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School Climate Indicators and Academic Achievement: An Investigation of Vulnerable Subgroups

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Abstract

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The purpose of this research was to explore the relationships between fifth grade students' perceptions of three school climate indicators as measured on the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKSS) and their academic achievement as measured by the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts (ELA). Students' CHKSS and ELA achievement scores were obtained from ninety-nine K-5 elementary schools in the San Diego Unified School District. Although this study was informed by 6,670 fifth-grade students, the unit of analysis was schools. Students' individual responses to the CHKSS and ELA achievement scores are confidential; this study examined correlations using the collective data of the fifth-grade students in various subgroups at each of the elementary schools to preserve student privacy.

Students' perceptions of school climate were recorded in the following three domains: high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional supports. In addition, for each school in the study, the percentages of fifth-grade students in specific racial/ethnic subgroups (African American, Asian, Hispanic and White) and the percentages of students who were English Learners and/or economically disadvantaged were calculated for each fifth-grade population at the ninety-nine schools. These sub-groups were purposely chosen for investigation because they represent typically vulnerable populations with available achievement data.

It was determined that there exists a moderate, significant correlation between fifth-grade students' perceptions of adults' high expectations and academic achievement for all students. In addition, a small, significant relationship was found between fifth-grade students' perceptions of adult caring relationships and academic achievement. Furthermore, there existed small, significant relationships between high expectations and caring adult relationships specifically for Hispanic and economically disadvantaged subgroups. No significant relationships were determined between the three school climate indicators and the African American, Asian and White student subgroups.

An ancillary analysis was conducted when nine schools were removed from the study sample because the percentage of fifth-graders at these schools who had taken the CHKSS was less than 40%. In this analysis, a large and significant interaction was found between African American students who meet or exceed ELA achievement standards and their perceptions of whether adults at their schools have high expectations for them. In general, for all fifth-grade students at all school sites, the greater students felt that adults on their campus held high expectations for them and had caring relationships toward them, the greater the schools' overall ELA achievement scores. This is special true for students who are African American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. On the other hand, no relationship was found between social emotional supports and any student group.

The study includes a discussion of these findings, including a conclusion and recommendations which emphasize that educational parity for vulnerable students requires teachers to provide the instruction and support that enable students to reach the highest levels.

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CHAPTER 1

Background of the Study

Grave concerns over failing schools and the fear that American students are less academically successful than students in other industrialized nations have led researchers to study the many factors affecting schools (O'Bryan, Braddock, & Dawkins, 2006). In addition, there is a history of persistent achievement gaps between African American, Hispanic and White students in our country, and these gaps expand as grade levels increase (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In the 1960s, Coleman and other scholars first linked schooling outcomes to educational inputs, including expenditures, the public-teacher ratio and school facilities, such as labs, libraries and textbooks. Eric Hanushek, in 1989, summarized the educational inputs research literature by sharing that the effects of school resources on student achievement have been weak and inconsistent. While money may be necessary for school improvement, it cannot guarantee that improvement will take place. Latent resources within a school community, such as vision, leadership, collaboration, or understanding of effective instructional strategies, can often have a powerful effect on student achievement (Grubb, 2009). Another latent resource is school climate. School climate has been described as the product of social interactions among students and educators; it is highly influenced by educational and social values (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). A school that has a positive school climate may better foster the experiences and relationships necessary to help vulnerable students achieve academically.

Still, the 1966 Coleman report found that home environment is a far greater determinant of children's futures than schools. Children from stable home environments may exhibit higher levels of trust towards both family members and the school community. In stable environments,

children feel that their parents care about them. They also feel that their parents have high expectations for their behavior and for their future. Finally, in stable home environments, children are more likely to learn social and emotional regulation skills. These skills allow children to manage their feelings in positive ways that do not limit their lives.

If schools were able to create these same environments for students, it follows that the effect of this setting would beneficially impact student achievement and outcomes. Students would feel that teachers care about them and support them in reaching the highest expectations. Because relationships are fundamental components of human learning (Rotter, 1967), the fact that some groups do not thrive may be related to the lack of caring adult relationships among students and their schools. In addition, systematic evaluation in the United States of social emotional learning (SEL) programs has provided evidence for its effectiveness in improving not only social emotional skills but also attitudes, behavior and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). The focus on the latent resource, school climate, in this study, does not imply that this resource has a greater positive relationship to student achievement than other latent resources, such as teachers' use of effective instructional strategies or administrator leadership. This study seeks to better understand the indicators of school climate which may have the greatest relationship to different student subgroups.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is threefold. The first purpose includes measuring three indicators of school climate reported by fifth-grade students in San Diego Unified School District elementary schools and examining the relationships between these indicators across the various schools. The second purpose is to examine the responses of these students to determine whether a school's racial composition, English Learner (EL) percentage and/or student body

socioeconomic status and relates to students' perceptions of school climate. Lastly, the third purpose is to determine if there is a relationship between students' perceptions of school climate, as measured by the three climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and students' academic achievement in English Language Arts. These findings will inform policy implications for growing and maintaining the most important components of school climate to best impact the academic achievement of vulnerable subgroups.

Significance of the Study

Unfortunately, there is insufficient research on the distribution of caring adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional regulation skills across and within groups in schools and across vulnerable populations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, 2000). Existing research has focused on the relationships between faculty and colleagues and teachers' relationships with administration (Tschannen-Moran, 2001, 2004, 2009). Relatively little effort has been made to measure the impact of caring adult relationships between students and teachers across racial, low-socioeconomic and EL subgroups (Adams, 2014). Understanding the impact of climate factors in schools, such as caring adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional learning, may help reduce achievement gaps and turn schools around. Although what works at one school is not easily replicable (Herman, 2012), positive school climate is a commonality among high-achieving schools.

Research Questions

RQ_1: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and student achievement?

RQ2: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and racial/ethnic subgroups?

RQ3: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports s) and English Learners?

RQ4: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and socioeconomic status?

Positionality/Reflexivity

My career in public education over the last fifteen years propels my interest in the relationship between school climate, vulnerable subgroups and academic achievement. For ten years I was an elementary school teacher of students in all grades, kindergarten through fifth. Over the ten years, I earned tenure in three different school districts: Cajon Valley Union, Vista Unified and Rancho Santa Fe. For the last five years, I have been a principal in the San Diego Unified School District. In my first principalship, I served at an elementary school located in Lincoln Military Housing, where 98% of students had one or more family members in the armed services. I currently serve as a principal at a high-performing school where 71.5% of parents have graduate or professional degrees.

Having worked in such a variety of educational settings, including classrooms where very few students spoke English, schools with high Title I percentages, and districts where the parent Foundation pledged over a million dollars to the school each year, I have seen vast inequities in the educational experiences students are receiving in the public-school systems. The fact that these differences exist does not surprise most of us in public education, but there is considerable variation in how we respond to the inequities. Are high expectations for students more significantly related to students' academic achievement more than caring adult relationships?

What role do caring adult relationships have in academic achievement? Currently, there is a large emphasis on direct social emotional skills training in our public schools. What is the relationship between these skills for interpersonal and intrapersonal effectiveness and student achievement?

Each fall, principals receive large amounts of data from the Healthy Kids Survey on school climate, gathered from parents, teachers and fifth-grade students. Receiving these responses can be overwhelming. We know that all measures of school climate are important, but what matters most? As a school administrator, efficiency is paramount, and knowing which aspect of school climate to focus on for the most prodigious result is critical.

My experience as a National Board-Certified Teacher in Early Childhood Literacy informs my decision to use students' English Language Arts proficiency scores as the measure of student achievement in my study. There is no other standardized measure of literacy across all fifth-graders in our district and state. According to a special report, *Early Warning*, from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, "…the process of dropping out begins long before high school. It stems from loss of interest in middle school, often triggered by retention in grade…and that, in a great many cases, is the result of not being able to read proficiently as early as fourth grade" (2010). The importance of literacy cannot be understated.

Educators cannot do it all, so we need to know where to focus first. My hope is that my research will provide administrators such as myself with meaningful information to positively affect achievement and spur continued research and efforts in school climate indicators.

Theoretical Framework

School climate has been established as an important construct to measure because of its connections to student psychological, social and academic outcomes (Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008). Research on school climate has arisen largely from three traditions: organizational, school

effects and psychological, each generating varied definitions and models of school climate (Rudasill, Snyder, Levinson, & Adelson, 2018). Hoy and Hannum (1997) describe academic emphasis, or the value placed on excellence in the academic realm, an essential value of school staff that shapes school climate. Academic emphasis is a shared value that predicts academic achievement and supports overall school effectiveness (Goddard et al., 2000; Lee and Bryk, 1989). The ideas of relationships and safety are also central to consideration of school climate, as they offer connection, support, affiliation and belongingness across groups within the school (Steffgen et al., 2013). The degree of social emotional safety students experience can be related to the social emotional skills learning opportunities available at the school (Steffgen et al., 2013).

In 2015, La Salle, Meyers, Varjas, & Roach presented a Cultural-Ecological Model of School Climate as a method for understanding the interrelationships between personal characteristics, culture, ecological contexts and school climate. They described a methodological framework for examining the CEMSC model with individual, family, school and community variables using multilevel methodologies. This model was created to guide future research aimed at identifying culture-specific prevention and intervention strategies to promote a positive school climate for all students.

Figure 1. Cultural Ecological Model of School Climate (La Salle et al., 2015)
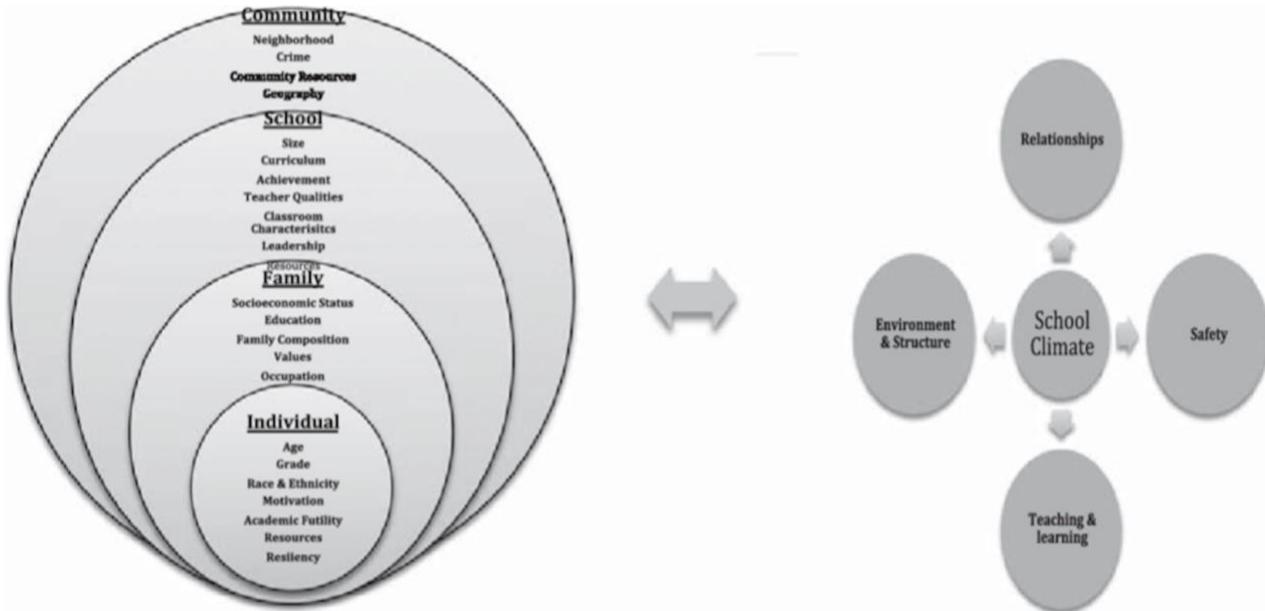
Definition of Key Terms

This section identifies and defines key terms used throughout the study.

Academic Achievement: For the purpose of this study, academic achievement is determined by whether a student has met or exceeded the grade level standard on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) in English Language Arts (ELA). Only fifth-grade student achievement data is measured in this study.

Caring adult relationships: For the purpose of this study, caring adult relationships are defined as high-quality interpersonal relationships between students and adults. Students describe caring adult relationships with teachers who are willing to help; are honest, calm, and fair; and cultivate students' ability to work autonomously (Ludwig & Warren 2009).

English Learner (EL): For the purpose of this study, ELs are language-minority students whose English proficiency affects their ability to meaningfully participate and succeed in school.

The EL population is expected to reach 25% of the total U.S. K-12 public school population by the year 2025 (Linquanti, Cook, Bailey, & MacDonald, 2016).

Free and Reduced Lunch Program: The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946 and served 30.4 million children in 2016. Children are determined eligible for free meals through participation in certain Federal Assistance Programs, or based on their status as a homeless, migrant, runaway or foster child. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the Federal poverty level are eligible for reduced price meals. (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017).

Meet or Exceeds Standards Students: For the purpose of this study, students who are performing at or above grade level are those who have taken the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and have demonstrated a meet or exceeds standards score of achievement on the fifth-grade level English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) standards.

Racial/ethnic: For the purpose of this study, racial/ethnic refers to a person's ethnic heritage. These categories and definitions are constructs that have been used to collect and represent data about population groups that have historically suffered discrimination and differential treatment in the United States because of their race or ethnicity. The majority of the nation's public schools report they collect information about race and ethnicity when students register at any school in the district (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): For the purpose of this study, SEL is defined as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2015).

Socioeconomic Status (SES): For the purpose of this study, SES is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others. Income, education and occupation can be assessed in this accounting. SES is most commonly used to depict an economic difference in society as a whole and is often broken down into three levels: high, middle and low. These associations have many implications for academic performance (Aikens & Barbarin, 2010).

Teacher Expectations: For the purpose of this study, teacher expectations are defined as a construct used to refer to the phenomena associated with the relation between what a teacher believes a student can do and what the student can actually do; generally, the more a teacher believes a student can do, the higher the achievement of the student, without respect to such factors as measured intelligence, social class or family background (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2013).

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

The vast K-12 American education system faces many challenges, including changes in charter, public and private school enrollment; subpar academic performance when compared to international counterparts; teacher certification programs; ongoing negotiations with labor unions; education of students with disabilities; curricular battles; insufficient state and federal funding; and ensuring educational access and equity for all students, regardless of socioeconomic, ethnicity and/or English Learner status. Rectifying this achievement gap has been the focus of many researchers and an impetus for this paper. Approaches used to address the disparity between students in these subgroups and their peers include the rise of critical theory as an orientation to learning in public school, insistence on direct instruction and high standards, reading intervention programs, and district-wide family engagement programs, among others. This paper focuses on the relationship between school climate and academic achievement across subgroups; specifically, this writing will review three of the school climate indicators measured in the California Healthy Kids Survey; discuss the theoretical framework and research behind each indicator; and assess whether there is a correlation between the indicator and student achievement, while considering the implications of school climate across students' racial/ethnic subgroup, English Learner status and/or socioeconomic level.

Democratic education is an educational ideal in which democracy is both a goal and a method of instruction. It brings democratic values of justice and equality to the classroom, serving to replicate an environment in which all citizens have agency, vote and voice. John Dewey, the most significant educational thinker of his era, and many would argue, of the 20th century, understood the central ethical imperative in education was democracy. As a leader of the

Progressive Movement, Dewey knew that students must be invested in what they were learning. The material needed to be relevant to students' lives and pragmatic. Education needed to meet the needs of all so that a successful democracy could continue. Every school, as he wrote in *The School and Society*, must become "an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious" (1900).

Today's America is more diverse than ever and in high need of an educated public grounded in civic ideals of unity, wisdom and tolerance. Our country has an enormous responsibility to meet the needs of its youngest citizens, K-12 students. Who are these students? In fall 2017, some 50.7 million students were enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools (prekindergarten [pre-K] through grade 12). Total public-school enrollment in pre-K through grade 12 is projected to increase to 51.1 million students (a 1 percent increase) by 2029, with changes across states ranging from an increase of 16 percent in North Dakota to a decrease of 12 percent in New Mexico.

The sharp rise of charter school enrollment in the past two decades has partly been driven by the notion that public schools are not meeting the needs of all students. A public charter school is a publicly funded school that is typically governed under a legislative contract - a charter - with the state, the district, or another entity. Between fall 2000 and fall 2017, overall public charter school enrollment increased from 0.4 million to 3.1 million. During this period, the percentage of public-school students who attended charter schools increased from 1 to 6

percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Advocates of charter schools often argue that when given the power to choose, parents will select the best school for their child. Some researchers contend that with choice, parents will act much like rational consumers in a marketplace. Others advocate that school choice is a means by which we can equalize educational opportunities, especially for families who have fewer resources and who live in a district with low-performing schools. In 2002, researchers at the University of Houston interviewed 1,006 charter school parents in Texas and asked them to raise their top reasons for choosing their school from the following options: test scores, discipline, school racial or ethnic characteristics, location, teaching of moral values or safety. The researchers wanted to know whether parent preferences differed across racial groups. They found that parents across the entire sample chose "discipline" and "the teaching or moral value" as two out of the three most important reasons (Public Agenda, 2015). For sure, parents of all backgrounds expect schools to be places where students learn social skills and emotional regulation as well as academics. How does this relate to the academic well-being of students?

Achievement of Students

To understand current differences in the achievement outcomes of student subgroups, it is important to consider the most recent academic data, along with recent data trends. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses student performance in reading at grades 4, 8 and 12 in both public and private schools across the nation. NAEP reading scale scores range from 0 to 500 for all grade levels. NAEP achievement levels define what students should know and be able to do: NAEP Basic indicates partial mastery of fundamental skills, NAEP Proficient indicates solid academic performance and demonstrated competency over challenging

subject matter, and NAEP Advanced indicates superior performance beyond proficient. The most recent reading assessments were conducted in 2019 for grades 4, 8, and 12.

In 2019, 66 percent of 4th-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Basic achievement level in reading, 35 percent performed at or above NAEP Proficient, and 9 percent performed at NAEP Advanced. Also, in 2019, 73 percent of 8th-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Basic achievement level in reading, 34 percent performed at or above NAEP Proficient, and 4 percent performed at NAEP Advanced. In 2015, 72 percent of 12th-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Basic achievement level in reading, 37 percent performed at or above NAEP Proficient, and 6 percent performed at NAEP Advanced (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

In relation to other countries, the United States falls in the average range when considering students' academic performance in reading. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international comparative assessment that measures student learning in reading. PIRLS documents worldwide trends in the reading knowledge of 4th-graders. These students complete a reading assessment and questionnaire that addresses students' attitudes towards reading and their reading habits. In addition, questionnaires are given to students' teachers and school principals to gather information about students' school experiences in developing reading literacy. In 2016, seven education systems scored higher on average than the United States on every subscale: the Russian Federation, Singapore, Ireland, *Northern Ireland-GBR*, Poland, Finland and *Moscow City-RUS* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). When considering the prowess of the American education system in international comparisons, however, it is necessary to consider the impact of poverty.

Another international exam used to measure the education of students is the Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA. Of all the nations participating in the PISA assessment, the U.S. has, at 21.7%, by far the largest number of students living in poverty. The next closest nations in terms of poverty levels are the United Kingdom and New Zealand. These countries have poverty rates that are only 75% of the total U.S. poverty rate. Furthermore, if U.S. students in schools with 10% or less poverty are compared to other countries, the U.S. is the number one country in the world. When U.S. students in schools with 10-24.9% poverty are compared, they are third behind Korea and Finland. When U.S. students in schools with 25-50% poverty are compared, their academic achievement ranks tenth in the world. Those U.S. students who attend schools with greater than 50% poverty levels, however, are near the bottom.

The seminal report, *A Nation At Risk* in 1983 notes, "The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life☐" (Bell, 1983, p. 4). This report promoted a surge for reform in education (Peterson, 2016). Geier (2016) argues, "The report served more as a symbol rather than quality empirical research" (p. 62). Regardless, the report promoted a surge in education reform in general and a closer look at the academic discrepancies across subgroups.

Student Subgroup Populations

Racial/Ethnic

As discussed earlier, the United States K-12 school student population is widely diverse. As of 2017, the racial breakdown of the student population in American public schools is as follows: White students: 47.6%; Hispanic students: 26.7%; Black students: 15.2%; Asian

students: 5.2%; two or more race students: 3.9%; American Indian/Alaska Native students: 1.0%; and Pacific Islander students: 0.4% (Riser-Kositsky, 2020). The percentages of traditional public schools and public charter schools that had more than 50 percent White enrollment were lower in 2017-18 than in 1999-2000 (57 vs. 71 percent and 32 vs. 51 percent, respectively) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). These shifts in the racial/ethnic concentration of schools reflect in part, general changes in the school-age population. Between 2000 and 2018, the percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who were White decreased from 62 to 51 percent. The percent who were Black decreased from 15 to 14 percent, and the percentage who were Hispanic increased from 16 to 25 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

In 2019, the White-Black achievement for 4th-grade students was 26 points. White students scored an average score of 230 points, and Black students scored an average score of 204 points. In 2019, Asian students scored an average of 239 points, Pacific Islander scored an average of 212 points, Hispanic scored an average of 209 points, and American Indian/Alaska Native scored an average of 204 points.

In 2019, the White-Black achievement for 8th-grade students was 28 points. White students scored an average score of 272 points, and Black students scored an average score of 244 points. In 2019, Asian students scored an average of 284 points, Pacific Islander scored an average of 252 points, Hispanic scored an average of 252 points, and American Indian/Alaska Native scored an average of 248 points.

The White-Black achievement gap for 12th-grade students was larger in 2015 (30 points) than in 1992 (24 points). Data were not available for 2019 at the time of publication (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

There are also wide disparities between the rates at which students in various ethnic groups graduate from high school. In California, for example, 82.70% of all California high school students graduate from high school. White students, on average, graduate at a rate of 87.3%, whereas Hispanic students graduate at a rate of 80.3%. Other percentages of students graduating from high school include: Black students: 73.1%; Asian/Pacific Islander: 92.6%; American Indian/Alaska Native: 68.2% (Riser-Kositsky, 2020).

Similar to the pattern observed at the high school completion level, the percentage of 25-to 29-year-olds who had attained an associate's or higher degrees was higher for those who were Asian (78 percent) and White (56 percent) than for those of any other racial/ethnic group in 2019. In addition, the percentage was higher for those who were Black (40 percent) than for those who were Hispanic (31 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native (23 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Globally, the phenomenon of academic underperformance of ethnic minority students continues as well. While at the start of their educational career, there are usually no significant differences observed in performance between ethnic majority and ethnic minority students (Osborne, 2001), during elementary school such differences begin to arise (Herweijer, 2003) and grow over time (Osborne, 2001). Across grade levels, ethnic minority students earn lower grades, obtain fewer credits, are two-and-a-half times as likely to fail examination and are twice as likely to experience study delays compared with majority background students (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999; Stevens, Clycq, Timmerman & Van Houtte, 2011). In tracked educational systems, ethnic minority students are overrepresented in vocation or lower education tracks and underrepresented in higher education (Herweijer, 2003; Herweijer, 2009; Stevens et al., 2011).

These achievement gaps have persisted across time and many attempts have been made to resolve the extreme differences in academic performances and opportunity across all student populations. Under the Bush administration, reforms including accountability and standard-based reform took center stage. Wong and Sunderman (2007) explain that as the U.S. Congress enacted NCLB in 2001, President George W. Bush broadened federal responsibility and accountability for all students. The states continued to move toward standards-based reform. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era did see some improvements in student achievement but stalled in later years of implementations (Hansen, Mann Levesque, Quintero & Valant, 2018).

More recently, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015, included goals that extended the previous acts to also include preparing all students for success in college. Klein (2016) describes this change as, "On the one side, it moved away from what they saw as the worst aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was the previous version of the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including what many deemed an overemphasis on standardized tests and a too-heavy federal footprint" (p. 1). Dean, Dahlin, and Cronin, (2011) highlight ESSA's loosening of the 100% accountability requirements of NCLB in order that states might focus their energies on turnarounds for the lowest performing schools, placing less emphasis on the measurement of proficiency and more emphasis on the college and career ready standards. The emphasis on college-readiness was meant to ensure that all students are ready for the academic challenges of higher education (MDE, 2017), whereas the previous acts centered on closing the student achievement gap and increasing accountability. However, rather than closing the gap, the disparities between economic, racial and social equities have only increased in public education over the last 50 years (Bishop & Jackson, 2015).

As this time, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) acts as our nation's policy, and the perpetuation or closing of the achievement gap remains to be seen. Though the failure to make overall progress in closing the achievement gap across race and ethnicity, there are some positive trends with respect to achievement gaps. Racial and ethnic achievement gaps have been on a gradual, and at times bumpy, decline since the 1970s (Hansen et al., 2018). When combining the math and reading scores in the current NAEP results, the White-Black achievement gap is down 0.15 standard deviations in fourth grade and 0.11 standard deviations in eight grades since 2003, the first NCLB-era assessment. The White-Hispanic gap is down 0.18 and 0.20 standard deviations in fourth and eighth grades, respectively, over the same period. Based on sizes of these gaps in 2003, these standard deviations represent reductions of 13-25%. To understand what these reductions look like in academic growth, consider that students in late elementary grades grow at a rate of around 0.3-0.5 standard deviations per year. Reducing the achievement gap by 0.2 standard deviations could loosely be equated with reducing an existing achievement gap with about one-half year of instruction (Hansen et al., 2018).

English Learners

Languages other than English are growing in use across the United States. Nearly 60 million people, more than one in five Americans, speak a language other than English at home. Of those, almost two-thirds (62%) speak Spanish, while another 15% speak one of several Asian languages, the most commonly spoken being Chinese (approximately 5%). Growth in other-than-English language speakers has been dramatic over the last three decades: from 23 million persons in 1980 to nearly 60 million today. The Census Bureau estimates that the US will continue to add more other-than-English speakers to the population in the future (Ryan, 2013).

While many of these 60 million individuals also speak English, many do not. Children often must learn to speak English through their education at school, where instruction (in most schools) is primarily in English. The percentage of public-school students in the United States who were English Learners (ELs) was higher in fall 2017 (10.1 percent, or 5.0 million students) than in fall 2000 (8.1 percent, or 3.8 million students). In fall 2017, the percentage of public-school students who were ELs ranged from 0.8 percent in West Virginia to 19.2 percent in California (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

When asked, speakers of a language other than English explain that communicating with peers in a native language creates a personal "understanding" among the speakers, as a common language can fortify the identity of an individual as part of a larger, socially connected community (Norton, 1997). In recent history, legal initiatives have sought to bar the teaching of other languages in public schools, as well as forbid the use of students' primary languages to provide access to the general curriculum. English Learners may experience increased loneliness when they cannot communicate with others during school hours in their primary language, whether this is because it is forbidden or because there are few others who share the same language. Unfortunately, many authors have found that there is minimal measurable impact of pre-service credentialing on teacher effectiveness specific to EL students (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008).

With this bereft orientation toward EL students, it is not surprising that the results of national testing indicate nearly half (46%) of Fourth-grade EL students scored below basic in mathematics and nearly three-quarters (73%) scored below basic in reading (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010). English Learners have higher rates of drop out, mobility and poverty, and their achievement remains among the lowest of subgroups (Wolf et al., 2010). The increasing urgency

for English proficiency is fueled by both their increasing numbers and distressing academic achievement scores. Schools are pressed with the demand to move students to English proficiency as quickly as possible, but this approach does not address the shifts in schools' values that are often needed to bring about meaningful instruction. Darder (2012) argues that a culturally democratic schooling environment is needed to rectify this and other achievement inequalities.

Latino English Learners

Current research demonstrates that the Latino population in the United States is consistently increasing, and it is estimated that Latino school-aged children will outnumber White school-aged children in public schools by 2050 (Wolf, Herman, Dietel, & National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, 2010). Research shows that the educational achievement of this subgroup remains problematic, and the achievement gap between White and Hispanic students is wider than the achievement gap between White and African-American students. Being that approximately one-third of the students in California's schools are ELs and that 85% of these ELs speak Spanish as their primary language, the current crisis demands our attention. A further concern is that both new and veteran teachers feel they have been inadequately trained and prepared to teach non-English Learners (Callahan, 2013).

Socioeconomic Status

In contrast to the relative stabilization of achievement gaps due to race and ethnicity, the differences in achievement between high and low poverty students is growing. Persistently large achievement gaps exist between high-social-class and low-social-class children in America, and the vast differences in academic and economic opportunity threaten Dewey's envisage of a democratic society. Since the early 1980s, the total share of income claimed by the bottom 90

percent of Americans has steadily decreased, with the majority of income gains going to the top one percent. These trends are of major concern because so far, our education system has not consistently helped children rise above their birth circumstances. In fact, this is hardly the case. Rather, the percentage of children who earn more than their parents has fallen approximately 90 percent for children born in 1940 to just 50 percent for children born in the 1980s.

Often, the percentage of public-school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program serves as a proxy measure for the concentration of low-income students within a school. In the fall of 2017, the percentages of students who attend high-poverty public schools were highest for Black and Hispanic students (45 percent each), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native students (41 percent), Pacific islander students (24 percent), students of two or more races (18 percent) and Asian students (15 percent). The percentage of students who attend high-poverty public schools was lowest for White students (8 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

The FRPL gaps have dropped by just 0.03 and 0.02 standard deviations in fourth and eighth grade, respectively, since 2003. Part of the slow progress on this measure could be attributed to the Great Recession, which coincided with small increases in the FRPL gap in 2009 and the surrounding years (Hansen et al., 2018).

Understanding income-based gaps can be a complex issue. Two families with very different life experiences can be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Students from deeply impoverished households may have greatly differing living experiences than students from lower-middle-class households, or enlisted military households, while all qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch. Moreover, trends in income gaps can differ greatly based on how these groups are defined. For example, Reardon has found steadily increasing income-based

achievement gaps over the last five decades when comparing achievement from students in the 90th versus 10th percentile of household income, a truer wealthy-poor comparison (2011). These findings can help us understand the growing gap between the highest and lowest performers, regardless of income, on the two most recent rounds of NAEP, 2012 and 2017. In addition, few states have made improvements in closing income-based achievement gaps. Fewer than half of all states have made any detectable progress on closing this gap since 2003. Since this time, eight states have seen this gap increase by 0.1 standard deviations or more (Hansen et al., 2018)

Extensive research has conclusively demonstrated that children's social class is one of the most significant predictors - if not the single most significant predictor - of their educational success. Poverty is damaging to the well-being of children. It affects children's social, emotional, behavioral and cognitive development. When compared to children from more affluent families, poor children are more likely to have low academic achievement, higher drop-out rates and persistent health problems (Bowling & Cummings, 2009).

We have also learned that these achievement gaps by social class take shape in the formative years of a child's life, existing well before a student enters kindergarten. The Economic Policy Institute (2017) estimates that in 2010, gaps between kindergarten children in the highest and lowest fifths of the SES distribution were over a standard deviation in both reading and math. Gaps in noncognitive skills such as self-control and approaches to learning are roughly between one-third and one-half as large (Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

Popular Initiatives and Interventions

Education researchers and policymakers have long been attentive to issues related to equity - by racial/ethnic, SES, gender and other characteristics. In 1966, Coleman et al. found that family background and socioeconomic status outweigh all other factors correlated with

students' achievement. Educational inequities remain today, and to address these vast differences in achievement across race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status and English Learner students, educators and policy makers have created and implemented many reform efforts. These initiatives have been aimed at multiple levels: student, school and community levels, including support for parents. It must be said that the need for these educational interventions would be greatly reduced by addressing larger, systemic structural issues, such as poverty, racism and inequality. Regardless, the attempts to bring equal educational opportunity to all are necessary and important.

A focus for interventions has been on addressing a child's readiness for school and supporting the child in his elementary years, before the achievement gap grows too great to make up. Early gains must be sustained and built throughout children's K-12 years. Many of these strategies are referred to as "whole-child" approaches to education, in reflection of their holistic nature (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Comprehensive and "whole-child" approaches to education are generally designed by all stakeholders to leverage each community's unique assets and meet its specific needs, as no two comprehensive approaches are exactly alike. Most (but not all) use schools as "hubs," involving a mix of school-community partnerships along with both public and private funding and support. But all of these whole-child approaches have the following components in common: high-quality early childhood education; health and nutrition components; enriching, hands-on classroom experiences; well-designed after-school classroom and summer enrichment programs; and parent and community engagement (Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

Students who are economically disadvantaged need school and classroom environments that provide a rich knowledge base where they can learn to participate in new kinds of

information gathering through learning, playing, imagining and creating, and it is a mistake for schools to use poverty or any other subgroup characteristic to explain and dismiss the persistent achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Whole-child approaches meet the needs of children across a range of academic, social and behavioral domains and do not focus exclusively on a narrow curriculum. Furthermore, they do not seek to solely improve performance on standardized tests. Instead, achievement of students who have the greatest needs is fostered by teachers who believe all students can be challenged; all students can be held to high expectations; all students can learn from teachers and from one another; and all obstacles are surmountable (Hattie, 2012).

School Climate and Achievement

According to Barber, Humana and Torney-Purta (2006), school climate is defined as "the impressions, beliefs and expectations held by members of the school community about their school as a learning environment, their associated behavior and the symbols and institutions that represent the patterned expressions of the behavior" (p. 1). It is a relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior and is based on their collective perceptions in schools. School climate has also been described as a product of social interactions among students and educators and is highly influenced by educational and social values. In schools where positive school climates exist, people are engaged and feel respected (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

Research on school climate indicates that a school's climate has a large effect on the educational processes that occur within the school. In 2011, Voight, Nixon and Nation showed that school climate is associated with essential behavioral and higher educational outcomes, including student attendance, engagement, achievement. In addition, in schools with a positive

school climate, problem behavior is less observed. A school climate creates a harmonious and well-functioning school, improving teaching practice through dialogue and collaboration around student engagement (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Positive school climate has been considered especially important for students from high-poverty backgrounds (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgin-D'Alessandro, 2013). Given these factors, it is not surprising that higher academic achievement results (Cotton, 2003). Simply put, school climate can determine the academic success or failure of the school (Osman, 2012).

California Healthy Kids Survey

The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) is an anonymous, comprehensive youth health risk and resilience data collection service sponsored by the California Department of Education (CDE). It measures school climate, safety and overall student wellness and is administered in grades five, seven, nine and eleven. The survey provides schools and communities, as well as the state, with key data on school climate, safety, student engagement, barriers and supports associated with academic performance and overall student well-being (California Department of Education, 2020).

Since the fall of 2003, CDE has mandated that all local education agencies (LEAs) that receive funding under the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) or state Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) program must administer the survey at least once every two years and report the results publicly. The survey also met the student data collection requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). In addition, the CHKS provides data for the Local Control and Accountability Plan and Single Plan for Student Achievement.

There are three types of surveys: student, staff and parent. All three surveys are collectively known as the California School Climate, Health and Learning Survey (Cal-SCHLS) System. The student survey was developed in 1999 and the staff survey in 2003. A parent survey was created several years later. Supplementary modules are available, and districts may also customize their questions in a module targeting topics of local interest. At this time, with school buildings now closed due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and districts shifting to distance learning, the CDE is providing a Learning from Home Survey to assess students' remote learning experiences. The survey will measure students' home educational routines, engagement and motivation in educational activities, quality of relationships with teachers and peers, and social emotional well-being (WestEd, 2020).

This is the largest, most comprehensive effort in the United States to provide data to local schools/communities to identify and address the needs of students and school and to improve efforts to promote academic achievement and well-being for all youth. The Cal-SCHLS was recognized by the US Department of Education as a model program. Between 2014-16, about 700 districts and 5000 schools administered the CHKS to over one million students in California. In addition, they are used statewide in West Virginia's and Louisiana's Safe and Supportive Schools Project. The student survey has been used effectively in research across the globe, including Australia, China, Jamaica, South Africa and Turkey (WestEd, 2010).

The Cal-SCHLS is not only valued for their contribution of important information at the site and community decision-making levels. They have also been used vastly in research because of the large size and value of the database and because they exhibit psychometrically-robust efforts to quantify school climate and resilience-promoting behaviors. Most of the research to date falls into five areas: (1) the characteristics of specific population groups and school types;

(2) how health, safety and education factors are related; (3) how school developmental supports and other school climate factors, school connectedness and engagement and academic achievement are related; (4) how risk and protective factors are related; and (5) how schools that receive specific grants or share other common characteristics differ from schools that do not. In many cases, these large-scale research projects would not be possible without the expansive dataset (WestEd, 2010).

There are many aspects of school climate outlined by the Healthy Kids Survey. School Climate Indicators fall under three categories: Supports and Engagement, Low Violence and Other School Climate Indicators. The school climate indicators provide school-level descriptions of several factors that are known to influence learning success in schools. The Supports and Engagement and Other School Climate subdomains are computed by averaging the percentage of respondents who report "Yes, most of the time" or "Yes, all of the time" on survey items that comprise each scale. A value of 86 on the "School Connectedness" indicator, for example, means that on average, 86% of students report "Yes, most of the time" or "Yes, all of the time" across the five "School Connectedness" survey items.

Research has consistently supported its theoretical framework linking the school environment to student engagement and to positive academic and health outcomes. The CDE recognizes that improvements in academic achievement cannot occur without addressing the health and behavior risks that confront youth and without establishing environments that support learning. In 2008, Austin and Bailey summarized the first two years of data reported by teachers, administrators and other staff. Key findings include the following:

- There is a consistent decline from elementary to high school across indicators of a positive learning and teaching environment (e.g., caring staff-student relations, achievement standards and expectations and meaningful student participation in school).

- There is a similar decline in indicators of student motivation to learn, attendance and other behaviors that facilitate learning.

- There is a dramatic increase from elementary to high school in the perceived severity of problems that the schools experience related to student risk behaviors, health and safety. Understandably, perceived school safety dramatically declines.

- While there is a clear pattern of increasing challenges from elementary to high school, there is also a marked decline in services and policies that address the behavioral and health problems students experience and that form barriers to learning.

- Across school types, there is a strong correlation between positive school climate factors and student academic performance, as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API).

- Less than half of high school staff felt most or nearly all students were motivated to learn. Only 40% strongly agreed their high school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn.

Research using the CHKS in secondary schools has confirmed the relationship between academic performance and school well-being. Efforts to turn around low-performing schools may be enhanced by fostering learning supports that make these schools safer and more caring, challenging, participatory and engaging. High schools exhibit particularly low levels of school well-being. Only about one-third of students in the lowest-performing high schools perceived

their schools as safe or experienced caring adult relationships and high expectations. Only around one-quarter felt connected to school (Hanson, Austin, & Zheng, 2011).

These findings are consistently and significantly varied in similar ways in relation to the racial/ethnic compositions of California schools. They also exist after taking into consideration how schools differ in socioeconomics, racial/ethnic composition and other demographic characteristics. In particular, both academic performance and school climate were lower in predominantly Hispanic and especially Black/Hispanic schools than in schools that were predominantly White and Asian. There is not only an achievement gap, but also a school safety gap, student engagement gap and a student support gap (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, 2005).

In 2009, Benard and Slade described a process for improving schools using student voice. In a practice in which students become partners, the authors moved the outlook of the school from a deficit perspective to a positive, resilient and empowered viewpoint. In this approach, the authors describe facilitated discussion with students about their school and how it can be improved, making optimal use of the CHKS data. The underlying message inherent in this activity is that everyone harbors resilience and is able to learn and develop the skills and understanding associated with resilience theory.

Standardized Achievement Testing

The history of standardized testing in the United States began in the early 1800s when American educators began articulating ideas that would be translated into more formal assessments of student achievement. Prior to this, in the colonial era when schools were oriented to servicing the elite, students took oral assessments to demonstrate knowledge of material. Between 1840 and 1875, as schools changed their missions from educating selectively to educating the general public, formal written testing began. From 1875 to the end of World War I,

the development and administration of new testing instruments revealed vast differences in students' readiness for college, bringing to light important issues related to discourse on the goals of American education. At the turn of the century, in 1905 French psychologist Alfred Binet developed a standardized test of intelligence, work that would be incorporated into the modern intelligence test. It was the United States Armed Services during World War I that ignited the most rapid expansion of the testing movement, as mental tests were conducted to assign US servicemen jobs during the war effort (Fletcher, 2009).

In 1922, John Dewey warned against the proliferation of aptitude testing in school. He shared, "Our mechanical, industrialized civilization is concerned with averages, with percents. The mental habit which reflects this social science subordinates education and social arrangements based on averaged gross inferiorities and superiorities" (p. 295). This thinking represented a concern related to standardized testing that continues today: while demands for tests stem in large part from demand for fair treatment of all students, the actual use of tests, especially for sorting and credentialing of youth, brings about questions of equity and fairness. Controversies have emerged over the effects of tests in correcting or exacerbating racial inequality. Two other points can be made here. First, the civil rights movement led to the development of a wide range of social programs, which in turn created new demands for accountability measures to ensure that Federal money was being well spent. The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act in particular opened the way for new and increased uses of norm-referenced tests to evaluate programs (U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment, 1992).

In these ways high-stakes testing has not only been used to assess student learning; these exams have also been used to hold schools accountable for results and allocate educational

opportunities to students. In the past decades, the characterization of standardized tests as instruments of fairness and scientific rigor has been challenged. Critics of testing tout standardized tests are discriminatory against non-English speakers and students with special needs. English Learners take tests in English before they have mastered the language, and special education students often take the same tests as other children, receiving few of the accommodations usually provided to them as part of their individualized education plans. Currently, new lawsuits have demanded the University of California to drop standardized test requirements, as research has been used to argue the use of tests violates states' anti-discrimination statute because it disadvantages children of color, children from low-income families and children with disabilities. For example, reminding students of their racial group before taking a test can impact their score. In addition, it has been shown that girls consistently underperform boys on the math sections of these tests (Elsesser, 2019).

Interestingly, patterns in achievement gaps across states generally elude regional classification. It does not appear that specific regions of the country are doing particularly well while other regions lag behind, a pattern one might expect to see when looking at overall achievement levels on the NAEP. In addition, there is no evidence from the most recent NAEP that states with higher per-pupil spending or stricter Common Core implementation, for example, are doing noticeably better than their counterparts. This lack of overall pattern by region or curricular implementation may suggest disparate income levels within a state can be used to explain the gap in achievement (Hansen et al., 2019).

Teacher Expectations and Effects

The first consideration of school climate in this study is the degree to which the adults on campus hold high expectations for students. According to Good and Brophy (1997), teacher

expectations are defined as "inferences that teachers make about the future behavior or academic achievement of their students, based on what they know about these students now" (p. 79). In 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobson conducted an innovative experiment *Pygmalion in the Classroom* and claimed that teachers' erroneous expectations of their students could affect their treatment of their students; ultimately students' achievement was altered in line with their teachers' initial expectations (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). These researchers reported IQ gains of 15 points or more for first and second-grade children in the experimental groups, those the teachers were told would show academic "blooming" during the school year. This was known as the expectation effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). The term described a situation where a false perception triggers novel behaviors that, in turn, make the original perception come true. This important study brought expectation effects into the education context and opened up the field of teacher expectation research. Investigators have continued to explore the direct and indirect exchanges of teachers which might have implications for student achievement, although it has been difficult to replicate Rosenthal and Jacobson's work.

While it was determined that teachers' expectations do not affect children's IQ test performance, specifically, a more important question asks the extent to which teachers' expectations affect students' actual acquisition of academic material. In several studies it was reported that school grades were not affected by teacher expectations regarding students' performance (Claiborn, 1969; Jose & Cody, 1971; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). A single study by Meichenbaum, Boers and Ross (1969) did show a significant relationship between teacher expectations and object test performance, yet the sample size was small and peculiar (female adolescent offenders).

In each of the above studies, however, teacher expectations were manipulated by the researcher and not inherently determined by the teacher him/herself. In other words, teacher expectation had been created for the teachers, and the effects of this artificial expectation on student performance were measured. But what about the conclusions and opinions a teacher independently forms about a students' potential?

To investigate this, an early and classic study on teacher expectations, teacher behavior and student outcomes was conducted by Rist in 1970. His ethnographic and longitudinal research examined the mechanisms through which a teacher's expectations for his/her student impacted the students' receipt of high-quality instruction. All subjects in this experiment were African American, so race did not play a part. On the eighth day of instruction in a kindergarten classroom, the teacher divided the students into three separate tables, based on her expectations for their success or failure. At this point, the teacher's expectations were solely based on their appearance and suggested socioeconomic status, since no formal testing had yet been conducted. Interestingly, the teacher's perceived assessments of students' appearance and SES were commensurate with their actual appearance and SES. Upper- and middle-SES students were expected to succeed, while lower-SES students were met with lower expectations of success. Rist observed that the teacher seated the higher-SES students at a table closer to her, called on them more often and provided direct feedback. On the other hand, lower-SES students were seated at a table further away, often not facing the board where instruction was occurring. The teacher called on the lower-SES students less often; Rist explained how these students acquired knowledge through "secondary learning," learning that occurred not through direct engagement with the teacher but acquired from listening in to the teacher's conversations with other students and/or interactions with other classroom students (Rist, 1970). The students were followed for a

total of three years, and at the end of second grade, there had been no academic mobility for the students. This study showed the long-term effects of teachers' expectations for their students.

In general, teachers generally form expectations for their students based on students' previous academic achievement and skills, and these expectations do tend to be accurate. They lead to self-maintaining expectation effects rather than self-fulfilling prophecy effects. However, the Rist study and other research evidence has shown that teacher expectations can be biased by stereotypes and biases related to student demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and special education labels (Dusek and Joseph, 1983; Ferguson, 2003; Wang et al., 2018).

Expectations Formation for Stigmatized Students

When not told beforehand what to expect about a student, how do teachers build expectations for their students? In the 1960s, the importance of teacher expectations was first examined, and a variety of factors were found to influence expectations, including race, physical attractiveness, gender, socioeconomic status, and cumulative folder contents (Adams & Cohen, 1976; Bergan & Smith, 1966; DeMeis & Turner, 1978; Deitz & Purkey, 1969; Lenkowsky & Blackman, 1968). It has also been determined that for some groups of students, the negative self-fulfilling expectation effects are significantly larger than others. For example, minority groups such as African American and Latino students are often stereotyped as performing low academically. Low-SES students, regardless of ethnicity and students for whom English is not their first language can also be stereotyped. Research shows that teacher expectations predicted achievement more strongly for low achievers (effect size .26) than for high achievers (effect size .08) (Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997). Another investigation by McKown & Weinstein (2002) replicated these findings with first-, third- and fifth-grade students. Indeed, they found that

students from academically stigmatized groups were more vulnerable to teachers' negative perceptions of their ability. Furthermore, they found that students from these backgrounds were more severely affected from teachers' overestimations of their lack of academic capacity than those students from non-disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, these groups benefited less when teachers positively overestimated their cognitive capacities.

Of pressing concern is the consideration of students who fall into two or more stigmatized groups. Jussim, Eccles and Madon (1996) investigated the impact of self-fulfilling prophecies on multiply-stigmatized students. It was found that the effects of these self-fulfilling prophecies for students with two stigmatizations were stronger than for students with single stigmatizations. Students belonging to multiple subgroup populations showed a doubled vulnerability, demonstrating that the effects of stigmatization are cumulative.

Communicating Expectations

Since Rist's 1970 investigation, researchers have focused on the way expectations are explicitly or implicitly communicated to a student in such a way that his/her academic performance can be impacted.

In 1970, Brophy and Good observed differing behaviors that teachers used with first-grade students of whom they had both high- and low-expectations. When the teachers had high expectations for a student, they were more likely to praise the student for providing correct answers. On the other hand, when the teachers had low expectations for a student, the teacher was less likely to praise the student for answering a question correctly, even though the student answered a question correctly far less often (Brophy and Good, 1970). In addition, it was found that lower performing students were also criticized more often when they provided answers that were incorrect and that teachers more often accepted subpar responses provided by students from

whom they expected less. In contrast, when a student from whom they expected more provided an unacceptable response, the teacher rephrased the question and provided support and coaching to help the student obtain a correct answer. Brophy's 1985 work further revealed that these teacher behaviors related to their expectations for the students, and that oftentimes teachers were not aware of the ways in which they related differently to their students.

Moreover, Cooper (1985) found further differences in teachers' behaviors toward high- and low-expectation students; the visibility of the interactions and the actual number of interactions varied. Teachers interacted with the high-expectation students publicly, while their work with the low-expectation students occurred in private. The teachers also discouraged low-expectation students from providing responses in public. Because of this, low-expectations students further internalized the teachers' lack of belief in them.

While additional research related to expectations continued to occur, it was not until 1985 when Harris and Rosenthal determined effect sizes for the various teacher behaviors. Through a meta-analysis, they identified 31 different teacher behaviors, both dyadic and whole-class oriented, across 136 investigations as contributing to teacher expectation effects. Some of the behaviors researchers had originally focused on were determined to have less impact on student outcomes than those not as frequently focused on. For example, increased wait time for high-expectation students, $r = .18$, praising high-expectation students more, $r = .12$, and smiling more at high-expectation students, $r = .19$, did not impact student outcomes as much as other teacher behaviors. The more impactful behaviors included: creating a friendly classroom climate, $r = .32$; teaching high-expectation more concepts and more difficult concepts, $r = .29$; and creating a warm socioemotional climate, $r = .29$. These findings revealed that the 1:1 dyadic student relationship between teacher and student was less impactful on student achievement than more

general behaviors toward students based on global expectations. This finding gives additional credence to the deleterious effects of general stereotyping.

Harris and Rosenthal (1985) continued to describe four important factors that allowed for whole classroom communication of expectations: socioemotional climate (smiling broadly, eye contact to all, friendly and supportive behavior); verbal input (greater quantity and more difficult material presented); verbal output (number of contacts, time spent talking, clues); and feedback (praise and criticism). In a meta-analysis of expectation studies, the researchers detailed sixteen of the most important behaviors in which teachers could engage to help increase students' abilities to learn. It is important to remember that these relationships are correlation, as causality has yet to be determined.

1. Create a less negative climate (i.e., not behaving in a cold manner).

2. Maintain closer physical distance to students.

3. Provide more input by attempting to teach a greater quantity or more difficult material.

4. Create a warmer socioemotional climate (i.e., acting in a more globally warm manner).

5. Exhibit less off-task behavior.

6. Have longer interactions with students.

7. Interact more often with students.

8. Ask more questions.

9. Encourage students more.

10. Engage in more eye contact.

11. Smile more.

12. Praise students more.

13. Accept students' ideas by modifying, acknowledging, summarizing or applying what the student said.

14. Provide more corrective feedback.

15. Nod more.

16. Wait longer for responses.

High Expectations and Academic Achievement

It has been said that teachers not only must believe in what they are doing, they must believe in their students' ability to learn (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Cooper & Good, 1983). In 2000, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), for example, published a revised version of the standards of mathematics education titled *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*, which attempted to include what was omitted in the prior standards document created in 1989. The later publication included an Equity Principle, proclaiming that "equity [in mathematics education] requires high expectations and worthwhile opportunities for all" (p. 12). If teachers' perceptions of students' abilities do not coincide with the purposes of initiative or standards meant to improve the educational experience and performance of marginalized students, the efforts will fail.

Jamar and Pitts (2005) spent a year studying an urban middle school mathematics teacher who held high expectations for all students. Colleagues and students alike attested to his excellence; high expectations manifested through both words and deeds. Many characteristics of his teaching revealed his high expectations for students. First, he used students' prior knowledge as building blocks to learn new information. This reinforced the idea to students that they already had the foundational knowledge to expand upon, ensuring they would be successful in the upcoming cognitive task. Next, he expected students to be active participants in their own

learning, making it clear that they were agents of their own understanding and responsible for the work. In addition, he provided opportunities for students to understand the mathematical concepts and not just memorize rules or mnemonics. He emphasized his belief that students *could* understand the content. This is in contrast to the "pedagogy of poverty," found in many inner-city classrooms, wherein students were expected to memorize rules without meaning and hopefully apply them correctly (Haberman, 1991). This teacher's pedagogical practices are consistent with research on best instructional practices and provide a space where academic excellence can become the norm for all students.

Teacher Efficacy and Academic Optimism

In order to have high expectations for students, particularly for students belonging to racial/ethnic, SES and English Learner minority groups, teachers must have high expectations for themselves. They also must have self-efficacious beliefs, knowing that they are capable of bringing about successful outcomes for students. Teacher efficacy, also called teacher self-efficacy or teacher's sense of efficacy, refers to teachers' judgments of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The notion of teacher efficacy originated during the mid-1970s in studies by the RAND Corporation and has evolved since then, becoming a frequent focus of education researchers. As Zee and Koomen (2016) remarked, ever since the early RAND work, "studies on teacher self-efficacy (TSE) have been popping up like daisies in a spring field" (p. 981). Teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their beliefs about student success in a systematic way. They must determine the origin of their expectations, including their conclusions about students' prior achievement experiences. Teachers must also recognize and discuss their first impressions of students' academic and

interpersonal behaviors the first weeks of school so that they can receive school and community support to meet the higher task demand. These judgments may serve as frames of reference, defining the challenge of their task for the year (Summers, Davis, & Hoy, 2016).

The notion of academic optimism has been used to help explain the link between teachers' collective sense of efficacy, trust in others (administrators, colleagues, students, parents), and academic emphasis. These constructs are highly correlated, even when controlling for socioeconomic status (Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Academic optimism includes both cognitive and affective dimensions. Teachers possess strong beliefs about themselves, their students and their instruction, and the combined perceptions that their efforts will have a positive impact on students is a cognitive expectation. In addition, teachers' trust in students, parents and administrators is based on the feelings that these individuals are benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open (Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). This is an affective response. Finally, academic emphasis is a *focus on learning* and a press for particular *behaviors* in schools. Thus, academic optimism is a triadic set of interactions with each element functionally dependent on the other, producing a positive learning environment. Thus, academic optimism is a triadic set of interactions with each element functionally dependent on the other, producing a positive learning environment.

High Academic Expectations: Racial/Ethnic, EL and SES

The National Center for Education Statistics (2020) reports that during the 2017-2018 school year, 79% of all public-school teachers identified themselves as White and 21% identified as a race other than White. During the 2017-2018 school year, 48% of public-school students identified as White, and 52% of public-school students identified as a race other than White. It is predicted that by 2029, only 44% of all public-school students will identify as White (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The demographic gap between students and teachers is growing as the student population continues to diversify.

These facts raise the concern that Black and Latino students are more likely to be taught by a White teacher than a Black or Latino teacher. The students of color, therefore, have a higher chance to have a teacher who questions their cognitive and academic abilities, are uncomfortable around them, or do not know how to teach them well (Sleeter, 2001).

For African Americans and other minority groups, school is often not a place to learn but a place of low expectations and failure. Teachers must recognize often-unconscious biases, confront institutional racism where it occurs, surmount stereotyping, adopt culturally relevant teaching, connect with parents and community and integrate diversity in all activities (Lewis & Landsman, 2006). Holbrook (2006) states the most important factors contributing to minority students' success are the deeply embedded "lower expectations" that may unconsciously surface in the classroom.

Setting high teacher expectations for English Learners has been identified by NCTE (2008) as a research-based recommendation for effective instruction of students learning English. When high expectations are set for English Learners' academic achievement, they learn more (NCTE, 2008). Too often, teachers of English Learners believe their students cannot do academic work until they have reached a high level of English proficiency (Lee, 2012). Instead, teachers must ensure English Learners are taught using high-quality curriculum with the expectation that they will build their knowledge of academic content as well as their language skills (Lopez & Iribarren, 2014). Li implores EL teachers to have confidence in their students, set high expectations and communicate to their students that they can meet these high expectations. Teachers should not view students' challenges to learn academic English as deficiencies or

limitations but instead continue to provide core subject matter content-area instruction and

expect that EL students master this material like all other students. In addition, Pereira and de

Oliveira (2015) stressed the importance of providing rigorous materials for English Learners in

their daily instruction as a way to support these students' content and English language

development.

In high-performing, high-poverty schools, high expectations are espoused by all

stakeholders: administrators, teachers and parents. There is a shared belief that every student can

learn and succeed (Towns, Cole-Henderson, & Serpell, 2001). School mottos are developed to

accentuate success, and principals work individually with students who are experiencing

academic challenges. Towns et al. found that in these schools, high expectations were

demonstrated through a challenging and rigorous curriculum, which is otherwise often lacking

for African American students. In addition, high expectations were set for teachers, too, and

administrators were responsible for holding teachers accountable for student learning.

Unfortunately, there are insufficient high-performing, high-poverty schools. In reality, in urban

schools with concentrations of poverty, often fewer than half the ninth graders leave with a high

school diploma at the end of four years (Towns et al., 2001).

Caring Adult Relationships and Academic Achievement

In addition to the existence of high expectations, another component of school climate is

the degree to which students perceive their teachers and other adults on campus as caring (Delpit,

2012). Caring adult relationships contribute to students' perceptions of the trustworthiness of

their teachers (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). In a national survey, parents identified teachers'

ability to motivate children to learn as the characteristic they most prize, while children most

desired teachers' respectful care and concern (Boyer, 1995). It is true that teaching and learning

is fundamentally relational. The patterns of norms, goals, values and interactions that shape

relationships in schools create an essential component of the overall school climate. Without

caring or learning, schools cannot reach the desired academic outcomes and at the same time

have a positive impact on students' lives (Noddings,1988).

Definition of Care

While there are different descriptions and interpretations of caring in education, all

definitions include the premise that being cared for is a basic need of all humans and that caring

is an ongoing process that is associated with the protection of others. Caring can be considered a

continuous exercise that is based on mutual unconditional acceptance of one another and

associated with a need to help one another (Noddings, 1984). When a person cares, she or he

truly hears, feels and sees what the other individual wants, needs and expects. This is "not a

psychological state or innate attribute but a set of relational practices that foster mutual

recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment and human

community, culture and possibility" (Noddings, 1996, p. 13).

Theoretical Frameworks for Caring: Vygotsky, Maslow, Noddings

An important theory for understanding the implications of caring adult relationships in

the educational setting is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which examines human behavior

from multiple perspectives, including social and cultural. In this theory, learning occurs within

interrelational cultural and communicative processes (Aimin, 2013). In this light, children's

thoughts and behaviors are guided by their social interactions, and development is cognitive,

physical and social. Understanding the importance of the child's social context allows the teacher

to build upon the student's previous experiences and knowledge, transforming his or her

schemata with new knowledge and skills (Morrow, Rueda, & Lapp, 2009). In this theory, an

optimal teacher-student relationship balances curriculum demands with personal interests and needs of the students. It is less authoritarian and more egalitarian as the teacher guides a student through the learning process (Jeon, 2000). This positive student-teacher relationship enables students to expand beyond their present levels of understanding and performance, leading them to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky, as cited by Goldstein (1999), defines the ZPD as the distance between a student's present level of development to his potential level of development. Goldstein continues, "The affective qualities of the relationships between teacher and student...are what allow the Zone of Proximal Development to take shape in any given situation" (p. 654). Successful teachers adeptly notice students' social cues and use this information to set limits for students and to push students to think further.

Abraham Maslow, one of the pioneering leaders in the field of humanistic psychology, posited that human needs can be prioritized through a hierarchical pyramid representation. At the base of the pyramid are an individual's basic needs, beginning with physiological needs for food, water, warmth and rest and at the next level, the individual's needs for safety and security. The next two levels describe needs for belongingness and love, including intimate relationships and friends and esteem needs for prestige and feelings of accomplishment. The highest level of the pyramid houses self-fulfillment needs, including the need for self-actualization, achieving one's full potential, including creative activities (Maslow, 1987). Prior to being of school-age, children's needs for love and belonging are met by parents and caregivers. When children transition to the school setting, however, they must adjust to find belongingness and love from teachers in their new setting. If these conditions are not met, it will be difficult to develop a positive self-concept and academic self-efficacy, which has a significant impact on students' motivation to learn and succeed academically (Gallagher, 2013).

Norwood (2016) expanded upon Maslow's Hierarchy when he suggested the following recommendations for teacher behavior when working with children: being authentic; transcending culture to become citizens of the world; valuing life as precious; finding joy in all kinds of situations and being virtuous; learning from one's own character and qualities; ensuring basic needs are met; appreciating the beauty and all good things life offers; providing controlled parameters and avoiding total lack of restraint; transcending insignificant conflicts; coping with injustice, pain, suffering and death; learning to make good choices, including helpful religious beliefs.

Nel Nodding's pioneering work, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), describes school relational experiences as both the foundation for and primary goal of education. Noddings offers a feminine view of caring that is rooted in receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness, and she argues that education from the care perspective has four key components: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation (1998). Educators must model through their behavior what it means to care. It is insufficient to tell students to care and to provide literature on the subject; teachers must demonstrate their caring in relations with their students. Next, Noddings stresses that dialogue is essential for caring and that it is important to talk directly about the manifestations of caring. Receiving feedback about our attempts to care helps better our attempt to care for others. Educators must also provide students with the opportunities and space to practice caring for others and reflecting upon their experiences. Finally, confirmation is a component of caring that sets the practice apart from other approaches to moral education. For this concept, Noddings draws upon the work of Martin Buber (Smith, 2000, 2009). Confirmation is the act of affirming and encouraging the best in others. Noddings writes, "Formulas and slogans have no place in confirmation. We do not posit a single ideal for

everyone and then announce 'high expectations for all.' Rather we recognize something

admirable, or at least acceptable, struggling to emerge in each person we encounter. The goal or

attribute must be seen as worthy both by the person trying to achieve it and by us. We do not

confirm people in ways we judge to be wrong" (Noddings, 1998, p. 192).

Noddings outlined specific requirements for caring. First, the carer (*the one-caring*) must

exhibit engrossment and motivational displacement, while the person receiving (*the cared-for*)

must respond in some way to the caring being received. The term *engrossment* is not a deep

fixation on the cared-for but rather an acquisition of the needs of the *cared-for*. Engrossment,

then, allows the *one-caring* to understand the personal and physical state to determine what the

cared-for most needs. Motivational displacement then can take place as the behavior of the *one-caring* is motivated to act based on the needs of the *cared-for*. In addition, Noddings affirmed

that the caring behavior requires the *cared-for* to recognize that the *one-caring* is indeed caring,

and that when this recognition takes place, caring is said to be completed (Noddings, 1984).

Under Nodding's notion of caring in education, caring teachers are those who actively

seek to know their students as individuals (Noddings, 1995). This can emerge naturally or from a

sense of obligation to others. Natural caring can be described as *I want,* and ethical caring can be

described as *I need* (Noddings, 1984). In education, the ethics of care take the form of an

obligation to do what is right and the sense that one must do what is right for others (Noddings,

Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2003). In addition, the relationship between teacher and student

must be one in which the teacher responds to the needs of their pupils. This can look like

differentiated instruction based on a student's needs and interests (Katz, Noddings, & Strike,

1999).

Research Findings on Caring

Over the past half-century, a growing body of literature has documented the importance of students' perceptions of teacher relationships on their classroom motivation, learning, performance and school completion (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Cataldi, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Poplin and Weeres (1994) reported a powerful qualitative study investigating the question "What is the problem with schooling?" and involving participants in four multiethnic school districts in California from every aspect of school life (students, teachers, cafeteria workers, security guards, parents and administrators). The number one problem identified was relationships. They wrote, "Participants feel the crisis inside schools is directly related to human relationships. Most often mentioned were relationships between teacher and students. Where positive things about school are noted, they usually involve reports of individuals who care, listen, understand, respect others and are honest, open and sensitive (p. 12). They continued, "Students desire authentic relationships where they are trusted, given responsibility, spoken to honestly and warmly and treated with dignity" (p. 20). This emphasis on quality teacher-student relationships has been advocated by McCombs and includes the following relational practices: honoring students' voices; adapting to individual and cultural differences; encouraging thinking and learning; and having learner-center beliefs (McCombs & Whistler, 1997).

Through the use of meta-analysis, Cornelius-White (2007) found students' perceptions of supportive teacher relationships were correlated, on average, between 0.25 and 0.55 with academic and social outcomes including participation, satisfaction, self-efficacy, critical thinking, standardized achievement in math and language, increasing attendance, reducing disruptive behavior, and higher grades. Conversely, findings suggest students' motivation and

adjustment to school may be adversely affected when their relationships with teachers are distressed (Cornelius-White, 2008).

Caring and Control

The commitment to care for and about children is central to conceptions of good teaching (Weinstein, 1990) and reflected through metaphors like "nurturer" and "parent" (Bullough, Crow, & Knowles, 1989). But what does it mean to truly care?

Caring can mean more than developing rapport. Caring implies moral and social responsibilities (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991). For teachers who hold this broader perspective, caring is enacted not only through interpersonal relationships but also through curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management (McLaughlin, 1991). These individuals enact caring by creating instruction designed to involve students in meaningful learning activities. They also create a safe, orderly classroom environment where students can learn and flourish. Dempsey (1991) and Noblit (1991) found that some elementary teachers connected caring to expectations. The consequences of these two different views of care can be dramatic. Hargreaves and Tucker (1991) contend that a narrow or exclusive orientation toward care as personal care can actually lead to less care than more. If teachers are primarily concerned about establishing warm, nurturing relationships with children, they may not recognize that caring can be enacted through teaching as well. These teachers may also be reticent to make the authoritative decisions necessary to creating a supportive learning environment (Weinstein, 1989). Interestingly, studies of children's conceptions of teaching suggest that children recognize that caring includes concerns about learning, curriculum and community. When asked to explain how teachers show that they care, fourth-grade students talked about listening, trying to see things from a student's perspective and giving second chances. The majority of respondents also emphasized that a

teacher shows she or he cares by helping students make sense of school tasks and that a caring teacher creates a safe, secure environment and protects children (Rogers, 1991).

Hoy (2001) suggests many of her students in elementary certification programs feel conflicted about the desire to be caring and the need to control. This tension is similar to the struggle McLaughlin's (1991) research on beginning teachers. When threatened by students' misbehavior, teachers often become more custodial in their discipline styles (Hoy, 2001). Research shows that the use of "get tough" sanctions and external controls may be counterproductive (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Hoy's research on student teachers' evolving beliefs about management also suggests that teacher preparation programs need to acknowledge prospective teachers' struggles to reconcile caring and control as they develop personal theories about management. This important issue is never directly addressed in most teacher preparation programs, and so much of what is covered in classroom management seems irrelevant or off target.

Caring Adult Relationships: Racial/Ethnic, EL and SES

Even though all students indicate a desire for caring teachers, students who are marginalized particularly value personal caring. They desire teachers who care about their home lives, welfare, personal problems and futures - teachers who keep them out of trouble (Cothran & Ennis, 2000). Teachers, on the other hand, value respect for authority, cooperation and compliance with school rules and procedures (McClain & Good, 1998). With pressures to improve test scores and maintain order, teachers are more likely to ignore personal relations and focus on improving the academic performance and behavior of their students (Brophy, 1996). But many less successful students, in contrast, will not show respect or cooperation until they feel that teachers truly care about them first, ahead of their academics. Teachers, on the other

hand, believe that students need to earn their respect, relationship, concern and interest - their caring. Teachers will provide choices and autonomy for students *after* students have earned it through their demonstration of self-regulation and appropriateness. Unfortunately, this leads to a possible spiral of mistrust wherein marginalized students expect unfair treatment and behave defensively. Teachers act tough, publicly reprimand and punish. This cycle is based on different perceptions of the meaning of caring and the requirements for forming close, supportive relationships (Hoy & Hoy, 2013).

Self-reflection is critical to the development of caring teachers who work with marginalized student populations. Stremmel (1997) states, ''Systematically exploring one's attitudes and practices is essential to moving toward cultural self-awareness and multiculturalism'' (p.369). In short, critically navigating the deep-rooted beliefs and values that one possesses promotes self-knowledge and a capacity to know and respect others (Palmer,1993). Howard (1999) suggests that if white, female teachers are to develop as effective teachers of diverse students, there must be an awareness of how socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical realities as well as how white privilege and social dominance influence urban students and educational outcomes. Cultural literacy is refreshing for urban students because they can perceive that white teachers are able to focus critically on the realities of their whiteness, rather than highlight perceived deficiencies in their students' culture (Howard, 1999).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Another aspect of school culture is the school's social emotional learning program. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) began in 1994 under the direction of current board chairman, Timothy Shriver (CASEL, 2015). Throughout the past

decades, CASEL has led the way for social emotional learning through its research, practice and advocacy work.

CASEL defines social emotional learning as the following: Social emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2015). There are five core competencies comprising the social emotional skills students will need to be successful both in school and in life (CASEL, 2015). These competencies consist of:

- Self-awareness: the ability to recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- Self-management: the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

- Social awareness: the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand the social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school and community resources and supports. This includes the development of empathy, which helps to prevent bullying.

- Relationship skills: the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly,

listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating

conflict constructively and seeking and offering help when needed.

- Responsible decision-making: the ability to make constructive and respectful choices

  about personal behavior and social interactions based on the consideration of ethical

  standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of

  various actions and the well-being of self and others.

History of Social Emotional Learning

Development of moral character through a holistic curriculum has been a stalwart of most

educational practices throughout history. Plato, in his work *The Republic* admonished, "By

maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you produce citizens of good

character" (Plato). Balancing an educational system with focus on physical, language arts, math,

science, visual and performing arts and character and moral education has long been the

challenge of school systems. Increasingly, public and private schools across the United States

grapple with how best to provide instruction in all these components. Explicitly and

systematically teaching social emotional learning skills has gained increased attention since the

1960s.

Early in his career at the Yale School of Medicine's Child Study Center, James Comer

began piloting a program called the Comer School Development Program. Comer observed that

the contrast between a child's experience at home and the child's experience at school deeply

affects the child's psychosocial development. This in turn, seemed to shape academic

achievement (Comer, 1988). The Comer School Development Program focused on two low-

achieving, poor, predominately African American elementary schools in New Haven,

Connecticut. With distressingly low attendance and poor academic achievement, these schools

were considered the worst in the city. With support from Comer and the school community, a receptive group of teachers, parents, administrators and mental health workers, truancy and behavior problems began to decline. The collaborative-management team worked together to address the need to change problematic school procedures that produced behavior problems. In addition, the team reorganized the schools' academic and social programs. Soon, the schools' academic performance exceeded the national average.

With the success of the School Development Program, interest in SEL work grew. Between 1987 and 1992, two additional figures from Yale, Timothy Shriver and Roger Weissberg, partnered with local public schools to establish the K-12 New Haven Social Development program. An additional group of youth-development and school-based-prevention experts, funded by the W.T. Grant Foundation, released a framework for incorporating social and emotional learning in all schools (Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History, 2011).

As the use of the term social emotional learning continued to grow, an organization named the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed. The first CASEL conference was held, and in 1997, nine CASEL collaborators coauthored the text, *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, which established and refined the field. This guide provided straightforward, practical advice for educators seeking to establish high-quality social and emotional education programs. The authors believed true academic success required strong social and emotional skills (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997).

In 1995, the concept of social emotional learning gained notoriety in popular culture when Daniel Goleman, New York Times science reporter, wrote *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, arguing the character matters and that the skills that build one's

character can be taught (Goleman, 1995). This text enabled educators who were developing school programs to cultivate social and emotional competence to partner with the psychologists and research scientists studying the neurological underpinnings and development of human emotion.

CASEL, originally housed at Yale, moved to the University of Illinois at Chicago where Roger Weissberg became its director. CASEL changed its name to Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning to reflect the importance of including academic achievement in its focus. At the present time, many state boards of education and several countries have approved standards for social and emotional learning, and researchers continue to study the impact of SEL on children's academic and personal success (Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History, 2011).

Scientific Basis for Social Emotional Learning

Shriver and Bridgeland (2015) stress the intricate relationships between learning and emotional state. Goleman (2015) explains the neuroscience behind teaching social emotional learning to children and the effect the instruction has on brain development. He shares that the emotional centers of the brain are finely interwoven with the neocortical areas responsible for cognition. When a child is experiencing a distressing emotion, these neocortical centers temporarily operate at diminished capacity. Instead of focusing on instruction, the child may become preoccupied with his anxiety and discomfort. Because attention has a limited capacity, when in this state of distress, the child has significantly diminished abilities to hear, remember, understand or explain what the information a teacher or book may be providing. In addition, in today's high-speed world, immediate access to technology and consumption of social media, children come to school with less ability to focus for sustained periods of time (Weissberg et al.,

2015). A 2017 meta-analysis conducted by Taylor, Oberle, Durlak and Weissberg analyzed results from 82 different programs involving more than 97,000 students from kindergarten to middle school in the U.S., Europe and the U.K. where the effects were assessed at least six months after the programs were completed. The researcher found that social emotional learning continued to have positive effects in the classroom and was also connected to longer-term positive outcomes. Students who participate in SEL programs graduate from college at a rate 11 percent higher than peers who did not participate in SEL programs. In addition, the high school graduation rate of those students participating in SEL programs was six percent higher. Drug use and behavior problems were six percent lower, arrest rates 19 percent lower and diagnoses of mental health disorders 13.5 percent lower.

Prevention Science and Resiliency

While all students come to school with risks, students who face higher levels of stress at home, in school and in their communities are at an increased risk for development adverse behaviors and poor academic performance. With a focus on social emotional skills training, classroom communities and peer relationships are enhanced (Elias et al., 1997). In addition, social emotional learning builds student resiliency, which is an important component of prevention science. Resiliency is defined as the ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risks, establishing the self-righting nature of human development (Bernard, 1993). Several longitudinal studies of students growing up with adversity have identified protective facts in the child, family school and community environments that can buffer life's stresses (Bernard, 1993). Social emotional competence serves as a protective factor within a child to help him/her cope with and respond to adversity (Jain, 2013).

Key Components of SEL for Academic Achievement

Prosocial behaviors in the classroom are linked with intellectual outcomes and student academic achievement (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Child Trends, a nonprofit research center focused on providing insights on the well-being of children and youth, has identified key competencies necessary in teaching resilience and created tools for schools to use for measuring these competencies. Research shows the following five skills are important to academic success:

(1) self-control: the ability to manage or regulate emotion and behaviors, inhibit negative responses and delay gratification in ways considered socially appropriate for a given situation.

(2) persistence: the voluntary continuation of a goal-direct action in spite of obstacles, difficulties or discouragement. "Grit" is another term that can be used to describe "perseverance and passion for long-term goals."

(3) mastery orientation: an approach to learning in which a child pursues learning because he or she wants to increase his or her overall competence or abilities over time until something is mastered. This concept is frequently contrasted with a performance orientation, the act of pursuing learning in order to obtain positive feedback from others related to his or her competence.

(4) academic self-efficacy: a person's belief that he or she can perform a variety of academic tasks effectively, while general self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to accomplish any task; this belief influences the effort put into academic work.

(5) social competence a broad set of skills necessary to get along with others and behavior constructively in groups. This includes taking others' perspectives; working well with peers to accomplish a task; resolving problems in ways that maximize positive consequences and minimize negative consequences for a student and his/her peers; and behave appropriately according to the situation and social norms (Child Trends, 2014).

Other key components of SEL programs include instruction in empathy and appropriate assertiveness. Palmer (2015) describes empathy as the ability to see and value what another person is feeling or experiencing. Teaching empathy in schools builds caring and inclusive environments, correlating bullying and increasing a variety of positive social, emotional and academic outcomes (Weissbourd, 2014). In addition, when SEL is consistently taught in schools, problem behaviors decrease and the quality of relationships surrounding each child increases (Elias et al., 1997). There is less need to remove students from the classroom when they demonstrate disruptive behaviors because students learn the skills necessary to manage their emotions and remain in the classroom, increasing instructional time.

Social Emotional Learning: Racial/Ethnic, English Learners and Socioeconomic Status

It is important to understand that SEL must address the needs of all students at a school and that these needs vary according to students' backgrounds. The National Equity Project (NEP) explains that the promise of social and emotional development as a lever for ensuring educational equity is founded on the belief that all learning is social and emotional. Learning is mediated by relationships that sit in a sociopolitical, racialized context, and building equity consciousness and capacity requires educators' professional development (NEP). Implications for professional learning include the following:

- Educators must increase their own self-awareness of how various social identities, including race, class, gender and language, have shaped experiences and interpretations of student behavior.

- Educators must build their knowledge of and reflect on the history of race, racism and exclusion in the United States, increasing their skill at discussing these issues with students.

- Educators must deconstruct, reflect upon and develop lessons that support the active valuing, engagement and development of the whole child.

- Educators must learn about the neuroscience of learning, especially signals that trigger a "threat" response especially for students of color; at the same time, educators must teach strategies explicitly designed to decrease stress and generate a sense of calm and well-being.

- Educators must develop a repertoire of approaches for building trust, especially across race, class and culture.

ELs are also a sub-group of students whose backgrounds may include experiences of trauma, racial inequities and micro-aggressions. A unique community within each specific classroom must be developed to best nurture English Learners' emotional wellness. ELs don't yet have the English language and vocabulary skills necessary to express their concerns and problems. They also may not have the language to initiate social interactions with teachers and peers. They will often feel cut off from classmates. In addition, ELs frequently perceive that their classmates are prejudiced against them. This belief can prevent ELs from bonding with their peers and becoming an integral part of the school community. Finally, ELs may have low self-esteem because they have not been able to participate in the academic learning of their class. For

these reasons, structures led by teachers, leaders, school staff and peers should be in place to provide EL students with security and stability. Ensuring the mental health of students who are new to our country and/or learning to speak English involves addressing a school community's mindset; arranging both formal and informal opportunities (within community programs, adults on and off campus and peers) for connection; and incorporating literature, role-playing and self-esteem building exercises into at the classroom level.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the significant achievement gaps in American education across some of our most vulnerable student subgroups: racial/ethnic, low socioeconomic status and EL. It has also examined the impact school climate can have on the academic achievement of all students and identified one tool used to measure school climate, the California Healthy Kids Survey. In this section, the researcher has also defined and discussed three climate indicators: high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning. The next chapter outlines the investigation to determine the relationship between these specific climate indicators and the academic achievement of fifth-grade students across elementary schools in the San Diego Unified School District. This investigation will reveal the relative strength of correlation between the climate indicators and school sites, as racial/ethnic, EL and SES composition of the schools are reviewed. Findings may help educators better understand which climate indicators are linked to higher academic outcomes across specific student subgroups.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures that were employed in this quantitative research study of the impact of school climate on the achievement of fifth-grade students who are included in the following subgroups: racial/ethnic, English Learner and economically disadvantaged. A description of the design study and the population is included. This chapter includes a description of the instrument used to measure student perception of the school climate indicators, as well as a description of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Finally, this chapter includes a description of the collection of data and how the data was analyzed for this study.

Research Design

This non-experimental, correlational study sought to determine the relationship between three school climate indicators and the achievement of students in various subgroups. The study used existing data from the 2018-2019 school year. The dependent variables were (1) students' perceptions of school climate and (2) students' academic achievement in ELA. In particular, the researcher examined the relationship between student achievement and students' perceptions of these climate indicators: the extent to which students perceived adults on campus held high expectations of them; the extent to which students perceived adults on campus cared for them; and the extent to which students felt adults on campus had taught them social emotional tools. The control variables were racial/ethnic, English Learner status and socioeconomic status. All research in this study was completed within the guidelines established by the Claremont Graduate School and San Diego State University.

Setting and Participants

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is a metropolitan school system with 120 elementary schools located throughout San Diego, California. During the 2018- 2019 academic school year, the student population that participated in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress included all students in grades three, four and five, unless they participated in the California Alternative Assessment or their parents declined their participation in state assessment.

The population for this study was the students who were in fifth grade in the 2018-2019 school year in San Diego Unified elementary schools composed of grades levels K – 5. students were selected using purposive sampling techniques. (Many of these schools also included a TK class, although the researcher did not separate schools based on the existence of a TK program.) The researcher chose to study fifth-grade student data because only fifth-grade students take the California Healthy Kids School Survey (CHKSS).

Although there are 120 elementary schools in the SDUSD, for this study the researcher excluded fifth-grade students in K-8 and K-12 schools, along with fifth-grade students at one middle schools with grades 5-6 only. All nine K-8 schools were excluded from the study. Only six of these nine schools had fifth-grade students who took the CHKSS, and this was too small of a sample size for quantitative analysis to be meaningful. Only one of the two K-12 schools had students who took the CHKSS, although for this school, the sample size of students who took the CHKSS was 39, which did not match the number of fifth-grade students at the school, listed as 13.

In the end, the sample group for this study included 99 elementary schools, although one of the 99 schools had students who took the CHKSS for only two of the three selected climate indicators.

Instrumentation

California Healthy Kids Survey

The instrument used to measure student perceptions was the California Healthy Kids Survey. One way to better understand low achievement and underachievement within the context of the achievement gap is to examine students' educational attitudes, perceptions, and subsequent behaviors (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). Research on students' perceptions of the classroom climate has identified consistent and statistically significant associations of certain social dimensions with numerous adaptive student beliefs and behaviors (Patrick et al., 2011). For this study, the researcher compiled data from each school's School Climate Report Card for the year 2018-2019. Two sub-domains from Part 1 of the report card were investigated: High Expectations and Caring Adult Relationships. One sub-domain from Part 2 of the report card was investigated: Social Emotional Learning Supports. The questions comprising each overall sub-domain value were as follows:

1. High Expectations (3 items)

    a. Do the teachers and other grown-ups at school tell you when you do a good job?

    b. Do the teachers and other grown-ups at school believe that you can do a good job?

    c. Do the teachers and other grown-ups at school want you to do your best?

2. Caring Adult Relationships (3 items)

    1. Do the teachers and other grown-ups at school care about you?

2. Do the teachers and other grown-ups at school listen when you have something to say?

3. Do the teachers and other grown-ups at school make an effort to get to know you?

3. Social Emotional Learning Supports (4 items)

1. Does your school help students resolve conflicts with one another?

2. Does your school teach students to understand how other students think and feel?

3. Does your school teach students to feel responsible for how they act?

4. Does your school teach students to care about each other and treat each other with respect?

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

As indicated on the California Department of Education website, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System consists of the following assessments: Smarter Balanced English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and mathematics; the California Alternate Assessments for English Language Arts, mathematics, and science; the California Science Tests; and California Spanish Assessment (2020). For this investigation, the researcher examined student scores on the Smarter Balanced English Language arts assessment only. Each year, students in grades three through eight and grade eleven receive full-length summative tests for both English language arts/literacy and mathematics, with approximately seven to eight hours of total testing time for each student. Every device used for testing must have a secure, testing browser installed, and stable, high-speed Internet is required. For the ELA component for students in grades three through five, the assessment consists of a computer adaptive test and a performance task. The estimated testing time for the computer adaptive task in one and one-half hours. The estimated testing time for the performance task is two hours. The

total estimated testing time for the CAASPP ELA for fifth-graders is three and one-half hours; students, however, are allowed as much time as needed to complete the assessments. Oftentimes, assessments are spread out across multiple days at a school site.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sought approval to conduct the research following all of the rules of Claremont Graduate School's Institutional Review Board. This included seeking approval from SDUSD to use the data necessary to complete this study.

To measure racial/ethnic, the researcher identified the number of fifth-graders who were African American, Asian, Hispanic or White as reported on the fifth-grade CAASPP. To measure the number of EL students, the researcher used the number of EL students as indicated on the fifth-grade CAASPP. Next, to measure the number of fifth-grade students who qualified as economically disadvantaged, the researcher used the number indicated on the fifth-grade CAASPP. Finally, to measure ELA achievement, the researcher used the percentage of fifth-grade students who tested meets or exceeds standards on the 2019 administration of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress.

The researcher used the SDUSD school profiles pages to gather the population of fifth-grade students attending a K-5 elementary school who participated in the CAASPP in the spring of 2019. This list was organized by school and the following columns per school: total number of all fifth-grade students enrolled in the school in 2019; the percentage of all fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA; total number of African American fifth-grade students enrolled in the school in 2019; percentage of African American fifth-grade students in 2019; the percentage of African American fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA; total number of Asian fifth-grade students enrolled in the

school in 2019; the percentage of Asian fifth-grade students in 2019; the percentage of Asian fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA; total number of Hispanic fifth-grade students enrolled in the school in 2019; the percentage of Hispanic fifth-grade students in 2019; the percentage of Hispanic fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA; total number of White fifth-grade students enrolled in the school in 2019; the percentage of White fifth-grade students in 2019; the percentage of White fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA; total number of EL fifth-grade students enrolled in the school in 2019; the percentage of EL fifth-grade students in 2019; the percentage of EL fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA; and total number of economically disadvantaged fifth-grade students enrolled in the school in 2019; the percentage of economically disadvantaged fifth-grade students in 2019; the percentage of economically disadvantaged fifth-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on the 2019 CAASPP ELA. In addition, for each school for which it was available, measures of students' perceptions of the three climate indicators and the percentage of fifth-grade students completing the CHKSS at each school were listed.

<p style="text-align:center">Variables of Treatment</p>

The dependent variables were (1) students' perceptions of school climate and (2) students' academic achievement in ELA. Specifically, there were three dependent variables that measured students' perceptions of school climate. These were the climate indicator variables: (1) whether students perceive there exist caring adult relationships with adults on campus; (2) whether students perceive that adults on campus have high expectations for them; and (3) whether students perceive they have been taught social emotional supports and skills. The independent variables included racial/ethnic, EL and economically disadvantaged students.

Analysis of Data

The researcher analyzed the data from the population of students who were in fifth grade at a K-5 elementary school and whose school participated in the California Healthy Kids Survey in the three climate indicators. Descriptive statistics were used to determine measures of central tendency including mean, median and ranges. The standard deviation was computed. Pearson r correlations were conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between achievement of students in each of the subgroup and the three climate indicators. These correlation coefficients were used to determine the size, direction, and strength of relationships between variables.

Protection of Human Subjects

No names of schools or students were used in this study.

Pilot Test

No pilot tests were required for this study, as the researcher exclusively used secondary data sets from the 2018-2019 school year.

Null Hypotheses

H_{01}: There are no statistically significant relationships between school climate indicators (caring adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional learning supports) and the achievement of fifth-grade students in English Language Arts.

H_{02}: There are no statistically significant relationships between school climate indicators (caring adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional learning supports) and the achievement of fifth-grade students in English Language Arts by racial/ethnic subgroup.

H_{03}: There are no statistically significant relationships between school climate indicators (caring adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional learning supports) and the achievement of English Learner fifth-grade students in English Language Arts.

H$_0$4: There are no statistically significant relationships between school climate indicators (caring adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional learning supports) and the achievement of economically disadvantaged fifth-grade students in English Language Arts.

Assumptions and Limitations

For the purposes of this study, the researcher assumed that fifth-graders' responses on the Healthy Kids Survey accurately reflected their perceptions of school climate in these indicated areas. The researchers also assumed that student data was collected in an objective manner and that the levels of participation at the school sites made the data a significant and accurate representation of students' perceptions.

Confounding variables were also limitations in the study. Ethnic and socioeconomic groups may feel differently about the importance of education in reaching their personal and professional goals. Climate can also be impacted by the way the school has connected with the community, so it cannot be determined whether parents, the school, or both the parents and school are the source of a unsatisfactory climate, if it exists. In addition, there are methodological limitations when trying to operationalize the climate indicators as measured by students' responses. Despite these limitations, examining relationships between key CHKSS indicators and student achievement across racial, SES and EL subgroups may provide a worthwhile, cost-free indicator for improving student outcomes.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Analysis and Data

Introduction

Teachers' high expectations for all children, caring adult relationships and the development of social emotional learning skills can all help to meet the cognitive, social and psychological needs of students, preparing them for maximum learning. A positive school climate can aim to replicate the qualities of a positive home environment in which all members of the learning community hold similar values students' behavior, development and achievement. It is important to explore the relationship between climate indicators and subgroups because schools have the moral imperative to provide equal access to education for all children, regardless of racial/ethnic subgroup, EL and socioeconomic background. The degree to which schools foster a positive climate speaks to how well schools are meeting this democratic ideal.

Data Cleaning

Data were obtained from the San Diego Unified School District and CHKSS database. Data from 120 schools were obtained from the archival data collection. Data were collected for all fifth-grade students and included, for each school, the number of fifth-grade students in racial/ethnic, EL and economically disadvantaged categories. In addition, student achievement scores for all fifth-grade students and for each subgroup of students at each school were collected. Schools that were K-4, K-8 and K-12 were excluded. In addition, one middle school that was grades five and six only was excluded from the analysis. Three K-5 schools in SDUSD whose fifth-grade students did not take the CHKSS were excluded. After this, only 99 schools were left in the sample. One K-5 school had scores only for the first two climate indicators, high

expectations and caring adult relationships. Therefore, there were only 98 schools included in the analysis of the third climate indicator, social emotional supports.

Descriptive Statistics for Academic Achievement

Of all fifth-grade students in the 99 San Diego Unified K-5 included in this study, 58.94% (*SD* = 18.89) were reported to score meet or Above Standard on the CAASPP achievement test. On average, 41.79% (*SD* = 14.06) of African American students scored meet and above standard on the CAASPP. The scores for Asian students who were meet and above standard on the CAASPP averaged 71.93% (*SD* = 19.73). For Hispanic students, 51.28% (*SD* = 17.22) were meet and above standard on the CAASPP. The scores for White students who were meet and above standard on the CAASPP averaged 78.40% (*SD* = 17.02). The scores for English Learners who were meet and above standard on the CAASPP were an average of 15.01% (*SD* = 9.81). Economically disadvantaged students who scored meet and above standard averaged 53.07% (*SD* = 17.10). Economically disadvantaged students are defined as those students who meet free or reduced-price meal eligibility criteria. The summary statistics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary Statistics Table for Percentages that are Meet and Above Standard

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*
All Students Meet and Above Standard	58.94	18.89	99
African American Students Meet and Above Standard	41.79	14.06	15
Asian Students Meet and Above Standard	71.93	19.73	25
Hispanic Students Meet and Above Standard	51.28	17.22	94
White Students Meet and Above Standard	78.40	17.02	41
EL Students Meet and Above Standard	15.01	9.81	41
Economically Disadvantaged Students Meet and Above Standard	53.07	17.10	97

For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not include the following subgroups of students: Filipino, Native American, Pacific Islander and Multiracial. Indochinese students were included in the Asian subgroup. In most SDUSD schools, the number of students in these subgroups was very small, or non-existent. In addition, it is important to note that in this study, the fifth-graders who were classified as English Learners were only those who had not already been reclassified as English Learners by the fifth-grade. Furthermore, this group of EL students did not include those who were newcomers to the country, defined as those students who have been in the United States for less than one year. In addition, the number of EL students provided did not include students who were initially tested fluent in English upon first attending school in the country. It is likely that the students who were in the EL category by fifth-grade and who were not newcomers to the country may be a population of students struggling the most. This could explain for the very low average ELA achievement score of 15.01% meet and above standard for the EL group.

Descriptive Statistics for Climate Indicators

For all schools, the scores for the first climate indicator, high expectations, had an average of 84.08 ($SD = 5.83$). The scores could range from $0 - 100$, and higher scores meant more students perceived adults at their school held high expectations for them most of the time or all of the time. This means that on average, 84.08% of fifth-grade students in this group of 99 SDUSD schools perceived that either most of the time or all of the time the adults at their school had high expectations for them. For all schools, the scores for the second climate indicator, caring adult relationships, had an average of 70.08 ($SD = 7.79$). The scores could range from $0 -$ 100, and higher scores meant more students perceived adults at their school cared about them most of the time or all of the time. This means that on average, 70.08% of fifth-grade students in

this group of 99 SDUSD schools perceived that either most of the time or all of the time the adults at their school cared about them. For all schools, the scores for the third climate indicator, social emotional supports, had an average of 74.93 ($SD = 7.61$). The scores could range from 0 – 100, and higher scores meant more students perceived social emotional supports were available to them most of the time or all of the time. This means that on average, 74.93% of fifth-grade students in this group of 98 SDUSD schools perceived that either most of the time or all of the time social emotional supports were available to them. The summary statistics can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for High Expectations, Caring Adult Relationships and Social Emotional Supports

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*
High Expectations	84.08	5.83	99
Caring Adult Relationships	70.08	7.79	99
Social Emotional Supports	74.93	7.61	98

Descriptive Statistics for Subgroups

Descriptive statistics were next calculated for the percentages of fifth-grade students in the study within each racial/ethnic, EL, and economically disadvantaged subgroup categories for each school. On average, 7% ($SD = 0.07$) of the students within the 99 schools were African American. The number of Asian students averaged 9% of the students within the 99 schools ($SD = 0.10$). Hispanic students comprised 50% ($SD = 0.26$) of the total fifth-grade student population in this study. White students accounted for an average of 20% ($SD = 0.21$) of fifth-graders in these 99 schools. The number of EL students averaged of 21% ($SD = 0.17$). Finally, the number of economically disadvantaged students had an average of 64% ($SD = 0.28$). The summary statistics can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary Statistics Table for Interval and Ratio Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*
African American Students	0.07	0.07
Asian Students	0.09	0.10
Hispanic Students	0.50	0.26
White Students	0.20	0.21
EL Students	0.21	0.17
Economically Disadvantaged Students	0.64	0.28

Note. n = 99.

Research Question One: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high

expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and student

achievement?

To examine Research Question One, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted among

high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports and student

achievement. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the strength of the relationships where

coefficients between .10 and .29 represent a small effect size, coefficients between .30 and .49

represent a moderate effect size and coefficients above .50 indicate a large effect size (Cohen,

1988). Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumption of linearity was assessed using

scatterplots (Conover & Iman, 1981). This assumption is violated if there is curvature among the

points on the scatterplot between any pair of variables. Data appeared to be normal.

A significant positive correlation was observed between high expectations and all

students meet and above standard (r_p (98) = 0.30, p = .002). The correlation coefficient between

high expectations and all students meet and above standard was 0.30, indicating a moderate

effect size. This correlation indicates that as high expectations increase, the percentage of

students that meet and are above standard tends to increase. A significant positive correlation

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was also observed between caring adult relationships and all students meet and above standard (r_p (98) = 0.26, p = .010). The correlation coefficient between caring adult relationships and all students meet and above standard was 0.26, indicating a small effect size. This correlation indicates that as caring adult relationships increase, the percentage of students that are meet and above standard tends to increase. No other significant correlation was found between social emotional supports and all students meet and above standard. Table 4 presents the results of the correlations. For Research Question One, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Results Among High Expectations, Caring Adult Relationships, Social Emotional Supports and Grade 5 Meet Standard and Above Standard

	Grade 5 Meet and Above Standard	
Variable	r_p	p
High Expectations	0.30**	.002
Caring Adult Relationships	0.26**	.010
Social Emotional Supports	-0.10	.340

*Note. **Significant at .01 level.*

Research Question Two: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and racial/ethnic subgroup?

To examine Research Question Two, Pearson correlation analyses were proposed among high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports and racial/ethnic. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the strength of the relationships, where coefficients between .10 and .29 represent a small effect size, coefficients between .30 and .49 represent a moderate effect size and coefficients above .50 indicate a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumption of linearity was assessed (Conover &

Iman, 1981). This assumption is violated if there is curvature among the points on the scatterplot between any pair of variables. All relationships appeared to be linear.

A significant positive correlation was observed between high expectations and Hispanic meet and above standard (r_p (93) = 0.29, $p < .005$). The sample size was 94 because five schools did not have a sufficient number of fifth-grade Hispanic students taking the CAASPP to provide a significant CAASPP achievement score. The correlation coefficient between high expectations and Hispanic meet and above standard was 0.29, indicating a small effect size. This correlation indicates that as high expectations increase, the percentage of Hispanic students who are meet and above standard tends to increase. A significant positive correlation was observed between caring adult expectations and Hispanic meet and above standard (r_p (93) = 0.24, $p < .019$). The correlation coefficient between high expectations and Hispanic meet and above standard was 0.24, indicating a small effect size. This correlation indicates that as high expectations increase, the percentage of Hispanic students who are meet and above standard tends to increase.

No other significant correlations were found between high expectations and African American, Asian and White subgroups and between caring adult relationships and African American, Asian and White subgroups. In addition, no significant correlations were found between social emotional supports and any racial/ethnic subgroups. For Research Question Two, the null hypothesis was rejected. Table 5 presents the results of the correlations.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Results Among High Expectations, Caring Adult Relationships, Social Emotional Supports and Grade 5 Race Meet Standard and Above Standard

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White
Variable	r_p	r_p	r_p	r_p
High Expectations	0.50	0.22	0.29**	0.10
Caring Adult Relationships	0.21	0.32	0.24*	0.14
Social Emotional Supports	0.30	-0.13	-0.03	-0.22

*Note. *p* <.05; **p* <.01.*

Research Question Three: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports) and socioeconomic status?

To examine Research Question Three, Pearson correlation analyses were proposed among high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports and socioeconomic status. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the strength of the relationships where coefficients between .10 and .29 represent a small effect size, coefficients between .30 and .49 represent a moderate effect size and coefficients above .50 indicate a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Prior to conducting the analyses, the assumption of linearity was assessed with scatterplots and met.

A significant positive correlation was observed between high expectations and economically disadvantaged meet and above standard (r_p (96) = 0.23, *p* = .024). The sample size was 97 because two schools did not have a sufficient number of fifth-grade economically disadvantaged students taking the CAASPP to provide a significant CAASPP achievement score. The correlation coefficient between high expectations and economically disadvantaged meet and above standard was 0.23, indicating a small effect size. This correlation indicates that as high expectations increase, the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged who

perform at meet and above standard tends to increase. A significant positive correlation was

observed between caring adult relationships and economically disadvantaged meet and above

standard (r_p (96) = 0.25, p = .013). The correlation coefficient between caring adult relationships

and economically disadvantaged meet and above standard was 0.25, indicating a small effect

size. This correlation indicates that as caring adult relationships increases, the percentage of

students who are economically disadvantaged scoring meet and above Standard tends to

increase.

No significant correlation was found between social emotional supports and

economically disadvantaged meet and above standard. For Research Question Three, the null

hypothesis was rejected. Table 6 presents the results of the correlations.

Table 6

*Pearson Correlation Results Among High Expectations, Caring Adult Relationships, Social
Emotional Supports and Grade 5 Economically Disadvantaged Meet Standard and Above
Standard*

	Grade 5 Economically Disadvantaged Meet and Above Standard	
Combination	r_p	p
High Expectations	0.23*	.024
Caring Adult Relationships	0.25*	.013
Social Emotional Supports	-0.11	.275

*Note. *p < .05.*

Research Question Four: What are the relationships between school climate indicators (caring

adult relationships, high expectations and social emotional learning supports) and English

Learners?

To examine Research Question Four, Pearson correlation analyses were proposed among

high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports, and English

Learners. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the strength of the relationships where

coefficients between .10 and .29 represent a small effect size, coefficients between .30 and .49

represent a moderate effect size and coefficients above .50 indicate a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Prior to conducting the analyses, the assumption of linearity was assessed with scatterplots, and data appeared to be linear.

No correlations between high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional supports and English Learners meet and above standard were significant. The research failed to reject the null hypothesis for Research Question Four. Table 7 presents the results of the correlations.

Table 7

Pearson Correlation Results Among High Expectations, Caring Adult Relationships, Social Emotional Supports, and Grade 5 English Learners Meet Standard and Above Standard

	English Learners Meet and Above Standard	
Variable	r_p	p
High Expectations	0.06	.712
Caring Adult Relationships	0.04	.792
Social Emotional Supports	-0.14	.380

Ancillary Analyses

To further explore the data, nine cases were removed for reporting data on less than 40% of the population. The researcher noted that for nine of the 99 schools, only a small percentage of fifth-grade students had taken the CHKSS. It was thought that at these schools, a fair representation of students' perceptions of school climate might not be able to be determined. Schools with the following percentages of fifth-graders who had taken the CHKSS were removed: 12%, 16%, 18%, 21%, 23%, 27%, 33%, 33%, 37%. In the SDUSD, the school counselor and principal are directed to work together to ensure fifth-grade students take the survey. Permission from parents and guardians must be obtained prior to students taking the survey.

The correlation analyses were rerun for these 90 schools. Pearson correlation analyses were proposed among high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional learning supports, and English Learners. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the strength of the relationships where coefficients between .10 and .29 represent a small effect size, coefficients between .30 and .49 represent a moderate effect size, and coefficients above .50 indicate a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Prior to conducting the analyses, the assumption of linearity was assessed with scatterplots, and data appeared to be linear.

The school climate indicator of high expectations was found to be significantly related to all fifth-grade, African American students who meet or exceed, and Hispanic students who meet or exceed. A large and significant effect size, 0.65, was found between African American students who meet or exceed and African American students' perceptions of adults having high expectations for them. Caring adult relationships was found to be significantly related to all fifth-grade students who meet or exceed, Hispanic Students who meet or exceed, White students who meet or exceed, and economically disadvantaged students who meet or exceed. As one variable increases, the other variable increases as well. Significant correlations are noted with an asterisk.

In this ancillary analysis, no significant correlations were found between high expectations and Asian, White, English Learner and economically disadvantaged subgroups. In addition, no significant correlations were found between caring relationships and African American, Asian, English Learner subgroups. Finally, no significant correlations were found between social emotional supports and any racial/ethnic, English Learner or economically disadvantaged subgroups. Results of the correlation analyses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Pearson Correlation Results Among High Expectations, Caring Adult Relationships, Social Emotional Supports with All Grade 5, Race, English Learner and Economically Disadvantaged

Variable	All 5th Grade	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	English Learner	Economically Disadvantaged
	r_p	r_p	r_p	r_p	r_p	r_p	r_p
High Expectations	0.28^{**}	0.65^{*}	0.11	0.26^{*}	0.19	0.05	0.20
Caring Adult Relationships	0.27^{*}	0.53	0.25	0.28^{**}	0.36^{*}	0.04	0.27^{*}
Social Emotional Supports	-0.11	0.19	-0.14	-0.00	0.28	-0.16	-0.11

Note. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$.

Summary

When considering measures for school reform, school climate should not be overlooked. The results of this investigation show that there are significant correlations between student achievement and the degree to which fifth-grade students perceive that adults on campus have high expectations for them and the degree to which fifth-grade students perceive that the adults on campus care about them. Moreover, these correlations exist especially for the following subgroups: Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. A large, significant correlation also exists between African American students' perceptions of adults' expectations for them and their academic achievement when those schools with less than 40% student participation in the CHKSS were removed from the sample.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing appreciation that school climate, the quality and character of school life, fosters children's learning and achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Furthermore, increasing reports and studies emphasize the importance of school climate in reducing inequities in achievement by increasing all students' motivation to learn (Marzano, 2007). Although there is little doubt that school climate is an important component of a successful school, there are so many factors to consider within an overall school's climate that administrators cannot easily or effectively focus on the most pertinent indicators affecting academic achievement.

In this study, data were initially compiled from 120 San Diego Unified School District schools serving elementary students. Nine schools were excluded because they were composed of K-8 students, and six schools were excluded because they included only K-4 students. One middle school, composed of grades 5-6 only, was excluded from the sample. It was felt the structure of this unique, two-grades middle school could impact fifth-grade students' perceptions of climate indicators in a different way than the structure of a traditional K-5 school. Two schools of students in K-12 were also excluded from the study. Of the 102 schools remaining, CHKSS data for three K-5 schools did not exist. Therefore, there were 99 schools in the final sample size. One of these schools did not provide data for the third climate indicator: social emotional supports.

High Expectations and Caring Adult Relationships

Analysis was first conducted for these final 99 schools. In this study, it was determined that the climate indicator of students' perceptions of how high adults' expectations were for them was significantly correlated to students' academic achievement in the all fifth-grade students category. The effect size of high expectations was moderate. In addition, there was a significant, although smaller, correlation between students' perceptions of how much adults cared for them and their academic achievement. This was also a significant finding for all fifth-grade students, regardless of subgroup. In both the initial and ancillary analyses, there were no significant correlations between students' perceptions of social emotional supports provided at school and academic achievement across all subgroups and within any subgroup specifically.

When the achievement of these subgroups in the initial analysis of schools was next investigated, it was determined that for the Hispanic group and for the economically disadvantaged student groups, students' perceptions of whether the adults at their school had high expectations for them was significant. In this initial analysis, for African American, Asian, White and EL subgroups, there was no significant relationship between students' perceptions of adults' high expectations and their academic achievement.

When considering the impact that adults at school may have on student achievement in the Hispanic and low SES subgroups, it is worthwhile to consider whether these students experience similar high expectations at home. If access to higher education has been more difficult for certain subgroups, achievement in this area may be less emphasized. Or, if a main consideration of families is how to pay rent or provide enough food for children to eat, excellence in school may not be as important in environments where these needs are more readily met. A pathway to success for an economically disadvantaged family may center on

consistent, stable access to a dependable job, and it may be more difficult to postpone working in favor of studying for a better-paying job requiring more education in the distant future. In this analysis of 99 elementary schools in SDUSD, over 64% of students are considered economically disadvantaged and half of these students are Hispanic. These subgroups actually comprise the majority of the "all" fifth-grade student category, and addressing the needs of these learners must remain central as SDUSD or any school district seeks to improve its measure of students who Meet or Exceed state achievement standards.

Increasing student achievement for these populations must occur in the broader context of societal and structural reforms. It is not enough to suggest educating Hispanic and economically-disadvantaged parents and students in the correlation between expectations and achievement will lead to higher academic achievement; these groups need to see role models actualizing this success. If a community has less history of realizing academic success, younger generations will have more difficulty perceiving academic achievement as a prerequisite to a better life. This is when the expectations of those adults at school can have all the more impact on Hispanic and economically-disadvantaged students' achievement.

Hispanic and economically-disadvantaged students' academic achievement was also significantly correlated to these students' perceptions of whether adults at school cared about them. Although this correlation had a smaller effect size, it seems likely that if students perceived adults to have high expectations for them, one would also expect that students would perceive these same adults to care about them. Conversely, one might imagine that adults who care about students do not automatically always have high expectations for them. Perhaps adults at school believe the children they teach are too far behind academically or that opportunities for certain children do not exist due to their unstable home environments or lack of parental support.

In this case, it is possible that the children are cared for but not held to the same academic standards as children at more affluent schools.

Additionally, it is important to consider why Asian students' CAASPP scores were not correlated with adult high expectations or caring adult relationships. Asian students comprised the second-highest achievement group, next to White students. Moreover, most times, Asian students score higher than White students on measures of achievement. Is this because there are more models of educated and successful Asians in multiple career and academic pathways fields? Are the social and societal pressures to succeed within some Asian communities so impressed upon these students that the beliefs of adults at school have less value?

Ancillary Analyses

What can be determined from the removal of the data from the nine schools with less than 40% of fifth-graders participated in the CHKSS? What if the researcher supposed that at these elementary schools, the task of ensuring fifth-graders' perceptions of school climate were recorded, was not afforded the same priority as other school counseling or administrative obligations? This could be because there was an interim principal, or because the school counselor was on leave, or because it was cumbersome to obtain parent permission slips for all students to participate. It could be fair to conclude that at these schools, at the time of CHKSS administration, despite ample direction, guidance, time and reminders from the District Office, fifth-graders' perceptions of school climate went unrecorded. With the removal of these nine schools from the sample size, the remaining schools can be thought to be an even more robust collection of all that fifth-graders have to say about how they feel about their school. In the ancillary analysis, it is important to note that the correlation between African American students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations of them yields the greatest effect size of the entire

study. In this analysis, there can be no hesitation that African American academic achievement is directly related to what their teachers believe they are capable of achieving. Furthermore, when the quality of CHKSS is enhanced through the removal of these nine outlying schools, the relationship between caring adult relationships and White students becomes significant as well.

Social Emotional Supports

In the analyses for all fifth-grade students and within all subgroups, the relationships between students' achievement and the degree to which they believed schools were offering them social emotional supports was insignificant. Social emotional learning has gained increased popularity since its inception in the turn-around efforts evidenced in the New Haven schools and with the CASEL teams at Yale (Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History, 2011). Perhaps an over reliance on Goleman's emotional intelligence in eliminating the achievement gap could be short-sighted. Advocates of SEL encourage schools to find room in the curriculum for training in skills such as constructive conflict resolution and relationships to peers. Training programs for the development of these social skills, however, existed long before the notion of emotional intelligence. It seems reasonable to assess whether research on SEL has really added anything to such programs or whether it is just a convenient banner under which to raise awareness of the issues (Zeidner, M., Matthews, G., & Roberts, R. D., 2009).

The CHKSS quantifies social emotional supports as the extent to which schools teach students to "get along with one another" and "resolve conflicts." The failure of this climate indicator to meaningfully align with achievement of any group should be especially considered in light of the reckoning of public conscience during the unprecedented year of 2020. Traditional social emotional programs are superficial in their attempts to address interpersonal conflicts if they do not first validate the larger social, racial and economic inequities that continue to exist in

our country. Although fifth-graders may not be able to articulate how their family's economic or social profile influences their interpersonal relationships or social conflict with peers at school, these factors should be considered. Ruby Payne's work on the culture of poverty, contrasting hidden rules amongst people living in poverty and those living in the middle class, helps explain a discipline issue that might play out in the elementary setting. For example, a student who is receiving free and reduced lunch and who has asked for a scholarship to pay for an upcoming class field trip, may bring an expensive cell phone to school. This student may have been sent to the office after hitting another child whom he accuses of stealing the phone. An administrator could teach the accuser self-calming tools to improve his self-regulation, so that he uses his words and not physical actions if he has a problem with another child. The administrator could also admonish the child for having a phone at school in the first-place, insisting the student have better self-control and leave non-school items at home. Both these approaches fall short of understanding that for the poor, money is seen as an expression of personality, entertainment and status-seeking, when other measures of status are more difficult for impoverished communities to achieve. Although Payne's work has been criticized for its wide-sweeping stereotypes and lack of empirical support, a consideration of these insights helps to explain why SEL interventions and discussions have no significant relationship to academic achievement in the present study (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008).

Moreover, inequities can be perpetuated by public school system structures or curriculum. The traditional school efforts to teach a subject as foundational as American history have misshapen the true experiences of the non-White participants in the very same history. The momentum gaining traction in The 1619 Project, for example, speaks to the need to rectify historical oversights and omissions. The goal of The 1619 Project is to reframe American

history, making explicit how slavery is the foundation on which this country is built. Proponents of the project call instruction in absence of this knowledge as educational malpractice (https://pulitzercenter.org/1619).

The lens of abolitionist teaching, then, may offer insight into why a significant correlation fails to exist in this social emotional domain of school climate. Likewise, a true passion for educational freedom that is rooted in the exposure of our racial, societal, economic and political past – in concert with the well-established principles of rigorous, effective, standards-based instructional pedagogy - offers a forward orientation for future schooling. Bettina Love, for example, shares that her goal as a professor in the Teacher Education Program at the University of Georgia, instructing overwhelmingly White students, is "to get White students to question how they are going to teach children of color with a limited understanding of who these children are, where these children come from, their history, why and how they should love Blackness, why they should want to see dark children win, how to support their quest to thrive, and how it is intentional that future teachers know so little about dark students" (2019, p. 126-127).

The experiences of marginalized racial or socioeconomic groups in our country may have resulted in their legitimate anger over longstanding social norms, and this anger often spills out into the classroom. For example, students' refusals to comply with teachers' classroom rules such as no hoodies in class may spur teachers to label these children as obstinate, threatening and troublesome. Bettina Love argues that White teachers who are focused on providing enough social emotional learning curriculum to this group, while ignoring their history and truth, is an inappropriate approach for achieving improved academic outcomes. Building caring relationships with these children, and showing them through action that they are capable of

meeting the same high expectations as their White and middle-class peers, is the viable path for success. This requires an examination of White privilege and a commitment to serving the most challenging students in the same way these teachers would instruct those children with the highest levels of compliance, motivation and enthusiasm.

Cultural Ecological Model

The researcher's correlational findings suggest that the many factors influencing school climate, including those factors inherent in a students' familial and community origins, along with those factors embedded in the traditions, orientations, practices and customs of the people and history of a school site, meld together to create children's actual perceptions and experience of how teaching and learning will manifest in their personal lives. The Cultural Ecological Model offered by La Salle et al. (2015) might be viewed as a two-dimensional understanding of the relationship between community, school, family and individual orientations and the makeup of the school climate itself, as expressed in relationships, safety, teaching and learning and environment and structure. A third dimension that could be considered is the attitude, agency and empowerment of learners within these constructs. The significance of adult expectations and caring adult relationships in the school environment varies according to the beliefs society has taught a child about herself until this point. This third presentation of school climate may be the most important consideration yet. It is not just the intersection between subgroup and school tradition; it is the empowerment a student assumes when adults show him what is possible for his life.

Accessibility of Data

It is worth noting that the data used for this project has always been publicly accessible, although the quantitative analysis involved in the study is likely beyond the means of most

school administrators. Although the process to obtain permission to utilize the data was at times cumbersome, there was no need to conduct further student surveys to derive meaning and insight. A problem amongst school administrators is that when energy and resources are consumed by the day-to-day minutia of operational, staffing and budgetary concerns or otherwise ransacked by sweeping school reforms, it is difficult to lead an organization that is driven by the important messages data provides. Our students do tell us exactly what matters for their achievement, but their voices are likely absent from in the email inbox and frequently fail to appear on our to-do lists.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, a number of issues emerged regarding school climate and achievement of fifth-grade students. On average, only 59 out of every 100 fifth-grade students in SDUSD will meet or exceed grade level standards in English language arts.

The first and second conclusions are that there are significant, moderate and small correlations between academic achievement and adult expectations and caring adult relationships, respectively.

The third conclusion is that data from the two largest groups of students in this district, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students, indicate that there especially significant correlations between these students' achievement and their perceptions of the degree to which adults at their schools have high expectations for them and care about them.

The fourth conclusion is when the analysis was focused on schools in which greater percentages of fifth-grade student voices were recorded, a significant, large correlation was found between African American students' achievement and their perceptions of adults' expectations for them.

The fifth conclusion is when the analysis was focused on schools in which greater percentages of fifth-grade student voices were recorded, a significant correlation was found between White students' achievement and their perceptions of caring adult relationships.

The sixth conclusion is that there is no significant correlation between the school climate indicator of social emotional supports and student academic achievement.

In addition, the seventh conclusion is that there is no significant correlation between these any of the three school climate indicators measured (high expectations, caring adult relationships and social emotional tools) and Asian or EL subgroups.

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings from this study, the following recommendations for practice are made:

School leaders should be informed of the correlation between school climate indicators of high expectations and caring adult relationships and academic achievement. Leaders should be informed that a correlation did not exist between social and emotional supports and academic achievement. Leaders should keep these findings in mind when devoting instructional time or resources to social and emotional programs.

The opportunity to strengthen the academic achievement of the especially vulnerable Hispanic and economically disadvantaged subgroups through meaningful adult-student relationships should not be overlooked. Educators could consider mentorship programs specifically for students who fall into one of both of these subgroups. Such programs should have a focus on high expectations for students. Students should study and learn from role models representing these subgroups.

Links between a school's climate data and academic achievement should be made explicit to school administrators. To more effectively use the data when making leadership decisions, it would be worthwhile to streamline the CHKSS results to focus on measures most strongly correlated with desired academic outcomes.

Student voice and feedback should continue to be considered when investigating which latent resources have the greatest effect on student achievement.

Professional development should focus on increasing educators' beliefs that every child has the capacity to succeed in school and in life. Teachers' perceptions and expectations are central to the achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged (Rall & Sheehan, 2011).

Teachers must receive the support and resources necessary to respond to the needs of their students from economically disadvantaged homes. Leadership must also play an important role in in establishing a culture of high academic expectations for all students to ensure the achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged (Chenowith, 2009). Teachers know better than anyone all that is required to move a student who is below grade level to meet those grade-level expectations. It is a short-sighted educational policy to believe that teachers should be convinced and then expected to work more hours than what they are paid to work in order to raise the achievement levels of struggling learners.

School structures must provide equitable opportunities for all. When some children, especially those from poor and minority families, are placed at risk by school practices that are based on sorting or tracking structures, replication of these patterns are continued. Leaders must disrupt the paradigm in which some students receive high-expectations instruction while the rest are relegated to lower-quality education and lower-quality futures. (Borman & Rachuba, 2001).

Positive relationships within the school should be central to a school's mission, yet positive relationships alone may be insufficient for student achievement. When students feel they are valued and respected, their attachment to school increases (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Educators must feel valued and respected by school administrators if they are to show equal value and respect for all learners. Stakeholders must demonstrate their beliefs that all students can achieve and must invest their partnership, time, efforts and resources to education efforts in accordance with these beliefs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the results of this study the following recommendations for future research are recommended:

A replication of this study in middle and high schools should be conducted to assess students' perceptions of these three climate indicators and the relationship these perceptions have to academic achievement across the indicated subgroups. At the middle and upper grade levels, do students' perceptions of adult expectations have the strongest relationships to academic achievement? This finding would provide secondary school administrators information for areas of focus when examining school climate.

Another suggestion would be to study the National Center for Urban Transformation (NCUST) schools throughout California to determine whether climate trends in these schools follow the researcher's findings in this study.

Further qualitative and mixed-method studies of climate should also take place. Through interviews, case-studies and self-created surveys of students, researchers could determine the specific behaviors of adults who demonstrate holding high expectations for students and/or show they care for students. In addition, observations of adult and student interactions at schools

showing strong measures of these two school climate indicators, along with observations of adult and student interactions at schools showing low measures of these two school climate indicators, would inform pragmatic application of these behaviors at all schools.

Further examination of adult perceptions of school climate, along with adult perceptions of their roles in creating school climate, should be conducted. How does the congruency in adult and student perceptions of climate in schools vary according to the strength of various school climate indicators? Exploration of staff members' racial/ethnic identities in relation to students' racial/ethnic identities at individual school sites could yield insight into whether similar racial/ethnic is a component of adult-student caring relationships or high expectations.

A study of the perceptions of students with disabilities in these climate indicators and others would inform whether achievement of this vulnerable subgroup is correlated to particular school climate indicators.

Replications of this study in other large, metropolitan school districts throughout the country could provide further empirical support for the strength of relationships between the climate indicators of high expectations and caring adult relationships.

A better understanding of students' perceptions of how social and emotional supports are currently provided at a school site, in relation to the school site's social and emotional support climate score, would provide useful information about how best to support the development of said supports.

It would be helpful to study the leadership behaviors of administrators at sites where high expectations, caring adult relationships and academic achievement exist, along with the behaviors of administrators at sites with low scores in these areas.

The correlation between all climate indicators and academic achievement should be measured. This information would help administrators know which measures of school climate deserve prominent attention and consideration when seeking to improve overall school achievement.

It would be worthwhile to learn if students' academic achievement in mathematics is correlated to students' perceptions of adults at their school having high expectations for them and/or to students' perceptions of adults at their school caring about them.

Final Words

To make progress in educational equity, we need leaders, teachers and other stakeholders to understand what is needed to create more equitable outcomes for teachers. Zaretta Hammond (2021) explains:

> ...the adult community in a school should engage in this work to become aware of the messages rooted in deficit thinking about the capacity and motivation of diverse students and families. But this type of equity conversation by itself is insufficient in improving outcomes of diverse students (para. 5)

When I first became an elementary school principal almost five years ago, the Superintendent handed me a leather journal with the inscription inside: "Listen to the children. They will always show you the way." In this study I have sought an assets-based approach to fortifying the positive conditions that already exist between students and adults at school. Students' voices and data tell us all we need to know: academic achievement happens when adults in the school building are committed to students' academic success, both (1) in setting high goals for children and (2) in remaining committed to providing the instruction that is going to bridge all gaps between students' present knowledge and ability in a subject area and the grade

level standard in that area. Illustrations of this instruction include the delivery of direct, explicit decoding and comprehension skills; or the co-creation of proficient written responses across multiple genres as a result of a daily writing workshop; or the provision of regular teacher-student writing conferences, stocked with specific, timely, actionable feedback to the blooming author. Social emotional tools used to improve self-regulation skills and aid in interpersonal development cannot adequately bridge the achievement chasms edged out under centuries of institutionalized marginalization of our most vulnerable students. Thankfully, good teaching can, and we must create the conditions necessary to ensure every child is afforded this opportunity.

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Appendix A

Approval to Collect Data

Claremont Graduate University Human Subjects Committee

Claremont Graduate University
Institutional Review Board

01/12/2021

Dear Nona,

An IRB representative has conducted a preliminary review of protocol **IRB # 3916 School Climate Indicators and Academic Achievement: An Investigation of Vulnerable Subgroups** . Pursuant to federal regulations 45 CFR 46.102(e)/(l), your project is not human subjects research, and does not require further IRB review or oversight.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect this determination. Please contact me directly to discuss any changes you may contemplate.

Respectfully,

James Griffith,
IRB Manager
james.griffith2@cgu.edu

150 East Tenth Street • Claremont, California 91711-6160
Tel: 909.607.9406

Appendix B

San Diego Unified School District

Department of Research and Evaluation

Approval to Collect Data

San Diego Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

November 25, 2020

Ms. Nona Richard
3592 Caminito El Rincon, #124
San Diego, CA 92130

Dear Ms. Richard:

San Diego Unified School District's Research Proposal Review Panel has approved your application to conduct research in San Diego Unified on *School Climate Indicators and Achievement: An Investigation of Vulnerable Subgroups.*

Your district sponsor, Noemi Villegas, stands ready to support your efforts in the district. You and she will need to submit a completed Memorandum of Agreement prior to you starting work in the district.

At completion of the study, my office and Noemi's would appreciate an electronic copy of the final report on your findings, which will be posted on the district website (or linked via a provided URL). If you have any questions or if I can be helpful to you in any way, please contact me at (619) 725-7190.

Sincerely,

Ronald G. Rode

Ronald G. Rode
Director

c: Noemi Villegas