2022

Examining Culture in Rural High-Poverty Schools

Kassandra E. Champion
South Dakota State University, kniska14@gmail.com

EXAMINING CULTURE IN RURAL HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

BY

KASSANDRA CHAMPION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science

Major in Agricultural Education

South Dakota State University

2022

THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Kassandra Champion

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for

the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are

necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Peter Troy White
Advisor   Date

Jay Trenhaile
Department Head   Date

Nicole Lounsbery, PhD
Director, Graduate School   Date

This dissertation is dedicated to all the teachers who have stepped up and chose to teach in a rural, high-poverty school district. The ability to change the lives of students is the most rewarding part of being a teacher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank The Lord for giving me the strength of learning. I would not be here if it was not for my love of learning. I also want to take time to thank my family. My parents who have always supported my dream in the agricultural industry and in education. To my husband, who has been my biggest supporter and has been my rock when things got hard. To my agricultural teacher I had growing up, thank you for opening the door wide open to this amazing profession. Finally, to all my teachers and mentors who made the choice to join the profession, you are the real superheroes.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

EXAMINING SCHOOL CULTURE IN RURAL HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

KASSANDRA CHAMPION

2022

This study utilized quantitative survey methods to evaluate how rural schools are affected by students living in poverty. There are many attributes to a school's culture. Successful leadership, high-quality teachers, and active students are three of the biggest factors. Schools located within a 265-mile radius from Newell, SD with a school population of less than 600 comprised the population for this study. This area encompassed schools in five states. Schools were contacted, surveyed, and assessed based on quantitative statements and open-ended questions. Considering that a school is dynamic, the high school teachers from four different subjects were all assessed. 58% of the sample agreed that students do not take responsibility for their own learning. The sample also fell below the 4.0 Likert-scale mean in the Collaborative Leadership Construct.

INTRODUCTION

School culture can mean many things to many different people. Educational scholars defined school culture as beliefs, rules, and values that a school has adopted. The culture of the school can have significant impacts on student achievement, teacher professional development, and administrative leadership (Cleveland et al., 2012). The culture of a school varies based on size, location, and teacher quality. Yet, they all have the same components that can lead to a positive or negative culture.

The culture of a school system has the tendencies to be either positive or negative, which can reflect the culture of the community as well. When schools are in communities of poverty does that affect the culture of the school? "Rural school leaders have a responsibility to nurture positive school-community relationships" (Preston & Barnes, 2017, p. 9). Student achievement reflects a school's culture. What does that mean for students who live in poverty? What does this mean for teacher professional development? And how can the administrative leadership help identify the culture of the school (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018)?

The environment that a student grew up in can positively or negatively affect their abilities to be successful. When students have been exposed to adversity, especially those in poverty, many students do not have the resiliency resources needed to be successful and end up in situations that threaten their health (Nurius et al., 2019). The school environment plays a role in a students' academic success as well. When a school has a wholesome culture, the students, teachers, and staff all benefit. "An academically effective school is distinguished by its culture: a structure, process, and climate of values

and norms that channel the staff and students in the direction of successful teaching and learning" (Cleveland et al., 2012, p. 36).

The purpose of this study was to find out how these three elements affect the culture of rural high poverty, high needs schools. Cuthrell et al. (2009) stated that "one in six children is poor, and one in three Black children is living in poverty" (p. 104). Schools need to have a positive culture, to promote student learning, support teachers, and have successful leadership. The location and income level of a community should not impact the success of students, teachers, and administration in a school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the United States, the number of students living in poverty is ever-increasing (Cuthrell et al., 2009). Teachers have had to provide in many ways for their students. This included a safe environment, positive role models, and a quality education. Students living in poverty need teachers who provide in these ways more than their affluent peers (McKenzie, 2019). The literature reviews will highlight ways teachers are taking measures to understand their students. Students' academic achievement can be affected based on the socioeconomic status of the student. It also addressed the importance of students living in poverty and the challenges they face compared to their affluent peers.

Professional Development

Teaching students in epidemic poverty areas produce stereotypes that need to be addressed. Stereotyping can be detrimental to a student's well-being and ultimate success in the school system. A study was conducted in a small school in Canada that looked at inside-the-school and outside-the-school case studies. This quantitative study used a Professional Development Series (PDS) titled *Possibilities: Poverty and Education Series.* Numerous teacher narratives were also used in the study to help clarify the beliefs, understandings, and values these teachers had before completing the PDS (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2017). The findings from the study showed that awareness of social justice was strongly highlighted during the professional development on poverty. Using social justice literature allowed teachers to look at their mindset and how that carried over into the

classroom. There are many programs and educational material that teachers can use to help them understand students who live in poverty.

Professional development for teachers about students in poverty addressed the stereotypes students face daily. The staff at Clear River High School all agreed that Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) helped examine their views on poverty. The instruction is student-centered, and teachers used three components when in their classroom. The first part of the CRP is institutional. This means the program looked at the physical and political structure of the school and how the school responded to a diverse population. The second part of the CRP is a personal dimension. Teachers who wanted to become culturally proficient examined their views, thoughts, and beliefs to understand who they are and who they strived to be. Finally, the third part of the CRP is instructional. It is also noted that principals needed to be on board with CRP. This means new implemented instruction into the classrooms through policies and procedures. (Mette et al., 2016). Professional development with instructions for teachers lends itself to the creation of strong Student-Teacher Relationships (S-T relationships). A strong relationship leads to a significant increase in student success (Knoell & Crow, 2013). When comparing students from an affluent school and one in a poverty-stricken community there is a significant difference in teacher influence. When given a survey about their teachers' influence on them, 68% of students from the affluent school said their teachers had a positive influence on them (Knoell & Crow, 2013). This was compared to less than half of the students from the poverty school saying their teachers had a positive influence on them.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Poor student-teacher relationships within rural school districts leads to a lack of success among students. Rural consciousness is a term used for those living in rural settings to perceive things like education and health care differently than those from affluent neighborhoods (Bright, 2018). "Rural consciousness entails a perspective that society unfairly allocates more resources and support to cities, focusing on the needs of minority populations while ignoring rural community needs" (Bright, 2018, p. 4). When there is no support from the parents, children often have experienced trauma that could be avoided (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2016). This mindset can lead to several stressors for students within a community. Children who have lived in a very poor household (50% below the poverty line), score 7-12 points lower on an assessment, which means that these students are ranked in the 19th percentile on a test. Compared to their peers who come from middle-class families who are ranked 66th on the percentile on a test (Lacour & Tissington, 2011).

Students who have parents with an educational background, specifically the mother, can influence the success of their child. When students have access to reading materials in their homes and are used properly, the student scored higher by more than four points (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Parents who have a positive mindset on education and who endorse certain skills for education have higher involvement in their child's education (Boyle & Benner, 2020). The socioeconomic status of parents with school-aged children also played a factor in their belief in education. "More affluent parents less often face the everyday challenges associated with poverty (e.g., unstable employment, child-care constraints) and experience greater comfort in initiating contact

and interacting with school personnel" (Boyle & Benner, 2020 p. 204). Schools are constantly working on finding ways for parents to be more involved. Especially with parents who are low-income and non-English speakers. Providing opportunities for all parents can strengthen the relationship between the parent and child. Which leads to helping the parent feel more comfortable when their child struggles (Boyle & Benner, 2020).

School Environment

There is a link between schools and the communities they serve. The school serves as a central hub for rural communities. When Harmon and Schafft (2009) said; "Rural schools, in particular, serve as symbols of community autonomy, vitality, and identity" (p. 2). Schools and communities needed to be on the same page when it comes to serving the students. Over 10 million students (about half the population of New York) are served in rural schools (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). The leadership in the communities and schools realized that they need each other for either one to be successful.

Thoroughly studying the learning environments of a school need to be done in collaboration with school staff, students, and parents (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001). The culture of the learning environment is based on five different attributes including improved educational outcomes, an emphasis on learning, mutual empowerment and caring, collaboration, and partnership (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001). Cavanagh and Dellar assessed these five attributes associated with the school staff, students, and parents from eight different school districts. Overall, 422 teachers were a part of the study and completed the *School Cultural Elements Questionnaire* (SCEQ). Also, 526 parents

completed the *Parental Involvement in Schooling Questionnaire* (PISQ) from three schools. Students (*n* = 988) were also surveyed using the *Classroom Cultural Elements Questionnaire* (CCEQ). Cavanagh and Dellar found that an emphasis on learning (*M* = 4.2) was a big contributor to the learning environment and the value of learning and student achievement (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001). Teachers agreed that the learning environment was "the majority of the time students spend at school is in class receiving instruction from teachers and interacting with peers" (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001 p. 3). Student achievement can be associated with student educational values. Parent perceptions on this (*M* = 3.5) mean that they believe in their child's learning abilities and that their child values their own learning.

When rural schools have quality leadership the community will rally behind the schools. High poverty-high needs (HPHN) schools struggle to get the leadership they need to be successful and have communities that do not see the value of education. When HPHN schools get the leadership that is needed, the academic success of students, teacher retention, and school pride are all affected in a positive way (Barley & Beesley, 2007).

Teacher quality can also affect the school culture. When teachers have quality professional development in addition to being highly qualified in their subject area the quality of education goes up. Teacher quality also can affect student absences and suspensions. When teachers are believed to be qualified in their area, the number of suspensions that happen in any given class goes down (Ohlson et al., 2016). The increased amount of class time for any student is known to increase achievement. When the administration and staff have a positive professional relationship, the culture of the

school can be positive. Yet, Ohlson, et al. said, "In contrast, schools with toxic cultures with little stakeholder collaboration were more likely to produce poor academic achievement" (p. 116). This can be detrimental to students who live in poverty. When schools are trying to keep highly qualified teachers, geographical isolation, lower teacher salaries, and a lack of community amenities trump the latter of small class sizes, and community closeness (Price & Stewart, 2016). Preservice teachers need to be aware of their educational journeys. Upbringings and identities help shape the world they live in, yet where they went to school and where they began teaching reshape their knowledge of the classroom environment (Price & Stewart, 2016).

> It is simply not enough to encourage teachers to build relationships with students and make the curriculum "relevant." Instead, teacher educators must make concerted efforts to dig deeply into the concepts of culture and place to explore how individual differences influence teaching and learning (Price & Stewart, 2016, p. 119).

Poverty

Many schools in epidemic poverty communities suffer from generational poverty, government neglect, and corporate manipulation. If preservice teachers never step foot into a rural school the challenges are still, there. Enabling preservice teachers to become ready to teach in rural school districts will help to dismantle rural consciousness. It will also help these high needs, high-poverty schools keep quality educators (Price & Stewart, 2016). Schools that have fully licensed teachers and who have years in the classroom is important but principal quality is just as important. Principals today are asked more and

more to make choices based on the unique culture of the school (Harmon & Shafft, 2009). "Leaders of school districts and schools in rural places need a clear vision of a mutually beneficial, collaborative school-community building process" (Harmon & Shafft, 2009, p. 5). This is to help bridge that gap between community collaboration and the school district. When preservice teachers and principals alike have the proper schooling needed to teach in a rural school district the community benefits and ultimately the students benefit.

Building relationships with students is important and has played a role in teacher quality. However, recent studies have shifted focus from quality to effectiveness (Gagnon, 2015). Teacher quality is associated with years in the classroom and credentials. Yet, this is a poor indicator of teacher effectiveness. Rural schools tend to have a hard time getting teachers with all the indicators. These indicators include experience in teaching, full licensure, and competitiveness of undergraduate education. These indicators thus can determine teacher effectiveness. (Gagnon, 2015). When teachers are effective it means that their impacts are measured on student outcome. This can be especially difficult because "the 21st-century realities of global interdependence and diverse institutions require that schools effectively and appropriately respond to diverse groups in the school and school community and prepare all young people for positive interactions with people who are culturally different" (Bustamante et al., 2009, p. 794). Identifying how to promote inclusivity can be challenging for rural school. Trying to incorporate change when practices that have been deeply rooted in a school system can be hard for school leaders. When leaders are willing to change and adapt to new policies this can show the teacher's that they too can do the same.

Cultural audits can help with identifying teacher quality and effectiveness. The audits consist of collecting data from multiple sources around the school to examine the policies, resources provided, traditions, and experiences made by the diverse population of the school. Observations within a school can gather meaningful data on behaviors and organizational practices. Bustamante et al. (2001), looked at how school leaders may overlook the aspects of school culture that influence why some students excel at school and why some struggle. Four major themes emerged from this study 1. The Paradox of Policy 2. Programs as Instrumental to Practice 3. The "Sameness" of School Culture and Climate and 4. Barriers to School Wide Cultural Competence. The study concluded that "more than 70% of school leader participants stressed that policy making was an important driver in improving schoolwide cultural competence" (p. 805). Another theme was that practices should be implemented to help encourage students to work and interact with others who are culturally different than them (Bustamante et al., 2001). This can sound appealing to schools, but the barriers can reflect confusion as well. Who is responsible for implementing this schoolwide cultural competence in schools? Also, cultural audits take time and resources, something rural schools may not have.

Rural consciousness can go hand in hand with the three forms of poverty: situational, generational, and absolute poverty. Situational poverty is related to a specific circumstance that occurs within a family like an illness, or loss of employment. Generational poverty is an ongoing cycle of families with limited resources staying in poverty across multiple generations. Absolute poverty looked at the provisions and the essentials for example the bare essentials it takes to survive with no extra resources of a family based on their culture (Cuthrell et al., 2009). When a child grows up with one of

these three types of poverty in their life their academic achievement gap tends to get wider and becomes harder to shrink. This challenge does not fall solely on the student. "Often, children living in poverty give up on school because of low self-esteem. Almost as often, teachers give up on children because of a perceived lack of trying and unwillingness to learn" (Cuthrell et al., 2009, p. 106). Teachers should not give up on their students. Rather than giving up, they should teach the students how to empathize with others. There is research that supports that when students have one positive role model in their life it can make a difference in that child's life.

> Empathy, thus defined, is a multidimensional construct that includes both bottom-up and top-down components. The bottom-up part of empathy is the automatic or unconscious affective process that allows us to recognize another's emotional state. The top-down part of empathy is the conscious cognitive process that enables us not only to explain and predict our behaviors, but the behaviors of others as well. (Gerdes et al., 2011, p. 112)

Teaching students how to effectively process their emotions can dramatically transform the classroom. Once students understand themselves it is easier for them to understand others.

> Students can use their experiences of enhanced and well-understood empathy to guide them as they implement the knowledge, values, and skills social work has always taught. They can approach individual and social well-being and social justice with a more sophisticated understanding. (Gerdes et al., 2011, p. 126)

Not only do students need to be taught empathy, but teachers need to also show empathy to students living in poverty. Teachers need to recognize that empathy is different than

sympathy. Students living in poverty do not want sympathy. Empathy empowers

students, sympathy belittles them. Without knowing, giving sympathy to students lowers

their academic standards (Budge & Parrett, 2018). Being aware of what students need

and how to support those needs make teachers invaluable to students living in poverty.

By building strong student-teacher relationships, teachers can empower their students to

be successful.

   Once we get to the root of the issue of why a student is struggling in school and

how we can help them, students can feel empowered to be successful with the resources

they gain. Equipping teachers with the resources and teaching those resources to students

will help them grow as individuals to be successful outside of the classroom. Creating a

positive school culture takes work. The amount of change and buy-in needed by

administration, teachers, and parents however can inadvertently impose a negative

attitude (Cleveland et al., 2012). If one of these three groups is not on board with the

changes being made, then the culture of the school will ultimately suffer and adherently

affect the rest of the school.

Stress

   Stress among students from poverty is not only related to their academics. Studies

show that chronic stress can lead to a hormonal imbalance in the brain leading to

metabolic deficiencies in learning and attention (Cedeño et al., 2016). Mental health

services can be provided to students, however, that is a challenge when it comes to

communities of poverty (Cappella et al., 2008). Before 2008, there was little research on

mental health services in schools. Since then, when these services are provided it is

usually in the form of pull-out services. Pull-out services such as case management, crisis

intervention, and counseling can hinder a child's achievement by keeping them from the classroom. Teachers can hold consultations with the students to produce strategies to help change the student's behavior and attitudes towards school. "However, teacher consultation is especially difficult in high poverty schools given the deteriorating physical conditions, the prevalence of staff stress, and the challenges experienced by students and families" (Cappella et al., 2008, p. 397). When students have strong parent-child relationships, and parents are interacting with their child's education, the child is going to have a more positive learning experience.

When stress is associated with academics, every part of the student's life is affected. Kundu (2017) completed a qualitative study which explained that students can feel marginalized which led to an increased threat of social identification. When students work hard and defy the possibilities, they are said to have grit (Kundu, 2017). "Students from poor backgrounds who are also "at-risk," tend to be resilient, having faced a number of challenges at home early on, such as hunger, but at the same time may also keep feelings to themselves at young ages." (Kundu, 2017, p. 73). Students can be very resourceful in times of trial. The social support students receive helps foster resilience as does parent involvement, school engagement, and a culturally impactful community (Nurius et al., 2019). Nurius et al.'s study titled *Victimization, Poverty, and Resilience Resources: Stress Process Considerations for Adolescent Mental Health* included over 10,000 students in Washington state and determined if early adolescent adversity poses risk to youth development. Mental health has three components: depression, suicidality, and psychological well-being. Childhood adversity was assessed in two forms: victimization index and poverty. Finally, resilience resources were addressed in the

surveys as family bondedness, school engagement, and sleep sufficiency. Nurius et al. found that schools played a pivotal role in helping students gain access to resiliency resources. Schools also have the means to supply health resources for students who live in poverty.

> Because the majority of items assessed here pertain to victimization by peers and peer contexts (dating violence, being bullied, feeling unsafe at school), schools have particularly vital opportunities to engage with youth in terms of both victimization and perpetration of peer victimization (Nurius et al., 2019, p. 130).

Yet, when schools have unequal opportunities because of the socioeconomic lines of the community this can be detrimental for schools to obtain access to help students. It is known that when parents have a higher education their socioeconomic status (SES) goes up as well (Boyle & Benner, 2020). Parents living in extreme poverty are going to raise their children using natural growth strategies. This means the parents are letting their children make their own schedules. Children will also have less adult supervision in certain activities. This all leads to and can affect parental school readiness awareness for their child (Boyle & Benner, 2020). Being school ready means that the child has the skills they need to be successful in the classroom. Parents need to take an active approach to their child being ready for school. Parents who are involved in their child's learning both in and out of school will have a better understanding of what their student is learning and can help them through challenges.

> Although we know much about the benefits of parents' home- and school-based involvement for students' educational outcomes, what drives parents to become

involved in their children's schooling is generally unknown but critically

important for promoting students' educational success. (Boyle & Benner, 2020, p.

201)

When students who live in poverty go to school, their mindset may be fixed. Meaning that they think they are stuck. Teachers must be conscious of how to approach these students. Jenny and Rhodes (2017) stated; "Moreover, people with a growth mindset believe in resilience and overcoming adversity by formulating new and inventive ways to reach success. Exposure to heightened stress can lead to an increased sense of detachment, helplessness, and a fixed mindset" (p. 658).

Rural Communities

School characteristics can play into that fixed mindset of students. Even though rural schools have several characteristics meaning that "rural schools are frequently the community social and activity hub, characterized by long-standing and supportive student–teacher relationships, and close community-school relationships" (Irvin et al., 2011, p.1226). This can promote healthy learning; however, the economic development of the community can ultimately hurt the students (Irvin et al., 2011). Students who leave school with a positive direction and sense of purpose do better than students who are stuck in a fixed mindset. Schools are not the same, but the characteristics can be size, location, and ethnic composition were all analyzed. National patterns show that schools that have a larger percentage of students from African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American families are attending schools that are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program and thus are in communities of poverty. (Irvin et al., 2001). Participants in

Irvin et al.'s study were from rural communities. The sample consisted of both students

and teachers. Both were given questionnaires to complete that assessed students'

aspirations in pursuing post-secondary options.

Irvin et al.'s study titled *Relationship of School Context to Rural Youth's*

Educational Achievement and Aspirations looked at how schools can overall provide

unique educational successes for students living in poverty. The overall sample of this

study agreed that school characteristics play an important role to those who live in a high

poverty community. School location, size, and ethnic composition were all characteristics

that were discussed. The study indicated that the characteristic of location lacked a

relationship between where a school is located and student achievement. This is

contradictory to prior research but when postsecondary education is not required to obtain

a local secure job, this can change the students' minds about attending a postsecondary

school. However, "Economic models indicate that the lack of job opportunities in rural

communities has been a major factor driving the outmigration of youth from rural

communities" (Irvin et al., 2011, p. 1236). Students are realizing that for them to be

successful they need to leave their community. Yet, these same students in rural schools

do not have the access to advanced coursework they may need when they leave the

community. This can lead to schools suggesting policymakers, school guidance

counselors, and school administration to take steps to help advance the course work for

students in preparation for postsecondary options (Irvin et al., 2011).

Resiliency

This can ultimately affect the importance of teacher resiliency. Student-centered resiliency has far overshadowed this important concept for teachers in rural schools. When creating a school positive school climate, much of the focus is on student necessities when it should be on creating an environment for all school personnel (Irvin et al., 2011). Teacher resiliency is directly related to a teacher's knowledge of motivation, competence, and interpersonal relatedness with students (Hardré & Hennessey, 2013). Schools that nurture a climate of success, need to promote a healthy, self-confident workforce as well (Malloy & Allen, 2018). This can be a challenge for rural schools to promote the benefits.

Malloy and Allen (2018) suggested that rural schools adopt a resiliency-building focus on nurturing the nurturers' concept. Malloy and Allen looked at the components of resiliency-building and focused on three: caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation. Building resiliency can come with hardship for teachers, thus changing the climate of a school even more. Chandler (2018) studied teacher's beliefs on how poverty impacts students with learning disabilities in rural school districts. He discussed that student in these areas face many challenges, but Chandler also sheds light on how teachers feel about teaching students in poverty:

> Because teachers expressed the belief that they can make a meaningful contribution to "fixing the poverty problem," it could be concluded that teachers take responsibility for their student's learning and well-being even when there is

evidence that students in poverty do not have access to the same advantages as their middle-class peers. (Chandler, 2014, p. 4)

Student motivation is tied to a positive classroom learning environment. The impact of the learning environment can affect students in positive or negative ways. The intrinsic motivation students may have helped show others the gratification in learning itself. On the opposite end, students can decide how much effort they put towards the learning task that is asked of them. Those who live in rural communities and especially in poverty-stricken homes when education is not the priority can hinder the learning environment of the classroom (Redding & Walberg, 2012).

Rural schools tend to have challenges for students, leadership of the school, and the staff than schools in larger, more populous areas. The strength of the school can also be linked to the strength of the community (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). School culture has a basis within Organizational Theory, focusing on the influences it has on the school, teachers, and culture (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001). Leaders of the school need a clear path and vision for the school to be successful. Teachers will prioritize what they have invested in, thus if a student lacks motivation on a certain subject, they are more likely to overlook that student (Hardré & Hennessey, 2013). The impact that a rural community can have on a student can be life-changing. The lack of resources and support can provide challenges for students transitioning to life after high school (Irvin et al., 2011). Schools need to have collaborative leadership in place for successful school culture.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

This study is based on the school culture survey framework from Gruenert, and

Whitaker's book *School Culture Rewired* (2015). Understanding the concept of school

culture and what it is and what is not is the first step in identifying the culture. A culture

is made up of shared beliefs, norms, and values of a group of people. It is equally

important to understand school culture and why it is the way it is. Gruenert and Whitaker

(2015) found six forms of culture within a school; collaborative, comfortable-

collaborative, contrived-collegial, balkanized, fragmented, and toxic.

Collaborative

The first type of school culture is the collaborative school culture. This type of

culture is where teachers, students and parents all share strong educational values. "A

collaborative culture is shorthand for all the good things that schools should be doing"

(Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 51). The collaborative culture within a school should feel

like a family. Most people are on the same page, and they support each other despite the

differences they may have. Collaboration is continuous, it is not an event or a place. The

leadership, school staff and community have a commonality in the idea of collaboration.

The dialogue includes student achievement, teaching practices, and current

research/topics (Gruenert, 1998).

According to Gruenert, there are two principal components to collaboration.

There has to be mutual respect among the teachers and there needs to be structure to

facilitate that process. Collaborative school cultures foster teacher performance and

support teachers in the process. He also describes those collaborative cultures do not

happen by chance, it takes work and action with understanding from the teachers and support from the students and community as well.

Comfortable-Collaborative

The second type of culture within a school is comfortable-collaborative. This type of school culture is where schools tend to believe they are in. This is where teachers expect students to be nice to their peers, and administration expects the same from teachers. In this culture, teachers are comfortable with where they are at. They occasionally visit their co-workers and have conversations about challenging students. But teachers also do not seek out different ideas for fear of compromising future praise.

The conversations that happen in this type of culture are not about how to improve in their work. The staff does not wish to get better at what they do and they could potentially have a fixed mindset (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). The intrinsic motivation of teachers starts to wane, and extrinsic motivation start to develop. Teachers want to be rewarded for the innovated and effective teaching styles they have. Thus, "comfortable is the enemy of collaboration" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015 p. 54).

Contrived-Collegial

The third type of culture in a school is contrived-collegial. This is the type of culture is where the leadership of the school is going to be determining how the staff behaves. The culture of a school is hard to change. Schools cannot change with a purposeful leadership. When the leadership identifies that the culture needs to change this can be taken as a threat to the current staff and community. "To sell a new vision, it's best to wait for respected teachers to identify with it and put it in their own words" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 55).

The culture change usually starts with new policies or strategies that are being enforced. "Although some contrivance is necessary for the development of a truly collaborative culture, knowing when to back off and let the seeds germinate can be challenging" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 55). An immediate shift in mindset is not going to come easy and can be frustrating for administration who want to build a new culture.

Balkanized

The fourth type of culture is balkanized. This means that collaboration is done only in small groups. This culture can create cliques of like-minded staff. There is territory created among the different groups in the school who compete for positions and resources. The groups in the school create their own cultures among themselves. "Staff in balkanized school cultures thus run the risk of being divided and lorded over by the stronger of many existing cliques" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 56). The majority of the time teachers in this type of school district are implementing their own practices. ". Although they may share materials and strategies, they avoid discussing deeper issues related to curriculum, long-term planning, or teaching philosophies. There is often intergroup conflict for resources and positions" (Ibrahim, 2020, p. 4).

Fragmented

A fragmented school culture is the fifth type of culture. This is where staff do their own thing. The staff is cordial with each other and meetings among the staff feel meaningless. This type of culture lacks professional interaction between the teachers, especially when the topic is about student achievement. "In a fragmented culture, educating students is an "every-man-for-himself" position" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015,

p. 57). These teachers are satisfied with the status quo and if they need to ask for help it is taken as a sign of weakness. This type of school culture is a hands-off approach. The leadership never steps into the classroom. This type of culture can attract teachers who fear micromanaging administration (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

It is true that collaboration can be a double-edged sword. When schools have the ability to collaborate with the community and create relationships, the schools can become vulnerable to these relationships. Especially when financial or other types of resources are involved. Fragmented schools will avoid these types of relationships for fear of future conflicts. There is nothing new brought up to challenge the status-quo of the school. "If staff could build a moat around the school, they would-and around each classroom" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 57).

Toxic

The last type of school culture is one that schools should try to avoid at all costs: toxic. This type of culture is where teachers are just there. They hand out worksheets, gossip about their colleagues and can even go as far as humiliating students publicly. The teachers in this school district will blame the poor school performance on their hostility and resentment on the schoolwork. Teachers will also have little to no commitment to the students (Ibrahim, 2020). Just a few teachers with the toxic mindset can create the toxic culture in the school. "the outsider simply doesn't understand what it takes to run the school given the types of students they have to deal with and the lack of support they receive" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 60).

This culture can turn into a self-fulfilling prophesy for teachers with a toxic mindset. Survival over improvement is at the forefront of teacher's minds. When this

happens, teachers count down the days to the next break or holiday and will avoid school at all costs. The schools with this type of culture spend many hours trying to prevent change. When the change does eventually happen, the push back from the staff can result in being toxic if they do not see the value of the change (Gruenert, 1998). Many times, when teachers and students are in this type of school culture, they will start to see this as normal. Parents are no help either, when they grow up in this environment, they will push their children to appreciate it (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Pinpointing what type of culture, a school has can be tough. Especially when schools can fit into one or more of the types of culture. Analyzing the culture can help the school leadership determine changes that can be made. "Student achievement increases when teachers work together in teams in true collaboration" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 7). When the culture of a school is collaborative, the leadership should reap the benefits of greater teacher satisfaction and high student achievement (Gruenert, 2005). The school culture instrument created by Gruenert, and Valentine (1998) is used to examine the collaborative level of school culture.

The survey that was created by Gruenert, and Valentine (1998) found six main categories that school culture can be divided amongst. Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial, and Learning Partnerships.

Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership identifies supportive relationships between the staff and the leadership of the school. Principals and other leaders of the school should model and

reward collaborative behavior. 11 statements from the survey are associated with this category.

Teacher Collaboration

The factor of teacher collaboration represents a set of values and norms that cause teachers to be heavily involved within their curriculum. The teachers take the time to plan together and evaluate each other. Discussions are also being valued and heard from the leadership and other teachers to help improve student achievement. Six statements from the survey are associated with the category.

Professional Development

The factor of professional development provides opportunities for teachers to build their knowledge of their content area. The teachers who have the time and resources to gain new knowledge within their content area also should be eager to share the information. When teachers are compelled to share their new information, this ultimately increase student achievement. Five statements from the survey fall into this category.

Unity of Purpose

The factor of unity of purpose relates to the mission of the school. Teachers and administration alike need to have a solid understanding and support for the mission statement of the school. New norms will develop when teachers are able to be part of the development of the mission statement. Five statements from the survey make up this category.

Collegial Support

Collegial support of the teachers recognizes the dimension of trust between teachers. Leaders of the school have to model trust and assist when needed. This will help

the ultimate goals of the school be achieved when teachers are trusted and can build relationships with each other. There were four statements from the survey that helped create this category.

Learning Partnerships

Learning partnerships are between teachers and parents of the students. It is also between the teachers and the students. Everyone should be on the same page when it comes to the education of the student. When parents and teachers have an open communication about the student's education everyone is better off. Parents also need to trust and support the teachers and their abilities to teach their children. Four statements from the survey helped create this category.

The six types of school culture can be affected by the six factors from the study. The six factors from the survey can help examine what type of culture a school has. When one factor is recognized as a weak spot for a school, that can change the school culture from being collaborative or even comfortable-collaborative to balkanized and even fragmented. This study will help schools understand and examine their culture and take the steps needed to change if that is what needs to happen.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to describe the culture of schools with high percentages of their students living in poverty as perceived by the teachers teaching in these districts. School culture can be tough to define. According the Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) "Culture is essentially a social indoctrination of unwritten rules that people learn as they try to fit in a particular group" (p.6). It contains many pieces. Student achievement, teacher support, school leadership all affect the school culture and climate. This study looked to examine these factors in the context of a rural school.

When students live in poverty, they face many challenges. These challenges can be social-emotional, and even physical. Students can face social-emotional challenges by trying to fit in with their peers. Physical challenges of not knowing where their next meal will come from or even where they are going to sleep. Researchers have found that when students face challenges outside of school that leads to students having challenges in the school. Teachers who are not prepared to teach in a rural school may struggle and burn out. School leadership also has a direct impact on school climate. The following questions are used to examine the relationship between teachers who teach in high poverty schools and their perception of the culture of the school:

1. What is the extent that teachers perceive collaborative school culture in each of the six factors as determined by Gruenert (1998)?

2. What is the relationship between teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture (Gruenert, 1998) in each of the six factors and the gender of the teachers?

3. What is the relationship between teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture (Gruenert, 1998) in each of the six factors and the years of experiences of the teachers?

These three questions will help examine the perception of rural school cultures. The instrument used in the study will also help to clarify what category do teachers perceive their rural, low-income schools fall into regarding culture.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This quantitative study gathered information from teachers teaching in rural low-income schools. To collect data, the quantitative survey instrument used a 7-point Likert scale on 35 school culture elements identified by Gruenert and Whitaker (2015). Rural schools were defined by having a school population of 600 or less based on the state school report cards that come out for the 2021 school year. A 265-mile radius from Newell, SD was established to bound the geographical region. Five states fell within the radius, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska Schools were then further narrowed down to those that are listed on the 2018-2019 TEACH Grant eligibility list as low-income schools. The final determination if a school was included was that email addresses were publicly displayed on the school's website.

There were 75 schools that made the final cuts to be part of the survey. South Dakota had 29 school and 116 teachers make the final cut. North Dakota had 16 school and 64 teachers make the final cut. Montana had 6 school make it into the final cut with 24 teachers. There was 10 schools in Wyoming that made the final cut with 39 teachers. Finally, Nebraska had 14 schools make the final cut with 56 teachers being asked to be part of the study. Teachers within the identified schools were contacted via email to invite them to be a part of the study and provide them with the survey instrument link. There were four different content areas that teachers were pulled from, career and technical education, math, science, and English. This survey gathered data on teachers' perceptions of their own school's culture. In addition, three demographic questions were added to the instrument:

1. Gender

2. How long have you been teaching?

3. How long have you been in your current school district?

To ensure the reliability of the data, each element of the survey is correlated with culture constructs including collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships as described in previous studies (Gruenert, 2005). Using a published set of statements improves reliability because teachers are likely to interpret the items from the survey in the same way as previous participants. The instrument was developed in 1998 with a study of 634 teachers in the state of Indiana (Gruenert, 2005). The following statements were used for the survey, and each contributes to a theoretical construct of school culture.

Table 1.

School Culture Survey Construct Statements

Statement	Construct
Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.	Professional Development
Leaders value teachers' ideas.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects.	Teacher Collaboration
Teachers trust each other.	Collegial Support
Teachers support the mission of the school.	Unity of Purpose
Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	Learning Partnership
Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers spend considerable time planning together.	Teacher Collaboration
Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.	Professional Development
Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	Collegial Support
Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.	Collaborative Leadership
The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.	Unity of Purpose
Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.	Learning Partnership

Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.	Teacher Collaboration
Professional development is valued by the faculty.	Professional Development
Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.	Collegial Support
Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers understand the mission of the school.	Unity of Purpose
Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.	Learning Partnership
My involvement in policy or decision-making is taken seriously.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.	Teacher Collaboration
Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	Professional Development
Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	Collegial Support
Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	Collaborative Leadership
The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.	Unity of Purpose
Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.	Collaborative Leadership
Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.	Teacher Collaboration
The faculty values school improvement.	Professional Development
Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.	Unity of Purpose
Administrators protect instruction and planning time.	Collaborative Leadership
Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.	Teacher Collaboration
Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	Collaborative Leadership
Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example, they engage mentally in class and complete homework assignments.	Learning Partnership

The survey was active for five-weeks beginning on May 4th and sent to a defined population of 300 teachers in the geographical region. The invitation to participate and the survey instrument were distributed through Question Pro with reminder emails going out weekly. The final response rate was 21.67% ($n = 65$) with 12% of respondents responding on the first distribution of the instrument. Every question in the survey was optional allowing participants to skip the statements they did not want to answer.

Following collection, data was then loaded into SPSS for analysis. The SPSS analyzed the relations between each teacher and the score they gave each element. Each element in this survey was used to identify the type of school culture as described by Gruenert (2005) which teachers perceived they were teaching in. The tests through SPSS that were done included descriptive statistics that looked at the six factors and how many teachers answered and where on the Likert-type scale they answered each question of the survey. That test helped answer objective 1 to examine the six different factors and the perceptions of the teachers of a collaborative school culture. Objective two had a one-way ANOVA test done to compare the gender and the six factors from the survey. Finally, objective three also had a one-way ANOVA test that analyzed the years of experience and how the teachers answered the questions to the survey.

RESULTS

Objective One: What is the extent that teachers perceive collaborative school culture in each of the six factors as determined by Gruenert (1998)?

The Professional Development Construct had a mean of 5.07 ($SD = 1.28$, $n = 62$) which consisted of five items. The category describes "the degree to which teachers value continuous personal development and schoolwide improvement" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015 p. 85). Professional development can help prepare teachers in various ways. Table 2 shows that teachers reported actively seeking out professional development. "Professional Development provides the opportunities to build a knowledge base" (Gruenert, 1998, p. 97). Teachers are finding professional development for themselves rather than as a collective group.

The Unity of Purpose Construct had a mean of 5.03 ($SD = 1.28$, $n = 64$). The characteristics of this category measure the degree to which teachers work toward a common mission for the school. The majority of responses fell in the categories of slightly agreed and agreed. The Unity of Purpose Construct in Table 3 shows that a majority of the teachers within the survey value the importance of the school's mission. This can indicate a strong sense of community among the teachers. This helps answer the question in Objective 1 by indicating that teachers believe their school's mission can support each other when push comes to shove.

The Teacher Collaboration had a construct mean of 4.08 ($SD = 1.18$, $n = 64$). This construct had six elements associated with it. The Teacher Collaboration construct " measure[s] the degree to which teachers engage in constructive dialogue that furthers the educational vision of the school" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 84). Many of the responses were in the lower half of the survey questions. The target behaviors for this

category include teachers across the school plan together and developing an awareness of the practices and programs of other teachers. "Moreover, it brings more experienced and less experienced teachers closer together and reinforces the competence and confidence of the less experienced ones (Gumuseli & Eryilmaz, 2011, p. 17). All six of the statements in Table 4 of the Teacher Collaboration Construct fell below 4.5, indicating that those teachers do not feel they can collaborate with other teachers and that disagreements are not being voiced openly. "Teacher Collaboration represents a set of norms that cause teachers to become immersed into the total curriculum of the school" (Gruenert, 1998, p. 97).

The construct of Collegial Support measures "the degree in how often and well teachers work together effectively" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 85). The construct mean was 4.05 ($SD = 0.69$, $n = 64$). The factors in Table 5 inherit a belief in teacher that their trust and assistance cannot be mandated. Meaning that "leaders may only model and reward these behaviors, they must not attempt to control them" (Gruenert, 1998, p. 98). The target behaviors for this category include teachers who trust and value each other's ideas and work together to achieve the school's goals.

The construct of Collaborative Leadership consisted of 11 statements with a construct mean of 4.29 ($SD = 1.19$, $n = 63$). The target behaviors of this construct relate to trusting teachers' professional judgment and engaging teachers in the decision-making. The "items in this category measure the degree to which school leaders establish, maintain, and support collaborative relationships with an among school staff" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 84). Three of the statements within the Collaborative Leadership construct in Table 6 were rated below a 4.0. This is an indication that out of the 11

statements, three of the statement's teachers felt that the collaboration between staff and the leadership of the school fall short of what they expected and encounter every day. This shows that a majority of the time, rural, low-income schools collaborate effectively yet there are some areas for growth.

The Learning Partnerships construct reflects how teachers, parents, and students work together for the common good of the student. The construct mean was 3.82 (SD = 1.22, n = 65). The behaviors within this category are that teachers and parents communicate frequently and that students accept responsibility for their schooling. All four statements in Table 7 in the Learning Partnerships construct fall short of 3.5. "This construct also measures the amount of time parents and teachers communicate about student performance" (Gumuseli & Eryilmaz, 2011, p. 17).

Table 2.

Construct 1: Professional Development

Construct Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.	0	2	8	1	13	34	6	5.35	1.28	62
Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.	1	3	5	3	23	26	3	5.06	1.28	62
Professional development is valued by the faculty.	2	10	14	6	17	12	4	4.21	1.64	62
Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	0	0	5	8	11	36	4	5.39	1.06	62
The faculty values school improvement.	1	2	4	1	23	30	4	5.32	1.14	62
							Construct	5.07	1.28	

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Table 3.

Construct 2: Unity of Purpose

Construct Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers support the mission of the school.	0	1	2	4	10	42	6	5.67	0.96	64
The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.	3	5	7	9	20	20	1	4.59	1.48	64
Teachers understand the mission of the school	1	2	9	6	16	29	2	5.02	1.32	64
The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.	2	1	6	11	13	27	4	5.02	1.37	64
Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.	1	4	3	10	28	17	2	4.83	1.24	64
							Construct	5.03	1.28	

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Table 4.

Construct 3: Teacher Collaboration

Construct Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects	1	12	17	0	17	13	4	4.17	1.68	64
Teachers spend considerable time planning together.	11	23	14	4	9	4	0	2.86	1.48	64
Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.	19	27	7	3	6	2	1	2.41	1.48	64
Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.	8	13	13	1	20	9	1	3.69	1.74	64
Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.	2	15	17	4	18	9	0	3.75	1.51	64
Disagreements over instructional practice are voiced openly and discussed.	7	13	13	12	10	10	0	3.56	1.60	64
							Construct	4.08	1.18	

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Table 5.

Construct 4: Collegial Support

Construct Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers trust each other	0	5	8	2	15	32	3	5.08	1.39	64
Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	0	0	2	2	6	39	16	6	0.87	64
Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.	1	2	6	6	24	22	3	5	1.25	64
Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	2	10	10	9	22	11	1	4.2	1.47	64
							Construct	4.06	0.69	

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Table 6.

Construct 5: Collaborative Leadership

Construct Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M	SD	n
Leaders value teachers' ideas	5	6	4	3	19	20	8	4.81	1.79	63
Leaders in the school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	6	7	7	4	16	18	7	4.59	1.86	63
Leaders take time to praise teachers who perform well.	6	9	14	3	20	9	3	3.97	1.73	63
Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	2	13	7	4	26	9	3	4.22	1.62	63
Leaders in the school facilitate teachers working together.	3	8	14	10	20	8	1	4.03	1.45	63
Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	6	6	11	4	16	17	5	4.41	1.78	63
Teacher involvement in policy or decision-making is taken seriously.	7	8	10	6	25	8	1	3.97	1.64	63
Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	5	10	19	13	15	3	0	3.49	1.33	63
Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.	3	10	11	5	21	14	1	4.21	1.61	63
Administrators protect instruction and planning time.	5	10	5	3	20	19	3	4.46	1.75	63
Teachers are encouraged to share ideas	1	6	4	5	20	26	3	5.02	1.39	63
Construct								4.29	1.20	

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Table 7.

Construct 6: Learning Partnerships

Construct Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	8	15	11	9	12	9	1	3.51	1.69	65
Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.	7	4	16	7	20	10	1	3.97	1.60	65
Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.	0	6	14	4	28	11	2	4.46	1.34	65
Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example by being mentally engaged in class and completing homework assignments	15	11	12	2	16	7	2	3.34	1.87	65
						Construct		3.82	1.22	

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Objective 2: What is the relationship between teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture (Gruenert, 1998) in each of the six factors and the gender of the teachers?

The relationship between teachers' perception of levels of collaboration and their gender resulted in no significant differences. There was no significant effect of gender on the Professional Development Construct at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 59) = 1.412$, $p = 0.25$]. There was no significant effect of gender on the Collaborative Leadership Construct at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 60) = 0.298$, $p = 0.74$]. There was no significant effect of gender on the Teacher Collaboration Construct at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 61) = 0.019$, $p = 0.98$]. There was no significant effect of gender on the Collegial Support Construct at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 61) = 0.751$, $p = 0.47$]. There was no significant effect of gender on the Unity of Purpose Construct at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 61) = 2.172$, $p = 0.12$]. There was no significant effect of gender on the Learning Partnerships Construct at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 62) = 2.012$, $p = 0.14$].

The relationship between male teachers and their perceived level of collaboration showed no significant data. The sample consisted of 21 male teachers with the following information. The Professional Development Construct $M = 4.86$, $SD = 0.80$. The Collaborative Leadership Construct $M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.06$. The Teacher Collaboration Construct $M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.7$. The Collegial Support Construct $M = 4.98$, $SD = 0.83$. The Unity of Purpose Construct $M = 4.90$, $SD = 0.70$. Finally, The Learning Partnership Construct $M = 4.98$ $SD = 1.108$.

When considering the information from the female teachers, there is also no significant difference in teachers' gender and their perceived level of collaboration. There were various samples within the survey. This was because all questions were optional

within the survey. The following information is located in Table 9. The Professional

Development Construct $M = 5.13$ ($SD = 0.91$, $n = 37$). The Collaborative Leadership

Construct $M = 4.36$ ($SD = 1.22$, $n = 38$). The Teacher Collaboration Construct $M = 3.43$

($SD = 1.02$, $n = 38$). The Collegial Support Construct $M = 5.07$, ($SD = .93$, $n = 39$). The

Unity of Purpose Construct $M = 5.18$ ($SD = 0.92$, $n = 38$). The Learning Partnership

Construct $M = 4.06$ ($SD = 1.27$, $n = 39$).

Table 8.

Male teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture

School Culture Constructs	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Professional Development	21	4.86	0.80
Collaborative Leadership	21	4.23	1.06
Teacher Collaboration	21	3.37	0.72
Collegial Support	21	4.98	0.83
Unity of Purpose	21	4.89	0.69
Learning Partnership	21	3.42	1.11
Valid N (listwise)	21		

Table 9.

Female teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture

School Culture Constructs	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Professional Development	37	5.13	0.91
Collaborative Leadership	38	4.36	1.22
Teacher Collaboration	38	3.43	1.02
Collegial Support	39	5.07	0.93
Unity of Purpose	38	5.18	0.92
Learning Partnership	39	4.06	1.27
Valid N (listwise)	34		

Table 10.

Gender comparison of teacher perception of a collaborative school culture

School Culture Constructs	*Gender*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Professional Development	Male	21	4.85	0.80	0.17
	Female	37	5.12	0.91	0.15
Collaborative Leadership	Male	21	4.22	1.06	0.23
	Female	38	4.36	1.22	0.19
Teacher Collaboration	Male	21	3.37	0.72	0.16
	Female	38	3.42	1.02	0.17
Collegial Support	Male	21	4.98	0.83	0.18
	Female	39	5.07	0.93	0.15
Unity of Purpose	Male	21	4.89	0.69	0.15
	Female	38	5.18	0.92	0.15
Learning Partnership	Male	21	3.42	1.11	0.24
	Female	39	4.06	1.27	0.20

Table 11.

Teacher perceptions on teacher collaboration and gender 1-way between subjects ANOVA test results

School Culture Constructs		SS	df	MS	F	p
Professional Development	Between Groups	2.20	2	1.10	1.412	0.25
	Within Groups	46.10	59	0.78		
	Total	48.31	61			
Collaborative Leadership	Between Groups	0.87	2	0.43	0.298	0.74
	Within Groups	87.99	60	1.46		
	Total	88.86	62			
Teacher Collaboration	Between Groups	0.03	2	0.01	0.019	0.98
	Within Groups	61.12	61	1.00		
	Total	61.16	63			
Collegial Support	Between Groups	1.15	2	0.57	0.751	0.47
	Within Groups	46.90	61	0.76		
	Total	48.05	63			
Unity of Purpose	Between Groups	3.52	2	1.76	2.172	0.12
	Within Groups	49.55	61	0.81		
	Total	53.08	63			
Learning Partnership	Between Groups	5.76	2	2.88	2.012	0.14
	Within Groups	88.79	62	1.43		
	Total	94.56	64			

Objective 3: What is the relationship between teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture (Gruenert, 1998) in each of the six factors and the years of experiences of the teachers?

The data from the survey concluded that there was no significant differences between the teachers in various years of teaching and the level of perception of a collaborative school culture. Table 11 indicated the years of teaching the construct means for each school culture factor. Table 12 used a one-way between subjects ANVOA test. There was no significant effect of the teachers' perceived levels of collaboration and their years of teaching at the $p < .05$ level for the Professional Development construct [$F(5,52) = 0.887, p = 0.49$]. There was no significant effect of the teachers' perceived levels of collaboration and their years of teaching at the $p < 0.5$ level for the Collaborative Leadership construct [$F(5,52) = 0.976, p = 0.44$]. There was no significant effect of the teachers' perceived levels of collaboration and their years of teaching at the $p < 0.5$ level for the Teacher Collaboration construct [$F(5,53) = 1.024, p = 0.41$]. There was no significant effect of the teachers' perceived levels of collaboration and their years of teaching at the p<0.5 level for the Collegial Support construct [$F(5,54) = 0.813, p = 0.54$]. There was no significant effect of the teachers' perceived levels of collaboration and their years of teaching at the $p < 0.5$ level for the Unity of Purpose construct [$F(5,53) = 1.021, p = 0.41$]. There was no significant effect of the teachers' perceived levels of collaboration and their years of teaching at the $p < 0.5$ level for the Learning Partnership construct [$F(5,54) = 0.410, p = 0.83$].

Table 12.

Teacher's perceptions of school culture construct means (SD) by years of teaching experience

Constructs	*1-5 Years*	*6-10 Years*	*11-15 Years*	*16-20 Years*	*21-25 Years*	*26+ Years*
Professional Development	5.40 (0.96)	4.93 (0.93)	4.87 (1.01)	4.60 (0.93)	5.25 (1.18)	5.00 (0.48)
Collaborative Leadership	4.75 (0.95)	4.44 (1.47)	3.84 (1.35)	4.16 (0.72)	3.88 (1.75)	4.52 (0.79)
Teacher Collaboration	3.92 (1.00)	3.35 (1.12)	3.23 (1.03)	3.57 (1.10)	3.27 (1.14)	3.13 (0.74)
Collegial Support	5.27 (0.95)	5.03 (0.73)	4.75 (0.84)	5.43 (0.70)	4.81 (1.22)	5.14 (0.62)
Unity of Purpose	5.05 (0.68)	5.44 (0.53)	4.64 (0.97)	5.20 (0.73)	4.88 (1.21)	5.02 (0.67)
Learning Partnership	3.90 (1.18)	4.22 (1.45)	3.39 (1.50)	3.75 (0.94)	3.78 (1.06)	3.79 (1.30)

Note: 1-5 years, $n = 12$; 6-10 years, $n = 9$; 11-15 years, $n = 8$; 16-20 years, $n = 7$; 21-25 years, $n = 8$; 26+ years $n = 13$. 7-point Likert-type scale.

Table 13.

Teacher perceptions on teacher collaboration with various years of teaching 1-way between subjects ANOVA test results

Constructs		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Professional Development	Between Groups	3.65	5	0.73	0.887	0.49
	Within Groups	42.86	52	0.82		
	Total	46.51	57			
Collaborative Leadership	Between Groups	6.89	5	1.37	0.976	0.44
	Within Groups	74.85	53	1.41		
	Total	81.74	58			
Teacher Collaboration	Between Groups	5.13	5	1.02	1.024	0.41
	Within Groups	53.10	53	1.00		
	Total	58.24	58			
Collegial Support	Between Groups	2.94	5	0.59	0.813	0.54
	Within Groups	39.13	54	0.72		
	Total	42.08	59			
Unity of Purpose	Between Groups	3.28	5	0.65	1.021	0.41
	Within Groups	34.08	53	0.64		
	Total	37.37	58			
Learning Partnership	Between Groups	3.28	5	0.65	0.410	0.83
	Within Groups	86.29	54	1.59		
	Total	89.57	59			

DISCUSSION

This research suggests that there is a correlation between the culture of a school and the strength of the community the school is in. But no correlation between the gender of the teacher and the years of experience with their perceptions of a collaborative school culture. The three objectives give this study a foundation for further research.

Objective One: What is the extent that teachers perceive collaborative school culture in each of the six factors as determined by Gruenert (1998)?

Before schools can determine a course of action that is needed, there need to be foundational thoughts of what type of culture a school has. The first objective helped evaluate the six factors that help examine a school culture. The professional development that teachers receive in their schools is a big factor. When professional development is valued and is appropriate for the teachers, this can increase the value in that professional development. When teachers can relate to the professional development, they are able to create stronger student-teacher relationships within the classroom.

This study shows that yes, teachers are seeking professional development in their area of expertise, but do not see the value in the professional development that is at their schools. 42% of the teachers in the sample agree that professional development is not valued by teachers in their district. When professional development can be about relevant topics especially within a rural school district that has a high poverty rate, everyone will benefit. The topic of poverty on its own within a community can help teachers overcome the negative stereotypes they might have on their students and families (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2017).

The unity of purpose is vital to having a positive work environment for teachers, students, and administration. When everyone is on the same page about the school's mission and understands the needs of the students within the district the culture of the school thrives. The study shows that teachers place a high value on supporting the school mission. Yet, when preservice teachers are not being given the tools and resources to teach in these rural low-income schools they are going to want to leave as soon as they arrive. There need to be clear-cut directions in the mission statement for new and seasoned teachers to understand where they are teaching.

When the teachers understand and support the mission statement, the retention of teachers will increase even in low-income school districts. The community plays a huge role in creating the mission statement of the school. When the community has a strong population of staff members living in the community the ability to have strong values within the school reflects that. "The core values of an institutional culture are the fundamental beliefs and commitments that drive what the organization does and how its members behave" (Gruenert, 1998, p. 23). The unity of purpose has to match the values of a school if they want to be successful in having a collaborative culture.

A collaborative school district is what every school district should strive for. Especially within a school district that has a high number of students within poverty. When a student grows up in a school that has a collaborative culture that can help their overall academics as well as teach them life skills. Yes, rural, low-income schools indeed have a higher turn-over rate in both students and teachers that contribute to the instability (Cappella, et al., 2008). The study shows that 83% of the teachers within the rural, low-income schools do not take the time to collaborate with others on projects and

assignments. Everyone is solely focused on their subject and standards that they are not

taking the time to observe other teachers as well. When trying to retain teachers and

students alike within a school district, the ability to hold them to high standards and

expectations is critical. This can be tough, however, because 53% of the teachers in the

study do not know what their colleagues are teaching. There is strong evidence that links

the culture of a school can determine and affect the academic achievement of students.

Yet, the teachers in these schools do not feel they are teaching in a collaborative school.

     The support teachers feel in their school districts plays a role in how collaborative

the culture is as well. "A person may be more likely to change his/her way of thinking if

that person is in a supportive, collegial context" (Gruenert, 2005, p. 36). This is evident in

Table 5, 95% of the teachers are willing to help out when there is an issue, and 78% of

the teachers are trusted among colleagues. When the teachers feel valued, the quality of

their teaching will increase. This leads to an increase in student attendance and students

achieving higher than expected. This all ties into keeping students at school and allowing

teachers to build strong relationships with their students. When a teacher wants to be at

school, so will the students. "Retaining teachers helps develop a supportive professional

community, leads to close relationships between students and teachers, and provides

continuity that supports curriculum innovations and school improvement plans" (Barley

& Beesley, 2007, p. 9). The participants in the survey feel supported, but there is still a

disconnect when it comes to them working collaboratively.

     The construct of Collaborative Leadership had 11 statements the sample had to

answer. The three statements that fell below the median had to do with being rewarded

for risk-taking, leaders praising teachers, and teachers having a say in policy and

decision-making. 54% of the teachers from the study do not feel rewarded for their risks and innovative teaching in the classroom. 46% of the sample believe that their leadership does not praise teachers who perform well. Finally, 40% of the sample said that teachers do not have a say in the decision-making process or are taken seriously in policy making. The way to change a culture in a school has to extend beyond the singular focus of student achievement (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). Teachers want to be taken seriously when it comes to changing the policy. They are the ones in the classrooms. They are the ones who see the students struggling.

The study reiterates that professional development is not valued by teachers, there is also no time for teachers to plan instruction together. When teachers are not heard by the leadership, that can hinder the culture and shift it from a collaborative culture to a contrived-collegial or even a fragmented culture. It is believed that for a collaborative culture to work in a school district the leadership fosters instructional experiments within the classroom. It is also encouraged for teachers to share their results with the staff (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Yet, in rural school districts, this is not the focus. The leadership of rural schools has to balance their time between the school, parent, and community stakeholders.

Learning partnerships between parents and teachers is a category that can determine the culture of a school as well. When teachers are communicating with parents this can help students assume more responsibility with their education. 75% of the statements from the study fell below the median. Meaning that the teachers and parents do not have common expectations for their student's academic performance. Parents also have a tough time trusting teachers' professional judgments when it comes to their

children. Finally, students are not taking responsibility for their education. Teachers are fully aware that to engage students from high-poverty households they need to seek out help from parents as well (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). The leadership of the school can dictate the culture of the school too. The school leadership should create partnerships with the teachers at the school to help establish the primary goals of the school thus utilizing the unity of purpose construct to foster a collaborative culture (Ohlson, et al., 2016).

There is evidence showing that when parents are more involved in their student's learning, the parents feel more connected to the school and the students tend to do better academically. In contrast, however, the school also relies heavily on the community and the partnerships made for financial, athletic, and internship support (Barley & Beesley, 2007). When the community falls below the poverty level, retaining highly qualified teachers to work with the parents to help the students is challenging. Unfortunately, schools that are in communities below the poverty line have very little control over raising the salary for teachers in the community. "Funding is often allocated on a per-pupil basis. So, although rural schools represent large geographic areas, they wind up at a financial disadvantage due to their low per-pupil demographics" (Miller, 2008, p. 190). This ties into having students being held accountable for their education. When there is no accountability at home for students to do well in school, the teachers and the overall school suffers.

The six factors from the study can help schools identify and examine their own culture and climate. With these factors however, there needs to be further research done in how to connect these factors into the six different types of school culture. By

identifying the factors that a school excels in and what they struggle with, the

administration can further dig into the reasoning behind that.

Objective 2: What is the relationship between teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture (Gruenert, 1998) in each of the six factors and the gender of the teachers?

When it comes to the relationship between the gender of the teacher and their

perceptions of a collaborative school culture based on the results there were no distinct

differences. Both genders had similar results. "By considering the standard deviation

(SD) for each item you can get an idea of how much teachers agreed on each one"

(Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015 p. 87). When the standard deviation is around 0.60 then

most teachers were on the same page with their answers. The male teachers in the sample

had a $M = 4.89$ for the Unity of Purpose Construct. Meaning that most of the male

teachers in the sample had similar answers to the five items from the survey related to

Unity of Purpose. But when it is compared to the female teachers within that same

construct, they had $M = 5.18$. Which indicated that female teachers may have better

understanding of their school's mission. But there is still not enough difference to really

make a significant effect. This means that teachers of both genders are making

meaningful connections and feel a sense of purpose and connection to the mission of the

school. The teachers feel like they can make a difference and create a space for students

to learn.

The lower the mean the more teachers are not on the same page with their

answers. For example, the female teachers from the sample had a $M = 4.06$ from the

Learning Partnership Construct. This means that there are some teachers who are on the

same page and some who are not. Some teachers may have good relationships with the

parents of their students, and students hold themselves accountable to their learning.

Similarly with the male teachers within the same construct, their $M = 3.41$. When a

higher standard deviation occurs this "suggests that there is an expert on that item in your

building who has not yet had a voice in the matter" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p.87). In

this case there could be an expert in the sample who has not yet had a voice to this

subject, this shows in table 10. The Learning Partnerships factor shows the disconnect in

the value of education between teachers and parents. Schools are consistently trying for

parents to be more involved in the school yet, when parents work full-time jobs outside of

the community, parents may not speak English, or the parents do not value education

these can pose challenges to the school. More research needs to continue to be done in

why parents are not wanting to be involved in their child's education.

The Professional Development Construct had mean over the 4.0 average mean.

This indicated that both genders answered the questions from the survey similarly and

both genders have a negative view of professional development in their schools. The

Collaborative Leadership Construct again had similar results. This also indicates that

there may be an expert in the sample but have not had the opportunity to voice their

thoughts on the subject. But this also indicated that teachers do not see their school

leadership as collaborative or give reason to be collaborative. There has been research

done on professional development for teachers. But further research needs to be done as

to why professional development is not valued by teachers, which just so happened to be

the lowest survey question in the Professional Development factor. Having proper

professional development in rural high poverty schools can help the teachers create better

student-teacher relationships, change their own beliefs of poverty, and ultimately help change the culture of the school. Both genders of teachers can make a difference and being willing to partake in the professional development will help everyone involved in the school.

The Teacher Collaboration Construct from the male teachers had $M = 3.37$ which indicated that male teachers had more similar answers than female teachers $M = 3.43$. The six items from this construct indicate that both male and female teachers do not take the time to discuss teaching practices or have the time to plan together. The Collegial Support Construct does indicate that both genders are on the same page with the four items from the survey. The male sample had $M = 4.98$ and female sample had $M = 5.07$. From the survey, both genders have support from their colleagues and work together to support the goals of the school. This can create a positive work environment when teachers are willing to step up when challenges arise. However, the Teacher Collaboration factor still sparks for more research. How do we get teachers to collaborate more effectively? How could this change help the school system? There are still lots of questions that need to be answered if schools want to change their culture to being collaborative.

Objective Three: What is the relationship between teachers perceived levels of collaborative school culture (Gruenert, 1998) in each of the six factors and the years of experiences of the teachers?

When comparing the years of experience among the teachers and their results from the survey. There is no significant change in their perception of a collaborative school culture. The six factors all showed the same data. Four of the six factors from the teachers within the 1-5 years of experience had slightly higher means than the whole

sample. The factors of Teacher Collaboration and Learning Partnerships fell below the average 4.0 mean. Yet, the standard deviation for the Learning Partnerships factor was 1.17 indicating that there were some who are not on the same page as the others within this experience category.

The teachers who have been teaching between 6-10 years also show little difference to the average of the group. The Unity of Purpose factor indicated that these teachers all think pretty close to the same when it comes to having a school mission they support. These are the teachers who also think and agree they have a strong support system among their colleagues. Yet, when looking at the Teacher Collaboration and Learning Partnership factors, they do not spend time collaborating with each other and have issues communicating with parents about the student's education.

There was 9 teachers within the 11-16 years of teaching experience. One teacher chose not to answer questions related to Teacher Collaboration. But that did not affect the overall perceived levels of collaboration in the schools. The Unity of Purpose, Professional Development, and Collegial Support factors all were significantly above the 4.0 median Likert scale. Finally, the Collaborative Leadership, Learning Partnerships and Teacher Collaboration were all below the 4.0 median on that scale at $M = 3.83$, $M = 3.38$ and $M = 3.22$ respectively. This indicates that the teachers in this level of experience agree with the rest of the teachers from the sample when it comes to Teacher Collaboration and Learning Partnerships.

The teachers from the next group have taught between 17-20 years. This group of teachers are almost all on the same page with their answers and it shows in Table 14. The

7 teachers in this group also agree that the level of teacher collaboration and the learning partnerships formed when teaching need to be addressed within their schools. The Teacher Collaboration factor did have a $M = 3.57$ indicating that there may be some discrepancies among this group of teachers and. But it does not factor in relation to the rest of the sample to make a difference.

Teachers who have been teaching 21-25 years saw the Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, and Learning Partnerships factors below the 4.0 median on the 7-point Likert Scale. The mean score was $M = 3.87$, $M = 3.27$, and $M = 3.78$ respectively. One factor that scored well on the survey was that of Professional Development $M = 5.25$. This could indicate that these teachers who have been teaching for this long have had many opportunities to partake in a variety of professional developments through their careers. They are the ones who also utilize what they learned in their professional development in the classroom.

The final group of teachers from the sample are those who have taught for 26 years or more. This group consisted of 14 teachers and some teachers skipping certain questions regarding professional development, collaborative leadership, and unity of purpose where only 13 teachers answered questions. However, there is still significant data that shows the relationship between the factor and the experiences in teaching. The teachers from this group also had the Teacher Collaboration factor at the bottom of their list when it came to the mean scores $M = 3.13$.

When teachers who have various years of experience are all experiencing the same feelings this can be a cause for concern. As a teacher, being aware of the mindset

can play a huge factor. When teachers have a growth mindset, they are able to see the bigger picture for the school. When teachers who have a fixed mindset and are set in their ways of teaching, this can hinder the culture of the school. The mindset of the teachers can mimic the mindset of the students, and this can in turn affect the culture of the school. Teachers have to be resilient in their abilities to push past their own mindset to help students. Building the strong relationships regardless of how long teachers have been in the school system is imperative for teachers to help students be successful. These relationships are not only with the students but also the parents as well. When parents are involved in the education of the student, the teachers and students will have a more enjoyable experience in the classroom. There needs to be further research conducted however on how to get parents involved in their child's education.

The experiences of teachers can also help in aiding and providing quality professional development. If teachers are able to share their experiences in their subject area, they not only feel valued as an employee, but they also feel they have something that is worth sharing. All the teachers from the survey agreed that teacher collaboration does not happen in their schools, or they do not take the time to do it effectively. Using professional development for the purpose of teacher collaboration and doing this consistently could help change the culture of a school for the better. There is also grounds here for further research in teacher collaboration and why this does not happen in rural schools.

CONCLUSION

School culture has many facets to it. The six factors in the study all encompass the parts that contribute to either a toxic or collaborative school culture. The study results showed that teachers do acknowledge the issue of a lack of collaboration within the district they are teaching in. This is not for a lack of trying. Teachers are utilizing professional development for their benefit. But when it comes to engaging in professional development at the school, many teachers agree that is it not being taken seriously. Teachers in low-income school districts need to have professional development that is relatable to the student population that they teach. Professional development needs to be engaging, and appropriate for the teachers to gain anything out of it. The hard part about having valued professional development is that administrators wear so many hats in the school, that the professional development may be overlooked for teachers.

Collaboration is what every school should strive for. Yet, collaboration is hard to come by because of all the pieces that need to fall into place. Teachers, administration, and the community need to all be on board for a school to foster a collaborative culture. Rural schools with a high number of poverty students tend to have a high turnover rate and those positions either go unfilled or are absorbed by another staff member. Collaborative schools are schools when teachers work together to accomplish not only a goal but a culture of positivity and inclusion. The students from low-income families tend to have the fixed mindset of being stuck and not achieving any higher than their parents. This is why teachers and parents must be on the same page about their student's education.

Parents are the most influential when it comes to their child's education. The study reflects however that parents and teachers have different expectations for the students. This can cause discord between parent and child due to the generational poverty families experience in rural communities. The student-teacher relationship is vital for student success and having a positive school culture. When students have success, that can create a positive culture among the teachers. Vice versa, when teachers have a collaborative culture, this is beneficial for all the students as well. However, teacher-parent relationships are not as strong among rural schools. Teachers and parents have a different understanding of what type of education students should be getting.

When looking at the six factors in conjunction with the gender of the teacher there is no difference in the scores when it comes to a male or female teacher. There is still data that shows the factors of Teacher Collaboration and Learning Partnerships fall short of the perceived level of collaboration based on a teacher's gender. Similarly, there is also no significant difference between teachers who have been teaching 1-5 years versus 26 plus year. All the groups based on their teaching experiences have Teacher Collaboration and Learning Partnerships at the bottom of their perceptions.

This can indicate that both male and female teachers are having a hard time working with the parents of their students. This poses a challenge for these teachers because gender and years of experiences does not matter, these teachers are having a hard time connecting to parents regardless. The students are challenging their own education and do not take responsibility for it. It also shows that gender and years of experience does not matter when it comes to collaborating with their colleagues. It just does not happen in the school districts.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study focused on three main questions regarding rural school culture with a high population of poverty students. The first question was what is the extent that teachers perceive collaborative school culture in each of the six factors as determined by Gruenert (1998)? The topic of effective and valued professional development is one of the biggest challenges for rural, low-income schools. The characteristics of effective and valued professional development should be aligned with the goals and mission of the school. Another goal of future professional development in the schools is it "should provide opportunities for active learning, allowing participants to analyze teaching and learning and try out and reflect on new practices" (Skyhar, 2020 p. 46). The practical work of the teachers needs to be the focus. Especially when teaching in rural, low-income schools and student achievement and success is low. Teachers should be able to have input and work collaboratively with the administration to figure out what the professional development should look like for the day. However, there still needs to be research done in the specifics as to why professional development is not valued by teachers in rural schools.

Another concern regarding the study leads to the topic of teacher collaboration in rural schools. The question remains as to why do teachers not collaborate in the classroom? Administrators and teachers alike know that collaboration is a positive when it comes to student success. But do they know that collaborating can change the relationships between teachers? Administrators wear many hats, but when their school district has a toxic school culture, what are they to do? Administrators need to start having conversations with their staff about what culture they perceive they are in versus

the one they are actually in. From the study, it shows that gender and teaching experiences do not play a factor into the conversation of collaboration. The administration of these schools need to recognize the first thing to potentially changing the culture of the school is to have everyone on staff have a say in something and actually be heard and valued.

Preservice teachers need to know what they are going to expect when entering a rural high-poverty school. There has been some research done on preparing preservice teachers for teaching in rural schools. There has been some research done on preparing preservice teachers for teaching in high poverty schools. But there needs to be more research done on how preservice teachers are being prepared to teach in both. This is especially important because those students in college who apply for the TEACH Grant are going to be the teachers in these districts. When proper preparation can happen for these students, the teacher turnover rate will decrease, there could be a higher chance of student's success, and overall teacher burnout will subside.

REFERENCES

Aschenbrener, C., & Johnson, S. (2016). Educationally-based, culturally-sensitive, theory-driven mentorship intervention with at-risk Native American youth in South Dakota: A narrative review. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(1), 14–27. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0537-z

Barley, Z. A., & Beesley, A. D. (2007). Rural school success: What can we learn? Journal of Research in Rural Education, *22*(1), *1–16*. https://jrre.psu.edu/node/840

Boyle, A. E., & Benner, A. D. (2020). Understanding Parental Educational Involvement: The Roles of Parental General and Child-Specific School Readiness Beliefs. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *66*(2), 199–226. https://doi.org/10.13110/merrpalmquar1982.66.2.0199

Bright, D. J. (2018). The rural gap: The need for exploration and intervention. *Journal of School Counseling, 16*(21), 1–27. http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v16n21.pdf

Budge, K. M., and William H Parrett. (2018). Disrupting poverty: 5 powerful classroom practices. ASCD Publishing.

Bustamante, R. M., Nelson, J. A., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2009). Assessing Schoolwide Cultural Competence: Implications for School Leadership Preparation. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *45*(5), 793–827. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x09347277

Cappella, E., Frazier, S. L., Atkins, M. S., Schoenwald, S. K., & Glisson, C. (2008). Enhancing Schools' Capacity to Support Children in Poverty: An Ecological Model of School-Based Mental Health Services. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 35*(5), 395–409. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-008-0182-y

Cavanagh, R. F., & Dellar, G. B. (2001). *Secondary school culture and improvement: teacher, student, and parent perspectives* (thesis). Australian Association for Research in Education, Bentley, Western Australia.

Cedeño, L. F., Martínez-Arias, R., & Bueno, J. A. (2016). Implications of socioeconomic status on academic competence: A perspective for teachers. *International Education Studies, 9*(4), 257. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n4p257

Chandler, R. (2018). Teachers' Beliefs about Poverty and the Impact on Learning Disabilities Identification in a Poor, Rural School District. *The Rural Educator*, *35*(3). https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v35i3.347

Ciuffetelli Parker, D. (2017). The impact of professional development on poverty, schooling, and literacy practices: Teacher narratives and reformation of mindset. *Cogent Education, 4(*1), 1279381. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1279381

Cleveland, R., Chambers, J., Mainus, C., Powell, N., Skepple, R., Tyler, T., & Wood, A. (2012). School culture, equity, and student academic performance in a rural

Appalachian school. *Kentucky Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning, 9*(4), 35-42. https://encompass.eku.edu/kjectl/vol9/iss1/4

Cuthrell, K., Stapleton, J., & Ledford, C. (2009). Examining the culture of poverty: Promising practices. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 54*(2), 104–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/10459880903217689

Gagnon, D. (2015). School Location and Teacher Supply: Understanding the Distribution of Teacher Effects. *Current Issues in Education, 18*(3), 1-15. https://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/view/1473

Gerdes, K. E., Segal, E. A., Jackson, K. F., & Mullins, J. L. (2011). Teaching empathy: A framework rooted in social cognitive neuroscience and social justice. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(1), 109–131. https://doi.org/10.5175/jswe.2011.200900085

Gruenert, S. W. (1998). *Development of a school culture survey* (dissertation). UMI, Ann Arbor, MI.

Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of Collaborative School Cultures with Student Achievement. *NASSP Bulletin, 89*(645), 43-55. https://doi.org/10.1177/019263650508964504

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it*. ASCD.

Gumuseli, A. I., & Eryilmaz, A. (2011). The Measurement of Collaborative School Culture (CSC) on Turkish Schools. *New Horizons in Education*, *59*(2), 13–26. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ955530.pdf

Harmon, H. L., & Schafft, K. (2009). Rural school leadership for collaborative community development. *The Rural Educator, 30*(3), 4–9. https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v30i3.443

Hardré, P. L., & Hennessey, M. N. (2013). What they think, what they know, what they do: Rural secondary teachers' motivational beliefs and strategies. *Learning Environ Res*, *16*, 411–436. https://doi.org/DOI/10.1007/s10984-013-9131-0

Ibrahim, A. (2020). What hurts or helps teacher collaboration? evidence from UAE Schools. *PROSPECTS*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-019-09459-9

Irvin, M. J., Meece, J. L., Farmer , T. W., Hutchins, B. C., & Byun, S.-yong. (2011). Relationship of School Context to Rural Youth's Educational Achievement and Aspirations. *Youth Adolescence*, *40*, 1225–1242. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-011-9628-8

Jenny, S. E., & Rhodes, S. (2017). Physical education professionals developing life skills in children affected by poverty. *The Physical Educator, 74*(4), 653–671. https://doi.org/10.18666/tpe-2017-v74-i4-7524

Knoell, C. M., & Crow, S. R. (2013). Exploring teacher influence on the lives of students from diverse elementary schools in a rural Midwestern community. International

Journal of Psychology: A Biopsychosocial Approach (13), 31–47.

http://dx.doi.org.excelsior.sdstate.edu/10.7220/1941-7233.13.2

Kundu, A. (2017). Grit and Agency: A Framework for Helping Students in Poverty to

Achieve Academic Greatness. *National Youth-At-Risk Journal, 2*(2), 69-80.

https://doi.org/10.20429/nyarj.2017.020205

Lacour, M., & Tissington, L. D. (2011). The Effects of poverty on academic

achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews, 6*(7), 522–527.

https://academicjournals.org/ERR

Malloy, W. W., & Allen, T. (2018). Teacher Retention in a Teacher Resiliency-Building

Rural School. *The Rural Educator*, *28*(2), 19–27.

https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v28i2.482

McKenzie, K. (2019). The effects of poverty on academic achievement. *BU Journal of

Graduate Studies in Education, 11*(2), 21–26. https://www.brandonu.ca/master-

education/journal/

Mette, I. M., Nieuwenhuizen, L., & Hvidston, D. J. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of

culturally responsive pedagogy and the impact on leadership preparation: Lessons

for future reform efforts. *International Journal of Educational Leadership

Preparation, 11*(1), 1–20. EISSN-2155-9635.

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1103652.pdf

Miller, A. (2008). Rural Schools Struggle to Attract Highly Qualified Teachers. *Public Interest Law Reporter*, *13*(2), 186–193. https://lawecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1238&context=pilr

Mitchell, B. D. (2008). *A quantitative study on positive school culture and student achievement on a criterion-referenced competency test* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix).

Nurius, P., LaValley, K., & Kim, M. H. (2019). Victimization, Poverty, and Resilience Resources: Stress Process Considerations for Adolescent Mental Health. *School Mental Health*, *12*, 124–135. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-019-09335-z

Ohlson, M., Swanson, A., Adams-Manning, A., & Byrd, A. (2016). A culture of success—Examining school culture and student outcomes via a performance framework. *Journal of Education and Learning, 5*(1), 114–127. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n1p114

Preston, J., & Barnes, K.E. (2018). Successful leadership in rural schools: Cultivating collaboration. *The Rural Educator, 38*(1), 6-15. https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v38i1.231

Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (2012). *Promoting learning in rural schools*. Center on Innovation & Improvement. https://www.adi.org/downloads/Promoting_Learning_in_Rural_Schools.pdf

Skyhar, C. (2020). Thinking Outside the Box. *Theory & Practice in Rural Education*, *10*(1), 42–72. https://doi.org/10.3776/tpre.2020.v10n1p42-72

Wieczorek, D., & Manard, C. Instructional leadership challenges and practices of novice

    principals in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 34*(2), 1–21.

    https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Instructional-Leadership-Challenges-and-

    Practices-Wiezorek-Manard/a8bab66943f4cd86537ae3a9c5cc0a991ee9cf11?p2df

Appendix A

Hello Kassandra Niska,

Your application **SCHOOL CULTURE IN RURAL SCHOOLS DETERMINED BY STUDENTS OF POVERTY** is exempt from further review by the Institutional Review Board of South Dakota State University. Exemption is claimed under exemption criterion 2 outlined in 45 CFR 46, section 104(d).

Please be sure to replace the current intro to your survey with the revised consent form.

Your advisor indicated an interest in adding gender and years of teaching as demographic variables. If you decide to make that change, please submit an amendment for IRB review before implementing. If the project is changed in any way, the IRB must make a determination of whether it still satisfies exemption criteria.

Your approval number is: IRB-2104009-EXM.

I wish you the best in your study.

Sincerely,

Dianne Nagy

Appendix B

School Culture Survey

Hello:

You are invited to participate in my study researching how school cultures are influenced by students who live in poverty. In this survey, approximately 300 teachers will be asked to complete a survey that asks questions about identifying the type of school culture they teach in. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point. It is very important for us to learn your opinions.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Kassandra Champion at 320-552-1791 or by email at the email address specified below.

kassandra.champion@k12.sd.us

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start with the survey now by clicking on the **Continue** button below.

Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Slightly Disagree
○ Undecided
○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

Administrators protect instruction and planning time.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Slightly Disagree
○ Undecided
○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Slightly Disagree
○ Undecided
○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

Leaders value teachers' ideas.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Slightly Disagree
○ Undecided
○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

Disagreements over instructional practice are voiced openly and discussed.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Slightly Disagree
○ Undecided
○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

Teachers are encouraged to share ideas

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Slightly Disagree
○ Undecided
○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers trust each other.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers support the mission of the school.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers work cooperatively in groups.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Slightly Disagree

○ Undecided

○ Slightly Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Teachers understand the mission of the school

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teacher involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Leaders in the school trust the professional judgments of teachers.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers spend considerable time planning together.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Professional development is valued by the faculty.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Diagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Leaders in the school facilitate teachers working together.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Diagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Leaders support risk taking and innovation in teaching.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

The faculty values school improvement.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Leaders take time to praise teachers who perform well.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example by being mentally engaged in class and completing homework assignments.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

Select your gender

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ I chose not to respond

How many years have you been teaching?

How many years have you been with your current school district?