

**HEALTHY SCHOOLS:  
DETERMINING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STAFF  
PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE IN THE  
FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DIVISION**

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Dedication

To my kids:

Dennis John, the chemist,

Gregory Thomas, the psychologist,

Michael Garret, the marine biologist,

Melissa Marie, the caregiver.

And all those students

who have crossed my path in my teaching career.

## Abstract

This study investigated perceptions about the healthiness of schools held by the teaching and support staff employed within the Foothills School Division. Four schools were chosen because they represented a cross section of the facilities, staff demographics, and grade configuration within the Division. Participants were asked to identify factors that they perceived to affect the healthiness of their school, with particular reference to elements of culture and climate. They were asked to respond within a developed conceptual framework consisting of four elements: ecology (physical and material aspects of an organization), milieu (characteristics of the organization's members), social system (pattern of the relationships among the people and groups), and culture (the norms, beliefs, values, and meaning of people). Of 160 questionnaires sent out, 55 were returned, a return rate of 34.4%. Staff members were given one month to complete the questionnaire. Analysis of the data revealed that staff in the Foothills School Division perceive their schools to be healthy places in which to work. Respondents consider natural light a positive enhancement to working in the building. They also indicate that demonstrations of individual, mutual and public respect are important. Differences in perception in regards to the four elements occurred between high school, middle school, and elementary school respondents. High school staff reported more favorably on cultural elements than did those representing middle school or elementary groups. Middle school respondents identified caring and support elements as most important. Elementary respondents identified leadership and school vision as the most important elements.

Preface

'Tis the set of the sails  
And not the direction of the gales  
That determines the way we go.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

## Acknowledgements

To my fellow cohort members.

Without their comradeship, friendship, fellowship,  
and the relationships that we have developed,  
my sails would not have been able to navigate this course.

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## Introduction

### *Background*

Healthy people and healthy workplaces are essential to the effective operation and function of any organization. Evidence to support this statement can be identified in many ways and is easily observed, monitored, or recorded. For example, a customer's reaction to a company's products will reflect on the organization's manufacturing ability and, ultimately, its success. The quality of the service provided by one company to others will, sooner or later, determine whether or not the service company will continue in business. Individuals who are trained by an organization directly influence perceptions of their organization's effectiveness through their performance in the workplace. The success or failure of a business hinges on the healthiness of the workplace and its workforce.

Schools are as much organizations as any large multinational corporation or small business. They are peopled by individuals whose primary job function assists in the development of citizens who are educated, trained, able to think and capable of functioning in the work place. School's products the students, are some of the most important benchmarks of their success. A school can only be successful if it, as an organization, is healthy and its workforce is well.

I have been involved with education for the past twenty-six years as a teacher and an administrator in the Foothills School Division. In my career I have worked in five different school buildings, experienced five different administration styles, and learned something about the styles and values of five different teaching staffs. I have had the opportunity to be in rural and in urban settings. I have taught in all areas of the Division

and have experienced communities that have had tremendous social challenges and transient populations, as well as communities that have enjoyed most of the benefits of societal well being. While teaching experience has brought me in contact with special needs children, and all grades from Kindergarten to grade nine, the majority of my teaching career has been with grade six students. Throughout my career I have experienced an increasing awareness of how important a healthy school climate and, correspondingly, a healthy staff have been to the effectiveness of schools. Recently, I had the opportunity to be a part of staff that opened up a new school. This experience helped me develop my questions about the factors that can help a school operate as a “healthy school.” As a staff that was responsible for the creation of a new school we visited many other schools to gather their staff members’ perceptions of their own beginnings. It was a powerful experience to observe and then put into practice the ideas that were the beginnings of our own school culture, climate, history, and legacy.

In a related way I have also become interested in how relationships within the school setting affect the “healthiness” of the school. These two topics seem to be closely interconnected. My tentative conclusion has been that staff members can choose to work together in ways that can be constructive or destructive of the “healthiness” of a school. Now that I am a school administrator, this topic has become even more important to me. I have come to believe the success of a school as a cultural entity is connected very strongly to the school’s administrators, how they handle the operations of the school and how they influence school climate. These tentative conclusions have led me to focus on the question of healthy schools as the topic of my graduate creative research project.

### *Purpose and Focus*

The purpose of this study was to question the staff of various schools and try to determine the factors that they perceive affect school health. I wanted to identify those factors and to see if there were commonalities among the schools in the sample. The schools represented a cross section of the various communities and grade configurations within the Foothills School Division. My study involved the development of a survey instrument and the use of that instrument in four identified schools within the Division. The survey was administered in September of the 2001 - 2002 school year. My research question was as follows: What are some of the critical factors of school climate and culture in the Foothills School Division?

### *Rationale*

Through this study, I hoped to identify effectiveness factors that are in evidence in all schools in Foothills School Division. I began with the notion that evolving influences such as population diversity, rapid change in educational strategies, technology, and societal forces support the need for research that is current and focused on the topic of school effectiveness. Alberta Learning and the Alberta Teachers' Association's program, "Safe and Caring Schools," is one of the many programs being developed to promote more effective schools. I hoped the results of this study would show some specific links among factors of school effectiveness, school culture and school climate in the Foothills School Division that, in turn, would relate back to results achieved by the Safe and Caring Schools program.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Perception.* Something that is perceived or is observable, an insight. A particular feeling that one may have that contributes to an overall estimate of something. It is a sense of something that is tangible and contributes to the climate.

*Factor.* Something that helps bring about a certain result. Identified items that contribute to the creation of something whole. There is tangible evidence or clues that provide validity to something.

*Healthy.* Indicative of good health; sound. Indicators that reflect observable characteristics such as productivity, very low rates of deliberate absenteeism, positive achievement test results, and accomplishments in sports. Healthy also refers to an organization that is likely to attract and retain the best people. It is also revealed in the smiles on the faces of the staff and students, a willingness to care for others and a desire to refrain from negative and dehumanizing behaviors. In addition, there is visible engagement and commitment, high performance, collaboration, continuous learning and resilience. Healthy also refers to an environment that will stimulate creativity and innovation. Turnover typically will be low and job satisfaction generally will be high.

*Climate.* The quality and frequency of interactions between staff members in the school and the students, among the students, among the staff members themselves, and between staff at the school, and the parents and the community.

*Culture.* Arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought created by a people or population at a particular time. It also refers to the norms, beliefs, values, and meaning of people. In this instance it is the culture of the school that is being defined.

*School.* In general school is an institution for instruction; in particular, school refers to any of the four schools taking part in this project within the Foothills School Division.

### *Participants*

I sampled a group of volunteer staff members in four schools in the Foothills School Division. The total possible number of respondents was 160. This included 97 certificated staff members with a range of teaching experience from 1 year to 28 years. The 41 support staff included educational assistants, librarians, secretaries, and Youth Development Workers. There were 9 administrators in the four schools. The remaining 13 respondents were from the custodial staff in each of the schools. The demographic composition of the four schools is as follows: an urban elementary school that had a configuration of kindergarten to grade five, a rural middle school that has a configuration of Kindergarten to grade eight, an urban middle school, that has a configuration of grade six to grade eight, and an urban high school that has a configuration of grade nine to grade twelve.

## Literature Review

### *Introduction*

What makes a school feel good? What makes a workplace healthy? What impact does the culture of a school have on the organization of the school and its inhabitants? What impact do healthy employees and clients have on the overall healthiness of the school? How do the perceptions of the staff, students, parents and the community at large, regarding the healthiness of the school, affect productivity of the staff and students? Is it possible to identify the factors that contribute to and are indicative of a healthy school? All of these are questions I have posed as I have been investigating this topic and reflecting on my personal experience in education. The dynamics of a healthy environment are complex and the subtleties can be exasperating to identify (Skelton, Marc, McKinnon, Jordan, Sime, Holt, & Hagedorn, 1999). It is intuitively clear to many people who enter any educational institution that there is an essence or aura that just seems to be present. This "feeling", be it negative or positive, has a dramatic impact on the overall "healthiness" of the school. Schein (as cited by Skelton et al., 1999), notes: "In talking about organizational culture with colleagues and members of organizations, I often find that we agree 'it' exists and that 'it' is important in its effects, but that we have completely different ideas of what 'it' is (p.19)."

This healthiness may manifest itself in observable characteristics such as: productivity, very low rates of deliberate absenteeism, positive achievement test results, and accomplishments in sports. A healthy organization is likely to attract and retain the best people. The smiles on the faces of the staff and students, a willingness to care for



others and a desire to refrain from negative and dehumanizing behaviors are also positive elements of a healthy school. In addition, there is visible engagement and commitment, high performance, collaboration, continuous learning and resilience. Its environment will stimulate creativity and innovation. Turnover typically will be low and job satisfaction generally will be high, (Skelton et al., 1999).

What makes a good, healthy school? The answers to this question can help form the foundation of positive, effective and successful educational change. The perceptions held by staff that they are working in a healthy working environment are essential in promoting positive and effective student learning. These perceptions influence and may ultimately determine a school's success. The culture and health of a school can be apparent to all individuals, educators, staff, students, and members of the community. How educators "feel" about their place of employment can have a negative or positive impact on the mental, physical, psychological and overall wellbeing of each individual within that environment.

Schools do not operate in a vacuum. They are the representations of teaching and learning, relationships and interactions among students, staff, parents, and the larger community. A positive school image is influenced by the effectiveness of learning and teaching within the school, and vice versa. However, to speak of image in terms solely of effectiveness may be misleading for, as Glickman (1993) points out, successful schools embody both effectiveness and "goodness." Therefore, even though there is much to be gained from devoting attention to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, attention should also be given to the idea of image and how it relates to and is integrated into the school. The future of a school is negotiated with its constituents largely upon the

presentation of its image, and the opportunity for improvement and growth depends, to a great extent, on the effectiveness of this activity (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, Moore, & James-Wilson, 1997).

### *Healthy Schools*

In order to analyze the healthiness of a school it is necessary to identify the negative characteristics as well. Many negative characteristics influence the overall health of a school. To identify most of them, one would only need to put negative prefixes or suffixes to previously identified positive ideas and concepts. For example, an unwillingness to collaborate or communicate would be a negative aspect. Disengagement and non-commitment would also be negative factors. Lack of humor and the lack of positive relationships would also detract from overall healthiness.

The healthiness of a school, or its "feeling", can often be labeled as its culture. Culture can be defined by the norms, beliefs, values, and meaning of people within the organization (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Jones, 1996). This culture may not be readily identified by the occupants of the organization or by those who are familiar with the organization. It is subtle, yet culture is seen, felt, and experienced. In part, it can be seen in the ease with which people share information and the quality of information that is shared. The way in which disagreements and negative feedback are managed can be another indicator. It is evident in the focus and the outcomes of people's work. Laughter and the nature of the relationships between the individuals and groups within the work environment can be listed as indicators of culture. It is what is done compared to what is actually stated. In general, culture is the every day experience of the people who work in an organization.

How work is organized and the environment in which it is carried out produces health, productivity, stress, illness, and injuries, just as it produces services and things (Shain, 1998). The use of a conceptual framework can help identify the factors that underlie the components of a healthy organization. This framework may consist of the following elements: ecology (physical and material aspects of an organization), milieu (characteristics of the organizations members), social system (pattern of the relationships among the people and groups), and culture (the norms, beliefs, values, and meaning of people) (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Jones, 1996).

To identify and delineate the specific characteristics within each part of the framework can be a confusing task. Many appear to overlap from one part of the framework to the other. For example, relationships can be seen as an integral part of the culture and the milieu of an organization. It is this interconnectedness of the framework that makes identification difficult. Also, there is confusion as to which framework should or could be applied (Jones, 1996). There are a variety of variables, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks through which to look at the concept of culture. Not surprisingly, then, within schools there is a lack of common understanding of the idea of organizational culture.

To capture and identify all the components of a healthy organization is beyond the scope of this study. Accordingly, it will seek to identify the factors of a healthy school in two areas only, social system and culture. The social system of an organization has been identified as one of the most important factors in identifying the healthiness of an organization (Scherer, 1998). Culture has been identified as another (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Jones, 1996). I believe these two areas are sufficient to identify a positive and

healthy school climate. The individual and collective relationships within the organization and the values, attitudes, and norms of the organization are at the heart of my investigation. Recent evidence suggests that strong, positive organizational cultures (Barth, 1991; Fullan, 2001 Hargreaves, Moore, & James-Wilson, 1997, Rosenholtz, 1989) characterize high-performance schools. Schools can become more effective if they develop the right kind of culture, and dysfunctional cultures can be changed in order to adapt better to environmental realities. Furthermore, there are indications that in the presence of strong cultures, significant and widespread improvements in instruction are possible (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Jones, 1996). Accordingly, I proceeded into this investigation in the belief that an understanding of organizational culture, and in particular, school culture, is extremely important to an understanding of the healthiness of a school.

### *School Culture*

Organizational culture comprises three salient components: values, norms and attitudes. Values can be defined as being explicit or implicit concepts of that, which is good, right or preferred. Values are the observable actions of people in an organization, which makes them identifiable to that organization. They define the standard by which the individuals in the organization act. They also determine the quality of the actions and how much the people care about what they are doing (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Values are distinctive and individualistic to each organization. They are also distinctive to the individuals and the groups within each organization. In the case of schools, these values influence and impact on every decision made within each school.

Attitudes can be described as ways of thinking, acting, or feeling, in other words, one's predisposition to act. In schools, they include such ideas as student capacity to learn and how the teachers will teach the students. As well, they also define the knowledge base that the school and its teachers employ in the teaching process and provide a strong indication of whether or not success will happen (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Norms, the third component, cover ideas of the rules, reward processes and shared standards or expectations of behavior those members of the system find socially acceptable. In another way, they sum up the ideas of values and attitudes (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Norms are developed by the interplay of the inhabitants of the school. Ways of acting are either supported or they are eliminated during the interplay of the individuals in the school setting. For an example, in my experience there have been a number of cases where parents have brought their children from schools in large cities to smaller rural schools. They did this to provide their children with the rural experience. In part, they felt that a small, rural school could “bring back the child within” just through immersion in the rural environment. In most cases, it did not take long for the values, attitudes and norms of the rural school to begin to influence the new student. The student became acclimatized and incorporated into the culture and ways of behavior of the rural school.

School culture is at the very core of the school. School culture has dramatic impact on everything that goes on in the building. It permeates the school hallways in the way the students, act alone and with others, and in the way the teachers react to students. It is revealed in the how students perceive their place in the school's hierarchy. For example, the students in a kindergarten-to-midschool configuration know that they have a

particular place to be at recess. The younger students know that to go into the middle school area may mean running into difficulty, unless of course they run into their older siblings. Such things as teacher talk at break time, and the sense of pride the sports teams have in their contact with other schools, all are intrinsically imbedded in the culture of a school. It is the way that things are done in this building. Culture in the school is a powerful tool in shaping effective ways to create a healthy environment. Cultural patterns are developed from the input of all stakeholders, not only the present ones, but also the ones that started the school and all those who followed. These patterns are enduring and have a powerful influence every day on the inhabitants of the school. They impact on the way they think, act and feel (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Organizational culture and, specifically, school culture, appear to be heavily influenced by two factors: leaders and their leadership and vision. Senge (as cited by Skelton et al., 1999) has said about vision within organizations, and schools in particular: "You cannot have a learning community without shared vision" (p.39). Another individual, no less colorful, Yogi Berra (cited by Skelton et al., 1999) says it in another way: "If you don't know where you are going, you probably aren't going to get there!" (p. 39).

Both Senge and Yogi Berra have identified vision as an important component of healthy and positive organizations. When a vision is real, clear, relevant, and meaningful it becomes a unifying factor that contributes to a sense of team and connection to work. These factors play vital roles in the total culture of the school. The leaders of the organization are the holders of this vision. They can insure it plays its part in the development and the continuance of culture in the organization. Leadership ability also

plays a vital role in the continuance of organizational culture. The school, as an organization, depends heavily on individuals identified as leaders to promote its success.

An operating school has an established culture, and the people presently in the building and the people who were part of the history of the school help create and maintain this culture. The culture has been established by historical circumstances, both positive and negative, and by the issues that the school finds itself confronting on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis. The school's leaders and their leadership style help support and move this culture along. Their role in the development and the continuance of the culture and, ultimately, the healthiness of the school is extremely important (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Secretan, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992).

The work that leaders do and the way they do their work are factors that can contribute to the formation of a positive or negative culture. Leaders' ability to maintain the vision of a school can make for a healthy school climate. They need to have the techniques and strategies to uncover the positive aspects of culture from the past and to be able to utilize these in the present day. As well, they must have strategies and techniques to make the present a positive experience and be able to be the symbolic leaders and supporters of the school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

#### *School Climate*

School climate is defined as the quality and frequency of the interactions between staff members in the school and the students, among students, among the staff members themselves, and between staff at school and the parents and the community. The individuals in the school setting, the community in which the school is located and the culture of the school precipitate these interactions. Deal and Peterson (1999) talk about

the various components that make up a school's culture. Rituals and ceremonies, history and the stories that go along with such history, and the architecture and artifacts of schools all contribute to the interactions that occur among the aforementioned individuals. People in the school talk and interact within the context of the school when they are talking about things to do for the school. Ideas about what makes "our school, our school," are taken from the ceremonies and the architecture of the school. Each interaction can be related to one of these components. Every time teachers talk with a student or parent they are conscious of the culture of the school. The climate can either support the culture or it can undermine the culture. A healthy climate is a precursor to a healthy environment. It promotes a healthy culture and in turn, a healthy school.

How all members of the school community treat each other throughout the day plays a vital role in how the climate of the school is perceived. Such things as negative comments and rudeness can poison the climate in the school. Something as obvious as the development of the timetable, or how students move through the building, can give clues to the overall school climate. Each classroom is a microcosm of the larger plant and in turn, the school takes on a climate that is emblematic, in some way, of each of the smaller subsets.

### *Summary*

Many sets of indicators of effective schools have been identified in the literature. Certain factors have been proven to be vital in building an effective school community (Bolender, 1997; Goodlad, 1984; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979). These factors include the following:

- Effective instructional leadership



- Clear purpose
- Safe and orderly climate
- Expectation of minimum mastery by all students
- Testing for program evaluation and redirection
- Clear academic goals
- Parental involvement
- Evidence of collegiality

When a school opens its doors for the first time, the development of the school's image begins (Bolender, 1997). The perceptions and observations of students, staff, parents, and the larger community help determine this reputation. In trying to create an effective school reputation, educators must be able to identify the factors that contribute to this purpose. One of the outcomes of this study is a compilation and analysis of the perceptions of staff in schools that are already operational and have an existing reputation. This information confirms the existence of conditions that can contribute to the overall "health" of the school. I anticipated that healthiness, school culture, and positive climate would be affected by the following:

- Teaching experience of staff in the designated school
- Student configuration of school
- Programs offered within the school
- Operational rules for the school
- Staff deployment and teaching assignments
- Gender configuration of the school staff
- Grade configuration of the school

- Staff age diversity
- Administration and teacher experience
- Student demographics
- School/community relations

Further questions arose in the early stages of my study. I wondered if the research would show that a healthy school is a successful school? Are the factors that make for a healthy school the same as those for a successful one? Is any one factor more important than another? Is it true that teachers are the ones who define the school workplace (Blankenship, 1973)? Through their everyday interactions do teachers define, classify and put reference to the everyday activities in the school? Do they, in fact, define the very nature of their work? In this regards, can they then be seen to be the controllers and creators of their own healthiness?

Rosenholtz (1989) argues that in successful schools, the problem of professional autonomy may arise at that intersection where competing individual freedoms and communal needs collide. Do healthy schools experience conflict between individual autonomy and community responsibility, between personal aspirations and common goals? If there is conflict between the individual goals and the communal ones, does this affect the healthiness of the school? Are there factors that contribute to a bridging of the two needs so that healthiness is protected? The affirmation of individual and communal needs and the cherishing of each would seem to be a goal to reach for in our schools. This research project was undertaken to add to the growing amount of data that supports the notion that successful schools are one in which a “healthiness” is perceived (Sergiovanni, 1992). The concept of healthiness is further explained by Secretan (1996)

when he describes the ideas of heart, head and hand. The head is shaped by the heart and drives the hand. Success consists of putting the three into harmony and making our schools more healthy places. A listing of additional resources on the topic of school climate and culture is included in Appendix A.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

I have chosen to do qualitative research because this form of research reflects my own pedagogical philosophy. Schools are places of “now” based on historical and structural experiences that are caused by the interactions of the people involved within the school structure. Researchers with a qualitative perspective tend to be reflective and concentrate on gathering empirical evidence that will allow them to make connections between the present ongoing lived experience and the larger social and cultural structure of the here and now (Stake, 1998). It also allows me to reflect on my own personal experience and explore how this can be best utilized in a qualitative research case study.

Qualitative research can be identified as being descriptive or naturalistic (Wolcott, 1990). Other researchers, such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), as well as Miles and Huberman (1994), have used other descriptors such as naturalistic paradigm; post positivistic, ethnographic, hermeneutic, and humanistic to characterize it. I would like to describe this case study as humanistic because it deals with people in their everyday workplace. It deals with how their perceptions contribute to the healthy possibilities of their school. It is both descriptive and naturalistic. It is descriptive because it has the potential to describe the context in which the study is being performed, rather than assigning numerical, quantifiable data to phenomena and events. It is naturalistic because the relationships and interactions of the people involved are looked at in a natural working environment. The environment is not contrived; nor is it created. The researcher

is able to describe the method by which the data is to be collected from the natural setting.

I chose to do a case study using the survey as my instrument for eliciting data. According to Smith (1978), a case study is a bounded system. This means that there are varying numbers of working parts or subsidiary events but it is a single working entity. Each school used in this study is in itself a single bounded system and, collectively, the four schools form a system as well. The case study is also an investigation of a specific phenomenon, or a population. Each of the schools represents this specificity. However, according to Smith, case study allows the researcher to apply information from this specific case to the broader general scope of cases.

Stake (1998) describes three separate forms of case studies as intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. This case study reflects components of all three types. I am very interested in finding out which factors influence the perceptions of staff about a healthy school. This takes the intrinsic point of view. Even though this represents a singular case, it can be seen as a small step towards grander generalizations (Campbell, 1975). On a second level it is instrumental, in that I hope the interpretations of the data will give insight into the factors that can assist in school improvement. This could lead to the refining of a particular school's healthiness and the possibility of further investigations. The study is also of a collective nature because it is an instrumental study of several individual cases (four schools). This multi-site qualitative research approach (Herriott & Firestone, 1993) is also confirmed as appropriate by Stake, who argues that a collective case study is an instrumental study that extends to several cases. Confirmation of my study not belonging to a specific category but having attributes of all three is also

confirmed by Stake, who suggests that many authors and research projects do not fit into one category but tend to stretch across one or more of the three. Stake considers the categories to be more heuristic rather than functional.

### *Design and Implementation of Survey*

The survey instrument was developed in the months of July and August of 2001. It was then taken to Synergy, a company primarily involved with the development and presentation of many types of survey instruments. The questions were clarified and revamped to take out any misleading information and double-barreled types of questions (Neuman, 1997). Although there were many recommendations for clarification, not all were adopted.

The overlying purpose of the survey is to determine staff members' perceptions of what makes a healthy school. The final survey instrument (see Appendix B) comprises four sections, each with its own purpose. Appendix C details the guiding questions, theoretical issues, and relevance considerations related to each of the survey questions.

The first section, questions 1 to 4, involves identification of the respondent. Information regarding current job position and assignment, length of time in that position and the number of years of teaching experience is requested. This section is designed to indicate the credibility of the respondents to the researcher.

The remainder of the survey includes 21 questions with a five-point response scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Questions in this section address the following six themes: contributions and being of value; positive orientation towards the organization; caring and support in the environment; communication; leaders and leadership; and vision. For example, one set of questions is designed to determine and

identify staff perceptions about the beliefs of the school. Another grouping consists of questions designed to determine and identify staff perceptions about the qualities of the leaders in the school. Other questions are designed to determine and identify staff perceptions about the vision of the school.

The third section of response in the survey allows each respondent to make written comments about questions 5 through 25. After each question, lines are provided for optional additional comments or explanation.

The fourth section is composed of five open-ended, optional questions. These questions are specific in asking the respondents how a particular item affects the overall healthiness of their school. The items refer to the physical plant, the school itself, the classroom, the leadership of the school, and the culture of the school.

A letter of participation and consent (see Appendix D) was sent to the Superintendent of Foothills School Division in late August. A similar letter was sent to each of the four administration teams (see Appendix E) in the schools of the study group. Finally, a letter requesting participation and consent was prepared for each staff member (see Appendix F). An application for human subjects research approval (see Appendix G) was completed and submitted.

The administration teams were asked to suggest convenient times at which I would present the survey instrument package to their staffs. The presentations took place at each individual school during staff meeting time. The survey was presented, and any problems that may have been encountered by the respondents were dealt with at that time. An additional letter was given to staff members, reminding them of the purpose of the project, requesting return of the consent forms, and instructing them on return of the

surveys (see Appendix H). Respondents were asked to return completed surveys by the end of September. In fact, all the surveys were not completed until the end of October.

### *Data Collection*

At the end of September the surveys were collected by the researcher or were sent by the division courier service to this researcher's school. The number of letters of consent gathered for each school was then compared to the number of surveys filled out and returned. It was important that the number of surveys equal the number of signed consent letters. If the number of consent forms did not match the number of surveys, then a random selection of surveys were deleted according to the differential. The letters of consent were then put aside and the surveys were opened and a tabulation process was undertaken. Charts were drawn up that allowed this researcher to tabulate the data from each school and each question (see Appendix I). For an example, the number of responses for the five-point scale was tabulated in a chart for each question. As well, the optional individual responses for each question were put into the chart beside each corresponding question. The data from each of the four schools were then put into one chart so that a cumulative analysis could be performed. The optional open-ended questions were also put into a chart for each school and a cumulative chart was created as well. The charts gave a very clear visual picture of the responses from each school as well as a total picture from the combined data.

In addition to the charts, individual graphs were created for each school and for each question. Cumulative graphs were also created from all of the data for each question. However, graphs indicating response rates were the only ones used. Individual written responses to each of the 21 questions were arranged thematically for purposes of



analysis. Responses to the five optional written questions were also coded thematically. This means that answers to questions that reflected a similar concept, idea, or simply a rephrasing of a comment were considered similar and put into the same group.

### *Data Analysis*

The data from each of the four schools were put into charts (see Appendix I). These charts provided an easy visual representation of the data. Each respondent's response to a particular question was tallied into the appropriate column. Cumulative charts representing all of the schools' responses to each question were also generated. The responses to the five optional open-ended questions were put into a chart, by school. Cumulative charts for these questions were also created. First level coding (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996; Neuman, 1997) combined those pieces of information that had similar meaning. Mentally, I began putting them into categories. This identification of similarities and differences continued as I put data into the charts. Patterns in the data were mentally identified and tagged for later use in the analysis. As I charted the responses to the questions for each school, patterns became evident for certain questions. This first level coding concretely identified a number of similar patterns. Most of the responses seemed to be in the Strongly Agree to Agree category. From my first mental look at the data, I drew a tentative conclusion that the four responding schools seemed to be healthy working organizations. This was confirmed as the process of analysis continued.

The data also revealed a strong response from the urban Middle School and the Kindergarten to grade 8 rural school. Lower response rates came from the large urban high school and the urban elementary school. Initially, I attributed this to differences in

the rural and urban setting of the schools. However, this did not hold for the urban middle school. Other factors were obviously responsible for the higher response rate.

The optional written responses for each question from each of the responding schools were also included in the charts. Categories became evident here, too. For example, there were similarities in response from the more experienced teachers, the younger staff, and those involved in Special Education. Relationships between the responses and the experience of staff members became apparent.

Graphs were created to demonstrate in graphic form the responses for each question from each school. These graphs would allow for a graphical representation showing the collation of data from the charts. However, I did not use the graphs in this project except for the ones demonstrating the number of total possible responses from each school compared to the actual number of responses.

Initially I was going to use all of the questions for analysis. However, I used only one or two questions from each of the six themes identified in my survey framework. The six themes were staff perceptions about being valued, perceptions about the organizations orientation, perceptions about care and support, perceptions about communication, perceptions about the leaders, and perceptions about the organization's vision. The optional open-ended questions were collated for each school as well. Cumulative charts were created for the questions. The questions were put into their five categories, as per the survey framework, and then were thematically grouped (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). If the questions were similar in their meaning but the phrasing was different, then they were put into a similar theme. Responses that had to do with the leader or the physical plant, for an example, were put into corresponding themes.

This cross-sectional survey (Borg & Gall, 1983) allowed a close look at four schools in a larger school division. The identification of perceptions by staff about certain factors in their schools, that they felt were important, gave positive clues about the functioning of their school. In the analysis of the data I took a somewhat negative approach. I used the data from questions that had higher responses for those categories of Not Applicable, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The higher the percentages in these three categories for a particular question identified, for me, a factor of importance. For an example, if a question had a combined response rate of greater than 10%, in these three categories, I assumed this represented an important staff perception that something that should have been present was absent in their school. If they perceived that this was not happening then there was something causing the negative response?

## Findings and Analysis

### *Introduction*

In dealing with a very large amount of data, I chose to isolate those questions that most clearly demonstrated the perceptions of staff about their schools. The survey was broken into six themes. Section one (questions 5 through 7) reflects respondents' individual perceptions of the value of their contribution of being of value to their school. Section two (questions 8 through 11) reflects respondents' perceptions of their positive orientation to the organization. The third section (questions 12 through 15) reflects respondents' perception of the degree of caring and support in their school environment. Section four (questions 16 and 17) reflects their perceptions of the quality of communication that occurs. The fifth section (questions 18 through 22) reflects respondents' perceptions of leadership characteristics in their school. The last section (questions 23 through 25) reflects the respondents' perception of the vision of their school. One set of responses has been selected from sections 1, 5, and 6. Two sets of responses have been selected from sections 2, 3, and 4.

### *Response Numbers*

The number of responses from each school is represented by the graphs that follow, which depict a strong response rate from the certificated staff in all schools except the high school. The response rate for each of the other three schools is above 50% except for the elementary school. The response percentages for support staff are similar. However, the response rate for the support staff in the high school is 0%. I believe there was a dissemination problem in handling the surveys. At my meeting with the high school staff, only certificated staff were in attendance. The support staff were

not visible. The surveys were left at the office and were left to each individual staff member to pick up. Administration response rates were above the 50% level in all schools except for the high school. Custodial staff responded only at the rural middle school. The combined school percentages were above the 30% level, except for custodial staff.

Figure 1 indicates the response rate at The Right Honorable Joe Clark School.

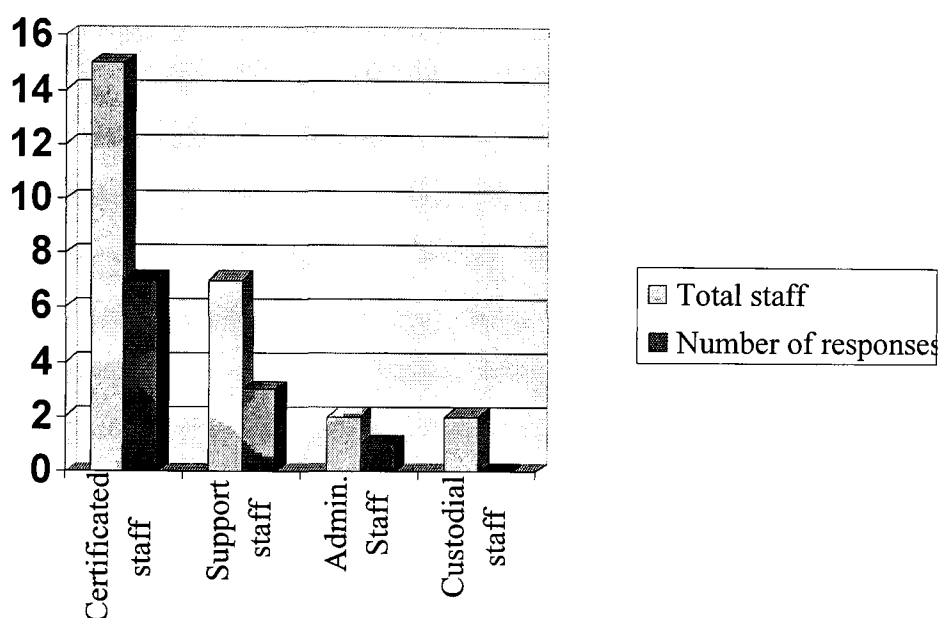


Figure 1. Responses from The Right Honorable Joe Clark School.

At this school, out of 15 total possible certificated staff responses there were 7 returns, a 46.6% return rate. Out of 7 total possible support staff responses there were 3 returns, a 42.8% return rate. Out of 2 possible administrative responses there was 1 return, a 50% return rate. Out of 2 possible custodial responses there were no returns.

I am quite surprised at the low return rate for this school. One of the staff members is a member of our university cohort and I would have thought this would be an advantage. I also expected both administrators to respond, as one happens to be one

of the instructors for our cohort. On the other hand, September is a very busy month for elementary schools. This school is also going through some significant changes, as it has become a “dual school”, in the form of a French immersion school and a regular public school. The start up would be doubly difficult as it is opening two schools instead of one.

Figure 2 indicates the response rate for Foothills Composite High School.

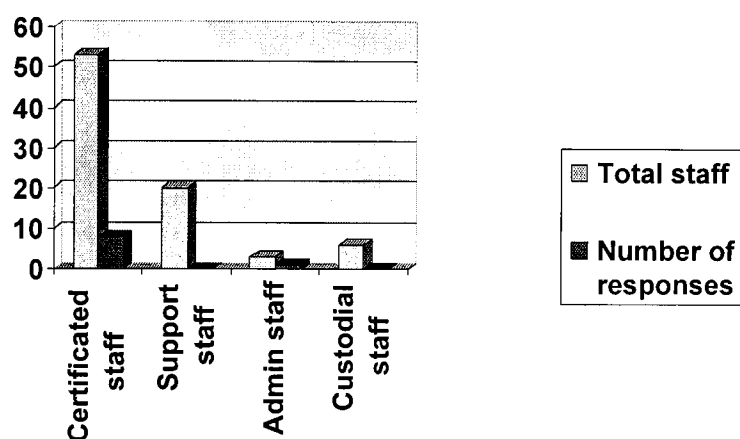


Figure 2. Responses from Foothills Composite High School.

At Foothills Composite, out of 53 total possible certificated staff responses there were 8 returns, a 15.1% return rate. Out of 20 total possible support staff responses there were 0 returns. Out of 3 possible administrative responses there was 1 return, a 33.3% return rate. Out of 6 possible custodial responses there were no returns.

The high school response rate was the lowest of the four schools. At the presentation of the survey package, only the teaching staff were in attendance. The surveys were kept at the office and were to be picked up by individuals.

The high school is a diverse demographic mix of seasoned veterans and new teachers. The results indicate that most of the responses were from the experienced

teachers. Many have made comments on the differences between the character of high school teachers and elementary and middle school teachers. It would seem that this phenomenon is evident in this research project and may be worthwhile for future investigation.

Figure 3 indicates the response rate achieved from Senator Riley Middle School.

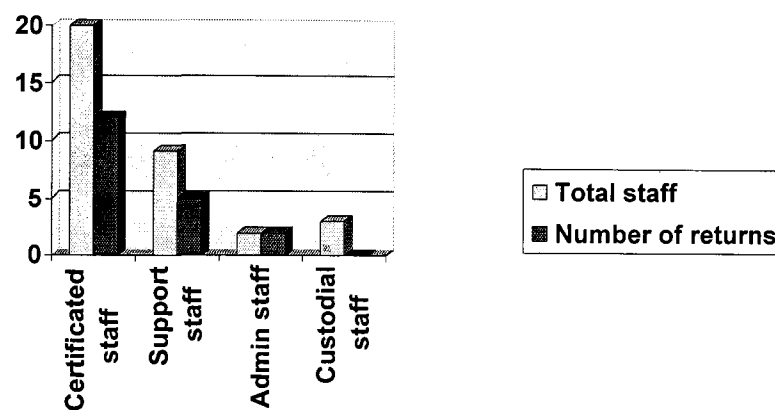


Figure 3. Responses from Senator Riley Middle School.

At Senator Riley, out of 20 total possible certificated staff responses there were 12 returns, a 60% return rate. Out of 9 total possible support staff responses there were 5 returns, a 55.6% return rate. Out of 2 possible administrative responses there were 2 returns, a 100% return rate. Out of 3 possible custodial responses there were no returns, a 0% return rate.

This school's responses reflect my belief that the administration team really was behind this research project. One administrator and two other teaching staff were in their own Masters program and talked frequently about the survey in their dealings with

other staff. The higher response rate for support staff also indicates a support by all and especially the admin team for the completion of the survey.

Finally, Figure 4 indicates the responses received from Turner Valley School.

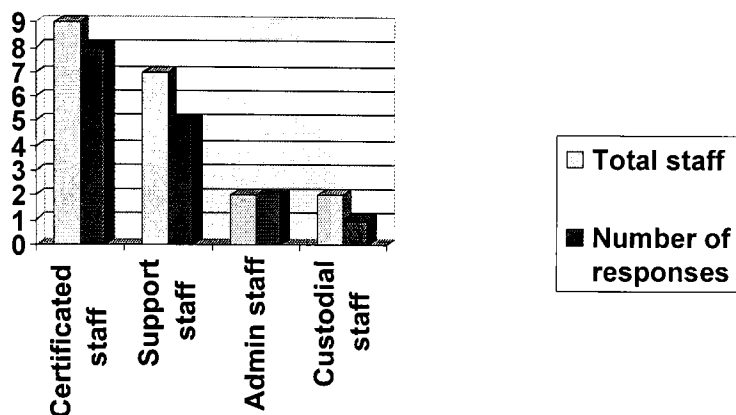


Figure 4. Responses from Turner Valley School.

At Turner Valley School, out of 9 total possible certificated staff responses there were 8 returns, an 88.9% return rate. Out of 7 total possible support staff responses there were 5 returns, a 71.4% return rate. Out of 2 possible administrative responses there were 2 returns, a 100% return rate. Out of 2 possible custodial responses there was 1 return, a 50% return rate.

Turner Valley is a small school. The principal is new to the school and strongly supported this research project as part of his administration team's goal to promote collegiality and collaboration.

Figure 5 compares the total number of surveys handed out to the number of surveys returned for each of the four respondent categories



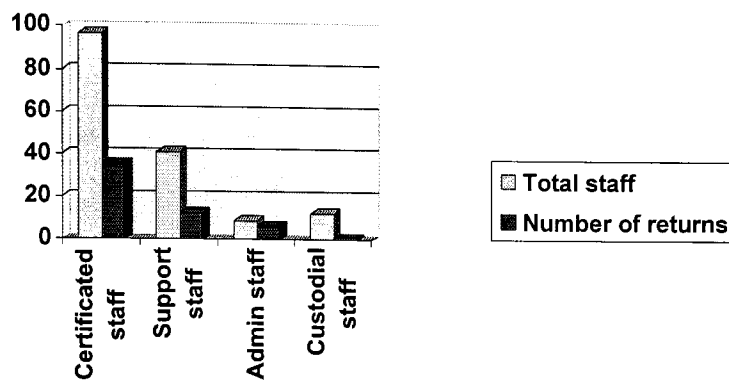


Figure 5. Total responses from all schools.

Of a possible total of 97 certificated staff responses there were 35 returns, a 36% return rate. Of 41 support staff responses there were 13 returns, a 31.7% return rate. Of 9 possible administrative responses there were 6 returns, a 66.6% return rate. Finally, of 13 possible custodial responses there was 1 return, a 7.6% return rate.

I believe that the response rate for the entire research project was very high. In the course of my reading I expected no higher than 10%. The overall response rate equals 35.8%. This, to me, is an excellent rate of response.

#### *Differences in Responses Between Schools*

Table 1 indicates the percentage of participants who responded Not Applicable, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree to a particular question. Items for which the responses exceeded 10% in at least three of the four schools were then used in the analysis for this study.

Table 1

Participants Responding Not Applicable, Disagree, and Firmly Disagree

Question	Joe Clark	Foothills Composite	Senator Riley	Turner Valley	Combined Schools
5. Do you feel that good ideas are considered equally, regardless of who initiates them?	9 %	0%	10.5%	12.5%	9%
6. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are requested?	27%	0%	0%	6.3%	7.8%
7. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are honestly considered?	9%	11.1%	10.5%	18.8%	12.7%
8. Do you feel that you are usually thanked for your contributions?	0%	0%	21%	12.5%	10.9%
9. Do you feel that your organization has realistic expectations?	9%	11.1%	31.5%	0%	10.9%

Question	Joe Clark	Foothills Composite	Senator Riley	Turner Valley	Combined Schools
10. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your positive concerns?	0%	0%	5.3%	6.3%	3.6%
11. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your negative concerns?	18%	22%	10.5%	12.5%	14.5%
12. Do you feel that you have the opportunity to celebrate success?	0%	0%	26.3%	6.3%	10.9%
13. Do you feel that there is freedom to share different ideas?	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
14. Do you feel that there is freedom to share resources and materials?	9%	22%	10.5%	0%	9%
15. Do you feel that people rally around each other in time of crisis?	0%	22%	5.3%	6.3%	7.3%
16. Do you feel that it is safe to talk about everyday issues and concerns?	7.3%	0%	0%	10.5%	12.5%

Question	Joe Clark	Foothills Composite	Senator Riley	Turner Valley	Combined Schools
17. Do you meet on a regular basis to share ideas and information?	9%	55.6%	10.5%	6.3%	16.4%
18. Do you perceive that your leader is willing to participate in two-way communication and feedback?	0%	0%	10.5%	18.8%	9.1%
19. Do you perceive that your leader is visible and approachable?	0%	0%	10.5%	12.5%	7.3%
20. Do you feel that your leader takes time to develop relationships with people?	0%	0%	26.3%	12.5%	12.7%
21. Do you feel that your leader is willing to identify priorities?	0%	22%	15.8%	12.5%	12.7%
Do you feel that your leader is willing to establish criteria for determining what is important?	0%	11.1%	10.5%	6.3%	7.3%

Question	Joe Clark	Foothills Composite	Senator Riley	Turner Valley	Combined Schools
23. Do you feel that the vision of the school is clear to all staff?	0%	0%	21%	0%	7.3%
24. Do you feel that you understand the school's vision as it applies to you?	0%	11.1%	5.3%	0%	7.3%
25. Do you feel that you have ownership of the vision as it applies to you?	0%	11.1%	21%	6.3%	10.9%

#### *Highest Percentage Responses*

Certain questions drew comparatively high levels of response. Table 2 displays the combined data for the seven questions that elicited the highest levels of response from these schools.

Table 2

#### Questions Eliciting the Highest Levels of Response

Question	Joe Clark	Foothills Composite	Senator Riley	Turner Valley	Combined Schools
7. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are honestly considered?	9%	11.1%	10.5%	18.8%	12.7%

Question	Joe Clark	Foothills Composite	Senator Riley	Turner Valley	Combined Schools
9. Do you feel that your organization has realistic expectations?	9%	11.1%	31.5%	0%	10.9%
11. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your negative concerns?	18%	22%	10.5%	12.5%	14.5%
14. Do you feel that there is freedom to share resources and materials?	9%	22%	10.5%	0%	9%
17. Do you meet on a regular basis to share ideas and information?	9%	55.6%	10.5%	6.3%	16.4%
21. Do you feel that your leader is willing to identify priorities?	0%	22%	15.8%	12.5%	12.7%
25. Do you feel that you have ownership of the vision as it o you?	0%	11.1%	21%	6.3%	10.9%

Question 7, “Do you feel that everyone’s input and opinions are honestly considered?” elicited the most intensive response in the theme dealing with individuals’

perceptions of the value of their contributions to their school. Responses from each of the four schools were strongest on this item.

Question 9, “Do you feel that your organization has realistic expectations?” and Question 11, “Do you feel it is safe to bring forward your negative concerns?” elicited the highest intensity of response under the theme of having a positive orientation towards the organization. Question 9 elicited a high level of response from three of the four schools, while Question 11 elicited a high level of response from all four schools.

With respect to the third theme, involving staff perception about the level of caring and support respondents felt in their school, Question 14, “Do you feel there is freedom to share resources and materials?” elicited the highest levels of response in three of the four schools.

In the theme dealing with communication, Question 17, “Do you meet on a regular basis to share ideas and information?” elicited the highest levels of response of the whole survey. This was mainly because of the intensity of response from the high school.

Question 21, “Do you feel that your leader is willing to identify priorities?” elicited a response above 10% in three of the four schools. This question reflects the theme about perceptions of leadership characteristics.

The final theme considers the idea of staff perceptions about the vision of the school. Question 25, “Do you feel that you have ownership of the vision as it applies to you?” elicited a 10.9% response level, but was considered important in only two of the four schools.

*Combined Optional Open-Ended Responses*

The summary below represents the combined responses from the four schools for the optional open-ended questions. These questions comprise direct queries about staff perceptions concerning the healthiness of their school in five areas: the school's physical plant, classroom, overall school environment, leadership, and culture. For the complete list of optional open-ended responses, see Appendix J. The responses have been synthesized from all of the schools. In order to differentiate between the responses of the participants, support staff responses are italicized, custodial staff responses are underscored, and responses of certificated and administration staff responses are presented in normal typeface. Also shown are the number of years of experience, years served at the school, and identification of grade division.

Question 1: When thinking about the physical plant (your school), in your opinion what is the single most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your workplace?

- Adequate room size to accommodate increasingly larger class size (12 years, 12 years, Division 4)
- Everyone's respect for the facility – cleanliness (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Staff room and office in a central location. Renewed air supply – healthier environment (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Layout of classrooms and resources are central (22 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Tidy, clean, attractive (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- The students take pride in keeping their school clean. They help washing desks at lunch and picking up garbage at the end of the day (10 years, 1 year, Division 2)



- Respect for school and property. Everyone appreciates efforts to keep our school clean, attractive and a good place to be (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- We have large classrooms and an aesthetically pleasing building (9 years, 1 year, Administration)
- Cleanliness, fantastic light, and open spaces (20 years, 2 years, middle school)
- Large windows, gathering area, clean shiny floors and etceteras, wall/posters, signs, etc. (10 years, 9 years, middle school)

Question 2: When thinking about the environment of your classroom, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of the workplace?

- Room enough for all students (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Stimulating displays of student work and “catchy” equipment demonstrations (8 years, 5 years, Division 4).
- My windows, I get a natural light and I can see the world (10 years, 3 years, Division 1)
- Air temperature relates to a healthy learning environment. After that, I feel that the mood/tone of the class is important (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- Sunlight and color – a relationship with the students that is conducive to learning and living (12 years, 2 years, middle school)
- Freedom to use, decorate, change learning spaces as required (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- Space and light (9 years, 5 years, middle school)

- Our class sizes have increased greatly over the years. It is very crowded and no one really has his or her own space (8 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Size of classroom, tables, chairs, and desks. Large windows that open. TV/radio/phone accessibility. Computers and happy learners - students and teacher (10 years, 9 years, middle school)

Question 3: When thinking about the environment of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Safe, welcoming and friendly environment (19 years, 18 years, Division 4)
- Culture – a positive culture of both staff and students (19 years, 11 years, Division 2)
- Staff and parent involvement and interaction (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Working together respecting differences and a lot of good jokes. We share concerns about student learning and behavior and support each other. Discussions happen daily with certain people (12 years, 4 years, Division 2)
- Good sense of humor, friendly, welcoming, and caring for all the students (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- A friendship between staff (12 years, 2 years, middle school)
- *The staff are all working toward the same end: to teach the children in a safe and caring place, to treat each child in the same way. (2 years, 2 years, middle school).*
- The staff truly love children. This is the focus of everything they do. (9 years, 1 year, Administration)

- Learning is the reason why we are here, and everything else slides in nicely. Participation in all areas is a must -- drama, art, sports, etc. (24 years, 5 years, middle school)
- *The principal is a leader, who can engage the staff and appreciate their strengths, individuality, and support them in doing their job (4 months, 4 months, Division 2)*

Question 4: When thinking about the leadership of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- The allocations of duties between all administration, taking a close look at the strengths of each person (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- Positive comments and pro staff (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Leadership needs to have a goal towards which ALL staff must work. Leaders must be approachable, and there must be open communication between staff and administration (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- Approachable and supportive (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Caring, organization, clear expectations, interests in all activities (20 years, 11 years, all grades)
- Learning to listen for the little problems and then acting before they are a concern (12 years, 2 years, middle school)
- Communication, appreciation, recognition and being supportive (24 years, 20 years, middle school)
- Open communication and fairness in suggestions (24 years, 5 years, middle school)

- Consistency of expectations, consequences, and support. (22 years, 4 years, middle school)

Question 5: When thinking about the culture of your school, in your opinion, what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Putting a greater effort into having more team building activities – staff, students, and staff and students together (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- Cohesion of staff towards mission statement (19 years, 11 years, Division 4)
- Close connections with parents and community. Staff being part of the community (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Respect of parents, teachers and students, and how they support each other (12 years, 4 years, Division 2)
- The sense of community – a genuine caring between all stakeholders for the stakeholders (12 years, 2 years, middle school)
- We realize we are unique in our own way – like every school. We celebrate our differences and come together at school as a learning community (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- Every aspect of the school is essential to the whole; for example, academics, community service, diversity, band, sports, art, yearbook, options, teachers, parents, students, etc. (20 years, 2 years, middle school)
- Extra curricular opportunities for all students. Happy learners (10 years, 9 years, middle school)

- *That the individuals in the school, staff and students, are seen as unique with special talents and abilities that make the school exciting and a fun place to be (4 months, 4 months, Division 2)*
- *Student focus and development of pride. Many activities for students – all can be successful (22 years, 4 years, midschool)*

These responses to the optional open-ended questions represent an aggregation of all of comments made by the respondents. In other words, I took those responses that were similar in nature and listed a representative sample. If the responses were similar except for their phrasing, then these were put into a single category and one was used in this listing. Sometimes the responses addressed the same point; for example, one person said he wanted natural lighting and another said she liked the windows. These were considered to be responses of a similar nature and were put into the same category. When several responses discussed some aspect of culture, they were then put into a category and one or two were chosen from the group. The listing includes sample responses from all schools.

The optional open-ended questions were designed to elicit positive responses. This was achieved. There was a 73% response rate from the individuals who responded to this section of the survey. Responses from all five questions reflected a positive inclination.

When considering the physical plant the respondents identified three main factors that influenced the healthiness of the workplace: adequate spaces for students, natural light and aesthetics, and cleanliness of the building. The responses from all four schools were similar in nature and in the percentage of responses.

When respondents were asked to respond about the environment of their classrooms they identified adequate space for students, natural lighting, and that the classroom had student work displayed as the three most important contributing factors to the healthiness of the workplace. Only one negative comment about the class size increasing over the years was mentioned. The survey indicated that a friendly environment, positive relationships among stakeholders, and a positive culture were the three most important factors for affecting the school environment and making it a healthy workplace. The three most important leadership factors influencing the workplace were that the leader demonstrated an ability to listen, be caring and show fairness and consistency to all. The last question asked respondents for the single most important factor affecting the healthiness of the workplace. In this question the respondents identified two factors. Firstly, it was important that relationships among all stakeholders were positive and healthy, and secondly, that the school is unique unto itself and should be celebrating the differences and similarities that create this uniqueness.

## Discussion

### *School Responses*

The use of a qualitative interpretation for this research project was based on the idea that it focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings. The researcher is able to get a peek at what “real life” is like from the individuals who work in the environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The four schools chosen for this research represented four different grade configurations of schools within the Foothills School Division. Their demographics suggested four real life situations.

There were a number of the factors affecting the response rate from the four schools. These include the location of the school (rural or urban), the number of staff, student population, the newness of the administration team, the demographics of the school population and its corresponding community, the grade configuration of the school, and the time that this survey was conducted (September). Another factor that came into play, but only at Senator Riley Middle School, was that three staff members were also completing their Masters courses. I believe that this had a positive effect on the response rate for this school. The collegiality of these three in promoting the survey and the whole idea of the Masters program assisted in the completion of the surveys.

The best responses came from the administration group, where six out of the nine people responded. However, at the high school, two of the three administrators did not respond. The administrators of a school are some of the most important individuals in the organization. Their ability to develop, implement, and maintain the factors that contribute to the healthiness of the organization cannot be overlooked (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1992).

The higher response percentages that came from both the certificated staff and the support staff may indicate that these respondents perceived that they have more ownership of, and are more responsible for, the everyday life, or healthiness, of the school. Their response rates suggest that they perceive that their opinions and ideas are of value and they have greater feelings of responsibility. The response rate for these two groups is very high except for the high school support staff. The highest response rate came from Turner Valley School, a small rural kindergarten to grade eight school with a population of 170 to 200 students. Their total staff's response rate was 76%, which represents the highest return rate in this research project. The school is situated in a small community and is the focal point of the town. The staff knows each and everyone of the students and their parents and strives to create a culture and an environment that is conducive to the positive growth of the students. Perhaps, they are also able to create a healthy environment because of the small number of staff and this may be an important factor in creating this environment.

Alternatively, even though Senator Riley Middle School is a large urban school its high response rate might be attributed to the influence of their new administration team and to staff perceptions that they had an opportunity to mold or change the existing climate by their responses.

At the opposite end of the response rate scale is the Foothills Composite High School, situated in the city of Okotoks, with a staff population of eighty-two and a student population of over a thousand. The size of the school is a very important factor in the staff perception of the healthiness of their school (Cotton, 2001). Their total staff response rate was 12.2%. The only groups that responded to the survey were certificated



staff and one administrator. There were no responses from the support staff or the custodial staff. The size of the staff and the structure of the school seem to have mitigated against clear communication in the case of this study.

#### *Highest Percentage Response Questions*

The first theme, involving individuals' perceptions of their contributions being of value, was drawn from responses to question 7. The responses indicate that a majority of these respondents agreed that having everyone's input and opinions honestly considered is very important. These respondents believed that all input must be considered, regardless of which staff member provides it. They also believed that when the input is given it must be considered honestly and without prejudice. They saw that this factor is an important one in determining the healthiness of a school.

Many respondents in two of the four schools also indicated that being thanked for one's contributions is quite important, question 8. The high percentage of response at these schools indicates a qualitatively different level of staff perceptions of their own value to their organization.

The perceptions of staff that they have a positive orientation towards their organization were reflected in responses to question 9. Having the perception that one's school has realistic expectations is a factor contributing to the healthiness of that school. Staff at the elementary and the small rural school did not consider this to be a major factor. However, staff in the large high school and the urban middle school provided higher percentage responses to this theme. The middle school responses were particularly high. This may indicate that the middle school staff agrees that their school's

expectations are realistic, or it may suggest that staff members would like the expectation to be more realistic.

Question 11 indicates the perceptions of staff regarding their ability to bring up negative concerns. Respondents from all schools feel that they are quite comfortable in bringing up positive matters but there is less certainty in bringing up negative concerns. Many staff members believe this to be an important factor but some are aware that it does not happen as often as it should

The perception of caring and support in an organization is very important to the overall healthiness of that organization and, in particular, to the school (Secretan, 1996). Staff from the two smaller schools felt that the sharing of resources and materials was an important factor in their school, question 14, and that it was contributing positively to school climate. They also felt that their school staff members would rally around each other in times of crisis, question 15. At the high school, respondents were less certain that these critical elements of caring and support were so prevalent. They are also a larger school and deal with a curriculum that is very defined and isolated. The middle school reflects some of this as it is dealing with a student clientele that is more defined and a curriculum that is a precursor to high school. The two smaller schools perceive that sharing is happening. It is a factor that is important and this is clearly identified by the two schools. The high school has another high percentage in the question that reflects their perception about support and the ability of staff to rally around each other in time of crisis. All other schools perceived that this was happening in their schools. Once again the staff in a larger school perceive that this is an important factor and on some occasions it did not happen in their school.

Communication plays a vital role in the overall effectiveness of the school as an organization (Glickman, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989). A measure of that effectiveness is the healthiness of the school. Respondents from three of the four schools perceived that meeting on a regular basis to share ideas and information, question 17, was something that was missing from their school. The high school responses to this question are the highest on the survey, but the concern is also reflected in two other schools.

Communication is known to be an important factor. If staff members perceive that they do not have the freedom to communicate, or be communicated with, they cannot see their schools to be as healthy as they should be. Regular, open, and informative communication is essential to the health of all schools.

The ability of a school staff to identify priorities is reflected in responses under theme five of the survey. Staff members in three of the four schools identified this as an important factor. Most respondents felt that it is important for administration to identify the priorities. In two of the four schools, staff responses were high for all five of the questions in this theme. Clearly, for these respondents, leadership characteristics play a very important role in the perception of what makes a healthy school.

The final theme explores staff perceptions of the vision of the school. In only two of the four schools staff members had concerns about their school's vision. The idea of vision as it affects the organization (Skelton, 1999) is thought to be an extremely important factor in the health of the school. However, the majority of respondents in this study did not give it such importance.

*Combined Optional Open-ended Questions*

The first question deals with the participant's opinion about what aspects of their physical plant or building affect the overall healthiness of their school. Many respondents felt that natural light was very important, and large windows would be the providers of this light. Many also felt that adequate class size and a larger greeting area was important. Several respondents commented on the importance of staff and students having common respect for the building, yet another factor several respondents noted was that the building needed to be clean. Secretan (1996) regards the environment as one of the most important factors in reclaiming the soul of an organization. The respondents of this survey confirm his perspective. Aesthetics plays an important role in this as well. People need to feel that they are comfortable in their environment before they can be fairly challenged to do their best.

The survey asked respondents to compare their own classrooms with the climate of the whole school. These responses tended to be complementary to the ones given in question one. Respondents again noted the importance of such things as light, adequate class size, an aesthetically pleasing environment and accessibility to materials and computers. In the research and in this study, these factors contribute to the healthiness of the school.

When respondents reflected upon the environment of their schools, they mentioned numerous ideas. These ideas fell into six basic areas, which are a positive school culture, humor and laughter, productive engagement, feeling safe, being seen as teams working together, and having leaders whom are visible and approachable.

Respondents considered a positive school culture, for both staff and students, to be most important. Many authors (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1991; Glickman, 1993; Hargreaves, 1997; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1996) consider culture to be one of the most, if not the most, important factor contributing to the overall effectiveness of a school. Obviously, the idea of humor and laughter in the environment of the school contributes directly to the development of positive culture, even as it is an indication of it. Again, this factor has many contributors in support of this factor as important to the health of the organization. Respondents felt that the staff needed to be engaged with what they were doing and that they needed to be seen as working together, as a team. The respondents also felt that they needed to be safe. When thinking about their environment they felt that these factors were important. The importance of this type of environment cannot be overlooked nor can it be underestimated in determining the health of the school.

Leadership is fundamental to the health of the organization (Deal & Peterson, 1999) and the respondents to this survey confirm this belief. They identified many characteristics of their leaders, which can be synthesized into five major categories: positive attitude, approachability, supportive of staff, willingness to listen, and consistency and fairness.

Many respondents indicated they wanted their leaders to have a positive inclination in the face of adversity, not unrealistic optimism, but one based in reality. For the staff members in this study, their administrators must be viewed as being positive in their dealings with staff, students, and the community. We are in an unprecedented time of change. It would seem that as the complexity increases in our society so does the need

for leaders to become more and more adept in their leadership abilities and the demonstration of positive characteristics must be quite visible (Fullan, 2001).

On the matter of approachability, respondents felt that their administration had to be able to handle a variety of situations and circumstances. The administration team may have different characteristics that are more suitable for one staff than the other, but together they must cover most of the staff needs. If staff members feel that the team is unapproachable then the school may run into problems. Clearly, an organization with an unapproachable leader cannot function well for very long. Respondents from the four schools in this research project identified this quality as an important one and they felt that this quality was one that their leaders were demonstrating. However, a number of respondents noted that they could bring forth positive concerns but were reluctant to bring forth negative or controversial ones. This is one area in which administrative teams might be able to develop more leadership skills.

Respondents want their administration team, and especially the principal, to be supportive. Teachers want to feel that the principal supports them, in their educational and professional activities with the students, parents and the community. The support must be seen when the teacher is dealing with students on a day-to-day basis, and with the parents in situations that may cause difficulty. It is important for the administrator to say this, do this, and continue to do this throughout the year. However, the staff must realize that this support has parameters set up initially. The ground rules, so to speak, must be on the table and known by all. The administrator must “walk the talk”, in this area of leadership.

Another important quality that the leader must have is the ability to listen. The ability to listen is a very important factor and goes far when being an administrator. People need to feel that they are being listened to. Lending an ear to staff for sounding off or to be a sounding board is very important. Leadership and the ability to listen are important tools as they come into play for changes to the school, suggestions for curricular modifications or simply the way the supervision scheduling is handled. Staff needs to feel that not only are they being listened to but also that they are being heard. Their suggestions and concerns need to be addressed to make sure that no misunderstanding or misconceptions are formed or are hindering the process of communication. Listening to what is meant and not what is said can be a very effective tool in the administration of the school.

Staff also needs to see the administration as fair and consistent in their dealings with staff, students and the community. Favoritism does not go far in a classroom and can be disastrous when working in a school. There must be a real understanding of the differences between equality and fairness. It requires a lot of work to make sure that all see the differences between these two concepts. If a student sees that favoritism is being exhibited they will become disenchanted with the things that are going on in the classroom, likewise, the staff will also become disenchanted if they feel or see unfairness or inconsistency.

When the respondents were asked their perceptions about culture specifically, they identified many concepts similar to those they noted when asked about their environment. However, there were also some very different ideas brought forward. They regarded the idea of “sense of community” as being one of the important factors

contributing to the healthiness of the school. This sense of community and closeness to the parents is something that each school staff mentioned. Staff members in schools need to have sense of belonging - a sense of their history - for them to be comfortable (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Many respondents suggested that the unique talents of students and staff should be recognized. The survey results indicated that the uniqueness of the school, as well, plays an important role in the culture and how it affects healthiness. In their open-ended responses, participants in this study suggested the school inhabitants needed to be proud of their building, what it stood for and how each of them could be integrated into it. Again, this reflects the opinions of Deal and Peterson (1999) when they discuss the school as needing some source of pride or “pizzazz.” They mention that a school must have this sense of pride so that its inhabitants will continue to add to and rejuvenate the culture of the school.



## Summary and Conclusions

What makes a school feel good? What makes a workplace healthy? What impact does the culture of a school have on the organization of the school and its inhabitants? What impact do healthy employees and clients have on the overall healthiness of the school? How do the perceptions of the staff, students, parents and the community at large, about the healthiness of the school, affect the operation and productivity of the staff and, collectively, the school? Is it possible to identify the factors that contribute to and are indicative of a healthy school? All of these are questions I have posed as I have been investigating this topic and, simultaneously, reflecting on my personal experience in education.

I have now come full circle and stand ready to offer answers to these questions. In determining the factors that influence staff perception about school climate and culture I have identified some key points. First, schools in the Foothills School Division are overall, particularly healthy places in which to work. For an example, 9% of the respondents to the question, 'Do you feel that good ideas are considered equally, regardless of whom initiates it?' responded in the Not Applicable, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree categories. This means that 91% of the respondents felt that, in their schools, it was happening. This was the case in each of the four responding schools for most questions in this study. These respondents believe that the schools are quite healthy overall.

There are a few particular discrepancies of response in a particular school depending on the question. As an example, the high school staff responded with a very

high percentage in regards to sharing ideas and information. This high rate may be a result of the high school environment, the size of the school, the student demographics, the low return rate of respondents, or individual reactions to a circumstance that happened in the year. It is not within the scope of this study to explain the reasons for these variations.

The overriding themes of value to the organization, positive orientation, caring and support in the organization, communication, leadership and vision, and the factors affecting each have been shown to be as important in this study as they are in the research literature. These positive perceptions of most respondents provide strong evidence of the healthiness of their workplace, and in, some cases, valuable information to the schools for change.

Schools need to have benchmarks in all areas of their endeavors so that they may continue to provide the most productive learning environments for their students. Benchmarks can be identified in many different ways. Staff perceptions of what is happening and how it is happening are one important way of establishing these benchmarks. In that sense, this small study provides some useful benchmarks. When staff members can view what they do in a positive way then the school can move forward to meet the challenges of continuous growth and change.

How a staff goes about this process is dependent on the leadership of the school, the culture of the school and the climate that has been established and reinforced. If staff feel that they have value and feel that they have ownership for what goes on in the school they will be more inclined to evaluate what is happening and make any changes that may be required. When staff members have things forced upon them, they tend to be resistant

and difficult to move. The qualities of the leader or the administration team are extremely vital to the overall functioning of the school.

It is evident from the results of this research project that the four schools involved are very positive places in which to work. However, there are areas of need and situations that need to be looked at. Respondents in each of the four schools identified areas that could be looked at for growth. For example, one could ask why the response rates for support staff and custodial staffs were much lower than those for the other two groups were? It is possible they feel that their contributions to the work of their schools are seen as being less important, or less valuable. A more simple suggestion might be that the survey instrument was not given to them. In either event, there is an opportunity here for productive staff development work to be done.

As another example, there was a much lower response rate from the high school than from any of the other three schools. In fact, the response rates for all four groups from the high school were lower than those from the other schools. Perhaps, the survey was not distributed effectively. Staff may have not been reminded that this was an important issue and, therefore, may not have taken the time for completion. Responses came mostly from more experienced teachers. Younger colleagues may need more modeling, mentorship guidance, and direction from administrators to participate in such tasks. If the low response rate is any indication of this, it may be worth the effort of the administration to investigate.

There was a concern about the loss of “voice” indicated by the response from the staff who dealt with special education. Some of them exposed feelings of being left out, perceiving that their contributions are seen as being not as important as other staff

members' contributions. Some respondents were concerned that other staff members feel their special education students involved have something of a "negative" impact on the functioning of the school. For some respondents there is a sense of being alone and not being heard.

The schools involved in this project are revealed as communities in which the perceptions of staff are very important for the development of a healthy workplace. The development of these perceptions into purposeful and useful change becomes critical to the survival of the organization (Fullan, 2001).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Additional Resources Related to School Climate and Culture

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## Appendix B

### Survey Instrument

#### Instructions:

This survey attempts to identify the factors that affect your perception about what makes a healthy school. There are 24 questions to answer. The first 3 simply ask you to identify yourself in regards to your teaching assignment and your teaching experience.

The remaining 21 questions are to be answered with the following scale in mind:

Strongly Disagree  
 1 2 3 4 5  
 1 2 3 4 5

Please circle the number that appropriately describes your perception. Please answer all questions with reference to conditions in your present school. There are 5 optional open-ended questions that can be answered as well. After completing the survey, please place the survey into the envelope provided, seal it, and hand it in to the office.

Thank you for your cooperation in giving up some of your valuable time.

#### Questions:

1. What is your current job position and assignment?
  - Teacher
  - Administration
  - Support Staff
  - Custodial staff
2. Grade level taught. Please circle all numbers that apply.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 Special Education Counselor

3. How long have you been at this current position/assignment?

Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_.

4. How long have you been teaching? Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_.

Please use the following three words when you are answering the following questions:

In your school...

5. Do you feel that good ideas are considered equally, regardless of who initiates them?

Strongly  
Disagree  
Completely  
Disagree  
Agree  
Slightly  
Disagree  
Agree  
Strongly  
Agree

Optional comments or explanations.

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6. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are requested?

Strongly  
Disagree  
Completely  
Disagree  
Agree  
Slightly  
Disagree  
Agree  
Strongly  
Agree

Optional comments or explanations.

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7. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are honestly considered?

Str A Not Di Stro  
 on gr App sa ightly  
 gl : ica gr Disa  
 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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8. Do you feel that you are usually thanked for your contributions?

Str A Not Di Stro  
 on gr App sa ightly  
 gl : ica gr Disa  
 y e ble æ gree  
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 gr  
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Optional comments or explanations.

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9. Do you feel that your organization has realistic expectations?

Str A Not Di Stron  
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 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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10. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your positive concerns?

Strongly Disagree  
 on a 5-point scale  
 from 1 (Strongly Disagree)  
 to 5 (Strongly Agree)  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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11. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your negative concerns?

Strongly Disagree  
 on a 5-point scale  
 from 1 (Strongly Disagree)  
 to 5 (Strongly Agree)  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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12. Do you feel that you have the opportunity to celebrate successes?

Strongly Disagree  
 on a 5-point scale  
 from 1 (Strongly Disagree)  
 to 5 (Strongly Agree)  
 A  
 gr  
 ee

1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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13. Do you feel that there is freedom to share different ideas?

Strongly Disagree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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14. Do you feel that there is freedom to share resources and materials?

Strongly Disagree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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15. Do you feel that people rally around each other in time of crisis?



Str A Not Di Stron  
 on gr App ia gly  
 gl : ica gr Disa  
 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
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 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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16. Do you feel that it is safe to talk about everyday issues and concerns?

Str A Not Di Stron  
 on gr App ia gly  
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 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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17. Do you meet on a regular basis to share ideas and information?

Str A Not Di Stron  
 on gr App ia gly  
 gl : ica gr Disa  
 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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18. Do you perceive that your leader is willing to participate in two-way communication and feedback?

Strongly Disagree  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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19. Do you perceive that your leader is visible and approachable?

Strongly Disagree  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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20. Do you feel that your leader takes the time to develop relationships with people?

Strongly Disagree  
 1 2 3 4 5

gl : ica gr Disa  
 y e ble æ gree  
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 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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21. Do you perceive that your leader is willing to identify priorities?

Str A Not Di Stron  
 on gr App sa gly  
 gl : ica gr Disa  
 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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22. Do you perceive that your leader is willing to establish criteria for determining what is important?

Str A Not Di Stron  
 on gr App sa gly  
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 y e ble æ gree  
 A  
 gr  
 ee  
 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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23. Do you feel that the vision of the school is clear to all staff?

Strongly Disagree  
Strongly Agree  
Disagree  
Agree  
A  
gr  
ee  
1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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24. Do you feel that you understand the vision as it applies to you?

Strongly Disagree  
Strongly Agree  
Disagree  
Agree  
A  
gr  
ee  
1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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25. Do you feel that you have ownership of the vision as it applies to you?

Strongly Disagree  
Strongly Agree  
Disagree

Agreeable

A

gr

ee

1 2 3 4 5

Optional comments or explanations.

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Open-ended Optional Questions:

1. When thinking about the physical plant (your school), in your opinion what is the single most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your workplace?

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2. When thinking about the environment of your classroom, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of the workplace?

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3. When thinking about the environment of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

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4. When thinking about the leadership of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

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5. When thinking about the culture of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

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## Appendix C

## Guiding Questions, Theoretical Issues and Relevance Associated with Survey Questions

Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Question
What are staff members' beliefs and perceptions about being considered valued members of the organization?	Factors that influence perceptions about organizational climate, culture	To determine if respondents perceive that their contributions are considered valuable in the organization.	<p>5. Do you feel that good ideas are considered equally, regardless of who initiates them?</p> <p>6. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are requested?</p> <p>7. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are honestly considered?</p> <p>8. Do you feel you are usually thanked for your contributions?</p>
What are staff members' beliefs and perceptions about the organization's orientation?	Factors that influence perceptions about organizational climate, culture	To determine if respondents perceive a positive orientation towards the organization.	<p>9. Do you feel that your organization has realistic expectations?</p> <p>10. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your positive concerns?</p> <p>11. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your negative concerns?</p>

Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Question
			12. Do you feel you have the opportunity to celebrate successes?
What are staff members' beliefs and perceptions about the organization's ability to care for and support its members?	Factors that influence perceptions about organizational climate, culture	To determine if respondents perceive caring and support in the environment.	13. Do you feel that there is freedom to share different ideas? 14. Do you feel that there is freedom to share resources and materials? 15. Do you feel that people rally around each other in time of crisis?
What are staff members' beliefs and perceptions about the organization's communication?	Factors that influence perceptions about organizational climate and culture	To determine respondents' perceptions about the kind of communication that occurs.	16. Do you feel that it is safe to talk about everyday issues and concerns? 17. Do you meet on a regular basis to share ideas and information?
What are staff members' beliefs and perceptions about the organization's leaders?	Factors that influence perceptions about organizational climate, culture	To determine respondents' perceptions about positive leadership characteristics.	18. Do you perceive that the leader is willing to participate in two-way communication? 19. Do you perceive that the leader is visible and approachable? 20. Do you feel that the



Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Question
			<p>leader takes the time to develop relationships with people?</p> <p>21. Do you perceive that the leader is willing to identify priorities?</p> <p>22. Do you perceive that the leader is willing to establish criteria for determining what is important?</p>
<p>What are staff members' beliefs and perceptions about the organization's vision?</p>	<p>Factors that influence perceptions about organizational climate, culture</p>	<p>To determine respondents' perceptions about vision.</p>	<p>23. Do you feel that the vision of the school is clear to all staff?</p> <p>24. I understand the vision as it applies to me?</p> <p>25. Do you feel that you have ownership of the vision as it applies to you?</p>

## Appendix D

### Letter of Invitation and Consent to Participate as a Division

Superintendent Foothills School Division No.38:

Box 5700, 120-5 Avenue West

High River, AB. T1V 1M7

Dear Mr. McLellan:

As a graduate student of The University of Lethbridge, I am conducting research on the perceptions of staff about the factors that affect the school climate and school culture in the making of a healthy school. I am hoping the results of this study will generate professional and pedagogical discussion so that the identification of the factors of "healthy schools" can be readily identified and can be utilized for future professional development plans and school goals. The ability to evaluate and then put into practice the recommendations from the evaluations would be greatly assisted if these factors could be identified or clarified for all.

As part of the research proposal, I am asking you to allow staff to participate in a four-school research project in the Foothills School Division. The schools represent a cross section of the various configurations that exist in the Foothills School Division. They are Right Honorable Joe Clark School, Turner Valley School, Senator Riley Middle School, and the Foothills Composite High School.

Your approval will allow the administration and the staff members to participate in this survey if they have in turn signed a personal consent to participate letter. The staff responses to the survey will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. They will not be given to any other party. When powerful and illuminating quotes, and details

are used to illustrate a theme, concern, or issue, identifying information will be removed or eliminated.

I would very much appreciate your approval for the staff of these four schools to participate in the survey. If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space provided below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [hoffartg@fsd38.ab.ca](mailto:hoffartg@fsd38.ab.ca), or my school phone number, 684-3666. Also, feel free to contact my project supervisor, Dr. David Townsend at The University of Lethbridge (329-2457, email: [david.townsend@uleth.ca](mailto:david.townsend@uleth.ca)), or Dr. Keith Roscoe, Chair of Human Subjects Research Committee, The University of Lethbridge (329-2446, email: [keith.roscoe@uleth.ca](mailto:keith.roscoe@uleth.ca)), if you wish additional information.

Please sign below and return to me.

Sincerely

Gary Hoffart

Consent Form

I have read the information and agree to respond to the survey.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### Letter of Invitation and Consent to Participate as a School

Dear Administration team:

As a graduate student of The University of Lethbridge, I am conducting research on the perceptions of staff about the factors that affect the school climate and school culture in making of a healthy school. I am hoping the results of this study will generate professional and pedagogical discussion so that the factors of "healthy schools" can be readily identified and can be utilized for future professional development plans and school goals. The ability to evaluate and then put into practice the recommendations from the evaluations would be greatly assisted if these factors could be identified or clarified for all.

As part of the research proposal, you are being asked to allow your staff to participate in a four-school research project in the Foothills School Division. The schools represent a cross section of the various configurations that exist in the Foothills School Division. They are a Kindergarten to grade five, Kindergarten to grade eight, a middle school, and a high school. I am asking for your approval for your staff to participate in this research survey. Since your participation is entirely voluntary, at any time, you may decide to withdraw, without prejudice.

Your approval will allow your staff members to participate in a survey if they have in turn signed a personal consent to participate letter. Your staff responses to the survey will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. They will not be given to any other party. When powerful and illuminating quotes and details, are used to

illustrate a theme, concern, or issue, identifying characteristics will be removed or eliminated to preserve your identify.

I would very much appreciate your approval for your staff to participate in the survey. If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space provided below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [hoffartg@fsd38.ab.ca](mailto:hoffartg@fsd38.ab.ca), or my school phone number, 684-3666. Also, feel free to contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. David Townsend at The University of Lethbridge (329-2457, email: [david.townsend@uleth.ca](mailto:david.townsend@uleth.ca)), or Dr. Keith Roscoe, Chair of Human Subjects Research Committee, The University of Lethbridge (329-2446, email: [keith.roscoe@uleth.ca](mailto:keith.roscoe@uleth.ca)), if you wish additional information.

Please sign below and return to me.

Sincerely,

Gary Hoffart

Consent Form

I have read the information and agree to respond to the survey.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Letter of Invitation and Consent to Participate as a Staff Member

Dear Staff Member:

As a graduate student of The University of Lethbridge, I am conducting research on the perceptions of staff about the factors that affect the school climate and school culture in making of a healthy school. I am hoping the results of this study will generate professional and pedagogical discussion so that the factors of "healthy schools" can be readily identified and can be utilized for future professional development plans and school goals. The ability to evaluate and then put into practice the recommendations from the evaluation would be greatly assisted if these factors could be identified or clarified for all.

As part of the research, you are being asked to participate as a staff member from one of four schools by completing the survey. Since your participation is entirely voluntary, at any time, you may decide to withdraw, without prejudice.

Your responses to the survey will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. They will not be given to any other party. When powerful and illuminating quotes and details, are used to illustrate a theme, concern, or issue, identifying characteristics will be removed or eliminated to preserve your identify.

I would very much appreciate your participation in the survey. If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space provided below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [hoffartg@fsd38.ab.ca](mailto:hoffartg@fsd38.ab.ca), or my school phone number, 684-3666. Also, feel free to contact my project supervisor, Dr.

David Townsend at The University of Lethbridge (329-2457, email: [david.townsend@uleth.ca](mailto:david.townsend@uleth.ca)), or Dr. Keith Roscoe, Chair of Human Subjects Research Committee, The University of Lethbridge (329-2446, email: [keith.roscoe@uleth.ca](mailto:keith.roscoe@uleth.ca)), if you wish additional information.

Please sign below and return to me.

Sincerely,

Gary Hoffart

Consent Form

I have read the information and agree to respond to the survey.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

Application for Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Approval

## FACULTY OF EDUCATION

## HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH APPROVAL FORM

2001 – 2002

Title of Study: Healthy Schools: Determining the Factors that Influence Staff Perceptions of School Climate and Culture in the Foothills School Division.

Principal Investigator: Gary Hoffart, Administrator in Foothills School Division No. 38

Co-Investigator: None.

## Duration of Research

The duration of this research project is proposed to be one month. It will commence approximately September 15th and culminate on October 31st, 2001. During this period of time I will visit each of the four respondent schools to explain what the project is about. The explanation of the project has a four-fold purpose: to invite each of the staff members to participate in the survey; to explain what the survey is and how it works; to dispel any fears about confidentiality, validity and anonymity; to have the letter of consent distributed, signed, and collected. It is the intention of this researcher to field any questions or concerns during this face-to-face visit.

## Purpose of Research

It is the purpose of this project to identify the factors that contribute to the perceptions of staff in how they feel about the healthiness of the school in which they work. These factors that contribute to this healthiness has been identified and perceived



by all that enter the building. Positive school climate and culture are key factors that promote healthy working environments. These factors should assist in the examination and the evaluation of the climate of the school and allow for a direct connection to the overall healthiness of the school.

The objective is to clearly and concretely identify these school climate and culture factors and their effects, so that they may be utilized in the creation of a school climate or culture that is conducive to the positive learning of the students within the building. As well, it is in the identification of these factors that school staff can function in a work environment that is healthy and conducive to their working well, and in turn being able to provide an environment that will lead to positive student outcomes.

The central research question is twofold: (a) Is it possible to identify the factors that affect the perceptions of school staff about the school climate and culture? (b) How do these factors, if identified, influence, teach, and/or shape the success or healthiness of the school?

#### Research Subjects

The subjects of this research are the staff members (all certificated teaching staff, administration, support staff, including custodial staff) that make up the staff of four schools. The four schools will be comprised of the Right Honorable Joe Clark School (Kindergarten to grade five), Turner Valley School (Kindergarten to grade eight), Senator Douglas Middle School (grade six to eight), and the Foothills Composite High School (grade ten to twelve). These four schools should comprise a large enough sample to enable the researcher to make some statements about the overall factors that affect the school climate and culture and in turn affect the overall healthiness of schools.

### Methods of Data Collection

The instrument that will be used is a survey that will be distributed by the researcher at the initial school visit. The survey is comprised of five parts. The first part is the introduction and demographic identification of the participant. The questions asked will only identify the position of the respondent, job assignment, and the total number of years of teaching experience. The anonymity of the respondents is necessary, as it is the intention of the project to simply identify the factors attributing to staff perceptions about a healthy school. This introduction will also explain the rationale behind the survey and to positively assure each respondent his or her anonymity. The following four sections will deal with the role of the leader, the direction and the strength of the shared school vision, the school climate and the involvement of the local school community. It is my assumption that these four aspects are at the core of a school's effectiveness.

### Free and Informed Consent

The survey is on a voluntary basis. The respondents will be asked to sign a written consent form, which will identify that their participation is on a voluntary basis. Consent also will be requested from the Superintendent of the Foothills School Division No.38 and from each of the respective school administration. A sample of the consent form is attached.

### Privacy and Confidentiality

The survey will only identify the collective data from each school. It is the intention of this project to identify the perceptions of staff that they feel are the factors that promote and influence their work place and in turn promote a healthy school. The

structure of the survey will ensure the privacy and the confidentiality of the respondents and the data gained from the survey.

#### Right to Inquire about Research

Information about the survey and the right of access to the information will be addressed at the conclusion of the respondent's answers to the survey. The information will only be accessible after the termination of the survey month. This will ensure that there is no influence by individuals until the survey is completed. The collective information will be made available to each school on an individual basis.

#### Access to Data and Research Materials

The collective result will be accessible by any of the respondents participating in the survey by a written request to the researcher. The superintendent may have access to the collective four schools results. Administration will be advised about their schools results as well. The Human Subjects Chair, supervisor, and committee members will have access to the results by the same process that the staff and administrators will have.

#### Balance of Harm and Benefit

It is the impression and the understanding of the researcher that there would be no physical or emotional risks involved with this research project, and that the results could help focus school administration and staff in their task of creating a healthier school.

Supervisor's Approval I have (a) ensured that all sections are completed satisfactorily, (b) reviewed all the above information for accuracy and completeness, and (c) made sure that all necessary supporting documentation has been provided.

Signature:

Date:

Office use only:

Committee decision:            Approve                    Resubmit

Chair of Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H

### Instructions to Staff Members for Completing Survey

#### HEALTHY SCHOOLS: DETERMINING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE IN THE FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DIVISION

Dear Colleagues:

Right from the start, I would like to thank you very much for agreeing to participate in my Masters Research Project. I know that the September start up is extremely busy for all of us in education and learning. I am part of the foothills School Division and the University of Lethbridge Masters cohort program that started in January of 1999. This joint program has been a great benefit to the individuals who participated in the Masters program as well as the division. The learning advantages that have been opened for all are a truly positive educational experience.

In order for you to participate in this survey you must sign the letter of consent and participation. If you decide to participate, please sign the letter of consent and put it into the envelope provided. Once you have completed the survey place the survey in the other envelope provided and place a check mark on the outside of the envelope. Each of the envelopes will have separate deposit brown packages at the office. I will collect the consent forms and the survey forms as soon as they are completed.

Once again thank you.

Sincerely,

Gary Hoffart

## Appendix I

## Example of Collation Charts

## School A

Question	SA	A	NA	D	SD	Optional Qu
5. Do you feel that good ideas are considered equally, regardless of who initiates them?	4	3		1	1	Written response listed beside each
7. Do you feel that everyone's input and opinions are honestly considered?	3	3	1	1	1	
10. Do you feel it is safe to bring forth your negative concerns?	3	3		2	1	
20. Do you feel that your leader takes the time to develop relationships with people?	6	3				
25. Do you feel that you have ownership of the vision as it applies to you?	5	2	1	1		
TOTAL	21	14	2	5	3	

SA Strongly agree

A Agree

NA Not applicable

D Disagree

SD Strongly disagree

## Appendix J

## Written Responses to Optional Open-ended Questions, by School

*Foothills Composite High School*

Question 1: When thinking about the physical plant (your school) in your opinion what is the single most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your workplace?

- Adequate room size to accommodate increasingly larger class size (12 years, 12 years, Division 4)
- The cleanliness of the school should be a greater focus (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- F.C.H.S is a very bright school with lots of windows. The building is clean and well maintained (19 years, 18 years, Division 4)
- Everyone's respect for the facility: cleanliness (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Meeting area of the cafeteria for students/teacher discussions (8 years, 5 years, Division 4)
- Very little display of students' accomplishments (19 years, 11 years, Division 4)
- Air circulation (8 years, 6 years, Division 4)
- A strong staff (15 years, 15 years, Division 4)

Question 2: When thinking about the environment of your classroom, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of the workplace?

- Respect (12 years, 12 years, Division 4)

- Organization of all staff and students involved (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- Safe, welcoming and friendly environment (19 years, 18 years, Division 4)
- Room enough for all students (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Stimulating displays of student work and “catchy” equipment demonstrations (8 years, 5 years, Division 4)
- Room: classes are crowded (19 years, 11 years, Division 4)
- Too dark, too dirty (8 years, 6 years, Division 4)
- A dedicated teacher (15 years, 15 years, Division 4)

Question 3: When thinking about the environment of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Respect and caring (12 years, 12 years, Division 4)
- The cleanliness of the school should be a greater focus (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- Safe, welcoming and friendly environment (19 years, 18 years, Division 4)
- Administration (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Culture – a positive culture of both staff and students (19 years, 11 years, Division 4)
- Smoking (8 years, 6 years, Division 4)
- Strong commitment by all staff to do their best (15 years, 15 years, Division 4)

Question 4: When thinking about the leadership of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Responsible and accountable (12 years, 12 years, Division 4)



- The allocations of duties between all administration – taking a close look at the strengths of each person (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- The student wellbeing is the number one priority. All students are welcomed and cared for (19 years, 18 years, Division 4)
- Administration (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Consistency (19 years, 11 years, Division 4)
- Positive attitude and smiles (8 years, 6 years, Division 4)
- Good interaction with the student body (15 years, 15 years, Division 4)

Question 5: When thinking about the culture of your school, in your opinion, what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Tolerance and respect (12 years, 12 years, Division 4)
- Putting a greater effort into having more team building activities – staff, students, and staff and students together (8 years, 3 years, Special Education)
- Entire staff (21 years, 21 years, Division 4)
- Positive attitudes and open discussion (8years, 5years Division 4)
- Cohesion of staff towards mission statement (19 years, 11 years, Division 4)
- That we all try to enjoy what we do (8 years, 6 years, Division 4)
- A strong staff (15 years, 15 years, Division 4)

*Joe Clark Elementary*

Question 1: When thinking about the physical plant (your school) in your opinion what is the single most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your workplace?

- Staff room and office in a central location. Renewed air supply: healthier environment (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Mixing of grades in all hallways. Library is central and well used by all (15 years, 3 years, Division 2)
- Humor. The staff is good at finding the “funny” stuff in our jobs and laughing. They’re willing to listen when a staff member needs to “talk” and get ideas (10 years, 3 years, Division 1)
- The air is very poor (27 years, 6 years, Special Education)
- Layout of classrooms and resources are central (22 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Air circulation (1 year, Division 2)
- The most important physical factor would be the use of sky light in the west hallway. Overall, I feel the physical plant is unhealthy in terms of air quality (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)

Question 2: When thinking about the environment of your classroom, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of the workplace?

- Staff positive outlook (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Buddy classes. Caring about others. Being able to go to colleagues in any hall for support (15 years, 3 years, Division 2)

- My windows, I get a natural light and I can see the world (10 years, 3 years, Division 1) The teacher's mood (27 years, 6 years, Special Education)
- Teacher educational Assistants and parents working together: partners in education (22 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Remembering I work with young people who make many mistakes and am constantly learning from them. Laughter helps students understand self-growth and community togetherness. WE ARE A TEAM! (12 years, 4 years, Division 2)
- Air temperature relates to a healthy learning environment. After that, I feel that the mood/tone of the class is important (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)

Question 3: When thinking about the environment of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Staff and parent involvement and interaction (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Open door policy: welcoming. People laughing and enjoying the children (15 years, 3 years, Division 2)
- The people of the school help it to be a healthy place (10 years, 3 years, Division 1)
- The empathy/respect for each other (27 years, 6 years, Special Education)
- Team approach and support from peers (22 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Working together, respecting differences, and a lot of good jokes. We share concerns about student learning and behavior and support each other. Discussions happen daily with certain people (12 years, 4 years, Division 2)

- How positive the staff is (1 year, Division 2)
- Environment is poor in terms of air quality and can be poor in terms of negativity at times. This is common in most schools and must be fought against at all times (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)

Question 4: When thinking about the leadership of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Positive comments and pro staff (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Being visible to parents, children and teachers (15 years, 3 years, Division 2)
- That the leaders equally care for, listen to and appreciate their staff members (27 years, 6 years, Special Education)
- Approachable and supportive (22 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Leadership needs to have a goal that ALL staff must work towards. Leaders must be approachable and there must be open communication between staff and administration (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- They listen and make time for teachers. They support teachers in small and big ways (10 years, 3 years, Division 1)

Question 5: When thinking about the culture of your school, in your opinion, what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Close connections with parents and community. Staff being part of the community (30 years, 10 years, Special Education)
- Our social activities, staff gatherings, Christmas. Visiting in the staff room (10 years, 3 years, Division 1)

- The positive feedback from parent and children (27 years, 6 years, Special Education)
- Fine Arts program – music and Phys. Ed specialists (22 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- Respect of parents, teachers and student and how they support each other (12 years, 4 years, Division 2)
- A school culture must be diverse but open to input and styles from all facets of schooling. In our school, this diversity is not shared enough (11 years, 1 year, Division 2)

*Senator Riley Middle School*

Question 1: When thinking about the physical plant (your school) in your opinion what is the single most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your workplace?

- Location to staff room (24 years, 6 years, Special Ed)
- We have large classrooms and an aesthetically pleasing building (9 years, 1 year, Administration)
- Open windows, lots of light (9 years, 5 years, midschool)
- Cleanliness (8 years, 5 years, midschool)
- Cleanliness, fantastic light and open spaces (20 years, 2 years, midschool)
- Distance between rooms means lots of walking (2 4years, 20 years, midschool)
- The atmosphere – energy – positiveness and the well being of those working within the walls of the school (18 years, 5 years, midschool)

- Classroom – hallway then gym (24 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Large windows, gathering area, clean shiny floors etceteras, wall/posters, signs, and etceteras (10 years, 9 years, middle school)
- *That the staff group is cohesive and feels they are supported and appreciated by the administration. That the staff has a shared vision and goal (4 months)*
- Bright, open, clean (22 years, 4 years, middle school)
- Clean air, light, windows (5 years, 1 year, middle school)
- *A clean, bright, attractive school (2 years)*
- Lots of windows – bright (student Teacher)
- All the windows and the bright light (skylights) (student teacher)

Question 2: When thinking about the environment of your classroom, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of the workplace?

- Closeness to students, relationships (24 years, 6 years, Special Ed)
- Space and light (9 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Our class sizes have increased greatly over the years. It is very crowded and no one really has his or her own space (8 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Space to move, comfort (20 years, 2 years, middle school)
- Humor – a wonderful cure! Care and compassion (24 years, 20 years, middle school)
- The lighting, the posters, student work on the walls and cooperativeness of teachers working with and for the students (18 years, 5 years, middle school)

- Communication/relationship (positive) between students and myself (24 years, 5 years, midschool)
- Size of classroom, tables, chairs, and desks. Large windows that open. TV/radio/phone accessibility. Computers and happy learners (students and teacher) (10 years, 9 years, midschool)
- Student-friendly environment. Supportive and caring (22 years, 4 years, midschool)
- Respect (5 years, 1 year, midschool)
- *Class size – if too large it becomes overwhelming for students as well as the teacher (2 years)*
- Desk arrangement in groups of four (student teacher)
- High expectations and lots of laughter (student teacher)

Question 3: When thinking about the environment of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Differences in philosophy (24 years, 6 years, Special Ed)
- The staff truly love children. This is the focus of everything they do (9 years, 1 year, Ad.)
- Fresh air, air exchange system. Light color. Lack of clutter (20 years, 2 years, midschool)
- Sharing concerns, understanding, humor and laughter (24 years, 20 years, midschool)
- The attitudes of those within the building (18 years, 5 years, midschool)

- That learning is the reason why we are here and everything else slides in nicely. Participation in all areas is a must: drama, art, sports, etc. (24 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Extracurricular opportunities for all students. Happy learners (10 years, 9 years, middle school)
- *The principal is a leader, who can engage his staff and appreciate their strengths, individuality, and support them in doing their job (4 months)*
- Student focus, positive attitude (22 years, 4 years, middle school)
- Staff supporting one another (5 years, 1 year, middle school)
- *Staff and students encouraging and supporting one another, instead of bullying and criticizing. Everyone on the same page (2 years)*
- Supportive and friendly (student teacher)
- The energy from the teachers and students makes the school so dynamic (student teacher)

Question 4: When thinking about the leadership of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Trust (24 years, 6 years, Special Ed)
- Great skill at problem solving and a democratic approach when dealing with people (9 years, 1 year, Ad.)
- Wise decisions (9 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Openness, candor, willingness to admit when could we use help, a very common sense approach (20 years, 2 years, middle school)



- Communication, appreciation, recognition, and being supportive (24 years, 20 years, midschool)
- Positive communication between staff, parents, administration, etc. (18 years, 5 years, midschool)
- Open communication and fairness in suggestions (24 years, 5 years, midschool)
- Communication (10 years, 9 years, midschool)
- *That the teacher is healthy, emotionally, socially, and psychologically (4 months)*
- Consistency (expectations, consequences, and support) (22 years, 4 years, midschool)
- Open communication (5 years, 1 year, midschool)
- *Support and encouragement, approachable personality) (2 years)*
- Approachable and friendly (student teacher)
- Leadership is willing to listen and compromise (student teacher)

Question 5: When thinking about the culture of your school, in your opinion, what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- In this together (Special Ed 24 years, 6 years)
- The staff works as a team (9 years, 1 year, Ad.)
- Celebration of students in their middle years (9 years, 5 years, midschool)
- Every aspect of the school is essential to the whole, for example, academics, community service, diversity, band, sports, art, yearbook, options, teachers, parents, students, etc. (20 years, 2 years, midschool)

- Support, awareness, humor, and honesty (24 years, 20 years, middle school)
- Excellence and motivation of the students and the ability to love and care for those within the walls of our school (18 years, 5 years, middle school)
- The respect students have for one another, staff and the school (24 years, 5 years, middle school)
- Extra curricular opportunities for all students. Happy learners (10 years, 9 years, middle school)
- *That the individual in the school, staff and students, are seen as unique with special talents and abilities, that make the school exciting and a fun place to be (4 months)*
- Student focus and development of pride. Many activities for students: all can be successful (22 years, 4 years, middle school)
- Respect! (5 years, 1 year, middle school)
- *The leadership and interrelationships between staff, parents and students (2 years)*
- Grades found here, friendliness, structured setting (student teacher)
- There's an inclusive quality to the school. As soon as I walked in the door I felt welcomed and part of the family (student teacher)

### *Turner Valley School*

Question 1: When thinking about the physical plant (your school) in your opinion what is the single most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your workplace?

- Tidy, clean, attractive (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- *Teamwork (1 year.)*
- We are looking to improve the “look” of our school. In doing this, the staff becomes proud and this transfers to the students’ opinions about our school (20 years, 11 years, all)
- My opinion is to keep all areas sanitized, where students and teachers work and study (desks, washrooms, eating areas, and rooms, offices, Library, and halls)
- Bright colors, clean and orderly appearance (12 years, 2 years, middle school)
- The students take pride in keeping their school clean. They help, washing desks at lunch and picking up garbage at the end of the day (10 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- Everyone takes pride in our school (9 years, 1 year, all)
- *We all respect each other and care about each other (2 years)*
- Respect for school and property. Everyone appreciates efforts to keep our school clean, attractive, a good place to be (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- *Everyone’s involvement to make the school a safe place (1 year)*

Question 2: When thinking about the environment of your classroom, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of the workplace?

- Organized, child-friendly, they have a feeling that this is their classroom. The students have access as well as responsibility for the materials in the classroom (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- *Your love of what you do and enjoying children (1 year)*
- We are a very caring and sensitive school. Everyone hugs. The atmosphere is like “family”, easy going and yet rules are very clear (20 years, 11 years, all)
- Cleanliness (teacher awareness) of clean desk, floors, door knobs.
- Sunlight and color. A relationship with the students that is conducive to learning and living (12 years, 2 years, midschool)
- Our safe and caring motto. It is taught in class and students use it to help solve problems (10 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- It is a safe and caring place (9 years 1 year, all)
- The factor contributing to healthiness is that it is a safe environment (4 years, 2 years, Division 1)
- Freedom to use, decorate, change learning spaces as required (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)

Question 3: When thinking about the environment of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Good sense of humor, friendly, welcoming, caring for all the students (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- *Teamwork (1 year)*

- We are a very caring and sensitive school. Everyone hugs. The atmosphere is like “family”, easy going, yet rules are very clear (20 years, 11 years, all)
- Washrooms and fountains.
- A friendship between staff (12 years, 2 years, midschool)
- The superstar program is a good way to let students feel proud of their accomplishments (10 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- *The staff is all working toward the same end. To teach the children in a safe and caring place. Treat each child in the same way (2 years)*
- The important factor would be our safe and caring program (4 years, 2 years, Division 1)
- The community feeling, that the school is here for everyone’s use (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- *Positive attitudes (1 year)*

Question 4: When thinking about the leadership of your school, in your opinion what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Approachable and supportive (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- *Strong leadership – care consideration and direction (1year)*
- Caring, organization, clear expectations, interests in “all” activities (20 years, 11 years, all)
- Discipline.
- Learning to listen for the little problems and then acting before they are a concern (12 years, 2 years, midschool)

- The administration is very supportive and allows teachers to have the freedom to choose what works best (10 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- The important factor would be our vice-principal (4 years, 2 years, Division 1)
- Our leader is approachable and takes time for everyone. He has gained our respect and admiration, students and staff alike (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- *Open and honest (1year)*

Question 5: When thinking about the culture of your school, in your opinion, what is the most important factor contributing to the overall healthiness of your school?

- Sharing and caring (20 years, 5 years, Division 1)
- We are working to become a “safe and caring” school. Students feel safe here (20 years, 11 years, all)
- To respect all cultures
- The sense of community, a genuine caring between all stakeholders for the stakeholders (12 years, 2 years, midschool)
- The way that all staff members encourage each other and acknowledge each other’s success (10 years, 1 year, Division 2)
- We realize we are unique in our own way, like every school. We celebrate our differences and come together at school as a learning community (22 years, 17 years, Division 1)
- *Everyone is equal as much as possible (1 year)*