

**ACADEMIC OPTIMISM
AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

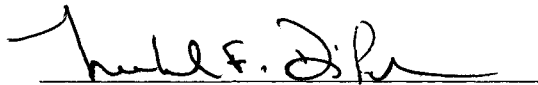
by
Misty M. Kirby
July 2009

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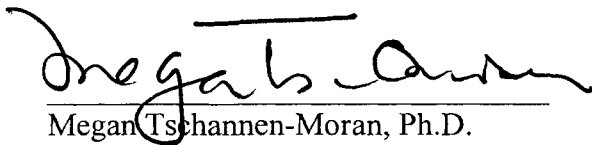
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DEDICATION

To my rock, my cheerleader, my husband, my greatest advocate, and my best friend – Jamie, this journey would not have been as rich an experience without your constant, unfailing support. Thank you for always making me laugh, even when things looked bleak and thank you for handling me with care when I needed it most.

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In memory of my father, David Brooks Pennington,
and my grandfathers, James Pennington and Jimmie Dufore
If they could see me now...

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ACADEMIC OPTIMISM AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

Despite the findings from the Coleman report (1966), which found that socioeconomic factors strongly predicted student achievement, educators have looked at other school characteristics in an attempt to demonstrate that socioeconomic status can be overcome. Academic Optimism, a construct formed by combining measures of collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in students and parents (clients), and academic press has been found to have a strong, positive relationship with student achievement, even when controlling for SES (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007). Academic optimism has been conceptualized as a “triadic set of interactions” (Hoy et al., 2007, p. 206) where collective efficacy supports trust in clients, which in turn nurtures academic press.

Community engagement is an element of school climate that examines the cooperative strategies that schools employ to foster positive and constructive relationships with the external community. A growing body of research supports the notion that bridging strategies designed to actively engage parents in the life of the school have positive consequences for students. Schools that utilize bridging strategies seek to actively engage parents in the school and build coalitions to align parents and community members with the school’s mission and goals (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005). Parental involvement has consistently been found to be positively and significantly related to student achievement (Bulach, Malone, & Castleman, 1995).

In this study of 35 urban elementary schools, there were significant relationships between community engagement and academic optimism and its three factors and

between academic optimism and student achievement on statewide math and reading assessments in grades three through five, as well as community engagement and student achievement. Multiple regression revealed that student SES status was the strongest independent predictor of student achievement, but when community engagement and the three aspects of academic optimism were added to the equation, all five predictors explained 74% of the variance in student achievement.

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**Academic Optimism and Community Engagement
in Urban Elementary Schools**

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 1966, Coleman et al. reported that schools only accounted for five to 38 percent of the variance in achievement among students of different ages, races, and residence. The level of success that children experience falls “along race and social class lines” (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001, p. 239). Student achievement has been linked to family background differences, school differences, and the racial makeup of a school’s student body. Skrla and colleagues asserted that this notion is the “central problem of education” (p. 239).

Despite many judicial and legislative efforts, an achievement gap between rich and poor, urban and suburban, and black and white students persists (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Kozol, 1991, 2005; NAEP, 2005). The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (2001) proposed that every child can learn and schools would be held accountable for that learning, which would be measured by state-sponsored examinations. One of the goals of NCLB is to increase student achievement so that students become more productive citizens and are able to compete in today’s global environment.

There are limitations on schools as to how much they are able to improve student achievement. However, without systemic solutions, policies, and actions that fundamentally change the way in which education is delivered, researchers and practitioners must rely on factors that schools can control and nurture in order to increase student achievement. Over the years, many researchers, disturbed by Coleman’s findings,

have searched for and found that there are characteristics of effective schools that do account for more of the variance on student achievement than student socioeconomic status (Edmonds, 1979; Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007).

Specifically, findings of previous studies have noted a strong relationship between academic optimism and student achievement as measured by required state examinations in traditional academic settings, in spite of student socioeconomic status (SES) (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007; Kirby & DiPaola, 2009; McGuigan, 2005; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Wagner, 2008). This study sought to test those findings in a sample of 35 urban elementary schools in one school district, Norfolk, Virginia. The purpose of this study was to examine relationships that exist among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement in these urban elementary schools. While SES does have an overwhelming negative effect on student achievement, inputs, such as resources, teacher credentials, and school size matter, too. Academic optimism looks at what is possible, beyond talent and desire, and reflects teachers' beliefs about collective behaviors and dispositions in their school. School processes such as policies, practices, and social interactions may provide education leaders a better starting point from which to examine how schools can better support the needs of their clients, the students. The conceptual framework of this study is described briefly below and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

Positive psychologist Seligman (2006) argued that while talent and motivation are important, optimism is crucial and can more than compensate for lack of talent or motivation. Those who are optimistic tend to not feel helpless when bad events happen. Rather, it is the optimists who become “energized when [they] encounter the everyday setbacks as well as momentous defeats” (Seligman, 2006, p. 16). Pessimists, on the other hand, feel helpless when faced with setbacks and are less resilient than optimists. Importantly, Seligman stressed that helplessness is not innate and can be unlearned and replaced by learning to explain events in a more optimistic way. Seligman (2006) called this “exploiting the strengths of the maximal self... [to] give us a permanent skill for warding off depression [and to] help us achieve more and have better health” (p. 290).

In schools, the findings from emerging research are clear: academic optimism and high community engagement are common characteristics of effective schools (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2007; Kirby & DiPaola, 2009; McGuigan, 2005; Wagner, 2008). Hoy and colleagues (2006) coined the term “academic optimism” to show teachers’ beliefs about collective behaviors and dispositions of the collective in their schools. Optimism can be learned, developed, and nurtured among stakeholders in a school. Since only one prior study has focused on urban elementary schools [Texas] (Smith & Hoy, 2007), this study sought to test those findings by examining academic optimism and community engagement across all schools in one urban district, controlling for student socioeconomic status. It is hoped that these two school characteristics can shed light on how leaders can build an empowered faculty who believe that their students’ success lies far beyond racial and social factors.

Academic Optimism

Academic optimism has been defined as a

shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor – in brief, a schoolwide confidence that students will succeed academically. (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 2)

Academic optimism is a school characteristic that has been associated with school achievement, despite student socioeconomic status. The three dimensions – collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press – are representative of the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Wagner, 2008). Academic optimism has also been conceptualized as a “triadic set of interactions” (Hoy et al., 2007, p. 206) where collective efficacy supports trust in clients, which in turn nurtures academic press.

Collective efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy, the cognitive aspect of academic optimism, is a school property that describes the collective judgment of the faculty regarding the extent to which they can cause a particular outcome. According to Bandura (1997), human behavior can be explained where personal and environmental factors interact; Bandura assumed that humans make choices purposefully and that we make those choices based on what is believed to be the likely outcome of those interactions. If teachers believe they can have a positive effect on students, then they will make choices that will result in increased student achievement, regardless of student characteristics (Goddard et al., 2004). The findings of several studies suggested that collective teacher

efficacy is crucial to student achievement, even when student socioeconomic status is controlled (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, LoGerfo, & Hoy, 2004; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). In a school where collective teacher efficacy is promoted and nurtured, the impact on student achievement tends to be positive.

Trust in clients. Trust, the affective aspect of academic optimism, is a crucial characteristic that has been found to enhance learning. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) found that six facets of trust emerged and integrated into a construct defined as a groups' "willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (pp. 185-186). Interestingly, factor analysis studies have suggested that faculty trust in students and parents load strongly as one factor, hence the term trust in clients (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Goddard, 2001). Faculty trust in clients can work in powerful ways to increase student achievement, regardless of student socioeconomic status (SES) (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In previous studies, trust has been correlated positively to student achievement and may be a strong predictor of student achievement, even when controlling for student SES (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In a school where teachers trust the clients, the impact on student achievement tends to be positive.

Academic press. Academic press, the behavioral aspect of academic optimism, is the "extent to which a school is driven by academic excellence" (Hoy et al., 2007, p. 201). In schools where there is a focus on academics, hard work and achievement are

recognized and teachers act and behave in ways that are reflective of their beliefs that students can be motivated to work hard and meet high expectations (Hoy et al., 2007). Additionally, Lee and Bryk (1989) found a link among a school's academic focus and student achievement, regardless of student SES or student minority status. It is precisely these links that interest school leaders: in a school where there are teachers with moderately high student expectations, "organizational dynamics will tend to press members to perform" (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000, p. 690). Because the norms that are in place to support student achievement and collective efficacy play an important part of motivation, teachers and students persist in their efforts to perform at high levels. As a result, Hoy and his colleagues (2002) found that academic press "flows through" (p. 290) collective efficacy in order to influence student achievement.

Community Engagement

The survival of a school depends on its environment and on interactions between its component parts or subsystems. A growing body of research supports the notion that bridging strategies designed to actively engage parents in the life of the school have positive consequences for students. Parental involvement was found to be positively and significantly related to student achievement, even when other factors such as leadership, instruction, expectation, order, and collaboration were included in the analysis (Bulach, Malone, & Castleman, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). As a result, cooperative strategies that schools employ to increase the interdependence of the school with elements in the environment embody community engagement. Principals who utilize bridging strategies seek to actively engage parents in the school and build coalitions to

align parents and community members with the school's mission and goals (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005).

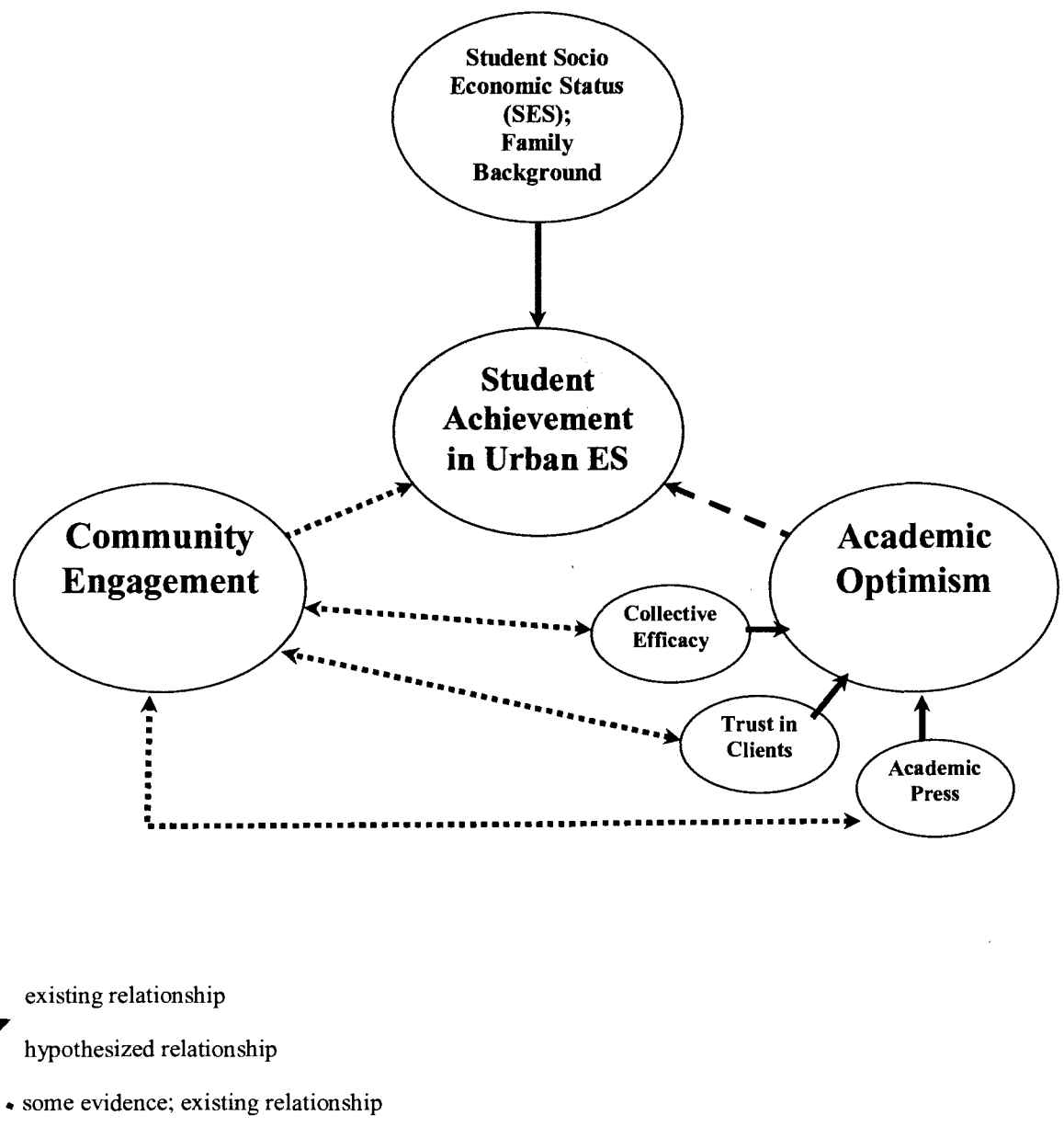


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the relationship among academic optimism, its factors, community engagement, and student achievement

Statement of the Problem

No Child Left Behind (2001) has forced school districts to look at how they are meeting the needs of all students, particularly those from subgroups of students previously marginalized. Each of the aspects of academic optimism and community engagement has been linked to high student achievement. School leaders must foster an environment where students are engaged in the learning process and are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, as well as achieve at high levels. Educators must reject the notion that they have little influence over their students' achievement. If there are characteristics of schools that can be nurtured in order to increase student achievement, we must learn what those qualities are, identify them in our schools, and foster them school wide in an effort to keep students engaged in the learning process.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement in urban elementary schools across one district. With only one previous study of this construct in an urban elementary setting (Smith & Hoy, 2007), the current study sought to test those findings in an effort to continue pushing this research agenda into urban settings. Although some may assume that students from lower socioeconomic homes cannot achieve at the same levels as their wealthier counterparts, educational leaders can work with their staffs to put in place organizational structures that support a focus on learning. Therefore, this study sought to build upon and extend prior research about academic optimism and community engagement and their relationship to student achievement. By focusing this study on two

specific school processes, academic optimism and community engagement, it is hoped that this study has provided research based evidence to inform researchers and practitioners that collective beliefs and behaviors can be nurtured and prove more powerful than student SES.

The findings of several prior studies have suggested that academic optimism in elementary and high schools has significant, positive effects on student achievement as measured by state examinations, regardless of student socioeconomic status (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007; Kirby & DiPaola, 2009; McGuigan, 2005; Wagner, 2008). Findings from this study may matter to policymakers, researchers, and education leaders at all levels and provide a view into urban elementary schools' collective beliefs about learning and instruction. While school inputs are important, especially in the way they are used, school processes provides us with specific practices and attitudes to target in order to improve student achievement. It is important to understand the processes of schools in order to develop meaningful ways in which they can be improved. By understanding schools systemically, the findings from this study may be used in formulating solutions that can be applied to schools in other urban districts with similar characteristics in order to engage and motivate students to increase student achievement.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between academic optimism of teachers and student achievement in their school?
2. What is the relationship between community engagement of an urban elementary school and its student achievement?

3. What is the relationship among the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) and community engagement in urban elementary schools?
4. What are the relative effects of community engagement and the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) on student achievement in urban elementary schools?

Definition of Terms

The following terms that will be used in this study are defined below.

Academic Optimism – shared belief that a school’s faculty can work with students to academically succeed. The three dimensions are collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Academic Press – “extent to which a school is driven by academic excellence” (Hoy et al., 2007, p. 201).

Collective Efficacy – school property that represents the judgment of teachers regarding the extent to which they as a whole can have positive effects on their students (Goddard, Hoy et al., 2000). The Collective Teacher Belief Scale, a survey used to measure the extent to which teachers believe that the teachers in their school can affect student achievement, was used in this study (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Community Engagement – bridging strategies schools implement in order to actively engage parents in the school and build coalitions to align parents and community members with the school’s mission and goals (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005).

Elementary School – public schools that provide instruction for students primarily in a grades K-5 configuration.

Socioeconomic Status (SES) – a condition of students’ family background, which characterizes income level or poverty. The percentage of students in a particular school receiving free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) is used as a proxy variable for SES.

Student Achievement – student academic performance measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning Exams. For purposes of this study, mean scores in reading and math, grades three through five were used. These criterion-referenced assessments are administered each year to all Virginia third through fifth grade elementary school students.

Trust – extent to which one is willing to be vulnerable to another who is benevolent, reliable, competent, open, and honest (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations refer to weaknesses in a study that are out of the researcher’s control (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). For this study, the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004) was used to measure collective efficacy on two subscales: student discipline and instructional strategies. In prior studies on academic optimism, Goddard’s (2002) collective efficacy measure of group competence and analysis of the teaching task was used. Because this was a larger study in progress when the researcher joined the project, the survey used was already in press and no additional items could be added in order to compare the two measures. As such, this limitation may have affected the findings. Also, student achievement is measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Exams, which measure only Virginia’s standards. Additionally, teacher participation will be voluntary and the surveys administered to assess academic optimism and community engagement are self-report measures, which

rely upon the honesty of the individual for accuracy; honesty of response is not guaranteed. Finally, since this was primarily a correlational study, causal effects cannot be determined.

“Delimitations describe the populations to which generalizations may be safely made” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007, p. 16). Generalization of this study will be limited because was being conducted in 35 urban elementary schools in one school district, Norfolk Public Schools. As a result, the external validity is affected; generalizability beyond the scope of this study is limited. As a delimitation, only those urban elementary schools in the Norfolk Public School district were used for this study. Generalizations should only be safely made in regards to programs within the population from which the sample was drawn.

Summary

As a result of *No Child Left Behind*, education leaders are looking at ways to raise student achievement of all students. It is necessary that education leaders understand the characteristics of effective schools that have positive relationships with student achievement. Academic optimism and community engagement have been shown in previous studies to positively correlate to achievement.

The next chapter will review the relevant literature on this topic and lead to the assertion that this study was necessary in order to better understand what is occurring in urban elementary schools as educators look for ways to increase the achievement of all students.

CHAPTER TWO

The Literature Review

Academic optimism and community engagement are school processes that have been found to have significant, positive relationships on student achievement, regardless of students' socioeconomic status. Because of the contextual nature of urban schools, leaders must work to build capacity with their staffs in order to change some teachers' cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. Academic optimism provides a window into these three dimensions, allowing leaders to nurture organizational structures that support a focus on student learning. This study sought to test the findings of the single study conducted in an urban setting in an effort to support urban education leaders in developing meaningful ways in which their schools may be improved. This chapter reviewed available literature for two organizational properties, academic optimism and community engagement, which were the variables of this study.

Effective Schools Research

Research through the 1970s and 1980s revealed school characteristics common to high performing schools. These effective schools tended to have such characteristics as strong instructional leadership, positive school climate, a strong press for academics through high expectations and an emphasis on skills mastery, frequent monitoring of student progress, a sense of community, and an environment conducive to learning (Edmonds, 1979; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). In fact, much research has been done to more closely examine how transformational processes that

shape the inputs into outcomes (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Other effective schools research has sought to control for inputs beyond the school's control, like socioeconomic status, in order to find relationships between the processes and student achievement as the outcome measure (Goddard, Hoy, & LoGerfo, 2003; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). What follows is a discussion of two organizational characteristics that have been found in effective schools.

Theoretical Perspectives

Seligman (2006) posited three aspects of success: talent, desire, and optimism. He proposed that optimism matters as much as, if not more than, talent and desire. Anthropologist Lionel Tiger (1979) defined individual optimism as “a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future – one that evaluator regards as socially desirable, to his [or her] advantage, or for his [or her] pleasure” (as cited in Peterson, 2000). Seligman (2006) explained that optimists have a way of explaining bad outcomes; these explanations allow the optimist the energy to try again because to them, the failure is not permanent and it is controllable. As Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006) concluded, “People who believe that bad outcomes are controllable have a greater sense of agency. Positive expectations and agency come together in a sense of hope that pathways can be identified to reach desired goals” (p. 143).

Peterson (2000) proposed that optimism is not merely a cognitive function, but that it also has an “emotional flavor” (p. 45), invoking the affective realm. As such, academic optimism has been conceptualized with cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. “Collective efficacy reflects the thoughts and beliefs of the group; faculty trust adds an affective dimension, and academic [press] captures the behavioral

enactment of efficacy and trust” (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006, p. 143). Academic optimism, through its “rich picture of human agency” (Hoy, Tarter et al., 2006, p 143), gives clarity to collective behavior in the cognitive, affective, as well as behavioral elements, as they work together to create an academic environment that is positive.

Academic Optimism

Academic optimism is a school characteristic that has been associated with school achievement, even despite student socioeconomic status (SES). Academic optimism at the school level has been identified as

a shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor – in brief, a schoolwide confidence that students will succeed academically. (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 2)

Its three aspects, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press, represent the cognitive, affective and behavioral domains (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Wagner, 2008). Hoy and colleagues (2007) conceptualized academic optimism as a “triadic set of interactions” (p. 206) where collective efficacy supports trust in clients, which in turn nurtures academic press.

Since scholars have found little evidence as to the direct effects of school leaders on student outcomes like student achievement, the newest challenge then is to find variables that school leaders can nurture and build in order to increase student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Mascal, Leithwood, Straus, & Sacks, 2008). Very often, the school leader is also the instructional leader, who is responsible for student achievement and works as a change agent to build capacity within a teaching staff

(Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood, 1999). In order to build capacity effectively, change needs to occur in the following processes simultaneously: pedagogical, content, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and organizational processes. Transformational leaders nurture a collective vision, which is carried out to motivated teachers who will in turn work with students to achieve at high levels. Academic optimism is but one construct to study how teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions effects student achievement.

Collective efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy, the cognitive aspect of academic optimism, is a school property that represents the judgment of teachers regarding the extent to which they as a whole can support student learning, regardless of student family and community factors (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Collective teacher efficacy is a collective belief based on teachers' perceptions of the teaching task and of the competence of their colleagues, the teaching faculty. These beliefs derive from the effects of both mastery and vicarious learning experiences, the affective state of the organization, as well as social persuasion, and are shaped by organizational structures and policies (Goddard, Hoy et al., 2000; Rosenholtz, 1989). According to Bandura, father of cognitive psychology, human behavior can be explained where behavior, personal and environmental factors interact; Bandura (1997) assumed that humans make choices purposefully and that we make those choices based on what is believed to be the likely outcome of those interactions.

Bandura's human agency theories are at the conceptual heart of collective efficacy. Human agency purports that humans make choices based on cognitive, affective, behavior, and biological factors, and that those choices are based on what people believe will be the outcome of a particular behavior. Bandura also posited that

these choices were also context specific, meaning that a person may have high self efficacy in snow skiing, but lower self efficacy for ballroom dancing. In other words, if people believe that what they are doing will be rewarding, it most likely will be (Bandura, 1989).

In schools, collective efficacy, which is based on perception, powerfully influences the social norms of a school (Goddard & Goddard, 2001). As such, teachers' beliefs about the levels of collective efficacy in their schools is just as powerful a predictor of student achievement as individual teacher self efficacy, influencing many aspects of how teachers interact with students in and out of the classroom (Bandura, 1993).

There have been several studies that have established significant positive relationships between collective efficacy and student achievement; some have even demonstrated the reciprocal nature of collective teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy et al., 2000; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002). Bandura (1993), Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000), and Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) found that stronger collective efficacy is a predictor of student achievement, even controlling for student socioeconomic status. In a study of Ohio high schools, researchers found significant positive relationships between collective efficacy and student achievement on 12th grade mathematics exams; the higher the collective efficacy of the school, the higher the achievement of its 12th grade students in mathematics (Hoy et al., 2002).

For purposes of this review, collective efficacy is a collective property of the school and represents the judgment of a teaching faculty regarding their ability to cause a particular outcome with their students, such as achieving at high levels on formal state

assessments. If teachers believe they can have a positive effect on students, then they will make choices and be persistent and resilient in their work of improving student achievement (Bandura, 1993, 1997; Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Logerfo, & Hoy, 2004). There have been several studies where the findings suggest that collective teacher efficacy is crucial to student achievement, even when student socioeconomic status is controlled (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2004; Goddard, Hoy et al., 2000; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Collective teacher efficacy beliefs influence teacher behaviors, which in turn influences student achievement.

However, low collective teacher efficacy can also work against student achievement. Because schools are social systems and teachers work together, collective teacher beliefs can harm or help a school's social system. As such, collective efficacy is an enduring school quality and requires much effort to change. In schools where teachers believe that students from low socioeconomic levels cannot perform at high levels, the faculty may experience lower collective efficacy. Since much understanding of collective efficacy is culturally and contextually dependent, schools need to respond to their needs and target the professional development of their staff in order to reinforce the positive values and norms of the organization (Bandura, 1993, 1997),

Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) created a 21 item collective efficacy instrument, which assessed the teaching competence of the group (13 items) and analyzed the teaching task (8 items). Goddard (2002) later refined the instrument into a short form of 12 items (2002). In the original CES (2000), Goddard and colleagues measured the two aspects of collective efficacy in an unbalanced manner. Since there was no theory to

undergird why group competence should weigh more than task analysis, Goddard (2002) sought to create a more balanced and parsimonious measure for collective efficacy. These 12 CES items were used to measure collective efficacy in all of the previous studies on academic optimism. However, there has been some concern expressed because it “artificially drives down the collective efficacy scores of schools in more challenging environments by its explicit measure of task difficulty” (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). For this study, the Collective Teacher Belief Scale was used to measure collective efficacy on two subscales: student discipline and instructional strategies. Detailed information on instrument development can be found in Chapter 3.

Trust in clients. Trust, the affective aspect of academic optimism, is a crucial characteristic that has been found to enhance learning. Further, trust has been correlated positively to student achievement and may be a strong predictor of student achievement, even when controlling for SES (Goddard et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) define trust as an “individual’s or groups’ willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (pp. 203). As such, trust has been postulated as an important school characteristic that is positively related to student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Researchers have consistently found that trust has many facets: a willingness to be vulnerable to another party, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Hoy, 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In order for trust to exist, vulnerability must be present. Vulnerability means that

someone is reliant upon another and that person's actions will benefit, not harm, the vulnerable member. Benevolence is one of the most common facets of trust and assumes good will on the part of others (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Reliability is seen as the extent that one can rely on others to fulfill their responsibilities (Butler & Cantrell, 1984). When trust exists, there is confidence that individuals will do what is expected of them. Competence implies that one is capable of performing a given task. In order to fully trust someone, we must believe that they can perform their assigned tasks. Honesty is integral to trust; one's words should correspond with one's actions. Finally, openness implies that one is willing to share information, which in turn enables the likelihood that others will confide and share information as well (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

It has been argued that the facets of trust work together and are contextually dependent. One's basic disposition to trust and values can influence how much one is willing to trust. Within organizations, trust can be influenced by practices, policies, leadership and culture (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). It is easier for trust to thrive in environments where there is congruence between a leader's words and actions.

As Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) worked to develop an instrument to measure the levels of trust in school, they found faculty trust in students and parents seemed to measure as a single construct, "trust in clients" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Goddard, 2001). Upon further testing, the researchers found that faculty trust in clients, colleagues, and principal were related. The three dimensions were moderately correlated and related to parental collaboration in decision making at the school level. Further, when multiple regressions were analyzed, faculty trust in clients

had the strongest relationship to collaboration than the other two dimensions (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Like collective efficacy, trust in clients is reciprocal. All sides need to trust in order to nurture the relationships that are so crucial to helping raise student achievement. Faculty trust in clients can work powerfully to increase student achievement, regardless of SES (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Academic press. Academic press, one of two dimensions of school climate in this study, represents the behavioral aspect of academic optimism. It is the “extent to which a school is driven by academic excellence” (Hoy et al., 2007, p. 201). This construct is also known as academic emphasis; like collective efficacy, which stems from individual perceptions, teachers’ beliefs about the importance of academics play a part in the collective group’s belief about the academic focus of a school (Goddard et al., 2000). Since collective beliefs take on many characteristics, academic press is measured at the school level (Goddard, Sweetland et al., 2000; Hoy & Sabo, 1998).

Academic press is a manifestation of how serious a school is about its purpose to educate all students. While all schools should prioritize academic achievement, some schools, through organizational structures and actions, do not. Shouse (1996) asserted that “the principles embodied in the idea of academic press help provide the sense of institutional purpose that distinguishes schooling from other socializing institutions (e.g., the family, the church, the Boy Scouts, etc.) and raises it to a level of community importance” (p. 52). Academic press has been found in several studies to be positively related to student achievement (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Tarter, 1997;

Lee & Bryk, 1989; Lee & Smith, 1999, Shouse, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & DiPaola, 2006).

Academic press initially emerged is a key aspect of an open, healthy school climate (Hoy et al., 1991; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy & Tarter, 1997). Hoy and Clover define a school's organizational climate as a "set of measurable properties of the work environment of teachers and administrators based on their collective perceptions... [which] are strongly influenced by the leadership practices of administrators..." (p. 93). These leadership practices have an indirect influence on student learning, so a school leader can influence student learning when they establish and maintain an orderly, disciplined learning environment where there is a strong press for academics and high expectations for all students (Hoy et al., 1991).

In a leading study of academic press in 45 urban elementary schools in one school district, the findings suggest that academic press was associated with between school differences in student achievement (Goddard, Sweetland et al., 2000). More specifically, academic press "explained about half of the variance between schools in student achievement" (p. 76). The authors put forward the idea that in their urban elementary school sample, the value of academic press can be communicated to students, teachers, and parents through mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states, all resulting in more student learning demonstrated through high student achievement.

Lee and Bryk (1989) found a positive relationship between a school's academic focus and student achievement, regardless of SES or student minority status. In another study of teachers in middle schools, academic press was most strongly correlated with

student achievement in math, reading, and writing, even controlling for students socioeconomic factors (Hoy & Sabo, 1998). In schools where there is a focus on academics, hard work and achievement are recognized and teachers act and behave in ways that reflect their beliefs that students can be motivated to work hard and meet high expectations (Hoy et al., 2007).

In a case study of two high schools over four years, Shouse (1996) found that social support from the school constrains academic achievement. That is, in the school where students were expected to do well academically, but where the “first concern is that they stay in school, stay out of gangs, and stay alive” (p. 48), students tended to have higher grades even though there was no strict focus on student achievement. However, the second school, where teachers wanted their students “to stay in school and stay out of trouble... [the] first goal is to raise their achievement” (p. 48), sent more of their students to college. Shouse viewed academic press as having three dimensions: academic climate, disciplinary climate, and teachers’ instructional practices and emphasis. In his analysis, he found that academic press, across all 398 schools, was strongly correlated with high student achievement. Shouse speculated that the more effective schools were those that had high academic press supported by a strong sense of community.

Finally, it bears mentioning that Hoy and his colleagues (2002) found that in schools where there were high levels of collective efficacy, there tended to be high student achievement, which in turn resulted in greater measures of collective efficacy. Their findings suggested that academic press “flows through” (p. 290) collective efficacy in order to influence student achievement. So, where collective teacher efficacy is high, academic press is more potent. More than collective teacher efficacy and trust in clients,

academic press may result directly from a school's processes and rules. In a school where there are teachers with moderately high student expectations, "organizational dynamics will tend to press members to perform" (Goddard, Sweetland et al., 2000, p. 290).

Community Engagement.

Community engagement is the second school climate dimension used in this study. The survival of a school depends on its environment, and on interactions between its component parts or subsystems. A growing body of research supports the contention that bridging strategies that actively engage parents in the life of the school have positive consequences for the school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Parental involvement was found to be positively and significantly related to student achievement, even when other factors such as leadership, instruction, expectation, order, and collaboration were included in the analysis (Bulach et al., 1995). In fact, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found an inverse relationship between the amount of parent and community involvement and the number of disciplinary actions needed for the students. As such, cooperative strategies that schools employ to increase the interdependence of the school with elements in the environment embody community engagement. Principals who actively bridge seek to engage parents in the school and build coalitions to align parents and community members with the school's mission and goals (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005).

Denton (1989) coined the term educative community to denote collaboration between a school and the community, where their work involves re-engaging and taking on the responsibility for educating students who are at risk. In these educative

communities, the school, in collaboration with local businesses, community organizations, and human service agencies, shares the work of educating its citizens. In a study of five U.S. cities' programs targeting a reduction of the dropout rate, community engagement is seen as a step in improving outcomes for students (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1995). Relationships between schools and their communities need to be nurtured and grown in order to be effective at improving the outcomes in the lives of students. As Tschannen-Moran (2000) stated, "Collaboration can generate the social capital necessary for excellent schools as both parents and teachers participate in problem-solving processes where they have the opportunity for greater contact and understanding" (p. 327).

Schools often provide little assistance to parents on ways in which they can be actively involved with their child's education. Current research supports findings that include the notion that parents are less likely to be involved with school if they are working class or if the mother is employed full time (Muller & Kerbow, 1993; Sheldon, 2003). Furthermore, parents' level of education has a reciprocal relationship with their involvement (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Parent involvement is typically lower in urban areas because parents and caretakers work and have time limits not conducive to being more involved in school.

All three levels of social systems in schools – managerial, technical, and institutional – impact the health of school systems. Briefly, healthy schools are growing organizations in which teachers, students, and administrators have positive feelings toward each other and are able to work in cooperation. In contrast, teachers in unhealthy schools may not like each other, their co-workers or their administrators (Hoy et al.,

1991). Because the environment of schools was viewed as something to be protected, the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) used a dimension called *institutional integrity* to determine the extent that a school deals with its environment so that the educational integrity of programs remains intact and safe from the demands of the community and parents (Hoy et al., 1991).

The notion of institutional integrity was a factor that was found to have a relationship with student achievement “in the opposite direction from the expected” (Tschannen-Moran et al, 2006, p. 399), which suggests that the better schools are at trying to keep parents and the community out, the more successful the school will be (Hoy et al., 1998). In the Organizational Climate Index (OCI), institutional integrity was renamed environmental press, but still carried the assumption that schools needed to be protected or buffered from the external environment. When schools bridge rather than buffer, that is they work to involve parents and the community in positive ways, students perform better in the classroom and have higher attendance. Researchers viewed bridging strategies as more effective in improving student performance than buffering strategies. A subscale, Community Engagement, was created and assumes that when parents are viewed as resources, student achievement rises (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005). In this study, a subscale of the School Climate Index (SCI), community engagement, was used to measure the levels of community engagement.

Virginia’s Standards of Learning

Virginia revised their Standards of Learning (SOL) in 1995 in an effort to fully implement an accountability system in an effort to hold schools accountable for what they are teaching, and to improve the instructional quality in schools to abolish the

achievement gap. The need to standardize the ways in which English, math, science, history, and social studies are assessed was greater in light of newly mandated legislation to improve our nation's schools (*NCLB*, 2001). School and district accreditation now depend upon specific percentages of students passing the SOL tests. Since educators live in a standards based environment, it is crucial that research be conducted to improve the current situation and work towards changing student performance.

In 2002, the General Assembly amended the Code of Virginia to authorize the Board of Education to establish course and credit requirements for graduation, and to prescribe Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments including end of courses and end of grade Standards of Learning tests for English, mathematics, science, history and social science. (*Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of Public Education in Virginia*, 2003, p. 49)

The latest independent evaluation of the SOL test items was performed in 2000 by the Virginia SOL Test Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), where test items were found to have strong internal consistency, as well as adequate content validity (Hambleton, Crocker, Cruse et al., 2000).

Socioeconomic Status and Student Achievement

The findings of several studies have suggested that socioeconomic status (SES) has an impact on student achievement (Coleman et al., 1966; Hoy et al., 2006, 2007; Hoy & Hannum, 1997). Recall that Coleman et al. (1966) found that family background was the single most important variable that predicted student achievement in school. However, many researchers, distressed by those results, have found characteristics of effective schools that do matter more than student SES (Edmonds, 1979; Hoy, Hannum,

& Tschannen-Moran, 1998; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007). While student SES continues to influence student achievement dramatically, initial research on academic optimism promises to be one more of those school characteristics.

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement. This study builds upon prior research about academic optimism and community engagement and their relationship to urban elementary school student achievement in a sample of 35 urban elementary schools. By focusing this study on two school processes, academic optimism and community engagement, it is hoped that this study will provide quantitative evidence to inform researchers and practitioners as to the importance of these school processes in improving student achievement. More importantly, perhaps, may be its contribution to the quantitative literature base on what urban schools may do to increase the achievement of all students.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief description of the effective schools research, followed by a review of the literature on two organizational properties, academic optimism and community engagement. The next chapter provides a description of the methodology for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Academic optimism and community engagement are school characteristics that have been positively associated with student achievement (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005; Kirby & DiPaola, 2009; McGuigan & Hoy, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2006; Wagner, 2008). Prior studies have used state examination scores as the measure for student achievement; this study sought to test previous findings, as well as to extend the research in urban schools. The purpose of this study was to examine relationships that exist among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement, as measured by Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) reading and math examinations from the third, fourth, and fifth grades. It is hoped that this study will build upon prior research about academic optimism, community engagement, and their relationship to student achievement. This study may provide some quantitative evidence with implications to research and practice leading to a better understanding of the social processes in school that influence student achievement. This chapter describes the research questions and discusses the sample used, including a historical perspective of the Norfolk Public School District. A description of the data collection, instruments, and data analysis procedures used in this study is also included.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the relationship between academic optimism of teachers and student achievement in their school?
2. What is the relationship between community engagement of an urban elementary school and its student achievement?
3. What is the relationship among the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) and community engagement in urban elementary schools?
4. What are the relative effects of community engagement and the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) on student achievement in urban elementary schools?

Historical Perspective of the Sample

Norfolk Public Schools (NPS) asserts that it is a “nationally recognized, globally competitive” school district. This urban district serves approximately 36,000 students, 60% of whom are considered economically disadvantaged. Nearly 64% of the students are African American, 24% are white, and 4% are Latino/a (Norfolk Public Schools, 2009). In 2005, NPS won the Broad Prize, which recognizes a district for “exceeding state and federal benchmarks and providing stellar education to urban students. Since 2005, the district has been able to maintain state accreditation in the majority of the schools, but the division has failed to meet federal accountability measures (AYP)” (Kirby & Parson, 2008, p. 11).

The district has undergone many changes and shifts over the past 40 years. The landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) decision deemed segregation illegal and found the plaintiff's Fourteenth Amendment rights of Equal Protection under the law were being violated. Parents brought suit against NPS in 1956 to integrate, but the suit was stalled for 15 years in litigation. In the meantime, NPS's six high schools were ordered closed in September 1958, by the then Governor Almond. Four months later, a district court ruled that the closings were a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment (Ikpa, 2008).

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965)*, which became the executive and legislative response to fund compensatory education, targeting its funds to children of the poor through programs like Title I. Just prior to Norfolk Public Schools' desegregation in January 1970, there were 56,830 students, 57% of whom were white and 43% were African American. The district was put under court order to bus between schools until the district was said to have met unitary status in 1975. After 10 more years of busing, NPS enrolled only 34,803 students, 58% of whom were African American and 43% were white (Ikpa, 2008).

In the 1980s, the population of the city experienced moderate rises and declines, going from just over 266,000 in 1980 to 261,000 in 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Since 1987, the city's population has been in decline and as of July 2008, the population was just over 234,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). However, during the 1980s, a revised plan was approved by the school board to put students into neighborhood schools. As a result of this policy decision, 10 elementary schools in Norfolk enrolled more than 95%

African American students. Although this decision was challenged in the courts (*Riddick v. School Board City of Norfolk*, 1983), a district court found that NPS could end busing of elementary students for desegregation and that the new plan of assigning students was not motivated by race. The district court's decision was appealed in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, where the court turned to the 1975 ruling in which NPS had achieved unitary status through busing. This decision has nurtured some neighborhood elementary schools' racial isolation. Success in school should not fall upon race or class lines, but rather in the collective, where leadership advocates and nurtures high expectations, academic press, and a safe and orderly learning environment (Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998).

Data Collection and Sample Procedures

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) advised that the size of the sample should be as large as possible in order to enhance the representativeness of the target population, urban elementary schools in Virginia. Borg and Gall (1979) suggested a sample size of no fewer than 30 cases for correlational studies. As such, full time teachers and professional instructional faculty from 35 public elementary schools in Norfolk, Virginia, primarily serving grades PK-5, participated in this study.

Teachers and professional instructional faculty from 35 urban elementary schools across the Norfolk, Virginia, Public School district completed 1,292 usable surveys on teacher and school climate, including community engagement and the three traits of academic optimism. The data collected for this study were part of a larger study on understanding teacher and student perceptions of instructional policies and practices, as well as other issues that influence school culture and climate. For this study, a member

of the research department briefed a representative from each school on how to administer the survey, as well as how to ensure confidentiality of those participating. The surveys were then distributed to the representative and picked up several weeks later. Among students in the schools, 62% of students are black, 23% are white, and nearly 5% are Hispanic. Since the school is the unit of analysis for this study, all data were aggregated to that level. Table 1 provides a more detailed description of the sample and a comparison to Virginia's elementary schools.

Table 1

Sample Descriptive Statistics and Comparisons

Classifications	Sample (N=35)	Virginia
PK-5 Elementary Schools*	35	1229
Mean School Enrollment	526	494
School Divisions	1	132
% FRL**	64.75	38.36
<u>Racial/Ethnic Background</u>		
% American Indian	.18	.28
% Asian	2.19	5.68
% Black	62.24	25.37
% Hispanic	4.63	10
% White	23.12	54.78
% Hawaiian	0	.13
% Unspecified	7.63	3.76

*33 schools are PK-5; 1 is K-8; 1 is K-5

**FRL= Percentage of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch
(Virginia Department of Education, 2008)

Instrumentation

One instrument was used to collect data for this study, the Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey, which included variables to determine teacher and school climate, including the three aspects of academic optimism, as well as community engagement. The subscale survey items have been shown in both this and prior studies to be valid and reliable instruments, as discussed in further detail below.

Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-2009

The Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey examined several teacher climate variables: teacher self efficacy, teacher collective efficacy, teacher trust in the administration, teacher trust in colleagues, and teacher trust in clients. The Survey also measured school climate variables: collegial leadership, teacher professionalism, academic press, community engagement, and organizational citizenship behaviors. The variables used in this study were teacher collective efficacy, faculty trust in clients, academic press, and community engagement. In this study of 35 schools, the 27 items used in this study demonstrated a robust Cronbach's Alpha reliability of .98. A copy of the Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-2009 is available in Appendix A.

Collective efficacy. In previous studies on academic optimism, Goddard's (2002) 12 item instrument was used to measure collective teacher efficacy. A six point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree is employed in an attempt to assess group competence and to analyze the teaching task. Previous studies have found strong factor loadings for collective efficacy, as well as a strong reliability coefficient of .96 (Goddard, 2002).

For purposes of this study, however, the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004) was used to measure collective teacher efficacy on two different subscales: student discipline and instructional strategies. The Collective Teacher Belief Scale consists of 12 items measuring teachers' perceptions about the collective ability of their faculty to influence student achievement on a nine point unidimensional scale ranging from Nothing to A Great Deal. This scale was used instead of the Goddard (2002) instrument because of concerns stemming from the measuring of task analysis. In challenging settings like urban schools, collective efficacy scores could appear lower than they are because of the explicitness of the survey items on the difficulty of tasks.

This 12 item scale was developed as a more precise measure of collective efficacy, where six items measure each of the two subscales on teachers' perceptions of collective teacher efficacy through instructional strategies and student discipline. Items in the instructional strategies subscale include "How much can teachers in your school do to: help students master complex content" and "How much can teachers in your school do to: produce meaningful student learning". Items in the student discipline subscale include "How much can teachers in your school do to: establish rules and procedures that facilitate learning" and "How much can teachers in your school do to: control disruptive behavior".

Tschannen-Moran and Barr's (2004) Collective Teacher Belief Scale was developed and adapted from the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) measure developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) during a seminar on Student and Teacher Efficacy Beliefs at the Ohio State University; the OSTES has groundings in

Bandura's unpublished teacher efficacy scale. In the pilot study of the OSTES, there was a reliability of .90; in Tschannen-Moran and Barr's prior study (2004), the Collective Teacher Efficacy Belief Scale had a reliability of .97. In this study of 35 schools, the 12 item Collective Efficacy Belief Scale demonstrated a strong Cronbach's Alpha reliability of .98.

Faculty trust in clients. This type of trust was measured using nine items from Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (2003) Omnibus T Scale, which asks participants to describe the levels of trust of their school on a six point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Each item has had strong factor loadings previously (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003), thus demonstrating high construct validity. The reliability coefficient of .93 demonstrates strong reliability for the current study. Sample items include, "Students in this school can be counted on to do their work" and "Teachers can count on parental support". In this study of 35 urban elementary schools, the nine item Trust in Clients subscale demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of .98.

Academic press. The academic press of the program was measured using the six item subscale from Hoy and colleagues' Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) measure (Hoy et al., 1991). A five point Likert type scale ranging from Never to Very Frequent is employed. Reliability and validity have been established through prior studies (Hoy et al., 1990, 1991, 2006). In Hoy and colleagues' study on academic optimism in 96 high schools, academic press had a reliability coefficient of .83. Hoy and Tarter (1997) used correlations and multiple regressions to strengthen the construct and predictive validity. All academic press items are located in Table 2. In this study of 35 schools, the six item

Academic Press subscale demonstrated a reliability of .94.

Table 2

Academic Press Survey Items

In your School:

The school sets high standards for academic performance.

Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.

Students try hard to improve on previous work.

The learning environment is orderly and serious.

Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.

Students respect others who get good grades.

Community engagement. The Community Engagement Subscale from the School Climate Index (SCI) (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005) consists of seven items that ask participants to give their determination of how often the statement is true in their school on a five point Likert type scale where 1 is Never and 5 is Very Frequent. The survey items for community engagement can be found in Table 3.

Each of the factors of the SCI, including community engagement, has been correlated with some aspect of student achievement and trust. In prior studies, the reliability was strong for the SCI at .96, with the community engagement subscale demonstrating strong reliability (.93). Construct validity was supported by factor analysis with items loading from .53 to .87 for both academic press and community

engagement (Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & DiPaola, 2006). In this study of 35 schools, the seven item Community Engagement Subscale demonstrated a reliability of .96.

Table 3

Community Engagement Survey Items

In your School:

Our school makes an effort to inform the community about our goals and achievements.

Our school is able to marshal community support when needed.

Parents and other community members are included on planning committees.

Community members are responsive to requests for participation.

Community members attend meetings to stay informed about our school.

Organized community groups (e.g., PTA, PTO) meet regularly to discuss school issues.

School people are responsive to the needs and concerns expressed by community members.

Data Analysis

This study was a quantitative correlational study that examined the relationships among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement. The school was the unit of analysis and all data were aggregated to the school level. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0) was used to calculate reliability statistics, mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges for community engagement and academic optimism, as well as each of the subscales. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used by SPSS to provide correlational analyses. SPSS was used to compute

Pearson's r to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) and the mean community engagement score. Because of the size of the sample, this study set its significance level at .05. A 95% confidence interval was used to determine if there are significant differences in the means. Multiple regression analysis, which is a statistical technique used to predict the influence of independent variables on a dependent variable, was used to determine the effects of the factors of faculty academic optimism – collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press – and community engagement on student achievement, as measured by the mean school scores on the 2008-2009 Virginia Standards of Learning Examinations in third, fourth, and fifth grade reading and math.

The latest independent evaluation of the SOL test items was performed in 2000 by the Virginia SOL Test Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), where test items were found to have strong internal consistency, as well as adequate content validity (Hambleton, Crocker, Cruse et al., 2000). SOL data were obtained from Norfolk Public School District's Office of Accountability.

Additionally, this study sought to find variables that affect student achievement more powerfully than student socioeconomic status (SES). As such, student SES was controlled in the data analyses. School level student participation in the federal free and reduced lunch program (FRL) was obtained from a document submitted to the Virginia Department of Education on May 1, 2009, from the accountability office in Norfolk Public Schools. Table 4 includes the research questions with corresponding data sources and analysis.

Table 4

Data Sources and Analysis

Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis
1. What is the relationship between academic optimism of teachers and student achievement in their school?	NPS Teacher Climate Survey Items (Collective Teacher Beliefs Scale; Faculty Trust in Clients –students and parents - subscale; Academic Press subscale): A13-24; B1, B8, B9, B12, B13, B17, B21, Bs3, B25; D5, D6, D14, D15, D21, D22; Virginia Standards of Learning third-fifth grade reading and math examinations	Correlations
2. What is the relationship between community engagement of an urban elementary school and its student achievement?	NPS Teacher Climate Survey Items (Community Engagement subscale): D1, D2, D9, D10, D26-D28; Virginia Standards of Learning third-fifth grade reading and math examinations	Correlations
3. What is the relationship among the three factors of	NPS Teacher Climate Survey Items (Collective Teacher	Correlations

<p>academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) and community engagement in urban elementary schools?</p>	<p>Beliefs Scale; Faculty Trust in Clients subscale; Academic Press subscale): A13-24; B1, B8, B9, B12, B13, B17, B21, Bs3, B25; D5, D6, D14, D15, D21, D22; NPS Teacher Climate Survey Items (Community Engagement subscale): D1, D2, D9, D10, D26-D28</p>	
<p>4. What are the relative effects of community engagement and the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) on student achievement in urban elementary schools?</p>	<p>NPS Teacher Climate Survey Items (Community Engagement subscale): D1, D2, D9, D10, D26-D28; NPS Teacher Climate Survey Items (Collective Teacher Beliefs Scale; Faculty Trust in Clients subscale; Academic Press subscale): A13-24; B1, B8, B9, B12, B13, B17, B21, Bs3, B25; D5, D6, D14, D15, D21, D22; Virginia Standards of Learning third-fifth grade reading and math examinations</p>	<p>Multiple Regression</p>

All data collected for this study were aggregated to the school level. Survey items were scored to produce mean values before school level means were calculated for each survey item. Then, survey items within each variable were aggregated in order to obtain the mean school value for each of the variables. Finally, mean school scores were compared across the entire sample of 35 urban elementary schools.

Ethical Safeguards

Approval for this study was obtained from the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary to conduct the study. The Protection of Human Subjects Committee determined that this study was in compliance with appropriate ethical standards and was exempted from formal review. Participation in the study was optional and participants could drop out at any time without penalty. Individual responses were anonymous and schools were not individually identifiable.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement in urban elementary schools across one district. This study sought to build upon and extend prior research about academic optimism and community engagement and their relationship to student achievement. Academic optimism is a school characteristic that has been associated with school achievement, over and above the influence of student socioeconomic status. The three dimensions, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press are representative of the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, 2007; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Wagner, 2008). Further analyses examined the relative effects of the three dimensions of academic optimism and community engagement on student achievement.

The Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-2009, which examined several teacher and school climate variables, was the instrument used to measure the variables in this study: collective efficacy, trust in clients, academic press, and community engagement. The subscales used to measure these variables were as follows: the Collective Teacher Belief Scale, which used a nine point unidimensional scale with one representing Nothing to nine representing A Great Deal; nine items from the Omnibus T-Scale, which used a six point Likert scale with one representing Strongly Disagree to six representing Strongly Agree; the Academic Press Subscale from the

Organizational Health Inventory (OHI), which was measured on a five point scale, where one represents Never and five represents Very Frequent; and the Community Engagement Subscale from the School Climate Index (SCI), which used a five point scale where one represents Never and five represents Very Frequent.

The survey was completed by 1,292 teachers and professional staff from 35 elementary schools serving primarily grades PK-5 in the Norfolk Public School District, Virginia. Student achievement data were collected using mean scaled scores from grades three through five in two Virginia Standards of Learning examinations from the 2008-2009 school year: reading and math. Student socioeconomic data were established through participation in the federal free and reduced priced lunch program for the 2008-2009 school year; these data were received from Norfolk Public Schools Strategic Evaluation, Assessment, and Support Department in a document they submitted to the Virginia Department of Education.

Findings

The four research questions for this study were answered by analyzing the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Gradpack (SPSS), version 16.0. Descriptive statistics, found in Table 5, were computed for each of the three factors of academic optimism (collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in clients, academic press), community engagement, and student achievement in grades three, four, and five in reading and math. This study also controlled for student socioeconomic status in an effort to determine the more accurate relationships and effects of academic optimism and community engagement. Data were aggregated to the school level. The mean score for

academic optimism was determined by averaging the scores for each of the three factors within the construct.

The Norfolk Public Schools Strategic Evaluation, Assessment, and Support Department provided the mean scaled scores for grades three, four, and five reading and math Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) scores; SOL scores range from 200-600. A score of 400 is considered passing at a minimally proficient level; 500 is deemed passing with advanced proficiency.

Table 5

Descriptive Data (N=35)

Variables	Mean	S.D.	Range	Reliability
Academic Optimism	5.12	.32	4.40 - 5.66	.98
Collective Efficacy	7.60	.33	6.91 - 8.19	.98
Trust in Client	3.81	.45	2.84 - 4.65	.98
Academic Press	3.94	.25	3.40 – 4.35	.94
Community Engagement	3.61	.39	2.67 – 4.44	.96
Reading SOL Exam	469.09	18.48	422.55 – 511.02	
Math SOL Exam	478.89	23.07	429.15 – 528.45	
Free/Reduced Lunch %	64.75	18.42	27.48 – 97.17	

Note. Reliability information not available for SY2008-2009 testing

Collective Teacher Belief Scale as the Measure for Collective Efficacy

Recall that for this study, Collective Teacher Efficacy was measured using the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004) rather than the Goddard (2002) 12 item instrument. Factor analysis was conducted to affirm that all items from the measure were strongly related to the other items to determine the construct validity. Not surprisingly, on the first Varimax rotated factor structure, all 12 items loaded as two factors, instructional strategies and student discipline, explaining 76.68% of the total variance among the items. Upon a second analysis, calling for one factor, strong factor loadings support the construct validity of this survey as a way to measure collective efficacy. Items loaded strongly and ranged from .73 to .87 with a reliability of .98 using Cronbach's alpha. Collective efficacy held together as a single construct, explaining 67.85% of the total variance.

Second Order Factor Analysis of Academic Optimism

While not a stated research question, in light of using a different measure for one of the three dimensions of academic optimism, a second order factor analysis was performed to determine whether or not the construct of academic optimism continued to operate as a single, unified construct. Using principal component analysis, collective teacher efficacy loaded very strongly at .90, and trust in clients and academic press loaded very strongly at .95. The reliability of the survey items to measure this construct was a robust alpha of .98. The single factor, academic optimism, with an Eigenvalue of 2.6, explained 87% of the total variance.

First Research Question

The first question asked, what is the relationship between academic optimism of teachers and student achievement in their school? Findings from the data indicated that there are significant relationships between academic optimism and student achievement in reading and math, whether or not there are controls for student socioeconomic status (SES).

A bivariate correlation revealed a significant, strong correlation between academic optimism and student achievement in reading ($r=.70$, $p < .01$) and in math ($r=.71$, $p < .01$). Academic optimism explained 49% of the variance in mean reading scores and 50% of the variance in mean math scores. These findings suggest that in schools where the instructional faculty are more optimistic about academics, students tend to achieve at higher rates. Table 6 contains bivariate correlations for academic optimism and reading and math student achievement on the Virginia SOL exams.

Table 6

Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Academic Optimism and Student Achievement

	2.	3.
1. Academic Optimism	.70**	.71**
2. Reading SOL Exam		.91**
3. Math SOL Exam		

** $p < .01$

A partial correlation, controlling for student SES, revealed a moderate relationship between academic optimism and student achievement in reading, as well as math ($r=.51, p < .01$; $r=.51, p < .01$ respectively). Academic optimism explained 26% of the variance in mean reading performance, as well as math Standards of Learning (SOL) performance, even after controlling for student SES. When faculty exhibit academic optimism, students tend to achieve at higher levels. Table 7 includes partial correlations for academic optimism and reading and math student achievement on the Virginia SOL exams.

Table 7

Partial Correlation Analysis of Academic Optimism and Student Achievement

	2.	3.
1. Academic Optimism	.51**	.51**
2. Reading SOL Exam		.80**
3. Math SOL Exam		

** $p < .01$

Although not a stated research question, further correlation analysis was performed on each of the three aspects of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in client, and academic press) and student achievement in reading and math in an effort to identify differences in the strength of the relationships of the individual variables of academic optimism. The findings revealed all positive and significant relationships. In

both reading and math achievement, trust in clients had the strongest relationship ($r=.75$, $p < .01$; $r=.78$, $p < .01$ respectively). Trust in clients explained 56% of the variance in mean reading scores and 61% of the variance in math achievement. This suggests that in this sample of urban elementary schools, relationships among teachers, students, and parents is important in student reading and math ability. Table 8 contains the correlations for each aspect of academic optimism and the two measures of student achievement.

Table 8

Bivariate Correlation Analysis of the Factors of Academic Optimism and Student Achievement

	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Collective Efficacy	.77**	.76**	.49**	.47**
2. Trust in Clients		.88**	.75**	.78**
3. Academic Press			.67**	.71**
4. Reading SOL Exam				.91**
5. Math SOL Exam				

** $p < .01$

In a partial correlation analysis, where student SES was controlled, academic press had the most significant correlation to math student achievement ($r=.59$, $p < .01$), while academic press and trust in clients had the most significant correlation with reading student achievement ($r=.52$, $p < .01$; $r=.52$, $p < .01$ respectively). Collective efficacy and

student achievement in reading and math were the only significant correlations at the .05 level ($r=.40, p < .05$; $r=.39, p < .05$ respectively). Table 9 presents the partial correlations for three factors of academic optimism and the two measures of student achievement.

Table 9

Partial Correlation Analysis of the Factors of Academic Optimism and Student Achievement

	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Collective Efficacy	.80**	.73**	.40*	.38*
2. Trust in Clients		.85**	.52**	.56**
3. Academic Press			.52**	.59**
4. Reading SOL Exam				.80**
5. Math SOL Exam				

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Second Research Question

The second question asked, what is the relationship between community engagement of an urban elementary school and its student achievement? Findings from the data indicated that there are significant, positive relationships between community engagement and student achievement in reading and math, whether or not there are controls for student socioeconomic status (SES).

Findings from a bivariate correlation revealed a significant, moderate correlation between community engagement and student achievement in reading ($r=.68$, $p < .01$) and in math ($r=.60$, $p < .01$). Community engagement explained 46% of the variance in mean reading achievement and 36% of the variance in mean math achievement. These findings suggest that in schools where the community is engaged and viewed as a resource, students are likely to perform well in reading and math. Table 10 depicts the bivariate correlations for community engagement and the two measures of student achievement.

Table 10

Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Community Engagement and Student Achievement

	2.	3.
1. Community Engagement	.68**	.60**
2. Reading SOL Exam		.91**
3. Math SOL Exam		

** $p < .01$

Further correlation analysis of the data controlling for student SES suggested that there was a moderate relationship between community engagement and student achievement in reading and math ($r=.56$ and $.43$ respectively, $p < .01$). Community engagement explained 31% of the variance in the mean reading SOL scores and 18% of the variance in mean math SOL scores, even when controls were in place for student SES status. These findings indicate the importance of community engagement on student

achievement. Partial correlations for community engagement and reading and math student achievement on the Virginia SOL exams can be found in Table 11.

Table 11

Partial Correlation Analysis of Community Engagement and Student Achievement

	2.	3.
1. Community Engagement	.56**	.43**
2. Reading SOL Exam		.80**
3. Math SOL Exam		

**p < .01

Third Research Question

The third question asked, what is the relationship among the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) and community engagement in urban elementary schools? The data from bivariate and partial correlations indicated that there are statistically significant positive relationships among the variables.

Findings from a bivariate correlation revealed a strong, positive relationship between academic optimism, its three factors, and community engagement. The relationship between the composite measure of academic optimism and community engagement demonstrated a strong, positive correlation ($r=.78$, $p < .01$). Community engagement and trust in clients demonstrated the strongest correlation among the

dimensions of academic optimism ($r=.78, p < .01$); there was also a strong correlation between community engagement and academic press ($r=.73, p < .01$). These findings suggest that in schools where the community is engaged, teachers believe students can learn and press students to meet their high expectations. These teachers trust that parents and students alike will aid in the learning process. Table 12 contains bivariate correlations for academic optimism, its three factors, and community engagement.

When controlling for student SES, the partial correlation analysis results between academic optimism as a composite measure and community engagement were nearly as significant at the .01 level ($r=.70, p < .01$). These findings suggest that in schools where there are high rates of community engagement, teachers tend to be more optimistic about the focus of the school, about their ability to do their jobs, and about the academic learning environment within the school. Table 13 contains correlations for academic optimism, its three factors, and community engagement.

Table 12

Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Academic Optimism, the Three Factors of Academic Optimism, and Community Engagement

	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Community Engagement	.78**	.61**	.78**	.73**
2. Academic Optimism		.89**	.96**	.93**
3. Collective Teacher Efficacy			.77**	.76**
4. Trust in Clients				.88**
5. Academic Press				

** $p < .01$

Table 13

Partial Correlation Analysis of Academic Optimism, the Three Factors of Academic Optimism, and Community Engagement

	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Community Engagement	.70**	.55**	.70**	.65**
2. Academic Optimism		.92**	.95**	.90**
3. Collective Teacher Efficacy			.79**	.73**
4. Trust in Clients				.85**
5. Academic Press				

** $p < .01$

Fourth Research Question

The fourth question asked, what are the relative effects of community engagement and the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) on student achievement in urban elementary schools? Multiple regression analysis was done in order to explore how much of the variance in mean student achievement of reading and math (the dependent variable) can be explained by the independent variables (community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press), as well as how much an independent variable may influence on its own. Data from these analyses revealed that the independent variables of community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press explained 66% of the variance in student achievement. Trust in clients had the only independent effect of all the independent variables. Trust in clients exhibited a strong independent effect on the mean student achievement scaled score ($\beta = .79, p < .01$). Table 14 depicts this regression analysis.

Table 14

Regression Analysis of Community Engagement, the Three Factors of Academic Optimism, and Student Achievement

	Student Achievement		
	Beta	t	Sig.
Community Engagement	.10	.61	.550
Collective Teacher Efficacy	-.313	-1.79	.083
Trust in Clients	.79	3.05	.005
Academic Press	.18	.74	.465
			R ² = .66
			Adjusted R ² = .61
			S.E. = 12.64

As a result of the first regression analysis, a stepwise regression was run to remove the weaker variables to determine the amount of variance explained. Trust in clients emerged as the only constant variable ($\beta = .78, p < .01$), which explained 62% of the variance in the mean student achievement score. In schools where there is trust between the teacher and the clients, students are more likely going to achieve at higher levels. Table 15 depicts the stepwise regression analysis for community engagement, the three factors of academic optimism, and student achievement.

Table 15

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Trust in Clients and Student Achievement Mean in Reading and Math

Dependent Variable					
Predictor Variable	B	Beta (β)	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE (β)
Reading & Math SOL Mean					
Trust in Client	35.14	.78* *	.62	.60	12.78

**p<.01

Results from a stepwise regression analysis of community engagement and academic optimism on student achievement indicated that community engagement was the weaker variable. Academic optimism had a significant independent effect on mean student achievement scores ($\beta = .72, p < .01$) and explained 52% of the variance on student achievement. The results for this regression analysis can be found in Table 16.

Table 16

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Community Engagement, Academic Optimism, and Student Achievement Mean in Reading and Math

Dependent Variable					
Predictor Variable	B	Beta (β)	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE (β)
Reading & Math SOL Mean					
Academic Optimism	45.39	.72* *	.52	.51	14.22

**p<.01

Multiple regressions controlling for student SES. The percentage of students participating in the federal free or reduced priced lunch was used as a proxy variable to measure for student SES. Findings from the multiple regression analysis of student SES on achievement indicated that student SES alone explains 58% of the variance in their

achievement ($\beta = -.44, p < .01$). Negative Beta weights signal that in schools where a high percentage of students receive free or reduced lunch, there most likely will be a lower level of student achievement in reading and math. Therefore, student SES had a significant independent effect on student achievement. However, when all independent variables were in place, 74% of the variance in student achievement can be explained. So where schools have community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press, students will more than likely achieve at high levels. These variables combined predict 74% of the variance in student achievement; table 17 contains the multiple regression results.

As a follow up analysis, a stepwise regression was run to remove the weakened variables. Student SES and trust in clients emerged as the significant variables, where trust in clients ($\beta = .78, p < .01$) explained 62% of the variance in student achievement, and trust in clients and SES ($\beta = .50, p < .01$; $\beta = -.42, p < .01$ respectively) explained 71% of the variance in student achievement. In this stepwise regression, trust in clients explained more of the variance in student achievement than student SES. Table 18 depicts this stepwise regression analysis.

Table 17

Regression Analysis of SES, Community Engagement, the Three Factors of Academic Optimism, and Student Achievement

	Student Achievement		
	Beta	t	Sig.
Student SES	-.44	-3.05	.005
Community Engagement	.14	.92	.365
Collective Teacher Efficacy	-.119	-.71	.482
Trust in Clients	.22	.73	.472
Academic Press	.29	1.35	.189
			R ² = .74
			Adjusted R ² = .70
			S.E. = 11.18

Table 18

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Trust in Clients and SES on Student Achievement Mean in Reading and Math

Dependent Variable					
Predictor Variable	B	Beta (β)	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE (β)
Reading & Math SOL Mean					
Trust in Clients	22.40	.50**	.62	.60	12.78
SES	-.46	-.42**	.71	.69	11.23

**p<.01

Further stepwise regression analysis revealed that both academic optimism and student SES combined were statistically significant strong predictors of mean student achievement. Academic optimism exhibited great promise on student achievement ($\beta = .43, p < .01$), while student SES exhibited an inverse relationship with mean student achievement ($\beta = -.51, p < .01$); together, they explained 70% of the variance in mean school scores. Table 19 depicts these results.

Table 19

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Academic Optimism and SES on Student Achievement Mean in Reading and Math

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	B	Beta (β)	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE (β)
Reading & Math SOL Mean						
	Academic Optimism	26.84	.43**	.70	.68	11.51
	SES	-.56	-.51**	.58	.56	13.42

**p<.01

Summary

Significant, positive relationships existed among the variables tested in this study. Academic optimism demonstrated a strong correlation with student achievement in reading and math and a moderate correlation with student achievement in reading and math, controlling for student SES. Likewise, community engagement was moderately correlated with student achievement in reading and math, whether or not controls were in place for student SES. Multiple regression analysis revealed that community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press were strongly

predictive of student achievement, explaining 66% of the variance. When student SES was added to the equation, 74% of the variance on student achievement could be attributed to the independent variables. The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter 5, along with their implications for research and practice and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Although there have been many judicial and legislative attempts to close the achievement gap between rich and poor, suburban and urban students, the gap persists. Many studies have been done over the past thirty years in an effort to prove that schools can and do make a difference in student achievement, controlling for students' socioeconomic status (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005; Edmonds, 1979; Goddard, LoGerfo, & Hoy, 2004; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001, 2007; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). As the press for accountability through *No Child Left Behind* (2001) mounts, researchers and practitioners have come together in an effort to find organizational properties of schools that can be nurtured in an effort to improve student achievement, and to overcome the obstacles to learning posed by low student socioeconomic status. Academic optimism and community engagement are two of those properties.

This study examined the relationships among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement in 35 urban elementary schools across one school district in Virginia. Analyses of the data confirmed that positive relationships among the variables exist. This study also explored the relative effects of community engagement and the three factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) on student achievement. Student achievement was measured by the

mean school scores on the third, fourth, and fifth grade Virginia Standards of Learning reading and math examinations.

Limitations and Delimitations

For this study, the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004) was used to measure collective efficacy on two subscales: student discipline and instructional strategies. In previous studies on academic optimism, Goddard's (2002) collective efficacy measure of two subscales – group competence and analysis of the teaching task – was used. As such, this limitation may have affected the findings. Also, student achievement is measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Exams, which measure only Virginia's standards. Additionally, teacher participation was voluntary and the surveys administered to assess academic optimism and community engagement are self-report measures, which rely upon the honesty of the individual for accuracy; honesty of response is not guaranteed. Finally, since this was primarily a correlational study, causal effects cannot be determined.

Generalization of this study is limited because it was being conducted in 35 urban elementary schools in one school district, Norfolk Public Schools. As a result, the external validity is affected, and generalizability beyond the scope of this study is limited. As a delimitation, only those urban elementary schools in the Norfolk Public School district were used for this study. Generalizations should only be safely made in regards to programs within the population from which the sample was drawn.

Summary of Research Findings

1. Bivariate correlation analysis confirmed a strong, positive correlation between academic optimism and student achievement in reading ($r=.70$, $p < .01$) and math ($r=.71$, $p < .01$). Further, partial correlation analysis confirmed there is a moderate, positive relationship between academic optimism and student achievement in reading ($r=.51$, $p < .01$) and math ($r=.51$, $p < .01$) when controlling for student SES.
2. Bivariate correlation analysis confirmed a moderate, positive correlation between community engagement and student achievement in reading ($r=.68$, $p < .01$) and in math ($r=.60$, $p < .01$). Partial correlation analysis also confirmed a moderate, positive relationship between community engagement and student achievement in reading ($r=.56$, $p < .01$) and math ($r=.43$, $p < .01$) when controlling for student SES.
3. Bivariate correlation analysis confirmed a strong, positive relationship between academic optimism, its three factors, and community engagement. Bivariate correlation analysis also confirmed moderate to strong relationships between community engagement and the three dimensions of academic optimism: collective efficacy ($r=.61$, $p < .01$), trust in clients ($r=.78$, $p < .01$), and academic press ($r=.73$, $p < .01$), with the relationships between community engagement and trust in clients demonstrating the strongest correlation ($r=.78$, $p < .01$). The relationship between the composite measure of academic optimism and community engagement also demonstrated a strong, positive correlation ($r=.78$, $p < .01$). Even when controlling for

student SES, partial correlation analysis confirmed that academic optimism and community engagement were still strongly and positively related ($r=.70, p < .01$).

4. Multiple regression analysis confirmed that community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press explained 66% of the variance in mean student achievement. Trust in clients had the only independent effect on mean student achievement ($\beta = .79, p < .01$), explaining nearly 62% of the variance on student achievement. A stepwise regression analysis of community engagement and the composite measure of academic optimism confirmed that academic optimism had a significant independent effect on mean student achievement scores ($\beta = .72, p < .01$) and explained 52% of the variance on student achievement.

Additional multiple regression analyses confirmed that community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, academic press, and student SES predicted 74% of the variance in student achievement, where student SES had a significant independent effect on student achievement ($\beta = -.44, p < .01$), and explained 58% of the variance in student achievement. Furthermore, a stepwise regression analysis indicated student SES and trust in clients were the significant variables predicting student achievement, where trust in clients ($\beta = .78, p < .01$) explained 62% of the variance in student achievement, and trust in clients and SES ($\beta = .50, p < .01$; $\beta = -.42, p < .01$ respectively) explained 71% of the variance in student achievement.

Discussion of Research Findings

The conceptual framework advanced in Chapter One, where community engagement, academic optimism, and its three dimensions are related was confirmed by the findings of this study. In schools where the faculty are optimistic that their students can succeed despite the obstacle of low socioeconomic status and where the community is engaged, students are more likely to achieve at higher levels. Findings of this study also supported that community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press do act as predictors to collectively influence student achievement.

Factor Analysis of Academic Optimism

Second order factor analysis confirmed that academic optimism operates as a single construct composed of collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press. These findings are consistent with prior work on academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter et al., 2006, 2007; Kirby & DiPaola, 2009; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Wagner, 2008), thus supporting Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy's theory that academic optimism is a latent construct in schools that is manifested through collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press.

Correlation Analyses of Academic Optimism and Student Achievement

This study examined the relationship between academic optimism and student achievement measured by the mean scaled scores on Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) Exams in third through fifth grades reading and math. A bivariate correlation analysis revealed statistically significant strong correlations between academic optimism and each of the two student achievement measures. Academic optimism was also positively and moderately correlated with student achievement in reading and math,

controlling for student socioeconomic (SES) status. These findings are consistent with previous studies on the construct (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Kirby & DiPaola, 2009; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Wagner, 2008). These results suggest that there is a relationship between academic optimism of teachers and elementary reading and math achievement on these cumulative Virginia SOL assessments.

Additional correlation analysis on the relationship of the three aspects of academic optimism – collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press – to student achievement in reading and math indicated that trust in clients had the most significant correlation in reading and math achievement ($r=.75, p < .01$; $r=.78, p < .01$ respectively). This finding suggests that in this sample of urban elementary schools, relationships between teacher and students and parents plays a role in students' literacy and numeric abilities. When trust is present in the teacher/client relationship, the teacher has confidence that students are willing to do the work and that parents will be supportive in their educational efforts.

Partial correlation analysis of collective efficacy, trust in client, and academic press on student achievement in reading and math revealed all positive and statistically significant relationships, controlling for student SES. Academic press had the most significant correlation to math student achievement ($r=.59, p < .01$) and academic press and trust in clients had the most significant correlation with reading student achievement ($r=.52, p < .01, r=.52, p < .01$). These findings are consistent with results from prior studies in urban elementary schools (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Since academic press is the behavioral aspect of academic optimism, these findings suggest that in reading and math, both cumulative

assessments, the behavioral norms of a school and the way its members behave play an important part in motivating students and teachers alike to perform at higher levels.

Correlation Analyses of Community Engagement and Student Achievement

This study also examined the relationship between community engagement and student achievement measured by mean scaled scores on Virginia Standards of Learning Tests in third through fifth grade reading and math. A bivariate correlation analysis revealed a moderate correlation between community engagement and student achievement in reading and math. Additionally, a partial correlation analysis, with controls for student SES, indicated a positive moderate correlation between community engagement and student achievement in reading and math. These findings are consistent with those from prior studies (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005; Jurewicz, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & DiPaola, 2006). These results suggest that there is a relationship between how teachers perceive their school engaging parents and community members and elementary reading and math achievement on Virginia's SOL examinations.

Correlation Analyses of Academic Optimism and Community Engagement

Academic optimism and community engagement were strongly and positively correlated with community engagement, whether or not controls for student SES were in place. The findings of this study also indicated that academic optimism and its individual factors (collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) were strongly and positively correlated with community engagement. Examining relationships between these two organizational properties is in its early stages, but these findings do support a prior study in Virginia high schools (Kirby & DiPaola, 2009). These results advance the

idea that there is a relationship between schools where faculty have a sense of optimism toward students' academics and how faculty perceive the way their school engages parents and community members.

Bivariate analysis of the factors of academic optimism (collective teacher efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press) and their relationships with community engagement proved interesting. Community engagement was strongly correlated with trust in clients and academic press and moderately correlated with collective teacher efficacy. This finding implies that teachers in schools that reach out to the community as a resource trust that students and parents will work toward meeting the high expectations set for them as they collectively work towards academic excellence. In short, they exhibit academic optimism. This finding reinforces Hoy and colleagues' (2006, 2007) assertion that academic optimism acts as a mutually reinforcing construct, where the factors interact and are supported and reinforced by each other. These factors, coupled with community engagement, are powerful in helping students achieve at high levels in reading and math.

Multiple Regression Analyses of Community Engagement and the Factors of Academic Optimism on Student Achievement

Regression analysis of community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press explained 66% of the variance on mean student achievement. Of the independent variables used in the regression, trust in clients was statistically significant and demonstrated a strong independent effect ($\beta = .79, p < .01$), explaining nearly 62% of the variance on mean student achievement. This finding is consistent with prior studies of trust in clients and student achievement (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran et

al., 2007; Hoy, 2002). Stepwise regression analysis revealed that academic optimism as a composite measure had a significant independent effect on mean student achievement scores ($\beta = .72, p < .01$), explaining 52% of the variance in student achievement.

Regression analyses of community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, academic press, and student SES indicated that 74% of the variance in student achievement could be attributed to the independent variables. This finding is encouraging and demonstrates the power these factors have collectively on student achievement and is consistent with one prior elementary study by McGuigan (2005). In her correlational analysis of academic optimism on value added student achievement gains in fourth and fifth grade reading and math, she found the two were not statistically significantly related.

Because student SES was the only independent variable to have a significant independent effect, explaining 58% of the variance in mean student achievement, this finding does support prior studies where student SES has strong predictive power over student achievement (Brookover, 1978; Coleman et al., 1966; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, 2007; Jurewicz, 2004; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Wagner, 2008). These findings raise questions about teacher attitudes and beliefs toward students from low SES homes. The shared variance among the independent variables of community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients, academic press, and student SES speaks not necessarily to the performance of students from low SES homes. Rather, the overlap of student SES, the dimensions of academic optimism, and community engagement may suggest that teacher attitudes about students from low SES homes affects the academic optimism of a faculty and drives down student achievement.

Further, a stepwise regression analysis was performed on academic optimism, community engagement, and student SES revealed community engagement as a comparatively weak variable, but that academic optimism and student SES explained 70% of the variance in mean student achievement. If a faculty can increase their academic optimism, student achievement will rise.

Other Findings

In prior studies of academic optimism, Goddard's (2002) instrument was used to measure collective efficacy on group competence and analyzing the teaching task. The task of teaching is challenging in many settings, particularly in urban schools, and collective efficacy scores may be artificially driven down. Rather, this study used Tschannen-Moran and Barr's (2004) measure of collective efficacy, which measures student discipline and instructional strategies, in order to attain the most precise measure for the sample under study. As expected, all 12 items loaded strongly with a range from .73 to .87, which means that the instrument used has high construct validity. This measure proved to be reliable, with an alpha of .98.

Implications to Research and Practice

Schools are under much pressure to close the achievement gap between students of different races, those who are rich or poor, and those who live in suburban or urban areas. *No Child Left Behind* (2001) was the federal response calling for more accountability. As schools strive to meet their federal benchmark goals, researchers and practitioners have looked to organizational properties that schools can nurture and build in order to increase student achievement.

Teacher beliefs can either help or hinder the learning process of students (Agne, Greenwood, & Miller, 1994). The findings from this study suggest that practitioners may need to examine their beliefs and attitudes, which affects their motivation in teaching students from low socioeconomic homes. This has implications for researchers and practitioners as they continue to look for ways to improve student achievement. Specifically, this study looked at school processes in the social context that have recently emerged from research as showing significant, positive relationships with student achievement. Academic optimism and community engagement were found to work in ways that improve student achievement. Understanding the social contexts in classrooms and schools allows education leaders to work with faculty in examining current practice in an effort to improve the educational outcomes for all students, even those who must overcome the obstacles to learning posed by their low socioeconomic status.

Academic Optimism

Academic optimism was found to have a moderate, positive relationship to student achievement in both reading and math. When teachers have high expectations for student performance and they believe that they and their students are up to tasks at hand, students tend to achieve at higher levels. When collective teacher efficacy, trust in clients, and academic press work together as academic optimism, educators are more likely to have higher levels of student achievement.

Collective efficacy. Bandura (1993) posited that teacher self-efficacy impacts their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward students, including how they instruct students. If teachers believe they can influence positively their students, most likely they will. Conversely, if teachers believe that their students, especially those from low SES

homes, are not capable and cannot perform given tasks, teachers may not utilize best practices with students and as a result, students may not achieve at high levels.

Education leaders can work to build teacher efficacy through mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. Teachers who attend relevant, targeted professional development or by visiting classrooms of teachers who have high student achievement have the opportunity to learn instructional strategies through vicarious learning experiences. Once they take these instructional strategies back to the classroom, such as metacognitive strategies for helping their students become better readers or more students centered approaches to math using manipulatives, mastery experiences occur as student achievement in math and reading improve, thereby enhancing their affective states. Social persuasion as a tool to build collective efficacy can be powerful. Teachers can work with coaches and more veteran teachers in an effort to provide support, share successfully implemented instructional strategies, and collaborate on ways in which improved student achievement in reading and math can occur. Collaboration among departments may also provide another way for teachers to work together to provide opportunity for vicarious experiences and social persuasion on teaching tasks or instructional strategies as a way to refine their practice in order to best meet the needs of all of their students.

Trust in clients. Like collective efficacy, trust in clients is reciprocal. In this study, trust in clients was strongly correlated with student achievement in reading and math and was moderately correlated with student achievement in reading and math when controlling for student SES. In schools where teachers trust students and parents, students tend to achieve at higher levels. Teachers in schools with a higher population of

students of low socioeconomic status tend to have lower levels of trust. As a result, it is imperative for teachers to build trust in their classrooms and extend trust building into students' homes. Teachers can build trust with students by having clear expectations and fair class procedures established for all and sharing those expectations and procedures with parents. Teachers need to demonstrate their care and respect for their students, as well as work to bring parents into the educational environment so that parents feel comfortable and can enable their children in the education process. Respect in urban communities can be built through explaining the instructional process and welcoming parents with open arms.

Faculty trust can be built in several informal and formal ways. Education leaders can act with benevolence, trusting that stakeholders will act in ways that are appropriate and respectful. If teachers act professionally and fairly and students work hard to achieve, education leaders can assume that parents are willing to collaborate in order to help students meet and exceed their high expectations. Education leaders can further build trust by being reliable and competent. This can be demonstrated by leaders beginning and ending meetings at their appointed times, following through on requests or promises, and backing up teachers as the need arises. When there is follow through with the expectations of the class and the school, stakeholders feel more confident that the leadership of the school is adept at their job of leading the school. This in turn may encourage others to believe in their abilities of professional competence. Finally, education leaders can lead their schools with honest and open communication and transparent actions. Leaders can be accessible through email and telephone, and can also hold parent meetings at various times to meet the needs of working parents. School

newsletters, memos, and websites can all be used as communication tools in order to strengthen the relationships between home and school, which in turn may inspire parents and members of the community to become more engaged with the school. Regardless of the ways in which education leaders seek to foster and build trust, it is a necessary component of improving student achievement.

Academic press. Academic press is crucial to improving reading and math scores in urban elementary schools (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). In this study, academic press had the strongest correlation to math student achievement, whether or not controls for student SES were in place, implying that in more structured classes, where the learning environment is orderly and serious and where there are high standards for student achievement, students may achieve at higher rates on math assessments. Academic press also had a moderate correlation to reading student achievement with and without controlling for student SES. Education leaders must work with teachers in order to establish this type of environment in order to nurture and raise student achievement. Teachers need to maximize time on task and opportunity to learn, review achievement data in order to remove barriers to student achievement, and provide targeted interventions for students who need it. Teachers may need additional training in order to meet the difficult demands of the classroom to meet the needs of all students. In urban schools particularly, where the teaching and learning environment are pressed by many other challenges, it is crucial that school leaders provide leadership and limit disruptions of instructional time and provide training for teachers on ways to build a serious learning community where students work together to meet high expectations and where academics and successes are celebrated.

Community Engagement

The survival of a school depends upon its environment and on the interactions between its component parts. In this study, community engagement was strongly correlated with academic optimism, controlling for student SES. This implies that in schools where there are high levels of community engagement, there tends to be high levels of student achievement. Interestingly, whether or not controls for student SES were in place, there were stronger correlations between community engagement in reading than in math, although both were moderate correlations. However, in some urban districts, there may be a distinct message from the schools, beginning in early childhood programs, of the importance of reading to children and a push for parents and the community to participate in school programs where reading is encouraged and nurtured. The same may not be said of programs for mathematics awareness. An alternate explanation of these findings may be that historically in the Norfolk Public School District, math scores tend to be lower than reading scores (Virginia Department of Education, 2009). As a result, there is less variability due to the restriction in range.

Community members and parents must feel welcome in a school and feel that they are viewed as a resource. Schools need to engage the community in meaningful ways, not just open their doors a few times a year. Rather, parent liaisons can work to bridge the gap between home and school and nurture those relationships. Education leaders can work to ensure that the community and families are notified of school activities and can offer college and employment related workshops, all in an effort to build a bridge between school and home. Education leaders can also nurture parent and

community relationships and encourage volunteering at school activities or providing extra assistance to students with their homework.

More importantly, cultural and class differences need to be recognized and discussed in order to more effectively marshal the support of parents and the community (Hollins, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996). In order to build respectful, collaborative partnerships, schools need to build on the values of the community, maintain a high level of contact and communication with students' homes, create an environment conducive for collaboration, and consider parents' needs when planning school activities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Finally, school leaders can use several successful strategies to increase the involvement of the community, including analyzing data in order to call constituents to action to address an issue, and gaining access to community board task forces and committees in order to develop collaboratively a community agenda that works in the best interest of the students (Harvard Family Research Project, 2008).

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research on the relationships among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement, along with an investigation as to the relative effects of academic optimism and community engagement on student achievement should be done in order to account for the differences in state standards and assessments, as well as grade levels. These studies may provide additional information and insight into how these constructs operate in different learning contexts.

Hoy, Hoy, and Kurz (2008) have developed and tested a measure of individual teacher's academic optimism. Further exploration of the relationships and effects of

individual teacher academic optimism could prove interesting. As an added dimension, a measure of individual student's academic optimism could prove interesting and offer compelling or refuting evidence to individual teacher's perceptions, as well as academic optimism as defined in this study, that is, at the group level.

A follow up qualitative study seems a natural outgrowth of this study to further examine academic optimism and community engagement, especially in an urban setting, in action. Specifically, what are some other common characteristics among the schools that have high levels and low levels of academic optimism? Would interviews with teachers and professional staff support the findings of the survey data? Would observations of behaviors of staff, students, and the community support the findings of this study? A deeper exploration of the meaning and nature of community engagement may prove fertile, as well, specifically looking at any differences between student achievement in reading and math.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that neither academic optimism nor community engagement independently predict student achievement, when controlling for student socioeconomic status (SES). While collectively, student SES and academic optimism did predict student achievement in this study, a prior study in Texas (Smith & Hoy, 2007) in schools of slightly larger with similar demographics found that academic optimism was as important as student SES ($\beta = .34, p < .01, \beta = -.34, p < .01$) when predicting student achievement in fourth grade math as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test (TAKS). It would be interesting to explore the relative effects of student SES and academic optimism in addition to examining state standards and assessment alignment for an explanation of the differences.

Final Thoughts

Academic optimism challenges researchers and practitioners alike to examine the potential power the collective has over student achievement. If education leaders and classroom teachers can increase academic optimism, student achievement will rise. Investigating teacher attitudes and beliefs about students from low socioeconomic homes may provide insight into teacher motivation and student achievement. There is much that teachers and schools can do to increase student achievement of all students, even those who must overcome the obstacles to learning posed by low socioeconomic status. Schools seeking to build bridges to connect with families and community may have an edge over schools that seek to buffer the school from these influences. Education leaders who view the community as a resource rather than a threat run schools where students tend to achieve at higher levels (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005). Education leaders must be mindful and act in ways that empower teachers through building collective efficacy, working to build trust between teachers, parents, and students, all the while emphasizing high academic achievement.

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Appendix

Appendix A Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-2009

Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-09

School
① ① ①
② ② ②
③ ③ ③
④ ④ ④
⑤ ⑤ ⑤
⑥ ⑥ ⑥
⑦ ⑦ ⑦
⑧ ⑧ ⑧
⑨ ⑨ ⑨

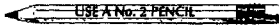
Years Teaching
<input type="radio"/> 1st year
<input type="radio"/> 1-2 years
<input type="radio"/> 3-5 years
<input type="radio"/> 6-10 years
<input type="radio"/> 11-15 years
<input type="radio"/> 16-20 years
<input type="radio"/> 21 + years

Marking Instructions

- Use a No. 2 pencil only.
- Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt tip pens.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks on this form.

CORRECT
●

INCORRECT
✗



Please indicate your opinion on each item below by selecting a number for each item.

	Nothing	Very little	Some degree	Quite a bit	A great deal				
How much can you do to:									
A1. Control disruptive behavior in the classroom	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A2. Motivate students who show low interest in school work	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A3. Calm a student who is disruptive or noisy	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A4. Help your students value learning	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A5. Craft good questions for your students	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A6. Have students follow classroom rules	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A7. Have students believe they can do well in school work	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A8. Establish a classroom management system with each group of students	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A9. Use a variety of assessment strategies	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A10. Provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A11. Assist families in helping their children do well in school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A12. Implement alternative teaching strategies in your classroom	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
How much can teachers in your school do to:									
A13. Produce meaningful student learning	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A14. Get students to believe they can do well in school work	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A15. Make expectations clear about appropriate student behavior	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A16. Establish rules and procedures that facilitate learning	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A17. Help students master complex content	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A18. Promote deep understanding of academic concepts	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A19. Help students think critically	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A20. Foster student creativity	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A21. Help students feel safe while they are at school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A22. Control disruptive behavior	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A23. Get students to follow school rules	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
A24. Respond to defiant students	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨

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Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-09
(page 2)

Please indicate your opinion on each item below by selecting a number for each item ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
In your school:						
B1. Students care about each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
B2. Teachers typically look out for each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
B3. Teachers have faith in the integrity of the school's administration	1	2	3	4	5	6
B4. <i>Even in difficult situations, teachers can depend on each other</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
B5. The school's administration typically acts in the best interests of the teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
B6. Teachers can rely on the school's administration	1	2	3	4	5	6
B7. Teachers trust each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
B8. Teachers can count on parental support	1	2	3	4	5	6
B9. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job	1	2	3	4	5	6
B10. Teachers trust the school's administration	1	2	3	4	5	6
B11. Teachers are open with each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
B12. Students can be counted on to do their work	1	2	3	4	5	6
B13. Parents are reliable in their commitments	1	2	3	4	5	6
B14. The school's administration does not tell teachers what is really going on	1	2	3	4	5	6
B15. The school's administration does not show concern for teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
B16. Teachers have faith in the integrity of their colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	6
B17. Teachers trust the parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
B18. Teachers are suspicious of each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
B19. When teachers tell you something you can believe it	1	2	3	4	5	6
B20. Teachers do their jobs well	1	2	3	4	5	6
B21. Teachers believe that students are competent learners	1	2	3	4	5	6
B22. Teachers are suspicious of most of the school's administration actions	1	2	3	4	5	6
B23. Teachers believe what parents tell them	1	2	3	4	5	6
B24. The principal is competent in doing his or her job	1	2	3	4	5	6
B25. Teachers trust their students	1	2	3	4	5	6

To what extent is each of the following a problem at your school:	Not at all	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Great Deal
C1. Physical conflicts among students (fighting)	1	2	3	4	5
C2. Gang activity	1	2	3	4	5
C3. Disorder in classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
C4. Disorder in hallways	1	2	3	4	5
C5. Threats of violence toward teachers	1	2	3	4	5
C6. Students threatening other students	1	2	3	4	5
C7. Students intimidating other students	1	2	3	4	5
C8. Bullying	1	2	3	4	5
C9. Students in this school fear other students.	1	2	3	4	5
C10. Students in this school make fun of other students	1	2	3	4	5

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**Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey 2008-09
(page 3)**

Please indicate your opinion on each item below by selecting a number for each item.	<i>Newer</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Very Frequent</i>
In your School:					
D1. Our school makes an effort to inform the community about our goals and achievements	①	②	③	④	⑤
D2. Our school is able to marshal community support when needed	①	②	③	④	⑤
D3. The interactions between faculty members are cooperative	①	②	③	④	⑤
D4. Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues	①	②	③	④	⑤
D5. The school sets high standards for academic performance	①	②	③	④	⑤
D6. Students respect others who get good grades	①	②	③	④	⑤
D7. The principal is friendly and approachable	①	②	③	④	⑤
D8. The principal puts suggestions made by the faculty into operation	①	②	③	④	⑤
D9. Parents and other community members are included on planning committees	①	②	③	④	⑤
D10. Community members are responsive to requests for participation	①	②	③	④	⑤
D11. Teachers help and support each other	①	②	③	④	⑤
D12. Teachers in this school exercise professional judgment	①	②	③	④	⑤
D13. Teachers are committed to helping students	①	②	③	④	⑤
D14. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school	①	②	③	④	⑤
D15. Students try hard to improve on previous work	①	②	③	④	⑤
D16. The principal explores all sides of topics and admits that other opinions exist	①	②	③	④	⑤
D17. The principal treats all faculty members as his or her equal	①	②	③	④	⑤
D18. Teachers accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm	①	②	③	④	⑤
D19. Teachers "go the extra mile" with their students	①	②	③	④	⑤
D20. Teachers provide strong social support for colleagues	①	②	③	④	⑤
D21. The learning environment is orderly and serious	①	②	③	④	⑤
D22. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades	①	②	③	④	⑤
D23. The principal is willing to make changes	①	②	③	④	⑤
D24. The principal lets the faculty know what is expected of them	①	②	③	④	⑤
D25. The principal maintains definite standards of performance	①	②	③	④	⑤
D26. Community members attend meetings to stay informed about our school	①	②	③	④	⑤
D27. Organized community groups (e.g., PTA, PTO) meet regularly to discuss school issues	①	②	③	④	⑤
D28. School people are responsive to the needs and concerns expressed by community members	①	②	③	④	⑤
D29. Teachers help students on their own time	①	②	③	④	⑤
D30. Teachers take initiative to introduce themselves to substitutes and assist them	①	②	③	④	⑤
D31. Teachers waste a lot of class time	①	②	③	④	⑤
D32. Teachers volunteer to sponsor extra-curricular activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
D33. Teacher committees in this school work productively	①	②	③	④	⑤
D34. Teachers make innovative suggestions to improve the overall quality of our system	①	②	③	④	⑤
D35. Teachers voluntarily help new teachers	①	②	③	④	⑤
D36. Teachers volunteer to serve on committees	①	②	③	④	⑤
D37. Teachers arrive to work and meetings on time	①	②	③	④	⑤
D38. Teachers begin class promptly and use class time effectively	①	②	③	④	⑤
D39. Teachers give colleagues advanced notice of changes in schedule or routine	①	②	③	④	⑤
D40. Teachers give an excessive amount of busy work	①	②	③	④	⑤

Norfolk Public Schools Teacher Climate Survey: 2008-09 (page 4)

Please indicate your opinion on each item below by selecting a number for each item.	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
E1. Faculty morale is good at this school	1	2	3	4	5
E2. I am satisfied with my job at this school	1	2	3	4	5
E3. I feel safe while at school	1	2	3	4	5
E4. My school is kept in good condition	1	2	3	4	5
E5. Parents cooperate with teachers in addressing the academic performance and discipline of their children	1	2	3	4	5
E6. I have planning time at least three days a week	1	2	3	4	5
E7. Student absenteeism is a problem in my class(es)	1	2	3	4	5
E8. Students feel safe in this school	1	2	3	4	5
E9. The school's administration actively monitors the quality of teaching in this school	1	2	3	4	5
E10. The school's administration is pro-active and addresses support issues	1	2	3	4	5
E11. The school's administration knows what's going on in my classroom	1	2	3	4	5
E12. The principal promotes and nurtures leadership among the staff	1	2	3	4	5
E13. The principal promotes shared decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
E14. The school's administration takes a personal interest in the professional development of teachers	1	2	3	4	5
E15. The teacher salary structure and benefits are equitable	1	2	3	4	5

How many teachers in your school:	None	Some	About half	Most	Nearly All	All
F1. Help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classroom	1	2	3	4	5	6
F2. Take responsibility for improving the school	1	2	3	4	5	6
F3. Feel responsible that all students learn	1	2	3	4	5	6
F4. Really care about each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
F5. How many of the parents of your students support your teaching efforts	1	2	3	4	5	6

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