please give a few word phrase of what that area of distrust would be. (Open-ended response item)
- If TCA had a reputation of distrust in the community, do you feel it (trust) would ever be able to be earned back? (a. Yes, trust can always be earned

again, b. No, once broken it is too late, c. Maybe, depending on what the situation was)

- For some people, trust comes at levels. What is your level of trust with TCA as school? (a. Very Low, b. Low, c. Average, d. High, e. Very High)
- Do you feel it is possible to have a different level of trust within the [elementary, middle, high] school? (a. Yes, b. No, c. Possible)
- If you have student on more than one campus, do you currently trust one school more than the other? (a. Yes, b. No, c. Undecided, d. I only have students [at one campus])
- Please list a way that TCA can improve or create better trust with its families. (Open-ended response questions)
- Do you feel that a definition of trust would have been helpful before completing this survey? (a. Yes, b. No)

During the time this survey was active, there were only 41 participants. The available participants were current parents having an enrolled child at one of the campuses. There was not a distinction made if the respondents were board members or school staff.

Participants in the Trust Survey were not provided a definition of trust. The assumption that all the stakeholders had a general understanding of trust was implied. However, the last question on the Trust Survey asked if a definition of trust would have been helpful in the completion of the survey. The results show that 43% of the responders claimed a definition of trust would have been helpful.

One of the questions asked if the parents could have a different level of trust at one campus more than another campus. This response showed that 75% marked 'Yes,' However, in the following question, 56% of the parents that responded to the survey only had children at one campus.

In the question that asked if the school had a 'reputation of distrust in the community, do you feel it (trust) would ever be able to be earned back,' none of the participants marked 'No' as their answer, though, 73% of those said earning back trust would depend on the situation.

When the Trust Survey polled the parents at the study school, 84% of those taking the survey stated their trust level with the school was high to very high.

This survey included two open-ended questions, one of which referred to creating an area of distrust in the school. Several of the responses had answers that were similar to this parent's answer, 'If a measure of harm came to my child, (physically, emotionally or spiritually) that could have been prevented by a trusted staff member and wasn't, then we would consider moving out of the school.' Several responses referenced 'Financial mismanagement or theological misguidance.' There were responses that referred to the loss of trust as situational, as stated by this parent, 'There is no perfect person or organization. I believe it is how we handle things when we mess up that are the true test of character and integrity.' Parents also responded to this question on distrust by suggesting why they do trust the school. One parent wrote, 'Trusting that my child is in a Christian environment surrounded by people that encourage and support her, yet discipline fairly and justly. This is why she attends this school, because I know I can trust this is happening.'

There were also comments made concerning open communication as being a factor where mistrust could happen. A mother of one student claimed that it would be difficult to keep her daughter in the school if she and her husband ‘ever felt that we could not discuss issues in regards to our child freely and work together with the teachers and staff.’ This, echoed by another response, where a parent stated that ‘not being able to talk with staff about my child’s problems and having a confidence that his best interest was being addressed’ would be a reason to distrust in the school. A few parents simply stated that trust would be broken at the time the school did not stand behind its decisions and when the school stops ‘being an institution of integrity or their word.’

The second open-ended question on the 2012 Trust Survey asked parents how the study school could ‘improve or create trust with the families.’ Several responses to this question related to communication, and had comments similar to a parent who stated, ‘TCA does a very good job with trust and communication between staff and parents.’ One responder reported that they thought, ‘Open and honest communication is key and I see that happening.’ Another parent from the survey suggested that the school should be ‘willing to listen and heed the concerns of the ‘quiet’ families not just the ones that are loudly reactionary.’

The same question contained responses that mentioned the leadership of the school as an area where trust could be improved. One parent mentioned, ‘Many times one’s trust is focused [on] the leadership of an institution, or more specifically, focused [on] the main leader,’ after having three principals in four years that they ‘had to reestablish trust’ each time a principal changed. Another commenter said to ‘Let the

principal run the school; not the teachers.’ Having more ‘parent discussions with administrators’ was also a suggestion made concerning improvement.

Common Themes Found Throughout Data Collection

During the coding process, themes would emerge in each question. In this study, the common themes and ideas that validated support of a trusting climate were also the same themes that provided the discussion for a non-supportive trusting climate. The table below displays three common themes that emerged in both a positive and negative sense.

Table 10

Common Themes That Build and Damage Trust

| Theme | Number of responses |
|--|----------------------------|
| Communication | 21 |
| Relationships (with – parent, staff, others) | 21 |
| Matthew 18 principle | 11 |

Communication is the theme that overlaps the other themes presented in the responses from the participants. Even though other themes emerged through coding, all of the themes are connected to communication. The lack of communication noted in the feedback from the focus group came mostly from the staff. Most of the data provided a positive census about communication. Strong feelings about the lack of good communication existed in the finding as well. One of the responses that reflected many of the feelings on communication came from the staff feeling that they were not part of the decision-making process:

And that communication is huge in that because there’s no communication going up to make the decision, and then the decision gets made, and then we are told

that a change is happening, but because, like—I will do anything you ask me to if you get me on board.

The school board felt, from their perspective, communication was good at that point in time. Because the board has attempted do more ‘proactive communication’ that the absence of upset parents at a board meeting reflected a higher level of trust. A board member expressed his thoughts in the following quote:

But we have all been in other meetings, whether here or in work settings where you can get an angry mob and there isn’t trust and it doesn’t matter what you say or how you say it, but in this case, at least tonight and in the fact that we are not seeing a bunch of people normally coming out I think there is that system and side of trust.

Relationships with teachers emerged as being an important aspect of supporting a trusting climate. In this theme, the importance of positive relationship as a trust builder. At the same time, when a relationship became viewed in a negative manner, the impact affected more than the damaged relationship. In the discussion with the board members, one stated, ‘It’s just another personal relationship that they had outside of their parents that they could confide in.’ An opposite opinion of that was also mentioned, when parents feel there is not enough communication, which is referenced when a parent states, ‘If a teacher sees an issue with it ahead of time, they need to make us aware of it. And that is what makes me not trust the teachers and the staff.’

The biblical principle of ‘Matthew 18’ referred to the manner of how the study school communicated when issues arose between people. When looking at the discussion, whether referring to a positive use of the Mathew 18 principle or a negative

use, the principle is important to the study school. During the study, the principle surfaced many times through the discussions, creating a category for the theme. The staff had the impression, when followed, Matthew 18 created a more trusting climate. An elementary teacher supported the Matthew 18 principle saying that the administrators ‘support their teachers that way.’ On the negative side of not using Matthew 18 in the way it should be used, one teacher expressed that ‘your hands become tied. There’s nothing you can do.’

Minor Themes Found Throughout Data Collection

The majority of the qualitative data for the case study came in from two different sources: the online survey tool (VETI) and the focus group. Each of these instruments revealed themes based on question types. However, some themes were not apparent when exploring the data in part, but with all the data combined these ‘minor themes’ emerged when viewing the data collectively. Table 12 identifies three of the minor themes that emerged collectively.

Table 11

Minor Themes Collectively

| Theme | Number of responses |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Listening | 11 |
| Prayer | 10 |
| Resource Services | 5 |

The study school had a resource room at each campus that were staffed full-time. The school resource services became the only department of the study school directly identified as area of the school that provided a supportive climate of trust. The data

proclaimed several teachers were willing to help students understand concepts, but the resource department came up in conversations from the focus group and the open-ended discussion questions from the online survey. All of the comments presented those staff member in a positive light when making a connection to providing a supportive climate.

A survey responded about the school resource program by explaining, 'There are students at TCA with various needs and levels of learning. Students in the [Resource] program are never made to feel that they are different because they require additional help or a different structure for learning.'

Prayer, identified as a minor theme in the study, did not emerge as a major theme in the individual sections of the data, but when looking at the data sets together, prayer was a strong theme. A parent stated:

First thing that comes to mind for me is the staff when there's an issue, a problem, and they feel like they can put their arms around my child and pray with them.

And I trust wholeheartedly that that's coming from a place of love and compassion and a shared belief system.

Prayer was reflected in other themes used in this study. Themes of support, relationship with families, and vulnerabilities are examples of where prayer had been mentioned.

Listening, mostly reflected in 'support' and 'relationship' themes, identified as a theme when reflecting on the findings as one data stream. One of the open-ended responses from the online survey captures this theme by stating, 'I think teachers are always willing to listen, but don't always have time to deal with students thoughts and emotions. The teachers do a great job of knowing their kids though.' Along the same lines, another parent referred to the trust their daughter had with a teacher, commenting,

‘She was willing to share what happened and express her frustration with the whole experience, and [kind of] got it off her chest.’

Connection to Research Questions

The primary research question for this case study was, How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school? This question was answered with the three following subquestions:

- 1) How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust?
- 2) How do the stakeholders perceive that the school demonstrates trust?
- 3) What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?

The major sources of data used to answer the research questions came from two collection sources (online survey and focus group) and existing secondary data (Trust Survey). The research design of this cases study was to explore the perceptions of the stakeholders in regards to climate and environment of the study school. It is important to note that, since trust was not defined as a single term, and there was no definition provided to the stakeholders to use when providing a view of trust, the view of trust came through the lens of the climate of the study school.

The following section contains a table for each of the subquestions designed for this case study. The tables represent a sampling of common themes and qualitative responses.

Table 12. *Themes for Subquestion 1*

| Themes Summaries for – How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust? | |
|---|---|
| Theme | Sample Responses from Stakeholders |
| An atmosphere that feels safe | <p>“Safe place, transparency like what he was saying. That you can go to staff and say what you need to say and still feel safe.”</p> <p>“And I have gone to like the guidance counselor or an administrator and said, ‘Hey, I have student who is struggling with this thing, but I would like to keep some of the details private’ and they’ve been okay with that. And it’s been—they’ve trusted my judgment in a situation. To know that what we were doing was right here—privacy matters.”</p> |
| A place where you can be vulnerable | <p>“What’s necessary for a supportive climate at least in a Christian setting is certainly being able to bring your vulnerabilities to bear. “</p> <p>“They are going to help you, promote you, you can be vulnerable, be yourself, not have to worry about putting on a Christian façade that everything is fine and you’re perfect, should be an environment that’s safe, and you know people are here to help you, promote you and get you through it.”</p> |
| A climate that supports others | <p>“We share prayer requests. So, those are personal and you know we pray for each other and even in the summer we have like a prayer chain sent out, just text like, this is going on for me, will you pray for me or this person.”</p> <p>“Is my understanding of a supportive environment based on trust is that even when it doesn’t make sense, even when I don’t fully agree with all the details, I have an underlying trust that we’re where we’re supposed to be and that we’re in the right place to grow.”</p> |
| A place that promotes relationships | <p>“I do feel like there are parents who feel like they can come to us and talk about most anything and know that if they come to us to talk about academics we’re not slamming their kid the next day or something. So, I just think that trust is there overall throughout the school to do that.”</p> <p>“Our school partners with our parents and I have trust that they would act in that situation how I would if I were there”</p> |

Table 13

*Themes for Subquestion 2***Theme Summaries for – *How do the stakeholders (parent, staff, and board) perceive that the school demonstrates trust?***

| Theme | Sample Responses from Stakeholders |
|---|---|
| Trust is built through the teachers. | <p>“Teachers are the front line of defense for this perception of trust, especially for the students, that’s who they are going to have the most engagement with and they may of some with other staff, administration, but it’s going to primary going to be through the teachers”</p> <p>“But there was a trust that I see my children feel with the faculty, that they trust them enough to say, hey, I want to bounce this off of you or run this by you, or can I talk to you about this. That means a lot to me to know that my kids feel that way.”</p> |
| Relationships between home and school. | <p>“They had some pretty close relationships with teachers who were also mentors to them through certain issues in life”</p> <p>“But it was interesting because that parent ended up talking with me [elementary teacher] and then ended up kind of turning and becoming—became very accommodating and started trusting the situation more”</p> |
| Through providing support for the family. | <p>“Because we have had other cases where a young woman was paralyzed and then came back and the school rallied and did free tuition and photos and prayers and another kid whose dad was dead and came back to life after 40 minutes of no breathing, nothing, and everybody rallied and so we have done sometimes extraordinarily well wrapping arms around folks.”</p> <p>“We’ve had [financial] trouble in the past, when I’ve had to reach out to one of the staff members in accounting which makes you want to puke... I have never been treated with more respect.”</p> |
| Following the Matthew 18 principle | <p>“The consistency with that [Matthew 18 Principle] helped me be like, ‘I can depend on this and trust that this is going to occur’. If I go to a superior and say, ‘you know, I’m having an issues with a student’. I will know what is going to take place.”</p> <p>“And I think when you brought up Matthew 18 that was so incredibly important because of the fact that that was one of the first things I saw as far as consistency, the consistency helps me with the trust.”</p> |

continued

Theme Summaries for – *How do the stakeholders (parent, staff, and board) perceive that the school demonstrates trust?*

| Theme | Sample Responses from Stakeholders |
|--------------------|--|
| Good communication | <p>“I’d say anything we’ve ever had a problem with, they generally take care of it. We discuss what happened and it gets resolved.”</p> <p>“I think open and honest communication is key and I see that happening. As Christians, we hold each other to higher standards, which we should. However, we should not set unachievable expectations or rush to pass [judgment] when we perceive that someone has failed us.”</p> |

Table 14

Themes for Subquestion 3

Theme Summaries for – *What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?*

| Theme | Sample Responses from Stakeholders |
|---|--|
| That the learner is uniquely important | <p>“Teachers and staff regularly remind students that they are image bearers, uniquely designed and created for a purpose.”</p> <p>“From pre-K through 12th grade the faculty and staff at TCA teach each student how unique and special they are in the eyes of God. Each student has special gifts and talents, which they are encouraged to use.”</p> |
| Developing a supportive relationship with individual learners | <p>“The faculty works hard at being available to learners and supporting them in their needs.”</p> <p>“So if my son gets help here [Resource class], then when he gets to middle school they will have all of that information, that his needs-his special things that he needs, that will duplicate through middle school and into high school. That part, is helpful, as far as that is concerned”</p> <p>“TCA makes an effort to maintain embarrassing issues or mistakes private, both in the classroom and in the administration. If information needs to be shared, it is done without mentioning names in order to protect identities.”</p> |

Theme Summaries for – *What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?*

| Theme | Sample Responses from Stakeholders |
|---|--|
| | <p>“There are students at TCA with various needs and levels of learning. Students in the [Resource Program] are never made to feel that they are different because they require additional help or a different structure for learning.”</p> |
| <p>Expresses confidence that learners will develop the skills they need</p> | <p>“It seems like it starts with confidence and buy-in from the teachers that the curriculum is the right foundation before the school year even starts. The teachers seem to have good lesson plans and goals for the year and they are determined and confident that the students will reach those goals. They are accessible and there are tutoring opportunities to help those who may struggle at times.”</p> <p>“Students are regularly told in the classroom that they are more than capable of doing the work teachers expect...the students are given the tools they need, then the help they need to get there.”</p> |
| <p>Exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners</p> | <p>“By communicating God’s love and tying every subject back to a Christian worldview it communicates unconditional love for the student”</p> <p>“There was multiple times that this teacher and I didn’t see eye to eye at all, but I had the most respect for this teacher because I knew that she wanted the best for my daughter.”</p> |

Table 15

Themes for Overall Research Question

Theme Summaries for – *How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school?*

| Theme | Sample Responses from Stakeholders |
|-----------------------|---|
| Through relationships | <p>“I love to sit on a team of people that meet regularly to talk about how can we make things better.”</p> <p>“It’s just another personal relationship that they had outside of their parents that they could confide in. And coaches, they have had coaches that they could do that with too.”</p> |
| Good communication | <p>“RenWeb! Student can monitor their own progress and can take accountability when academic progress is not as desired. Great interaction between many teachers and students about where they excel or need more help.”</p> <p>“Right now, TCA does a very good job with trust and communication between staff and parents. To me this is the most important aspect for a school trying to establish trust. Making sure the parents are informed of what you are going to do and doing what you told us because our children will tell us what was actually done and if that differs from what we were told by the school then trust starts to fade. My children have been with TCA for 4 years now and I totally trust the staff with my children.”</p> |
| Common values | <p>“It was okay to stand out at as being someone that just wants to follow God and do the right thing, it wasn’t—it’s hard for her to go against her culture and she didn’t have to go against her culture there because everyone had a trust that that was the way it was supposed to be and it was accepted”</p> <p>“You know, not everything has been perfect by any means, but as a whole. And I have the privilege of knowing some of the board members and they are just godly people who hold those values and have the same expectations and it’s just awesome to see.”</p> |

Summary

In Chapter Four, the data collection instruments present the findings with data corresponding to that instrument. The common themes emerged and the findings were

connected to the research questions, which appeared at the end of the chapter. In the following chapter, the perceptions and opinions of the primary researcher, shared along with the, connections to literature, recommendations for further research, and recommendations for the study school conclude the study.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The results from the previous chapter, presented with the instrument used to gather the data in the study, provides the framework for answering the research questions for this chapter. In Chapter Five, additional discussions concerning the findings from the study begin with an overview, followed by an interpretation of data, connections to literature, recommendations for the study school, and concludes with recommendations for further research.

Overview

In an effort to explore the presence of trust in one suburban Christian school, a case study design approach became the template for study school. Even though the topic of trust was well covered in literature, at the time of the study, there was an absence of literature which examined the trust levels in Christian organizations. This study would add to the body of literature and provide a perspective from a Christian institution.

This case study was designed to gather the perceptions of the stakeholders from the study school. The stakeholders, as defined in the study, were staff (all employees), parents, and board members. This study contained one overarching research question and three sub questions used to help answer the main question:

- 1) How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school?
 - a) How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust?
 - b) How do the stakeholders perceive that the school demonstrates trust?
 - c) What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?

In order to answer the research questions, the primary researcher (an employee of the study school) sent an online survey to the stakeholders, used secondary data from the

study school, and had a third-party facilitator conduct focus groups with each of the stakeholder types. In the following section, the research questions are accompanied with an interpretation of the results.

Interpretation of Results

The stakeholders were asked in a survey to provide their perception of the visible elements of trust. The questions were written for the stakeholder to respond to trust in relation to the learner (their student). A focus group (one for each stakeholder group) asked questions based on the climate of the study school. From the data trends revealed in this study, a person's perceptions impacts their level of trust. There were three subquestions used to answer the overall questions. This section contains the results as they pertain to the subquestion.

How do the stakeholders (parents, staff, and board) view trust? The view of trust from the perceptions of the stakeholders, identified in several themes, demonstrated what made up those views. Questions from the focus group and the Trust Survey contained data supporting the view of trust. The Trust Survey, conducted in 2012, revealed the parents at the time felt the study school had a good reputation of trust in the community. The respondents in that survey felt the trust level was high. The Trust Survey provided a path for the parents to respond to how trust would be lost at the study school. The themes of that survey reflected the current themes shared in the research from the 2016 study. From the focus group data, the stakeholders responded to their understanding of a supportive climate trust. Trust, from the stakeholder perceptions, assumed relationships to be healthy and supportive. Trust was viewed to be stronger when there was a sense of strong relationships as stated in this response:

But there was a trust that I see my children feel with the faculty, that they trust them enough to say, hey, I want to bounce this off of you or run this by you, or can I talk to you about this. That means a lot to me to know that my kids feel that way.

One of the more unexpected outcomes for the researcher was the understanding, from several families, that trust did not equal perfection. One parent responded by stating,

[The school is] not perfect, it's far from perfect. There is no perfect churches, there is no perfect anything, I taught my kids that everyday, it's not perfect . . .

TCA is trying to achieve and aim for greatness at this school.

A Trust Survey response included integrity with the claim, 'There is no perfect person or organization. I believe it is how we handle things when we mess up that are the true test of character and integrity.' When stakeholders acknowledged the relationships, whether between student and teacher or each other, trust or climate of trust included a place of safety where vulnerability can exist.

When ranked on the survey, stakeholders felt that TCA 'communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important.' This supported many of the other comments provided throughout the study. The stakeholders have a stronger view of trust when the communication is effective.

How do the stakeholders perceive that the school demonstrates trust? The case study school reached an audience of people with very similar backgrounds in their views to Christianity. The stakeholders participating in the study were part of the school population. The data collected from the focus groups showed the school demonstrated

trust by, but not limited to, support, relationships, consistency, and communication. One of the focus group’s participant’s comments captured several of these themes with the following statement:

I think the students here know they can go to almost any teacher with a problem.

I mean all the teachers are open to talk to. They love a student to come in with a problem be it academic or personal.

When reviewing the study school’s annual surveys, communication was an area requested by parents that the school could do better. TCA attempted to use as much digital communication as possible. Stakeholders claimed communication in the study school had improved over the last few years. At the time of the study, the school had 12 different methods used to communicate with the school’s stakeholders, as seen in Table 17.

Table 16

Communication Methods

| Standard Communication Methods | |
|---|---|
| • Digital Newsletters (District, Classroom) | • Automatic Notifications (nurse, tardy/absence, grade, financial) |
| • Emergency alerts (snow days, events) | • Sports alerts |
| • Classroom texting alerts | • Facebook |
| • Emails | • Daily Student planners (elementary) |
| • Phone (each teacher has a digital voice mail) | • Annual Parent/ Teacher conference (required for elementary, optional for secondary) |
| • Paper copies | • Face-to-face |

In all the efforts for the study school to communicate more effectively, there were still feelings that ‘a lack of follow through on communication does not instill trust in an environment,’ as well as, there being a level of over communication as stated by this parent comment:

Really, I can only think of one or some other minor things where there was a time where there wasn’t the element of trust, and it’s interesting what’s brought up is not communicating, where really the core of this was over communicating.

The biblical principle of Matthew 18: 15–17 (known as the ‘Matthew 18 Principle’) deals with how to resolve an issue through communication. In the English Standard Version (ESV), the passage read:

15) If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16) But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Following the steps of the Matthew 18 principle was communicated in the focus groups as one of the ways trust is demonstrated by the study school.

Consistency is another way the study school demonstrated trust. One manner of being consistent came from the viewpoint of the staff, where it stated even when communicating using Matthew 18 that is ‘the consistency helps me with the trust.’ Being consistent in word and action, is what stakeholders want to observe. As one participant

shared, the staff needed to be men and women of their word, and staying consistent in discipline issues helps build trust, the follow through is important.

In the study school, support and relationships are how the school demonstrates trust. Staff mentioned the supportive relationship with each other and support of families. Parents referenced the relationship they enjoy with the partnership established through the school, but also parents noted the importance of the student being able to have a supportive relationship with the teachers.

What do the stakeholders perceive are the most important elements of trust?

The elements of trust were provided to the stakeholders through the online survey, which contained a simple response and open-ended response questions. The following table reveals how the stakeholders perceived each element of trust (agreeing the element was visible or not visible) and ranked order of each element as perceived by the survey responders.

Table 17

Overall VETI

| Overall Results for the Visible Elements of Trust Inventory (VETI) | | |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Trust Element | Percent Who Agree Trust is Visible | Ranked Order |
| TCA communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important. | 94 | 1 |
| TCA works toward developing a supportive relationship with individual learners. | 92 | 2 |
| TCA demonstrates respect of learners' dignity and integrity. | 92 | 3 |
| TCA expresses confidence that learners will develop the skills they need. | 94 | 4 |
| TCA exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners. | 81 | 5 |
| TCA indicates ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are. | 64 | 6 |
| TCA communicates to learners they need to be aware of and communicate their thoughts and feelings. | 83 | 7 |
| TCA prizes learners' ability to learn what is needed. | 85 | 8 |
| TCA enables learners to evaluate their own progress. | 70 | 9 |
| TCA demonstrates that learners know what their goals, dreams, and realities are. | 76 | 10 |
| TCA engages learners in clarifying their own aspirations. | 58 | 11 |

According to the results, the study school valued that each learner is uniquely important, and responders agreed the school is accomplishing that particular element of trust. This was not a surprising result, as the study school promoted this idea throughout the school's curriculum. The school uses the biblical concepts that all people created in God's image as found in Genesis 1:26–27 (ESV):

26) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and

over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

As well as each person was uniquely created by God as stated in Psalm 139:14 (ESV), ‘I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.’

Ranked second in importance was the school worked toward developing a supportive relationship with individual learners. This visible element of trust was supported several times through the stakeholder discussions. Having a supportive relationship in providing a place of safety where students feel they can be transparent in the relationships with staff whether it is when a ‘kiddos had a rough day’ or the student could ‘say what you need to say and still feel safe.’

Two of the lowest percentages of agreement on the ranking questions showing the element of trust existed, were indicating ‘ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are,’ and engaging ‘learners in clarifying their own aspirations.’ Through some of the themes noted by the focus groups regarding providing a supportive trusting climate, parents and staff shared the importance of having students confide in the teachers. A staff member suggested, “Also, the understanding of my students to me, having space for my students to confide in my knowing that I’m trusted with that from their perspective that I am a person they can trust.” There appeared to be freedom for the students to openly share problems and issues, but according the VETI results, only about 60% of the stakeholders felt the school was effectively hearing what the learning needs of the students are and promoting the goals of the student. When considering that the rest

(40%) of the survey responders were not sure the school was hearing what the learning of the students are; it needs to be noted that the study school did have two guidance counselors (middle school, high school), and the school newsletter contained guidance-related items each week. Noted from secondary survey data, often times digital data communication gets overlooked by stakeholders, either by expressing their family receives too many emails to process, or people do not realize what information is important enough to open.

One of the goals for the school resource program that assists students with special needs was to teach those students to learn to be an advocate in their own learning. Praise was provided to resource program of TCA by the stakeholders

How, if at all, is the presence of trust identified at the school? When looking at the emerging themes through an open-coding process, words and phrases created the theme heading, and similar responses were added under those headings. Some of the responses were also part of other themes, based on the content of the answer. The emerging themes connect to relationships, which is the strongest identified theme for identifying trust. The relationships where communication was valued and shared in all directions created a higher level of trust in the study school. Each instance in the data where communication was not adequate was related to a less-trusting relationship. At the end of the study, several areas were identified for building and supporting trust. On the occasions where trust appeared damaged or lost, the data supports the person referenced in the personal example caused damage and effected the perceptions the stakeholder held for the entire organization.

Connections to Literature Review

When reviewing the emerging themes in the data gathered from the study, there were themes that were similar and supported the literature for this study.

Vulnerability. One of the themes that emerged from the focus group discussions was ‘a supportive climate at least in a Christian setting is certainly being able to bring your vulnerabilities to bear.’ An attribute of trust is being vulnerable (Bolton & English, 2010; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Morgan, 2004). In the combined work of Forsyth, Adams, and Hoy (2011) on vulnerability, a common thread for trust was noted: ‘Those who trust make themselves vulnerable to others in the belief that those they trust will act in ways that are not harmful or detrimental to them’ (p. 17). Responses provided by study participants support the literature, this belief was detected in the way student and parents shared with teachers.

Andragogy. One of the surprising themes to me, as the researcher, was the theme of staff in-service. There were at least 15 references to in-service by the teachers, most presented in manner of claiming that trust is not built in these meeting. The sole purpose for in-service meeting is to provide for this group of stakeholders, the adult learners of the school district, an atmosphere where professional development is meaningful to them. The administration of the study school realized a need for more professional development time for the teachers, and intentionally planed time in the district calendar for professional development. Even though time was provided for professional development, the allotted time was used, according the staff, as ‘busy work’ as TCA prepared for accreditation, and not on ‘individual learning.’

As previously mentioned, andragogy is the ‘art and science of teaching adults’ (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 342). As commented by one staff member, ‘as much as everybody hates [in-service], I didn’t have any idea what anyone else was doing in any other classroom. I didn’t know what the grade below me did or what the grade above me expected.’ In-service did make people more aware of what was happening in the school as a whole. The problem expressed by focus group members, simply put, was that in-service has not ‘been all that.’ From survey data (secondary to this study), participants were asked if the study school provided professional development opportunities that help staff advance their needed skills. A teacher’s response to that question was, ‘[Professional Development] opportunities are usually what the administration wants for us to learn, rather than asking us what we need.’

One of the primary principles of andragogy, according to Henschke (1989), was the learner’s ability toward self-directedness. The statements collected through this study and other collection methods, indicated a lack of trust that, in Henschke’s words, “seriously hampers the learning process” (p. 13). Henschke provided a four-ingredient outline (andragogy, attitude, congruence, and trust) that the study school could use as an institution to create a more supportive climate for staff to grow professional. As shared in Chapter Two as well as in the next section, Henschke’s MIPI had been modified several times for other studies. Based on the results from this case study, the administration from the school utilized Vatcharasirisook’s (2011) version of the MIPI, which used the same 11 belief statements that were considered the foundation of trust. The MIPI statements in that study show modified wording to reflect the supervisor’s trust of subordinates.

Collective trust. In the work of Forsyth et al. (2011), a model of collective trust presented the shared beliefs of interdependent groups. Whereas personal trust deals with cognition of an individual, collective trust was socially constructed by the individuals of a certain group. In the data from TCA, trust was perceived by the stakeholders groups differently with each group. Less trust was perspective from the staff perception than the other two groups, their experiences appeared to have damaged or hurt the trust levels in that group. The collective trust model, according to Forsyth et al., depicted three contextual elements that form the model: external (environmental influences and experiences), internal (conditions within the organization), and task (set of constraints for the group). Table 19 shows examples of how the overall trust from the staff was impacted by using the collective trust model.

Table 18

Collective Trust

| Examples of lack of trust from the staff using the collective trust model | | |
|---|--|--|
| External Context | Internal Context | Task Context |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School mergers (with other schools) • School Consolidation (schools within the district) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough information shared from administration • Too many changes, too fast • Not consistently following Matthew 18 principle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for accreditation • Work for the mapping of curriculum • No time for personal professional growth |

Relationships. “Trust lies at the heart of healthy interpersonal relationships. Without it, schools are subject to destructive personal agenda, suspicion, and manipulation” (Hoy & Tarter, 1997, p. 11). Many of the emerged themes from the data collection process had connections to the relationships formed within the school.

Relationships built over time added to the culture of the study school, it was easier for parents to say, ‘Our school partners with our parents and I have trust that they would act in that situation how I would if I were there.’ In the findings, there were participants, as mentioned by the facilitator of the focus groups, that had ‘moved from trust to not trusting and others have experienced the opposite of moving from not trusting to trusting.’ Not everyone involved in the study claimed that all of the relationships were providing a supportive climate of trust, but many stated that it was acceptable and even expected to have disagreements, which is supported by this comment from one of the parents:

We would not always agree and there were definitely difficult discussions that happened, but deep down we know that they’re there for our kids. Even if we didn’t agree particularly, we knew that overall there were people that were there.

Another response taken from a previous staff survey secondary affirms the same perspective from a staff perception. Speaking from more than 15 years’ experience at the study school, the participant stated,

If you stay that long, you’ll get your feelings hurt. So, you’ll have to make a decisions—are you so hurt that you either leave and get your feelings hurt there too? Or, do you chalk it up to you just disagree and you’re still here.

Relationships between the teachers and principal were part of the discussions for a supportive climate of trust. At the high school campus, it was mentioned by a teacher that their building principal was working toward building trust by taking walks around the school:

Like an hour or two after school and he walks around the school building to all of the teachers that are in their rooms after school, and if you are not busy he will just walk in and sit down and just talk a while. And, that's actually been, that particular thing, has been the best thing in gaining my trust because it makes me feel like I have an ear.

Kochanek (2005) referred to this type of interaction between the principal and the teacher by suggesting, 'Teachers who feel valued as professionals as open to input from a principal' (p. 6).

Recommendation for the Study School

Positive feedback. From the data collected, the online survey provided an opportunity for simple responses of *visible* and *not visible* on the VETI. The instrument design gathered the perceptions of the stakeholders (parent, staff, and board). The following 11 questions were used as a method for the stakeholders to respond to TCA as an organization, even though responses included examples about individuals.

- 1) TCA communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important
- 2) TCA expresses confidence that learners will develop the skills they
- 3) need
- 4) TCA demonstrates that learners know what their goals, dreams, and realities are
- 5) TCA prizes learners' ability to learn what is needed
- 6) TCA communicates to learners they need to be aware of and communicate their thoughts and feelings
- 7) TCA enables learners to evaluate their own progress

- 8) TCA indicates ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are
- 9) TCA engages learners in clarifying their own aspirations
- 10) TCA works [toward] developing a supportive relationship with individual learners
- 11) TCA exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners
- 12) TCA demonstrates respect of learners' dignity and integrity

The VETI questions provided the space to mark *visible* or *not visible* for each of the 11 survey items. Through observation of the overall response provided on the survey, 82% of the stakeholder responses were positive (*visible*). Of the 18% that provided *not visible* responses, only 27% provided specific feedback for their response. Reflecting on all open-ended responses providing specific feedback, 95% of those responses provided positive statements concerning the study school.

Even though the focus group questions contained a question geared to gathering a negative response (Tell me of a time [if there is one] when/where you have seen that TCA has not provided a supportive and trusting climate?), several of the stakeholders referred to the negative responses as being minor by suggesting, 'some other minor things' or 'it's not a real strong feeling.' The overall feedback gathered through the case study presented support of the stakeholder perception of trust in the study school.

Negative feedback. Even with the option to provide feedback on the survey, only 5% of the open-ended responses contain specific examples of how trust was perceived by the stakeholder as not being visible. Focus group responders provided, when asked, examples or occasions of when a climate of trust was not supportive. From

the opinion of the primary researcher, a few of the negative themes throughout the data are worth sharing with study school.

Different trust levels. Any identifying data that would reveal a person's identity was scrubbed from the transcription, and the survey responses were anonymously collected from the stakeholders. However, responses did not present equal perceptions of each campus. The Trust Survey, completed by 40 participants in 2012, claimed trust level could vary between the campuses, and it was possible to trust one campus more than the other campus. The study completed in 2016, revealed similar perceptions. On the VETI, while exploring visible elements of trust, three of the stakeholders claimed trust was more visible at lower grades than the upper grades. In the staff focus group, one response exclaimed 'get the [High School] like the [Elementary].' The differences in the levels of trust documented in the research for the case study came from parents and staff.

The recommendation to the study school:

- 1) Further investigate why the perception exists of a less trust across campuses exists.
- 2) Develop a plan to bridge the gap and/or provide opportunity to build trust.

Communication. Communication is a theme the study school acknowledges as an issue. Communication was, in this study, a major theme in that it flowed as a theme in both positive and negative conversations. Through the annual school surveys, the study school already assumes responsibility for the improvement of communicating. 'Trust influences communication, and communication influences trust. These two are closely related' (Reina & Reina, 2006, p. 34). Through this study, claims were made, such as

trust levels, that more communication happened and was even encouraged more in the lower grades than the upper grades. The staff participating in the focus group had opinions that the administration often did not communicate enough with staff. One of the communication breakdowns, according to the employees of TCA, referenced communication through using the biblical principle of Matthew 18. The Matthew 18 model is vitally important at the study school to the point, it is part of the annual evaluation process for faculty and staff. However, the perceptions shared through the focus group claimed that Matthew 18 is not always followed from top down (administrator to employee).

The recommendation to the study school:

- 1) Continue the current path of recognizing the need for better communication.
- 2) Develop ways to better communicate with the school's faculty and staff.
- 3) If the Matthew 18 is an important method for communicating, develop a plan for modeling consistency in following the principle.

Mergers and consolidations. The study school was noted to have made several changes with regard to building moves, changing head administrators, absorbing students from closing schools, and merging staff and board into the existing school culture. The continual changes have created a culture of distrust among the school staff saying, 'There was just so much emotions involved with that, and then with the lack of communication.' This theme presented itself though staff conversations, with no noticeable connections to parent or board conversation. The discussion topics from other data streams referred to changes in the size (growth) of the study school, which was directly impacted by some the consolidations and how the school moved from a trusting environment to one

concerned with mergers and consolidations. This view came through the perception of the staff from the case study school.

The recommendation to the study school:

- 1) In the staff discussion concerning mergers, an implication exists that the staff ‘feel good about where we are headed now.’ Trust can improve if the study school can continue creating a stable environment.
- 2) Since the trust levels are currently in a weakened state, any sizable change by the study school, will cause further issues of distrust. If the study school is concerned about improving the trust level among the staff, major changes in the school that impact the staff should be avoided.
- 3) If changes (small and/or large) prescribed by the administration of the study school are going to be made, including the staff in the discussion with as much openness and honesty as possible may be able to reduce the negative impact how a trusting climate is perceived.

Affirmations. TCA, at the time of the study, had been providing an education to the children of Christian families since 1980. In the school’s infancy, there was not a high school program. TCA began adding grade levels to create a high school in 1995. At the time of the case study, the school had reached more the 900 graduates. The school in the study had struggles, a few of which were revealed throughout the study, and they had a reputation for doing things well.

Affirmations to the study school:

- 1) Through the discussions from people involved with the study school and through commendations revealed through the accreditation reports, the

schools is not supported by any church or denomination. At the time of the study, the school's support came from the annual tuition payments from the families. The study school operates on a budget created from the projected tuition income for the year. There were no endowments that assist in building upkeep, and the longevity of school had been possible with the commitment of the returning families that place trust in school year after year.

- 2) The partnership with families, which is part of the mission statement of study school, was credited as an important part of a supportive climate of trust. Much of the data referred to relationships and the support that comes from those relationships as one of the reason for remaining at the study school.
- 3) The core values, even though the school had changed in size and had lost the relational aspects that a smaller environment provides, has remained the same through the years. All stakeholder groups referred to school values as being the same as the family's home values.

Recommendations for Further Research

Using the VETI. A recommendation made by one the stakeholders was the perspective from students would have been an addition to consider. Since this study was not designed to gather student perspectives or opinions, the stakeholder recommendation could be considered for future research. Risley and Petroff (2014) collaborated with Henschke to modify the MIPI for student use. This piece, known as MIPI-S, could be a compliment component to a similar study desiring to reflect student perspectives. These questions, written to use a Likert scale, Almost Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Usually, or Almost Always, are as follows:

- How frequently did my professor communicate to me, that I am uniquely important?
- How frequently did my professor express confidence that I will develop the skills I need?
- How frequently did my professor demonstrate that I know what my goals, dreams, and realities are?
- How frequently did my professor demonstrate that he prizes my ability to learn what is needed?
- How frequently did my professor communicate to me, my need to be aware of and communicate my thoughts and feelings?
- How frequently did my professor enable me to evaluate my own progress?
- How frequently did my professor indicate he is able to “hear” what I say my learning needs are?
- How frequently did my professor engage me in clarifying my own aspirations?
- How frequently did my professor work toward developing a supportive relationship with me?
- How frequently did I experience unconditional positive regard from my professor?
- How frequently did my professor demonstrate that he respects my dignity and integrity? (p. 10).

Even though the VETI was used to gather perceptions about the study school, on the whole, some of the participants felt it was difficult to answer the questions in that

manner. One person provided feedback by stating, ‘We have had many teachers that have been amazing at all of these aspects and we have had some that are very frustrating in these areas.’ Another parent responded after not completing the survey by recalling ‘feeling like I could have answered the questions in so many different ways... i.e. The questions may have been so broad or subjective that I didn’t know what way to go with my answers.’ Because the VETI was completely different than the surveys normally provided to the families on an annual basis, more instructions could have been provided on the front end of the survey in order to set the tone for how to answer the questions.

Demographics of the stakeholder. Based on the anonymity of the participants, very little demographic information was gathered. A expansion to this study could reflect the age of the stakeholder and generation types (Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers) as a way to explore the levels of trust within a generation type.

The school in this case study was a multi-campus school. In much of the data, it could be determined that there were distinct differences in the perceptions about trust based on the campus that the students attended or where staff were employed. There were times when a question was answered with ‘at our campus’ and not with a campus identifier (elementary, middle school). Even adding a person identifier (Person 1, Staff 1) when responding to a question would allow the researcher to identify a trend by responders in the transcripts. Since the study was designed to protect anonymity as well as provide an anonymous way to respond, these things were left to be neutral when responding.

Staff perceptions. The staff (employees) of the study school shared many strong opinions, but their responses were shaped by the focus group questions. Since the

personality and health of school is created by people who are working at the school (Hoy & Tarter, 1997), more emphasis could be placed on the perceptions of staff beyond a focus group. For this study, as stated in beginning of this section, a VETI was created as a complement piece to Henschke's MIPI. A version of Henschke's inventory has already been used for teacher and principal interaction (Sticker, 2006), and another modified version of the instrument was used to gather data from teachers and their professional development (Jones-Clinton, 2011). Either of these could be used to gather more data from this group.

Conclusion

Trust is vital in any organization. Even though the overall perception of trust within the school in this case study was positive; there were still areas where the level of trust could be improved and situations that reveal there is a lack of trust. I would challenge researchers to explore the perceptions of trust in other settings, because each organization has a climate that is unique.

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Appendix A:

| <i>Date of Dissertation</i> | <i>Author</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 1995 | Thomas, E. | An identification of the instructional perspectives of parent educators. [KSU] |
| 1997 | Seward, S. | An identification of the instructional perspectives of Kansas parents as teachers educators [KSU] |
| 1997 | Dawson, S. | Instructional perspectives of nurse educators [UMSL] |
| 2003 | Drinkard, G. | Instructional perspectives of nurse educators in distance education [UMSL] |
| 2005 | Stanton, C. (<i>Modified instrument and first validation study</i>) | A construct validity assessment of the Instructional Perspectives Inventory (IPI) [UMSL] |
| 2006 | Stricker, A. | Learning leadership: An investigation of principals' attitudes toward teachers in creating the conditions conducive for learning in school-based staff development [UMSL] |
| 2007 | Reinsch, E. | The relationship among lifelong learning, emotional intelligence and life satisfaction for adults 55 years of age or older [UMSL] |
| 2007 | McManus, L. | The instructional perspectives of community college mathematics faculty [UMSL] |
| 2007 | Rowbotham, M. | Teacher perspectives and the psychosocial climate of the classroom in a traditional BSN program [UMSL] |
| 2009 | Ryan, L. | Adult learning satisfaction and instructional perspective in the foreign language classroom [UMSL] |
| 2010 | Manjounes, C. | An adult accelerated degree program: Student and instructor perspectives and factors that affect retention [LU] |
| 2011 | Vatcharasirisook, V. (<i>Second validation study of instrument</i>) | Organizational learning and employee retention: A focused study examining the role of relationships between supervisors and subordinates [UMSL] |
| 2011 | Jones-Clinton, T. | Principals as facilitators of professional development with teachers as adult learners [UMSL] |
| 2011 | Moehl, P. (<i>Third validation study of instrument</i>) | Exploring the relationship between Myers-Briggs Type and Instructional Perspectives among college faculty across academic disciplines [UMSL] |
| 2102 | Risley, L. (<i>developed the VETI as a compliment to MIPI</i>) | Exploring Congruency between John A. Henschke's Practice and Scholarship [LU] |
| 2013 | Lubin, M. | Coaching the Adult Learner: A Framework for Engaging the Principles and Processes of Andragogy for Best Practices in Coaching [VPU] |
| 2014 | Gillespie, L. | Trust in Leadership: Investigation of Andragogical Learning and Implications for Student Placement Outcomes [LU] |
| 2014 | Lu, Y. | An Exploration of Merit Pay, Teacher and Student Satisfaction, and Teacher Performance Evaluation from an Instructional Perspective [UMSL] |
| 2014 | Queen, V. | Practical Andragogy: Considering Instructional Perspectives of Hospitality Educators [SLU] |

2015 Lundy, S. Transformational Learning: An Investigation of the
Emotional Maturation Advancement in Learners aged 50
and older [UMSL]

Kansas State University [2]; University of Missouri-St. Louis [13]; Lindenwood
University [3];
St. Louis University [1]; Virginia Polytechnic State University-National Capital Region
[1].

Appendix B:**First Recruitment Letter to All Stakeholders**

[School Logo Here]

Saturday, September 3, 2016

Dear [School Name] Families,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. James Drury, [School] Principal, under the guidance of John Henschke/Dissertation Chair. The purpose of this research is to explore the presence of trust in our Christian school. Trust is a heavily explored topic, but not very much in Christian education. Your participation will help in that area.

Your participation will involve filling out a short survey which is attached by link to this email, and the possibility of serving on a focus group at a later date. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in the survey and/or focus group. You may also choose not to answer every question. If you would like to be a part of the study, just follow the attached link. Anything submitted by you will be anonymous without any negative affect on you, and I will not know any individual responders personal information. If you would like to participate in the focus group, click on the focus group link below. [Assistant Principal Name] will contact you to confirm the meeting time. Your participation will be anonymous to me and your names will be changed to a pseudonym during the transcription process by the third party conducting the focus group.

There are no anticipated risks associated with this research; your responses will be used in the research study, but will not identify the person. For this project, it is not necessary to identify your responses with your name. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about trust being an important factor, even in Christian organizations. After the study is completed, the results will be provided to the school board.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call me, James Drury at 636-970-2398 or the Supervising Faculty, John Henschke at 314-651-9897. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilynn Abbott, Provost at 636-949-4912.

By taking the following survey, you are providing your consent to be a part of Mr. Drury's study on trust.

[Online Survey](#)

[Focus Group for Parents](#)

[Focus Group for Staff](#)

Thank you in advance for your help.

Mr. James Drury
Principal & Lindenwood Graduate Student

Appendix C:**Reminder Recruitment Letter to All Stakeholders**

[School Logo Here]

Saturday, September 10, 2016

Dear [School Name] Families,

If you have not already taken part in this study, you are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. James Drury, [School] Principal, under the guidance of John Henschke/Dissertation Chair. The purpose of this research is to explore the presence of trust in our Christian school. Trust is a heavily explored topic, but not very much in Christian education. Your participation will help in that area.

Your participation will involve filling out a short survey which is attached by link to this email, and the possibility of serving on a focus group at a later date. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in the survey and/or focus group. You may also choose not to answer every question. If you would like to be a part of the study, just follow the attached link. Anything submitted by you will be anonymous without any negative affect on you, and I will not know any individual responders personal information. If you would like to participate in the focus group, click on the focus group link below. [Assistant Principal Name] will contact you to confirm the meeting time. Your participation will be anonymous to me and your names will be changed to a pseudonym during the transcription process by the third party conducting the focus group.

There are no anticipated risks associated with this research; your responses will be used in the research study, but will not identify the person. For this project, it is not necessary to identify your responses with your name. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about trust being an important factor, even in Christian organizations. After the study is completed, the results will be provided to the school board.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call me, James Drury at 636-970-2398 or the Supervising Faculty, John Henschke at 314-651-9897. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost at 636-949-4912.

By taking the following survey, you are providing your consent to be a part of Mr. Drury's study on trust.

[Online Survey](#)

[Focus Group for Parents](#) (Choose between evening, or a Saturday morning)

[Focus Group for Staff](#) (Meets this Wednesday. Sign up closes on Tuesday)

Thank you in advance for your help.

Mr. James Drury
Principal & Lindenwood Graduate Student

Appendix D:**Email Invitation to Board Members from Superintendent**

[School Logo]

Dear [School Name] School Board,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. James Drury, Elementary Principal, under the guidance of John Henschke/Dissertation Chair. The purpose of this research is to explore the presence of trust in our Christian school. Trust is a heavily explored topic, but not very much in Christian education. Your participation will help in that area.

Your participation will involve filling out a short survey which is attached by link to this email, and the possibility of serving on a focus group at a later date (September Board Meeting). Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in the survey and/or focus group. You may also choose not to answer every question. If you would like to be a part of the study, just follow the attached link (this part had to be done online). Anything submitted by you will be anonymous without any negative affect on you, and I will not know any individual responders personal information. If you would like to participate in the focus group, click on the focus group link below. Your participation will be anonymous to me and your names will be changed to a pseudonym during the transcription process by the third party conducting the focus group.

There are no anticipated risks associated with this research; your responses will be used in the research study, but will not identify the person. For this project, it is not necessary to identify your responses with your name. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about trust being an important factor, even in Christian organizations. After the study is completed, the results will be provided to the school board.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call me, James Drury at 636-970-2398 or the Supervising Faculty, John Henschke at 314-651-9897. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilynn Abbott, Provost at 636-949-4912.

By taking the following survey (emailed to everyone before Labor Day), you are providing your consent to be a part of Mr. Drury's study on trust.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Mr. James Drury
*[School Name] Principal &
Lindenwood Graduate Student*

Appendix E:
Permission Letter to Use and Modify VETI



April 11, 2016

Dear Mr. Drury,

I am pleased that you wish to use the Visual Elements of Trust Inventory (VETI) adapted for use in your Doctoral Dissertation at Lindenwood University. I understand your study does not yet have a title.

I hereby give you permission to use this copyrighted instrument. I would expect appropriate citations in your dissertation or any publications that result from using the VETI.

If there is any other way I may help you in this process, please let me know. My best wishes to you in your research. I look forward to hearing your results.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lori Risley', is written over a large, faint watermark of the signature.

Lori Risley

Assistant Professor, Adult and Higher Education,

Adult Education & Safety Science Dept.

LearningCounts Project Manager, University of Central Oklahoma

100 N. University Dr, Box 120, Edmond, OK 73034

(405) 974-5533 Lrisley1@uco.edu

6. Enables learners to evaluate their own progress?

VISIBLE

NOT VISIBLE

Example:

7. Indicates ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are?

VISIBLE

NOT VISIBLE

Example:

8. Engages learners in clarifying their own aspirations?

VISIBLE

NOT VISIBLE

Example:

9. Works towards developing a supportive relationship with individual learners?

VISIBLE

NOT VISIBLE

Example:

10. Exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners?

VISIBLE

NOT VISIBLE

Example:

11. Demonstrates respect of learners' dignity and integrity?

VISIBLE

NOT VISIBLE

Example:

12. Rank in order what you perceive to be the most important elements of a trusting environment. *There are 11 items to rank. Use each number only once. (1 is most important and 11 is the least important).*

___ Communicates to learners that they are each uniquely important?

___ Expresses confidence that learners will develop the skills they need?

___ Demonstrates that learners know what their goals, dreams, and realities are?

___ Prizes learners' ability to learn what is needed?

___ Communicates to learners they need to be aware of and communicate their thoughts and feelings?

- ___ Enables learners to evaluate their own progress?
- ___ Indicates ability to hear what learners say their learning needs are?
- ___ Engages learners in clarifying their own aspirations?
- ___ Works towards developing a supportive relationship with individual learners?
- ___ Exemplifies unconditional positive regard for learners?
- ___ Demonstrates respect of learners' dignity and integrity?

The VETI was used in the 2012 dissertation of Dr. Lori Risley, and is currently being used in another dissertation. The VETI was created as a compliment to visualize trust elements from the Dr. John Henschke's Modified Instructional Perspective Inventory.

Appendix G:**Focus Group Questions****Focus Group*****Exploring the Presence of Trust...***

(To be completed after the electronic survey)

Introductions for Facilitator: *Share with the focus group that this discussion is being audio recorded for transcription purposes and, the primary researcher will NOT listen to the recording to determine or attempt to identify the voices of the respondents.*

- What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust--in a Christian setting? (Please provide examples, moments, interactions, etc...Be specific)
- What is your perception of how [SCHOOL NAME] demonstrates a trusting climate?
- Tell me of a time, (if there is one), when/where you have seen that [SCHOOL NAME] has NOT provided a supportive and trusting climate?
- Consider your original expectations when you came to [SCHOOL NAME]. Compare those expectations to the reality of your experiences now that you are here at [SCHOOL NAME]. In the time since you have been part of the school, is there a noticeable change in the climate? If so please describe. *(i.e. Could be changes in leadership, building moves, school consolidations)*
- What--Is there anything else you would like to share (concerning climate, trust) that was NOT asked or suggested on the surveys or in these questions?

Appendix H:

Open Coding for Focus Group Themes Based on Questions

What is your understanding of a supportive climate based on trust--in a Christian setting?

Listening is part of a supportive climate

It's the idea of being able to come with a need or a problem to those who are in charge and getting their sincere assistance to get it resolved. (Board)

[Eve] trusted her that this teacher loved her genuinely and she was willing to share what happened and express her frustration with the whole experience, and kinda got it off her chest (Board)

Open, free discussions, all the staff is first and foremost interested about each child, what's best for their spirit, and not be worried about being second-guessed and the parents also before they take any perception of anything that they might have an issue with or interaction with the child. They know that first and foremost they're looking out for the spirit of the child, not only academically but the spirit, the foundation of their education. (Parent)

That's another thing for me, based on trust here at [School Name], is that I love to sit on a team of people that meet regularly to talk about how can we make things better. (Parent)

But the trust aspect that just all of us in parenting, if my kid's not gonna come to me for that need or that advice, I want them to go to someone that I would trust. Another friend, family member, that knows God, that is a Christian, that is going to point them in a direction that's going to be good for them. Which most people want for their kids. (Parent)

We also have students come to us on the elementary level and tell us many things that happen in the home. And so, you know, to be able to—not, that that's not going out of the classroom and that child tells us something that they probably were not supposed to tell their teacher about something happening in the home. That's an

Confidence has to be present

But it's very important that if somebody confides in you and says this needs to stay confidential that there's trust that it's going to stay that way. (Board)

I'm at the teacher level and so I'm looking down and I'm looking at the way my students trust me. And I'm looking up at the way I trust both administration and the rest of faculty. And it could be horizontal or vertical. So the, I guess the vertical one, looking up towards the administration, I think I value that the school has its Matthew:18 policy. That there's a push towards talking directly to someone instead of walking a story around the building. Whether or not that happens is an individual thing, but just the idea... that's the encouragement (Staff)

Also the understanding of my students to me, having space for my students to confide in my knowing that I'm trusted with that from their perspective that I am a person they can trust. (Staff)

Because I have a similar relationship with [my] students. And I've even had parents that trust me with the details of the student, knowing that as long as they are talking to someone that's really all that matters. (Staff)

{not a quote} Several staff supporting the Matthew 18 principle would support a climate of trust.

And I think probably parents realize that. That we're hearing things that happen at home and it's not going any further. (Staff)

I've not heard of an incident where a teacher has broken a trust with a student who has said something (Staff)

element of trust with the elementary teacher. (Staff)

And I think probably parents realize that. That we're hearing things that happen at home and it's not going any further. (Staff)

Well first of all it's your relationship with Christ and your knowledge of His truth that hopefully gives you the wisdom or discernment to know if it can stop with you or you know you can have a word with the student or if you need to take it to somebody else. So I think it depends on the severity I guess. (Staff)

I've not heard of an incident where a teacher has broken a trust with a student who has said something. (Staff)

Being vulnerable/ transparent are needed

what's necessary for a supportive climate at least in a Christian setting is certainly being able to bring your vulnerabilities to bear (Board)

They are going to help you, promote you, you can be vulnerable, be yourself, not have to worry about putting on a Christian façade that everything is fine and you're perfect, should be an environment that's safe and you know people are here to help you, promote you and get you through it. (Board)

it was okay to stand out at as being someone that just wants to follow God and do the right thing, it wasn't—it's hard for her to go against her culture and she didn't have to go against her culture there because everyone had a trust that that was the way it was supposed to be and it was accepted (Board)

Without saying a word, all just started walking down the steps and crossed the field in the rain to where the football team was and went over there and just gathered around in what was a 35-0 loss in the pouring rain and thanking God. And that was a cool thing to do and that was accepted in their culture (Board)

Trust allows for a vulnerability and allows for open discussion of challenges that you may have with your student who may or may not be less than perfect. And dealing with those things and supporting each other. (Parent)

Safe atmosphere/ environment

They are going to help you, promote you, you can be vulnerable, be yourself, not have to worry about putting on a Christian façade that everything is fine and you're perfect, should be an environment that's safe and you know people are here to help you, promote you and get you through it. (Board)

I think my daughter too, being very shy and introverted, came into a community where it was okay to be a not cool kid, to not—she doesn't party, she's not interested in any of that, it was okay to do the right thing. (Board)

Safe place, transparency like what he was saying. That you can go to staff and say what you need to say and still feel safe. (Parent)

There's just a safety for me in knowing that even though when I'm not there, if there's a need, if there's something, if my kiddo's had a rough day, there will be an arm, there will be a prayer (Parent)

And I have gone to like the guidance counselor or an administrator and said, 'Hey, I have student who is struggling with this thing, but I would like to keep some of the details private' and they've been okay with that. And it's been—they've trusted my judgment in a situation. To know that what we were doing was right here—privacy matters. (Staff)

Safe place, transparency like what he was saying. That you can go to staff and say what you need to say and still feel safe. (Parent)

We share prayer requests. So, those are personal and you know we pray for each other and even in the summer we have like a prayer chain sent out, just text like, 'this is going on for me, will you pray for me or this person.' (Staff)

We also have students come to us on the elementary level and tell us many things that happen in the home. And so, you know, to be able to—not, that that's not going out of the classroom and that child tells us something that they probably were not supposed to tell their teacher about something happening in the home. That's an element of trust with the elementary teacher. (Staff)

Love/ Compassion/ Prayer are present

First thing that comes to mind for me is the staff when there's an issue, a problem, and they feel like they can put their arms around my child and pray with them. And I trust wholeheartedly that that's coming from a place of love and compassion and a shared belief system. (Parent)

We have devotions in the morning. We share prayer requests. So, those are personal and you know we pray for each other and even in the summer we have like a prayer chain sent out, just text like, 'this is going on for me, will you pray for me or this person'. And also I think that when we ask for prayer for students teachers are really careful not to use student names also so we can pray for them, God knows who they are, but we can still cover them in prayer without revealing their identities necessarily. (Staff)

We also have students come to us on the elementary level and tell us many things that happen in the home. And so, you know, to be able to—not, that that's not going out of the classroom and that child tells us something that they probably were not supposed to tell their teacher about something happening in the home. That's an element of trust with the elementary teacher. (Staff)

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Partnership with parents

Our school partners with our parents and I have trust that they would act in that situation how I would if I were there. (Parent)

Because I have a similar relationship with [my] students. And I've even had parents that trust me with the details of the student, knowing that as long as they are talking to someone that's really all that matters. (Staff)

And I think probably parents realize that. That we're hearing things that happen at home and it's not going any further. (Staff)

I do feel like there are parents who feel like they can come to us and talk about most anything and know that if they come to us to talk about academics we're not slamming their kid the next day or something. So I just think that trust is there overall throughout the school to do that. (Staff)

I think that teachers, I mean I can only speak for the elementary, but teachers and office staff they are always very accommodating to parents always willing to talk to them even if it's an inopportune time (Staff)

So teaching the parents to learn to trust as well, like you know we really are watching what your children are doing let us decide some of these—like these situations may not be as bad as you

Teachers create the climate

That you have to trust, you have to agree that God has brought you here basically. It's part of the journey in your life and your child's life. You have to trust that you're in the right place, believe. We've had nothing but support from the teachers to the after-care teachers, to the staff. Everyone has been very, very accommodating. (Parent)

There was multiple times that this teacher and I didn't see eye to eye at all, but I had the most respect for this teacher because I knew that she wanted the best for my daughter. (Parent)

And while I completely disagreed multiple times with what I was hearing from my daughter and when I was hearing from the [teacher], it's not matching right, I knew there was a level of trust in me that just knew, trusting in God, trusting in our environment, trusting where we were, that it was okay. (Parent)

More than a couple times, I sat down with his teacher last year with challenges and every time she'd start with prayer. That's just really good. (Parent)

Support for each other exists

I'm picking it [a new subject area] up easy, you know, but I needed to [use a program], so in the middle of the summer [a teacher] helped me set that all up and get that moving and she did not have to do that. (Staff)

But at the elementary school and with most of the staff that I have dealt with at the high school it has been a very trusting—I've been able to come to you and ask for things I need and I have not found—I found it really supportive, even in situations where I was wrong. Most people are able to say, 'hey, you should probably rethink that.' (Staff)

think they are, give us some room to do that. So that was interesting and good for everybody. (Staff)

Not always agreeing is part of understanding

And while I completely disagreed multiple times with what I was hearing from my daughter and when I was hearing from the school, it's not matching right, I knew there was a level of trust in me that just knew, trusting in God, trusting in our environment, trusting where we were, that it was okay. And all of the frustration, all of the challenge that we were walking through was supposed to be there to help produce the things that needed to be produced and to help my daughter and I and our family to grow. (Parent)

My understanding of a supportive environment based on trust is that even when it doesn't make sense, even when I don't fully agree with all the details, I have an underlying trust that we're where we're supposed to be and that we're in the right place to grow. (Parent)

We would not always agree and there were definitely difficult discussions that happened. But deep down we know that they're there for our kids. Even if we didn't agree particularly, we knew that overall there were people that were there. (Parent)

There was multiple times that this teacher and I didn't see eye to eye at all, but I had the most respect for this teacher because I knew that she wanted the best for my daughter. (Parent)

I don't have this perspective that everything is going to be perfect 'cause it's a Christian school. That's just silly. We're all still human beings. There is a trust that if all of us have our lives surrendered to Christ, the Christian aspect is there. (Parent)

But at the elementary school and with most of the staff that I have dealt with at the high school it has been a very trusting—I've been able to come to you and ask for things I need and I have not found—I found it really supportive, even in situations where I was wrong. Most people are able to say, 'hey, you should probably rethink that.' (Staff)

What is your perception of how [SCHOOL NAME] demonstrates a trusting climate?

Teachers

But most teachers we've been involved in with they truly care about our kids, they love their kids and they want the best for them. (Board)

Well, as part of that I think it is that it's being in a more intimate school there's kids can confide in the teachers more, generally speaking than probably other schools (Board)

Teachers are the front line of defense for this perception of trust, especially for the students, that's who they are going to have the most engagement with and they may of some with other staff, administration, but it's going to primary going to be through the teachers (Board)

Part of our mission is that it's a school that partners with Christian families so as in my family happens to be way more my wife than me, but she has lots of interactions with the teachers too, so there certainly is some part of perception is reality thing, but we have first-hand experience, but most of that is going to come through what we hear through our children. (Board)

But there was a trust that I see my children feel with the faculty, that they trust them enough to say, hey, I want to bounce this off of you or run this by you, or can I talk to you about this. That means a lot to me to know that my kids feel that way. (Parent)

I have been at [School Name] just a short time but I have never heard a teacher talking about a student in my presence in any negative way. (Parent)

[The Resource Teacher] said that help will follow them all the way through the high school. (Parent)

I think the students here know they can go to almost any teacher with a problem. I mean all the teachers are open to talk to. They love a student to come in with a problem be it academic or personal. (Staff)

At the upper levels in high school all of our religion classes are segregated, gender specific.

Relationships

They had some pretty close relationships with teachers who were also mentors to them through certain issues in life (Board)

It's just another personal relationship that they had outside of their parents that they could confide in. And coaches, they have had coaches that they could do that with too. (Board)

Part of our mission is that it's a school that partners with Christian families so as in my family happens to be way more my wife than me, but she has lots of interactions with the teachers too, so there certainly is some part of perception is reality thing, but we have first-hand experience, but most of that is going to come through what we hear through our children. (Board)

[Responding to NOT providing a supportive climate] And at least from my take that was one of the things when the campus pastor position was created, and it was like hey if somebody gets sick you gotta lead the charge. (Board)

Because we have had other cases where a young woman was paralyzed and then came back and the school rallied and did free tuition and photos and prayers and another kid whose dad was dead and came back to life after 40 minutes of no breathing, nothing, and everybody rallied and so we have done sometimes extraordinarily well wrapping arms around folks. (Board)

My trust comes from the fact that, if there is a mistake or just even a misunderstanding that occurs, that our principal understands that there's mistakes and understands that there is going to be things that happen and doesn't necessarily get crazy with you and allows you—I'm not sure if I'm articulating that well—but allows you to make a mistake and then still you can trust him that that relationship will not be scared. (Staff)

We have girls and boys. My colleague and I this year asked if we could make a change with that and combine in the upper grades not have it be gender specific. They said pretty much you know your students if you think this is the best thing for them and this will work, we trust you in letting you run this. And they did. So that's an example of [administration] being trusting of us.

But it was interesting because that parent ended up talking with me [elementary teacher] and then ended up kind of turning and becoming—became very accommodating and started trusting the situation more. And so I wasn't sure what her background was, if they came from a public school—it was part of that whole merge thing, they were not from our school in the first place, that was her first time with our school, her first year and so then that was the second half. So teaching the parents to learn to trust as well, like you know we really are watching what your children are doing let us decide some of these—like these situations may not be as bad as you think they are, give us some room to do that. So that was interesting and good for everybody.
(Staff)

Communication

My perception is that it's extremely trustworthy. Like I said before, quite a few conversations and I never had a concern that it might get talked about or get out there or be gossiped about or anything like that. (Parent)

I have been at Living Word just a short time but I have never heard a teacher talking about a student in my presence in any negative way.
(Parent)

As I understand protocol was, go to the person you have a problem with, work it out with them, and then if that's not the end result, then bring it up to me, being the administration/staff or whoever, but I found a level of trust in that.
(Parent)

I'd say anything we've ever had a problem with, they generally take care of it. We discuss what happened and it gets resolved. (Parent)

Support

But I knew in my heart where I was supposed to go [to the administration]. We got to that spot where they let us in, we met with them, and it was really wonderful how [principal] came alongside us. Support, so much support from him. He made us feel comfortable again. He made us feel safe again. (Parent)

[financial difficulty]. When we've had trouble in the past, when I've had to reach out to one of the staff members in accounting which makes you want to puke. Hi, can you put off my deduction or let someone into your personal struggle that you don't want someone to know about. I have never been treated with more respect. (Parent)

So if my son gets help here [Resource class], then when he gets to middle school they will have all of that information, that his needs-his special things that he needs, that will duplicate through middle school and into high school. That part, is helpful, as far as that is concerned (Parent)

But I love that I have supportive [department] chairs in my world. It makes a big difference, it makes a big difference. (Staff)

But where I see this question going is just more so where do I feel my support coming from and I think that there's just a bit of a unique situation as far as my life within this particular establishment that did not start typically, and it was a result of a merger and so I have had a fun time acquiring some trust. (Staff)

That's when you do have this where do you go with that and then your support is the next step which is the principal and whether or not you can trust them you know you've taken that issues, you've taken it to the next step and you can trust whoever that principle was to take it the next step. (Staff)

But the other side to that [regarding Matthew 18] is the administration is the one that started that, there the ones that started it, there the ones that enforce it. You know, sometimes when you don't want it to follow it. But at the same time you know that I think it is really supportive thing (Staff)

The principal has, he addresses that at parent night to help parents be respectful of teacher time too, so that's very supportive of us, but also because no teacher will tell a parent, 'Oh I can't talk to you right now, I have to make copies'. I think teachers are supportive of parents and students in that they will take the time to do that and then the principal is supportive of the teachers in acknowledging that they're not going to tell you no, but please don't put them in that position. (Staff)

[Concerning a principal] And we're encouraged that if there's anything that we [think he needs to] know right away send it to him so he's aware of the situation so that if they—a parent does approach him that he knows what's happening. (Staff)

[Because of Matthew 18] they [administrators] can support their teachers that way. Just as she said then they aren't caught off guard and they can say, 'oh, I already know that situation'. (Staff)

A parent misunderstood something that I said and I won't go into it all because it was an abuse situation... my principal had my back and I was able to talk to him and say what really happened here and I could say I'm not really sure what happen on her end because she took it out of context...Well the structure held and it did, but the parent did come back around and came and talked to me. And they had healing to do and it's just one of those awful situations. (Staff)

Matthew 18 Principle

And I think when you brought up Matthew: 18 that was so incredibly important because of the fact that that was one of the first things I saw as far as consistency, the consistency helps me with the trust. (Staff)

The consistency with that [Matthew 18 Principle] helped me be like, 'I can depend on this and trust that this is going to occur'. If I go to a superior and say, 'you know, I'm having an issues with a student'. I will know what is going to take place. (Staff)

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And our principal will always—if a parent—as long as if they catch him off guard then he obviously can't, he will put them off, talk to the staff member to get the story and then send the parent back to the staff member. (Staff)

Tell me of a time, (if there is one), when/where you have seen that [SCHOOL NAME] has NOT provided a supportive and trusting climate?

Judgement/punitive/ legalistic

This young female was made to kneel in the front, walk to the front of the class, and made to kneel in front of the class to show that her skirt was too short (Board)

For whatever reason it seems to be the Bible classes ironically where there's a lot of judgment I guess it feels like, condemnation (Board)

Consistency

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Embarrassment

Trust would have hugely eroded because they are basically making a spectacle out of that particular student (Board)

Brand new teacher and these kids are talking in the back of the room and he picks my son up and. (Board)

We've experienced that from teachers too. Very punitive, more than mild, your action is in your heart and one mess up and you know, the sky is falling and you aren't even a Christian and it's a little over the top. (Board)

As one of the other guys said it's punitive, it's not about the heart, and it was excessive. And I've seen that multiple times in the school, again I would say there is more love; there is more grace in this school (Board)

And there was a particular coach in particular who is no longer in the school who was that way, very punitive, very harsh, and those people generally don't stick around very long. (Board)

And that is my lack of trust in this school because I trust that the other parents at the school will raise up their kids in a way similar to the way we are raising up our kids to be kind and polite, considerate. But they're not, they're mean. (Parent)

[Police investigation] I don't know if it was necessarily anybody's fault, whether they did or didn't know what was going on. But at some point, she was blamed for something, had some threat at school, and she was interrogated in some room with several policemen without calling me, for several hours. Door closed, locked in a room by herself, like a 15 or 16 year old girl scared to death, as they're grilling her about whatever was going on. I just couldn't believe it, I about lost my mind. They didn't want to talk to anybody.... But then they didn't want to talk to me about what happened afterwards. I was looked at as a bad person because I questioned them and I was upset. For instance, when I called the put me on the speaker and they started asking me questions. I knew I was speaker and somebody else was listening to me. I said, First off, include me on what's going on, don't leave me in the dark. That was rather upsetting. (Parent)

Because they [teacher] didn't want her bringing home all of the books because she would lose them or something, whatever, so I would buy a duplicate book on my like ten bucks or whatever a reading book. So you know the night before, if we knew this is where they were she could read those

Last year, I asked the teacher and the teacher said your child needs to come to me and let me know what's going on [bullying]. And I said, my child's not gonna do that, because then it could be ten times worse. No child wants to be called a tattletale. (Parent)

So you know the night before, if we knew this is where they were she could read those ahead of time, get to class, she's already read it. Then when she reads it there she doesn't feel as intimidated and I didn't have to get her a tutor. So maybe that's what I kinda did to help along with—I know your resources are important, your books and stuff you don't want to lose them. At the same point, for her, it was important to read it ahead of time so she had some confidence walking into the day not being like oh my gosh I don't know what this means, or I can't do this or whatever. (Parent)

ahead of time, get to class, she's already read it.
(Parent)

When a student tells me something, sometimes I am hesitant to tell an administrator because an administrator has to enforce the rules. (Staff)

[Feeling like being watched by the administration]
I kinda want to say, 'you hired me, I signed a contract, I don't know what the problem is'. So yeah, there's a lack of trust that I am going to do the things that I signed in my contract. (Staff)

So it's problematic in the sense that it exhibits a lack of trust in that I know you signed this and you said you were gonna do these things, but I just want to make sure you remember. (Staff)

A lot of times teachers feel beat up after staff meetings. Like it's more like this is what your are doing wrong, this is what you need to do better, this is what you need to change. (Staff)

Lack of relationship

And he was out of school for a number of months, had to miss classes and do home stuff, whatever and there was no calls, there was no visits, there was no email, and it got almost to a deafening silence where we got to be like, where is everybody? (Board)

My kid remembers that two to three month period where he missed all of school and Christian school, but there wasn't a lot of support. So in his case that eroded some of the trust (Board)

But then at least in our situation we fell through the cracks and maybe there were other times where this was like, well we could do better to support people who have a mid term or long term sickness that gets them out of all the stuff that they were involved in, especially in this environment where we're trying to be Christ-like. (Board)

Since I have been in the school for 15, 16 years it's definitely changed in that we still try to partner with parents but I don't feel like parents necessarily partner with us. And I feel like there's been a lack of trust from home. (Staff)

Individual

But I have been a little disappointed and I would say it is a lack of trust in the individual, but it's trusting that [School Name] is doing everything as much as they can, to provide the best education possible. (Parent)

So I don't trust at all right now that [School Name] is doing everything that they can to make sure their teachers [know what they need] but I don't believe that the teachers are getting [proper information] I don't feel that the communication happened from last year's teacher to this year's teacher to fully know who [the teacher] was getting in her class. (Parent)

You met with [Principal] who said, 'we'll figure out how your kid learns and we'll adapt for that kid.' And I don't fully trust that that's happening in the classroom. I trust that the administration would like that, but I don't yet see that happening. (Parent)

I think that you have to have [stay on top as a parent] —each teacher is different. Some are more willing, I know, are more willing to work with your child whatever that need is, and some just don't have the time because maybe there's more kids in the class that have that same

[resource class] that they can't take that extra time to teach that way to your child. I found that last year—this year's better. It goes with each teacher. (Parent)

We worked it out, well one of the things is we started selectively using email, which was a thing that was encouraged but we had to do that for some things that we weren't hiding but we didn't want it to go that way and there was kinda another element of when that was copied and we kinda dealt with it later. So that was the only thing there that we were worried, we understood why the teacher would do that, but it kinda violated a trust profile the other thought was. (Parent)

Overall, after finishing that year with that teacher we still feel that way [blessed to be at school], we had those words, we had those elements of not trust, but we also kinda carried that over as like okay, if we have the overall perception of trust at [School Name], know there are going to be times, but you have to take everything as a whole. (Parent)

No problem with the principal side of the issues, it was always specifically the teacher and the other [teacher] in that grade. We had no issues with either and so it was one of those where we just did not trust his grade [level] teacher at all and then even though it sort of subsided as the year went on. (Parent)

We knew that this really is a good place and we did trust that we could get through this [not trusting the one teacher] and this year has been great. So you know, but that was our issue with trust was with the teacher (Parent)

I think sometimes it's more of when other families don't sometimes have the same values you have and your kids are interacting with them and influencing it creates a lack of trust with other families within the school system. I've seen a lot of that. (Parent)

And if a teacher sees an issue with it ahead of time, they need to make us aware of it. And that is what makes me not trust the teachers and the staff. (Parent)

[Daughter was bullied] It's put a bad taste in our mouth you know? I mean we really, my husband and I love this school, and we are very supportive of this school. (Parent)

Kids are pretty good at hiding stuff. And I don't say that to belittle anything, but to say it's hard to answer that question and to know whether or not it's some of it is the faculty could do better and some of it is kids are just cruel. (Parents)

Communicating

It's not a real strong feeling, but a lack of follow through on communication does not instill trust in an environment when you ask for help and with a special need or something and you have to keep asking to get it, then that demonstrates—I lose trust that way. It's minor, I'm not saying there is a bad job being done, but it's a way that trust would be harmed. (Parent)

Really I can only think of one or some other minor things where there was a time where there wasn't the element of trust, and it's interesting what's brought up is not communicating, where really the core of this was over communicating. It was—the teacher basically the short of it is, communicating to the teacher very openly with a lot of details and in their request to kinda over communicate and keep the principal in the loop, they would reply and bring the principal into the email chain. (Parent)

We worked it out, well one of the things is we started selectively using email, which was a thing that was encouraged but we had to do that for some things that we weren't hiding but we didn't want it to go that way and there was kinda another element of when that was copied and we kinda dealt with it later. So that was the only thing there that we were worried, we understood why the teacher would do that, but it kinda violated a trust profile the other thought was. (Parent)

So, there is a downside to the Matthew:18 principle and that downside is that you can get the impression that things are happening behind closed doors. There can be problems where the Matthew:18 is used as a way to not have to communicate. (Staff)

Education

But the other piece that pops into my head for lack of trust, is again on the educational side, is—my perception is that my daughter sits in a classroom a lot to learn and I don't know if that's normal across the board, if that's just because it's private school. (Parent)

But just I think the value of education has decreased and that I don't know sometimes it feels like you are battling parents to serve their child you know. And to develop character, and responsibility, and respect, and accountability, and all of that and parents are really—I mean everybody says that kids are entitled and all of that so I feel like there has definitely been a shift in—like I feel like we've tried to keep the mission the same, now we are butting heads with parents rather than—you know it's going to take all of us to get this kid so that they can be responsible, and respectful, and God fearing human beings. (Staff)

When I don't have the information or I don't feel like I have enough information about certain things, or I don't feel like they are being answered completely, that makes me feel untrusting. (Staff)

Then if it is coming from that administration where I am not necessarily getting the information or I'm not feeling supported there, then I will have people—parent's and staff—coming to me that I feel—well, first of all I don't have that trust ...the trickle-down theory. (Staff)

I would say though on the communication side of that, I can see where decisions are made without asking for input that affect a lot of people that with a little bit of input they would have made just a little bit different of a choice making it easier for everybody. (Staff)

And that communication is huge in that because there's no communication going up to make the decision, and then the decision gets made, and then we are told that a change is happening but because like—I will do anything you ask me to if you get me on board. (Staff)

I would say at our campus the expectation is you're going to walk in and it's going to be what new project do we have today? And it's alright, we are doing this and go into department groups, we aren't going to give you enough time to do it, without actually explaining why or explaining the rationale behind it and with very little input coming back up towards it. And so you end up not trusting that their making good decisions because they seem fast decisions. (Staff)

It goes back to communication I'm a big on communication, but there wasn't a lot of explanation, there wasn't a lot of confirmation, it was a little vague when things did occur as far as when the merger occurred. I believe a lot of the trust issues came from that because they didn't feel like they were being given all the information, or enough information to really understand what was even occurring at that point in time. And so when some of these situations arose where you know, should I trust this teacher or not trust the teacher. It was almost like they weren't being given the information necessary (Staff)

Matthew 18 Principle

The other thing that I would add is I have seen evidence of not using the Matthew:18 and it's somewhat destructive at our site. And an example would be, in a broad sense, not going directly to the person involved, but skirting around that or going above. And it's been very detrimental to relationships with that parent possibly, or things like that. It has caused some problems there because there's no trust that an administrator would have a teachers back in a classroom setting type of things so. (Staff)

And it's, I'm very aware of [the school not supporting Matt. 18] too and it's terrible when that happens. (Staff)

It's always because your hands become tied. There's nothing you can do [when Matt. 18 is not supported]. (Staff)

And to add to that, for me, I guess that's why I'm kinda sitting here hesitating because I've dealt with that [the school not supporting Matt. 18] at the high school level a little bit. Like get the [high school] like the [elementary]. (Staff)

As a parent I've dealt with that [the school not supporting Matt. 18], so I'm having a hard time. (Staff)

So, there is a downside to the Matthew:18 principle and that downside is that you can get the impression that things are happening behind closed doors. There can be problems where the Matthew:18 is used as a way to not have to communicate. (Staff)

Consider your original expectations when you came to [SCHOOL NAME]. Compare those expectations to the reality of your experiences now that you are here at [SCHOOL NAME]. In the time since you have been part of the school, is there a noticeable change in the climate? If so please describe.

Evolved over time

I had an unrealistic expectation of the Christian environment when we came. (Board)

So my expectation was high, that bubble was burst, but it is interesting the original founding of the school was fairly legalistic, so there was some of that sentiment in the early years of the school, that has changed and the school is growing and is

Not enough support

But there's like a trust in professionalism that like our administrators trust us to build our own curriculum, run our own classroom, but sometimes that trust is so much that you don't get the support that you need. And it kinda comes across as the you guys are professional and we trust you and we trust your judgment, and I'm like yes, but I don't [trust my judgement] so could I get support. (Staff)

When you say they trust you with so much, which they do, it's more like how much can they squeeze out of you. It's like can you do this, or can you do that? But in the same time the people who are on the ground doing it aren't necessarily involved in decisions for setting things up, where it's just a select few decide for everyone. (Staff)

Matched Expectations

I know the kids can go to any college from here and do well, I see that with [my daughter] she's gone on from here and done well. Kind of a very close match to my expectations. (Board)

I'd say it's been consistent with the expectations we had when we came to the school. That was that it was going to be a Christ centered

becoming, I guess what I would call more main line Evangelical, non-denominational school, but even that legalism did exist in the high school to some degree several years ago. (Board)

We change our understanding of what our expectations and disappointments were as well as I think the climate has changed a little bit, but I can't, I don't think there has been any monumental changes in the climate. (Board)

Similar to this gentleman's comments over here, that you know I think that we are trying to transition to being less legalistic, or trying to be more grace driven. (Board)

From my perception, yeah there is probably a spectrum between those two ends [prestigious institution and grass roots institution], but I think there is a lot of unrest, I think that's a climate change we have seen. (Board)

You know I think there's normal kid stuff that goes on, this and that and the other, but for the most part a solid education and a good environment for them to be in. I hope that's—you know changed at the Chapel level and everything is very recent, but so far so good, it seems like there is way more resources than there used to be, probably just based on the population. So I think it's changed for the better for sure. (Parent)

I think the school is going through an adolescent phase. I think that we were a small school and we operated really well as a small school because we were a family and when everyone knows everyone it's easy to do, it's easy to trust when you know every single person in the building. But we are headed to being a big school, and it's like we see where we need to go, and we are trying, and I give a lot of credit for the trying. (Staff)

I see that on both hands, like I see how far we've come, and I remember being a student, I remember the staff struggling, I remember back then. But I also know like we have grown a lot, but there's this tension of I need more, but we are trying and it's just not there completely. (Staff)

I saw how much the teachers and the faculty and the staff actually cared for students, not for their behavior or that they measure up to certain

environment, teaching the approach, the general philosophy, attempting to live out that life by the teachers and the faculty and everybody else was all about being like Jesus and bringing Jesus into the classroom. So I think that from that sense it has, I think the expectations have pretty much been consistent the whole time we have been her. (Board)

[After coming from a denominational school to the study school] And so that is what we experienced, it's what we perceived being and it's what we wanted to experience and we hadn't received that somewhere else and so it was a better fit for us in terms of the kind of Christian climate we wanted our kids to be in. (Board)

I feel like they felt, our school in general, at least our administration and staff, I think they overall have our best interest at heart, but stuff still happens... but overall it's pretty comparable we are satisfied on that end of the scale. (Parent)

And I would say my expectation, and this is flat out the reason why we decided to send our children to a Christian school, is because God is in every subject. At the public school it would get no God, rather they would get the world thrown at them (Parent)

standards, but actually cared for them. Like I had my now new colleagues, former teachers, coming and asking me about former classmates and how were they doing and how could they pray for them and updates on their lives. And I didn't think they cared at all. And then also in the past five years or so I think that the school has been able to own its role as an interdenominational school better. (Staff)

We've never caught up with our growth. It's continued, it's elusive. We grow, we're behind, we grow, we're behind. (Staff)

And one thing I attached to that is changing the doctoral statement. I think that there is a little more allowing of different views. (Staff)

Because I don't think the school actually knows what it looks like to be an interdenominational school, it's a challenge that we are constantly facing. And so the flip side of that is that I can tell you the same stories of these are ways that's it's failing, but from a ten-year perspective I see an improvement there. (Staff)

I came to the school seventeen years ago and the way the school has changed. It is not like it used to like. I became friends with all my student's parents. It was just like the family atmosphere and I miss that a lot. The closeness with the parents, just how involved they were. You know now parents are involved, maybe more parents are working now, maybe that's part of it. I do miss that family atmosphere, like I feel like this school really is my family, like the teachers here and they've gotten me through some really dark times and the support and the prayer ...teachers gave me their sick days so I could still get paid. So I feel a family with my colleagues, but not necessarily feel that closeness with the parents, overall like it used to be. But I'm in a different position now too, so maybe that's why. (Staff)

The shift has been in your relationship with the parents. But it could be viewed—like what [Teacher] said that we've grown so much that that's obviously going to changed. (Staff)

Easier to be close to 85 families than it is with 300. I'm making up numbers but the growing pains are right. (Staff)

More resources

It seems like there is way more resources than there used to be, probably just based on the population. So I think it's changed for the better for sure. (Parents)

Overall I feel like the educational standards here, for the most part, there are some areas that I lack trust in which would be kind of like the STEM area (Parent)

I realized that they [children] have actually gotten a better education than I expected, gotten more opportunities than I expected, and it does seem like things like STEM are small growth, but I feel like they are on target. (Parent)

I can tell you a big change. I can tell you a noticeable change and that is principal support. When I came, this is your classroom and you do it like you want to. It was called, my name flavored classroom. And we never had, I won't say we never had in services, but I don't remember any, but there was never anything to help us grow as teachers. No seminars, no conventions, no people coming in to speak to us, it was like on your own. (Staff)

And while we're growing, we don't have all the resources or the support staff that you know a public school might offer. (Staff)

Core Values

I was looking for a good Christian school that would be in line with my values, that was the most important thing. I wasn't concerned with the education at that time, I just wanted a Christian environment, and to get as much as she could out of it. And even though I have seen so many changes since I have been here, we've had a lot of struggles, we've had issues with kids and families and things, we're growing, we're bigger than we've ever been, we've experienced so much growth and change, the core values of our school have remained the same. (Parent)

I love that for those core issues, at least from my perception, those remain the same. We are all still focused on God first and foremost, and that is just awesome to me. (Parent)

In the two years that I've been here, my expectations are about the same. Climate is about the same, from my perspective. (Parent)

So making that transition [from another Christian school] in knowing that the values were the same, that was huge. And then realizing that the education was better than I was expecting as well. (Parent)

So far I feel like it's the same when I came in, they're not just stuck in their ways as a school. You know, they've got their values and then they are like how can we improve, and I feel like that's still an open and moldable thing. (Parent)

What she said about the core values, it has stayed. But you know it's like, this school, there are kids—parents—families that sacrificed so much to put their kids through this school and that is what brings unity. (Parent)

You know, not everything has been perfect by any means, but as a whole. And I have the privilege of knowing some of the board members and they are just Godly people who hold those values and have the same expectations and it's just awesome to see. (Parent)

[School] shifted from enrollment—from character and the quality and the holding to our values to

Not Perfect

So yeah, it's been great—and I'm not saying everything is perfect, I've had my bumps, I've had teachers I didn't agree with, I've gone to the higher level with some things, but that's because I fight for my kids. So that's my—I love the climate and I feel like if I have a problem or a question I do feel like I can approach whoever and be heard. (Parent)

Now, it's not perfect, it's far from perfect. There is no perfect Churches, there is no perfect anything, I taught my kids that everyday, it's not perfect. But they are still fighting. They still are trying, always trying to achieve and aim for greatness at this school. (Parent)

You know, not everything has been perfect by any means, but as a whole. And I have the privilege of knowing some of the board members and they are just Godly people who hold those values and have the same expectations and it's just awesome to see. (Parent)

let's grow our school and let's bring more people in. (Staff)

In-service

I don't think the training [In-service] has been all that in my personal opinion (Staff)

When we started having these in services it was more about first year just getting ready for accreditation, so it wasn't like we were developing, we were doing assignments basically. (Staff)

As much as everybody hates [in-service], I didn't have any idea what anyone else was doing in any other classroom. I didn't know what the grade below me did or what the grade above me expected. (Staff)

[Concerning In-service] It's been a few years since I've been in school, but I try to learn as much as I can on my own, but really things that will change me and make me better, like I want to learn, I'm hungry to learn as much as I can. (Staff)

Well I feel like we have more in services, but I don't know how well they are used to make us better teachers. (Staff)

And so it's like oh, I need more support, let's have more in services, I like that, that's good, but then half the in services aren't useful. Or, they are geared towards projects we have to accomplish and not towards actual pedagogy. (Staff)

And now we have a lot of in services, which it appears to have the goal of the administration getting us to a certain point. So there's not a sense that it's really for me, it's so that they met their goals. (Staff)

The goal of in services is professional development, it is professional development, not necessarily accreditation. (Staff)

I feel like our in services are very theory based, they are trying to hit... I almost feel like, I'm sitting in one of my master classes again, they want us—they are drilling that Blooms' taxonomy or it's the Curriculum Trek. This is how we have to put it into curriculum to make sure that you are making your assessments line up, or that your tests are lining up with your [School] expectations

which are exceeding the state level expectations, which you wrote yourself but they have to be exceeding what the state does. (Staff)

I think that would help it shift if from the view that in services are for the institution to the in services are for the teacher because we are all teachers and we all learn—I don't know about you, but I did that Madeline Hunter lesson plan until my eyeballs probably bled, you activate prior knowledge, you model, you do guided instruction, and then you do the practice. And our in services should do the same thing. They should model for us, and then we should be provided time to actually do it and so when it stays high in the theory it drives me crazy, and then when you get the flip side when it is all we are not going to explain to you how to do this, but go do it. (Staff)

Here's a very specific, maybe I'm the only person here who struggles with this, and I've gotten a lot of feedback from teachers, we are working really hard on Biblical World View and how that looks in a classroom. Well, in my classroom that is going to look very different in arts and in a language than that's going to look in your classroom, or that's going to look in the 5th grade classroom, or that's what going to look in a science classroom in the high school. And so I would like more—instead of, from my experience of our Biblical World View it was more of a somebody came in and gave us a lecture, I would like more opportunities to hear some different ideas on how to do this, now you do it. (Staff)

And just like what you said, there is no time for collaboration. Like I think that we have so much support available to us, but we don't have time to tap into it because there's not time for us to brainstorm or you know collaborate on all the upper elementary or the departments you guys do, and maybe they do and just no one invites me. I think that, hey we are teaching on—because they are science and they all teach on the same thing—we are teaching on plants and all the teachers get together and they brainstorm together and pull in special teachers and say well hey we could do this in computer, we could do this in art, like there is no time to feed off of each other in doing that and build the support to share ideas and creativity. (Staff)

You have a family atmosphere here, we have a family atmosphere there, and often at in service we are all thrown together and put at a table by somebody's design and asked to be a community. I think it's very difficult. (Staff)

We all in our own building have trust issues with different people, let's not throw more people into that mix and create a tense uncomfortable environment and I just think that is a little bit of a problem for the trust issues. I think it would get a lot more trust and a lot relationship and a lot more family atmosphere. (Staff)

But if the goal [of in-service] is to instill trust and relationships and do that interpersonal kinda good stuff then it needs to be something that is not so formal or test oriented. (Staff)

Consolidations/merger

But I feel like when I came in it was stable and we trusted people, everybody, and everybody was really a very tight community and then we kinda fell apart. It was like there was a little explosion and there were huge trust issues for two to three years. [After the consolidation] It got really tough between parents and teachers. (Staff)

I kinda feel like this year, we are coming back around from where I started. I feel good about where we are heading now, where I didn't feel very good about where we were heading a couple of years ago [concerning consolidation]. (Staff)

Because I think when a lot of those big mergers happened, it was like it all hit the fan and we kinda realized something has to change, something has to happen. And so like—so I've seen different things be put into place to help create that trust again. Like a year ago we started doing a mentorship program at the high school for new teachers, because there is this idea that you need the support you need to be folded into the community. It didn't work that great, but the fact that we tried it was a really big deal, talking about the new people coming in from the merger. It was really rough, because they tried to hit the ground running. (Staff)

Change In culture

And one thing I attached to that is changing the doctoral statement. I think that there is a little more allowing of different views. (Staff)

And that I think that the clientele that we have now is very different from when I first started here in the late 90's (Staff)

There was a much more intense interview process, and statements that students and parents had to make to attend our school. And now, that's not the case and so the students that are now in our system are there, it seems to me, so that we can grow our numbers, not for the character of the student and the family. (Staff)

[School] shifted from enrollment—from character and the quality and the holding to our values to let's grow our school and let's bring more people in. (Staff)

There has been a big change. Like back in the day when my children came you had to be there to get in line to wait or you would be put on a waiting list you couldn't get in, and now you know where it's like we are three students under budget and there's the pressure of we've got to get—you know and I appreciate the incentive for the enrollment, the monetary incentive, but it's pressure too. (Staff)

And so he's [principal] changed that over the course of the past year or two, and now what he does is after school he takes like an hour or two after school and he walks around the school building to all of the teachers that are in their rooms after school, and if you are not busy he will just walk in and sit down and just talk a while. And that's actually been, that particular thing, has been the best thing in gaining my trust because it makes me feel like I have an ear. It was like this really bad period and they are slowly building things back in. (Staff)

There was just so much emotions involved with that. And then with the lack of communication and then you know the fact that it happened in the first place. You know I had no intention of forming relationships and being an adjusting individual. And then it's completely come around. In fact, there are so many things that we do here that we did not do in other places that just I'm like why in the world didn't we do that. You know? It has just come completely around the other way, you know to where I came in completely not trusting and suspecting. (Staff)

[The change reflects] the interests of the institution versus perhaps the interests of the family, or the interests of the students, or the interests of the faculty and staff. (Staff)

I think the one thing we've seen this year start to happen, it's going to get worse, is parent involvement. We depend heavily down here on volunteers in elementary and we almost could not have hot lunch this year because we did not have volunteers and I have seen that across the board for volunteers, they just they say no, they won't do it and I am curious if it has to do with the type of people that are coming in? (Staff)

Everything's changed. People have to work to pay for their kids to come in. (Staff)

It's really where like I do think it's growing pains because the problem that we have now is, so you've got we are post-recession, more people are working, we grew a size and then all the sudden less people could afford private school and so now we are trying to get as many people as possible, and so you have the institution going oh no what do we do, but then also trying to deal with the size. And so you even have the problem of now we have the appearance of a big school and a big school can provide things, so volunteer, no you should provide that. (Staff)

I'm paying this much money, you should provide it. And so there's a problem of like we don't know what our personality as a school is. So you get a problem of trusting, like parents don't know...like we are having an identity crisis. (Staff)

It's volunteers versus not volunteers. And so I think we are probably at that point. And I think parents do pay to send their kids to a private school and they think why should I have to volunteer? I mean I've even had students say I don't know why I have to clean tables at lunch my parents pay for me to go here, they aren't paying for me to come here and work. (Staff)

And that would have been entirely different when we were small and we felt like a family and so how do you make that family feel—like I have 87 students, how do I become family with 87 families? That's hard. (Staff)

[Parents] are paying so their expectations are different too coming in. And while we're growing, we don't have all the resources or the support staff that you know a public school might offer. (Staff)

We've never caught up with our growth. It's continued, it's elusive. We grow, we're behind, we grow, we're behind. (Staff)

What--Is there anything else you would like to share (concerning climate, trust) that was NOT asked or suggested on the surveys or in these questions?

Faith and trust

When you look at this whole, you gotta kinda step back and understand that the school probably really shouldn't exist from the perspective of that we don't have any donors and we don't have any source of income other than tuition and while we are in a nice area, we are not in an affluent area. (Board)

So it's like the whole thing is you know, God speaks things into existence and creates things out of nothing and that's kinda how this school came about, it all came out of faith and trust and that as we go forward we spend everything that we get (Board)

Sometimes our operating cash looks almost like zero or negative so how we do next year it's faith, it's trust. It's like we have to trust that this is all going to come together, so it is really just nothing but trust (Board)

That I don't think anyone is going to sit around here and say this is a perfect school, no issues right? We all pray, we all sin, people make mistakes, people step on people's toes, it happens, I do think there is a level of trust and respect for the school board and the administration that they are going to do the right thing. Is everything perfect? No. Does everything go the way parents want it to go? No. But somebody said the school's been around a long time, there's lots of reasons you would think that we wouldn't be around (Board)

Communication

Often times its just a lack of proactive communication. Many times if they are just to some degree, like tonight is a good example, if there had just been proactive communication that both helps build trust and diffuses a flare up of reactions. (Board)

And so I think because we don't normally have folks at the meetings I'm hoping it's not simply apathy, but a sense and a sign that they are trusting, that we are kind of in the right direction (Board)

But we have all been in other meetings, whether here or in work settings where you can get an angry mob and there isn't trust and it doesn't matter what you say or how you say it, but in this case, at least tonight and in the fact that we are not seeing a bunch of people normally coming out I think there is that system and side of trust. (Board)

I think a forum or feedback group, or whatever official name is here, might be very good for the different areas to get the parental input. (Parent)

You see there is inside the multiple hats and problems of communication like there is also a problem of knowing whose role is what. So, if you are a department chair, if you are an admin person, whatever your position is because we wear so many hats it's hard to know who to go to for things. So like I just got a masters and I didn't know who to tell that to. Right, but I wouldn't have known that. I emailed the superintended, because start at the top, right? One thing that has actually always bothered me is we have an HR

person and the person who is in charge of that—like the person who took the HR hat has switched every year and this year it's been split, the hat has been cut into little tiny pieces and passed around. (Staff)

I knew that getting my masters I would get a pay raise, but I had only seen a pay table once, a long long time ago, and no one could show me one. Actually, no one still has given me an actual number, I'm still just assured that that's coming, which is fine, but that takes a lot of trust, right? Like that takes me trusting the—you know and it's really easy for me to switch out of my family Christian school mode into outside business mode and think, no I want it in writing. (Staff)

And that's an example of the problem [HR communication] of like different hats being tossed around and not knowing who is in charge of what, things get lost. (Staff)

I think another trust issues aside from that, this is totally different, that I have seen in talking to parents on both levels, is that down in the elementary level it is like a family and you've got the teacher who is like the mom of that classroom and we mother those kids, and then all the sudden they go to 6th grade and they are in middle school and it's like communication goes away. You know? And maybe down here it's communication overload because they have the newsletters they have all these different things, and then they get up there and they have all these different teachers and I think parents feel a little bit like they don't trust any more because they don't have that one teacher to talk to. (Staff)

Load Equality

There are some people who don't do any of that [extra duties]. So that does build trust, or not build trust, it depletes trust, so I don't know, maybe that's just my tired bitterness that's talking, but I think it should be spread out. (Staff)

I've seen if people who show enthusiasm get asked to do all of the things, and then because they are enthusiastic because they are doing those things, they get asked to do other things as well. If you look at the duty rosters it's the same core 20% of people who are doing most of the duty rosters and then there are these other

teachers that just don't show up on any of the lists. And I can see that dis-balance (Staff)

And it's true of the parents too, its always the same. The same ones are always volunteering. (Staff)

Vitae

James Kent Drury has lived in the metro area of St. Louis, Missouri for more than a decade, and a firm believer in the value of being a life-long learner. After attending and graduating from a private Christian school. He earned a bachelor's degree from Christian Life College. He later obtained his Master of Education in Educational Leadership & Integrated Curriculum and Instruction from Covenant College and now his Doctorate in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Andragogy at Lindenwood University.

James remains passionate about the important role and impact Christian education plays in students and families lives. He wishes to influence other Christian schools through his research in exploring the perception of trust in their schools. How trust is perceived in our schools, whether public or private, is vital to the overall success of the schools.