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# An Analysis of the Culture in a Foreign Language Immersion School

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An Analysis of the Culture in a Foreign Language Immersion School

By  
Amy Felicia Eybl

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2015

## Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Amy Felicia Eybl under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## **Abstract**

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This dissertation was designed to assess the culture in a foreign language immersion magnet school to determine the type of culture in the school, to discover how the culture in the school is perceived by the foreign language immersion and non-immersion staff members, and to determine the impact the presence of the foreign language immersion program has on the culture of the school. This study was designed to add to the knowledge base on school culture in the foreign language immersion setting.

The writer used the School Culture Triage Survey developed by Christopher Wagner to assess the culture of the school. Additional data were obtained from observations, interviews, and school documents.

An analysis of the collected data revealed how the culture is perceived by the staff members and the type of culture in the school. Although there is a perceived culture in the school, the culture has only previously been assessed through the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey but never specifically with the school culture in a foreign language immersion school as the focus.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Understanding how to interpret and assess the type of culture in a school is essential in order to pull student achievement and effective teaching practices together. The problem, then, is how the culture in a school can be assessed in order to implement changes that will increase effective instructional practices and student achievement (Wagner, 2006). From his research, Wagner (2006) found that there are unique conditions found in every school which contribute to the school's culture. The means of identifying how humans in a group share their lifestyle, values, habits, behaviors, and celebrations are defined as its culture (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992), one of the early organizational culture theorists, wrote that in order to discern the deeper meanings and understandings that members of an organization have cultivated over time and taken for granted such as habits, patterns, practices and ways of thinking, the group must be systematically observed. Schein (1992) found observation to be an effective way to obtain valuable data on how people behave and perform in an organization. Observation provides the observer with clear data about what is valued, celebrated, taken for granted, and held in esteem in the organization. Schein (1992) found using culture audits to be an effective means of helping to determine the type of culture present in an organization, leading to a purposeful way to improve and change the culture in organizations.

The culture of an organization provides meaning to the normal daily occurrences and can be seen in the behaviors of its members. School culture is characterized by what makes the school unique and what members of the organization deem to be important, as well as the symbols and characteristics reflected in the organization. The culture of an organization helps its members perform successfully because they know, believe in,



celebrate, share, and value the organization and its accomplishments (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Barth (2002) contended that culture is the adhesive that forms the bond that holds an organization together like the mortar in a brick building. Schein (1986) wrote that the culture of an organization is related to the organization's history and a series of processes learned over time that shapes it. Schein (1986) continued that the perception of how problems in the organization have been reviewed and resolved over time gives its members a sense of comfort and reduces anxiety. When problems and solutions are resolved in a consistent manner over a period of years, they are often taken for granted and become a part of the organizational assumptions. Culture helps the members of an organization learn how to problem solve, how to develop common communication skills that are a reflection of the organization's purpose, and how to create and share a common vision (Schein, 1986). The type of culture found in schools is a derivation of organizational culture. Educational researchers note that this culture reflects the culture of the community where the school is located (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwebguzie, 2009).

Major reforms in education were brought about through the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), created to raise the standards for educating children in the United States. It was the first major education overhaul to occur in the United States since 1965 when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) became law (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). Under mandates from NCLB, high-stakes accountability measures led to school reforms, many of which were unsuccessful because the legislation failed to consider the importance of culture development that supports teacher development and teacher success. As the drive for high-stakes accountability continues, reform efforts will only be successful in a school that has developed a culture

that provides teachers with support, the means to collaborate, and professional development which is aligned with the learning needs of the teachers to support and enhance their own learning (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). The drive for higher test scores has caused many to lose sight of the best interests of students; and this loss of the vision to educate students to their highest levels has, in some cases, been detrimental to student achievement. The demands for higher accountability measures have also led to stress among teachers (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2014). School culture should work hand-in-hand with student achievement. When one views schools through the lens of culture, research shows a high correlation between student achievement and a culture of collaboration in a school (Gruenert, 2005). To assess the culture in a school, culture surveys and audits have been created and conducted for educational research by Brinton (2007), Bustamante et al. (2009), Wagner and O'Phelan (1998), Waldron and McLeskey (2010).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Peterson and Deal (1998) and Lindahl (2006) referenced Willard Waller as one of the first theorists who wrote about the defined culture present in each school that makes the school unique and distinguishes one school from another. The researchers noted that Waller described the rituals, games, ceremonies, and traditions commonly found in schools and give the school its distinct character (Lindahl, 2006; Peterson & Deal, 1998). Peterson and Deal (1998) wrote that culture is a complex concept defined by the school's main purpose or mission that includes the organization's "values, beliefs, assumptions and norms" (p. 28) and all those things which influence what happens in the organization. The culture in the school provides the focus for what is important in the school and what is to be valued in the everyday life of the school. When staff members are given the autonomy to experiment, make decisions, become risk takers, and gain an understanding

of their own value in the school community, the school has a supportive culture. It is also important for teachers to know, identify, encourage, and defend the shared values of the organization (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Students succeed in schools where there is a culture of commitment and effective instructional and teaching strategies and practices. Culture is important because it is responsive to the developmental needs and levels of students and stimulates students academically and personally (Reeves, 2007). Peterson and Deal (1998) identified the benefits of having a strong school culture and wrote that the effectiveness of a school improves when there is a positive culture that enhances teacher productivity (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The culture in a school is positively impacted by the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs increase the communication among teachers, bring them together to reflect critically on classroom and school practices, and allow for teachers to explore preconceived notions about school operations in a new light as they work together to make improvements that will increase student and teacher success (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). This premise parallels the findings of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) who explained that one of the major responsibilities of the school principal is to endorse and support a positive collaborative culture in a school. Teachers who work together in a positive manner and participate in collaborative activities positively impact collegial relationships and foster communication that generates problem-solving strategies. Teaching in isolation is the opposite of collaborative teaching and is detrimental to the teaching profession. The teacher who teaches in isolation is not aware of the effective teaching practices occurring in other classrooms, nor is the teacher aware of his or her own inferior teaching practices which need to be corrected because the teacher has no means of comparison. When teachers

collaborate, they are involved in the change process and in reform efforts implemented to improve the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Many teachers have been led to believe that teaching is a private affair and not to be judged by others. Teachers who want to be left alone are not taking advantage of the knowledge base of their colleagues and are missing out on the collaborative effort of others that makes those who collaborate more effective and gives them the impetus to have a much larger impact on their students (Schmoker, 2006). When teachers take ownership of the school vision and the school's success, they are more willing to commit to the shared endeavors of the school as stakeholders.

Schmoker (2006) referred to Wise who wrote that after college, those professionals who are team players continue to improve their professional practice in collaboration with others to accomplish a goal. Finally, a strong school culture is unifying. Such a culture brings together students, staff, and stakeholders in the community who will be positively impacted by the energy and motivation generated from the positive culture (Deal & Peterson, 2003).

Glasser (1969) wrote about what he recognized as a negative culture that existed in schools that did not facilitate learning for all children, especially students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. He criticized the nation's schools for failing to provide all students with the tools needed to be academically successful. He noted that poor school preparation would not lead students to be successful in higher education or in careers once they finished high school. The goal of education is for all students to achieve at high levels, according to Glasser. To accomplish this goal, schools must be measured by their ability to produce students equipped to achieve at high levels (Glasser, 1969).

Glasser's statements connect to the current trend in educational research that effective schools share the belief that all students can learn, and the school must maximize

educational opportunities for all children by improving the quality of the education that they receive. A teacher in the profession who works in isolation and continues to do what has always been done facilitates the continuation of inferior practices. Teachers who teach in this manner are not taking advantage of the benefits that collaboration among colleagues brings, namely contributing to the improvement of professional practices and student success (Schmoker, 2006).

Barth (1990) wrote that in order to pull student achievement and effective teaching practices together to achieve school success, it is essential to develop a positive culture in a school. The development of a positive school culture leads to improving the relationships among stakeholders in the school, leading to improved teacher effectiveness. Barth asserted that the most important aspect of a school is the culture. He recommended that schools that desire to be successful must begin the challenge of culture building to increase and improve upon the expectations for learning in the school (Barth, 1990). Further, Barth contended that a school's culture is more important than anything that might influence the school from the outside. His recommendation is that school stakeholders take the time and necessary energy to embrace the task to improve the culture, no matter the type of culture (Barth, 2002). Organizational culture takes years to evolve and is learned by the members of the organization as they connect and interact with each other in positive and negative ways and as they share language, concepts, and norms which define the particular school and its culture. Culture is defined consciously through behaviors, beliefs, artifacts, and rituals and subconsciously through the fundamental assumptions and values of the people in the organization (Lindahl, 2006).

Schein (1992) based his understanding of culture on its deeper meanings in relationship to mental processes and understanding. He defined culture as the

evolutionary process by which members of a group make and create ideas about how to deal with the problems in their world; how members of the group create validity around their beliefs; and how they share these beliefs with other members of the group to teach them the group norms for reacting, feeling, and regarding problems or situations that may arise. When people work in close proximity to one another, culture happens. Schein's (1986) background was in organizational development; and he consulted with companies who often regarded the terms organizational climate, organizational culture, and managerial climate to be congruent.

Hoy (1990) wrote that an organization gets its identity from its culture. The concepts of culture and climate humanize organizations and have been studied, defined, and analyzed, moving the concept of organizational culture into the forefront when describing effective schools. Hoy noted that culture is a concept derived from the literature on organizational culture in corporations. He recorded that Bernard in the 1930s and Mayo in the 1940s described the significance of organizational culture when referring to culture in the workplace. The agreed upon consensus for defining organizational culture is that it is the network of shared views that connect the parts of an organization and provide the organization with its identity. Culture exists in an organization when its members share a common view of their world and have a shared sense of values based on what the members of the organization must do to be successful. Hoy found that schools with a strong culture have shared values and agree on how things are done; the school leader exemplifies the values found in the school; there are certain rituals that take place in the school; staff members are valued for their contribution to the success of the school; members actively participate in school celebrations; and a balance exists between control and the freedom to explore new ideas.

Everything that happens in the school is influenced by the school's culture.

Wagner (2006) wrote that student academic success is subject to the influence of the culture of the school. He described culture as the bridge that supports current and future achievement of the students in a school that can only be sustained when there are strong pillars such as those found in a healthy and positive school environment that support the bridge (Wagner, 2006). Further, Masden-Copas and Wagner (2002) supported the premise that schools must understand the importance of culture to the school organization and its stakeholders. Everyone in the school must work together to ensure that they get the culture right before engaging in other school improvement activities. A healthy school culture is essential for a school. In a sound culture, colleagues willingly participate in professional development to improve their own instructional practices and the academic success of the school (Masden-Copas & Wagner, 2002).

Schoen and Teddlie (2008) conducted research that they hoped would bring clarity to the concept of school culture and the implications that school culture has on school improvement and school effectiveness. The researchers looked at an abundance of literature on the topic of culture but later refined their search to studies around school culture and school improvement from 1980 to 2001. Beginning with Waller in 1932, they found broad definitions on how culture impacts the behavior of members of an organization. Schoen and Teddlie (2008) found an increase in interest around organizational culture from 1981 to the present when Deal and Peterson began their research on culture in organizations. In addition, Schoen and Teddlie found the previous definitions of culture too broad, ambiguous, and hard to observe and developed their framework for culture using the accepted and recognized frameworks to observe how schools operate. They also took into consideration Schein's (1992) model of

organizational culture. Schoen and Teddlie found that Schein's levels of organizational culture were defined as "artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions" that interact with each other (p. 138). Lezotte and Snyder (2011) added that Schein's model provides a practical way to view school culture and designed a similar schematic using Schein's view of culture. All four researchers noted that the levels of culture are fluid and interact with each other. Level 1 in the table represents those behaviors that can be seen. Level 2 represents what members of an organization articulate they believe in or value. Per Lezotte and Snyder, an observable behavior in an elementary school is grouping students according to their chronological age; however, when measured against what educators know and value as best practices for children, grouping students according to their age is not always sensible. Level 3 represents what happens when premises are addressed and action is taken consistent with what the organization believes and values. Lezotte and Snyder took from Schein's model that if organizational change is to occur, it will occur at the third level where the organization's beliefs and values are found.

Table 1

*Organizational Culture*

Level 1	Artifacts	Visible organizational structures and processes (hard to decipher)
Level 2	Espoused values	Strategies, goals, philosophies (espoused justifications)
Level 3	Basic underlying assumptions	Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (ultimate sources of values and actions)

*Note.* Schein's (1992) levels of organizational culture (as referenced by Lezotte & Snyder, 2011, p. 103; Schoen & Teddlie, 2008, p. 237).

Organizational culture takes years to evolve and is learned by the members of the organization as they connect and interact with each other in positive and negative ways



and in sharing language, concepts, and norms which define each particular school and its culture. Lindahl (2006) stated that culture is defined consciously through the behaviors, beliefs, artifacts, and rituals and subconsciously through fundamental assumptions and values of the organization's members (Lindahl, 2006). Hershey, Blanchard, Johnson, and Dewey (2001) described culture as a common set of shared understandings among members of an organization or society that guides their thinking and influences their behavior and how they make decisions. This is what the group believes, holds in high esteem, and is typical of the group. An organization's culture results from organizational decisions and events that help to forge the thinking and operating processes of the members of the organization and contribute to the positive school culture (Hershey et al., 2001).

Research conducted by Lezotte and Snyder (2011) on effective teaching indicates a correlation between positive school culture and the academic success of students in a school which Lezotte and Snyder refer to as "academic press" (p. 104), one of three terms the researchers use to characterize a positive culture in a school. There is order in a school with academic press, as well as a laser-like focus on academic excellence and a common goal that students will work hard to achieve their goals. The term academic press came from research conducted by Tschannen-Moran, Parish, and DiPaulo (2006) who identified two additional characteristics of school culture: "teacher professionalism, and community engagement" (p. 104). In schools that are effectively achieving student success, a correlation can be found between student academic success and a positive culture in the school. Teachers in this type of school share a common vision regarding the education of the students; they work in collaboration with each other, work hard, and show genuine respect for each other (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this research study was to assess the culture in a K-8 foreign language immersion magnet school to determine the type of culture in the school and to determine to what extent the school's culture is impacted by the language immersion program. Additionally, the researcher hoped the investigation would uncover staff member perceptions of the school's culture and whether or not these perceptions were congruent with the school's actual culture. Members of an organization often recognize the presence of culture in their organization but often do not understand the culture or the type of culture that is present and its implications (Wagner, 2006). The established foreign language immersion magnet school exists in an urban district in a southeastern state. The unique culture of this school has not been assessed, and there is growing concern that the culture of the school may be affected if changes in the instructional delivery in the foreign language program change due to the accountability measures enacted through the adoption of the Common Core State Standards and the residual effects from NCLB. The state curriculum is the basis for instruction in the school conducted in one of four foreign languages in the elementary school beginning in kindergarten: Chinese, French, German, or Japanese. Students continue to master the state-mandated curriculum concepts taught in the target foreign language, and enrollment in the foreign language immersion program continues to increase. High stakes accountability systems implemented under NCLB may not achieve the long-term goals essential for student growth and achievement and may be achieved at the expense of teacher motivation. These changes may lead to a school developing a negative culture as a result of teacher burnout and lack of motivation (Fullan, 2005).

An organization's culture helps the members of the organization to perform their

roles and duties successfully. A positive school culture is critical to the school environment and the educational mission of the school. Organizational culture also plays a major role in influencing the change process in schools (Lindahl, 2006; Peterson & Deal, 1998). With pressing high stakes accountability and the knowledge that effective schools have positive cultures with increased student achievement, understanding the culture in the school chosen for this study is important due to the unique nature of the school. This research was expected to provide the researcher with information about the school's culture, the shared values, beliefs, and norms of the organization's members, and to provide strategies that could be implemented to positively influence the culture. Myers (2009) also used the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS) developed by Wagner to research the connection between teachers' perceptions of culture and the impact of these perceptions on student achievement. Results from her survey of 60 middle school reading teachers in Grades 6-8 found positive correlations existed among student achievement on the reading scores and the perceived collegiality and positive school culture. Through the correlation coefficient between +1 and -1, it was determined that there is strength in the correlation between student success and positive school culture. The results were correlated to the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores of 1,427 students using multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlations (Myers, 2009).

### **Research Questions**

This research study was designed to answer these questions about culture in the foreign language immersion magnet school.

1. What type of culture exists in this foreign language immersion school, and how is it perceived by the staff members?

2. To what extent does language immersion impact the culture in the school?

Beal (2009) conducted similar research in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at the South Boulevard School Foreign Language Academic Magnet School. She drew similar conclusions to Barth (1990) that schools need to improve their cultures to improve the quality of relationships among the members of the school staff that lead to an increase in the quality of the instruction and learning that takes place in the school (Beal, 2009). Trusting relationships among teachers and students are important factors positively influencing the culture in a school. There are two conclusions that stand out from Beal's study that relate to language immersion teaching and culture. The first conclusion is that the unique character of the school comes from the uniqueness of the foreign language immersion curriculum taught at the school. The second conclusion the research recognized is that the strong culture at the school is positively influenced by the school's language immersion program. The culture is characterized by a sense of community, high quality relationships among the school's stakeholders, and the unique immersion curriculum that instills in parents, teachers, and students a sense of pride about their school (Beal, 2009). The researcher observed that the international teachers at the school contribute in a major way to the positive culture in the school. Beal described the international teachers as positive, open-minded, and free from bias and stereotypes. Additional information gathered by the researcher from interviews and observations suggested that teachers at the school enjoy their work and have high expectations for and expect excellence from their students. Such attitudes contribute to the sense of community in the school, which is a characteristic of a strong school culture and factors into the support for student success and achievement (Beal, 2009).

## **Study Setting**

The school designated for this study is located in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States and is the largest and most successful magnet school in the district. The school has received national recognition for its success in foreign language immersion teaching. The State School Progress Report from 2012 includes the following demographic information about the school: The student population is 1,250 students enrolled in Grades Kindergarten through 8, 82 classroom teachers, three administrators including the principal, and 30 support staff. The school has a diverse population of African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and White students and a small group of students with no specific classification of background. The school is located on the campus of a former high school which provides ample space for the school's growing student enrollment and facilitates the location of all of the foreign languages under one roof. The Chinese Immersion program has added two teachers each year as the program has grown and currently has two teachers per grade level. The Japanese Immersion program has one teacher for each grade level K-5. The French and German Immersion programs have two teachers each for each grade level K-5. Language instruction continues in the middle school, though not through the concept of foreign language immersion. There is one language teacher for each of the languages offered in the middle school – Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. All targets were achieved for adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB in school year 2011-2012, and the school was designated by the state as an "Honor School of Excellence" for the third year in a row. According to this designation, 90% of the students are at or above grade level. The school also met its Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) under NCLB.

Table 2

*2009-2012 Student EOG Results*

Year	AYP/AMO Reading Gr. 5	AYP/AMO Mathematics Gr. 8	AYP/AMO Science Gr. 5	AYP/AMO Science Gr. 8
2009-2010	83.5%	94.2%	82.1%	90.6%
2010-2011	84.5%	>95%	85.1%	93.6%
2011-2012	86.1%	94.2	94.6%	93.8%

*Note.* AYP defined as adequate yearly progress; changed to AMO annual measurable objectives based on 2010-2011 data.

Table 2 provides evidence of the success of the foreign language immersion teachers and other certified instructional staff in the school who work to achieve academic success with students in Grades 5 and 8 on the mandated state assessments for those grade levels. The data indicate that students have achieved and sustained expected growth over a 3-year period (North Carolina School Report Cards, 2011-2012). It is important that a culture exists in schools to support teachers in ways that help teachers to guarantee the achievement of all students at high levels. The National Middle School Association (NMSA, 2003) wrote that implementing best practices in middle school leads to academically and socially successful students. NMSA (2003) drew these conclusions from more than 30 years of advocating for the distinctiveness that makes middle schools unique and provides for strong cultures in middle schools. NMSA noted that effective schools have strong positive cultures and provide middle-school aged children with a positive environment and adults who are prepared and responsible and share similar values regarding the education of students. Teachers work collaboratively and have a shared vision with high expectations and high levels of engagement with other staff

members and students (NMSA, 2003).

The Language School has created its own brand as one of the first language magnet schools in the district. It has grown and flourished since the school's inception over 20 years ago. Originally, the school housed only German Language Immersion but was joined by French Immersion and Japanese Immersion in 2000, becoming the Language Academy. The school's brand is recognized nationally and internationally because of the success it has had with fostering language development. The school has international partnerships with the German government and the Japan Foundation and is a Confucius Classroom School. The school received a monetary award to be used to support the Chinese Language Immersion program. The school received the Melba Woodruff Award from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) honoring the school for having an Exemplary Elementary Foreign Language Program. In addition, the school has established learning partnerships with schools in Germany, France, Japan, and most recently China. These partnerships, in the form of student exchange programs, provide students with the opportunity to become totally immersed in the target language and the culture of the country. Students in the foreign language immersion program take pride in their ability to speak a second language and are proud of the new relationships and experiences gained by learning about another culture and meeting new people and making new friends internationally. There is a shared understanding and shared responsibility among the staff members in the school who value the importance of developing fluency in a foreign language. The increased awareness of the importance of language acquisition impacts student efficacy. Met (2001) wrote that in order to attain a world-class education, students in the United States must be able to attain fluency in a foreign language. She contended that fluency in

a foreign language is necessary as the United States continues to develop into an international service industry providing goods and services around the globe with large numbers of employees working in multi-cultural settings. Met described the increasing importance for workers in the United States to be able to access information in an information-based global economy. She added that it is a myth that everyone in the world speaks English. This is especially evident as more countries open their borders to goods and services from the United States. Met continued that being bilingual increases reading proficiency, enhances brain cognitive functioning, and has been associated with increasing student scores on standardized assessments in the core content areas of reading and math. She asserted that language competency is as important in the 21st century and to global competitiveness as science and math (Met, 2001). It will be necessary to gain an understanding of the culture in the school, staff member perceptions of the school's culture, and the part that staff members' shared responsibility to increase student foreign language proficiency enhances the culture in the school to provide information and add to the research base about how foreign language immersion schools are impacted by the concept of culture in these unique school settings.

### **Background of Foreign Language Immersion**

Met and Lorenz (1995) conducted research in the first foreign language immersion schools in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Maryland. The researchers concluded that the best way to engage children in a foreign language and to facilitate foreign language learning is through language immersion teaching. In addition, it was found that in order for a foreign language immersion program to be successful, it is critically important to find and hire highly qualified and engaged teachers. These staff members will be a valuable resource and a critical component to influence the culture of



the program and its success as well as have a positive influence on the success of the school (Met & Lorenz, 1995). In addition, it is important to hire teachers in foreign language immersion programs who have the necessary dispositions to teach in a foreign language program. The researchers determined how important it is for foreign language immersion teachers to possess a strong knowledge base with native or near-native command and proficiency in the language they would be instructing (Met & Lorenz, 1995). In 2002, the expectations for foreign language teachers were revised by ACTFL. ACTFL added to their guidelines that foreign language teachers should also have a strong background in the liberal arts and possess the “skills, knowledge, and dispositions” necessary to be effective teachers (ACTFL, 2003, p. 21).

Mike Easley, former governor of North Carolina, was influential in the creation of the Center for 21st Century Skills in North Carolina in 2005. The focus of the Center was to prepare students for life and the workforce in the 21st century. The North Carolina State Board of Education adopted a policy affecting all school districts across the state that would help individual school districts prepare their students to develop the necessary skills to ensure that when they graduated from high school, students would be ready to compete globally for jobs in the 21st century. This development increased the importance of learning a foreign language (21st Century Skills in North Carolina, 2008). The trend toward a global economy and markets expanding around the globe have impacted the world and transformed education, making it necessary to expose children to second language experiences and knowledge of other cultures (Soderman, 2010). The ability to speak a foreign language helps students to understand other cultures and increases their perception of the world, leading such students to be able to compete for additional career opportunities available for students who speak a foreign language

(Curtain, 1993). Preparing students with language skills to be ready for the 21st century is an important objective that will ensure that students have the necessary skills and are prepared to become global citizens to compete in the global workforce (Met, 2001).

### **Overview of Study Design**

Years after Schein's (1986) research on culture in organizations, Wagner refined Phillips' School Culture Audit with Masden-Copas and renamed it the School Culture Triage (Masden-Copas & Wagner, 2002). Wagner recommended that school leaders use this refined version to assess the culture in their organizations in order to determine whether the existing culture is healthy or toxic. A healthy school culture exists where there is a nurturing environment that supports student achievement. A toxic environment is the opposite – staff members and teachers are not cordial toward each other, do not acknowledge the accomplishments of their colleagues or others, and teach in isolation. Wagner recognized the 25 years of extensive research conducted by Phillips from 1981 to 2006 as foundational and the basis for his own research. According to Wagner (2006), he found evidence for the following conclusions from the 3,100 school culture assessments that were administered: (1) culture is connected to student achievement and (2) everything that happens in a school can be connected back to its culture.

Schools must know the value and worth of the culture in a school as well as the type of culture a school has in order to make improvements (Wagner, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the SCTS was administered to members of the staff of the K-8 foreign language immersion magnet school. The observation and interview protocols were adapted from the SCTS and used to conduct informal observations and semi-structured interviews in the school. These instruments helped the researcher to determine the type of culture in the school and how that culture is perceived by the staff members.

Wagner (2006) was successful in the adaptation and implementation of the SCTS that he used to measure and assess culture. He has used the survey successfully to analyze culture in schools in North Carolina, Florida, and Kentucky. The SCTS provides comprehensive information about a school's culture and may offer suggestions and strategies for improving the culture in a school (Wagner, 2006).

The three subscales in Wagner's SCTS are professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. The use of the survey (Appendix A) provided the researcher with additional data to be used to identify the artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions of culture as described in Schein's model of organizational culture. The professional collaboration subscale from the survey assesses how teachers work together to find resolutions for the academic, instructional, and curricular issues within the school. Successful schools have teachers who share a belief that every student in the school has the ability to learn, teachers who ensure that learning is taking place for all students in the school, and teachers who are willing to focus their collaborative efforts on results (Wagner, 2006). A positive culture promotes an optimal learning environment for teachers which is enhanced when teachers collaborate and have a sense of shared responsibility for students and their learning (DuFour, 2004). Collaboration is important in developing and maintaining a positive school culture (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Subscale two assesses collegial relationships and attempts to determine whether people enjoy their work, value others in the workplace, and feel that they perform work that is valued by others. An organization develops the capacity to improve, change, and reform through its organizational culture (Wagner, 2006).

The third subscale assesses efficacy/self-determination. This subscale assesses whether the people in the school enjoy working together and choose to be there, whether

they increase their professional practice, or feel as though they are victims of the system (Wagner, 2006). This subscale assisted in identifying some of the underlying assumptions and beliefs that staff members have about the school as identified in Level 3 of the organizational culture chart. Huffman and Hipp (2003) wrote of the important role that sharing information and collaborative learning play in improving school culture. Sharing and collaboration bring teachers together, provide new strategies to try in the classroom, and open the lines of communication between teachers who contribute to improved teaching and learning (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) developed the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) in an attempt to create an instrument to measure teacher efficacy. The researchers reviewed previously created scales and subsequently validated the OSTES, considering their scale to be the more effective one for measuring teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

The survey portion of the SCTS consists of 17 items which participants in the study rated on a Likert scale of 1-5. The survey was used to determine how study participants perceive the culture in the school. The surveys were electronically distributed to each staff member in the school using Survey Monkey, an online survey distributor. Additional data were obtained from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) to gain additional information about the staff members' perceptions of the culture in the school. Masden-Copas and Wagner (2002) suggested that when conducting observations, the researcher is to be attentive to the presence of the characteristics of a positive school culture in the school in order to relate the observed behaviors to the behaviors rated on the survey subscales. Collegiality, efficacy, trust and confidence, support, shared visions, and traditions are characteristics of a positive school culture that should be easy to observe and identify in a school with a positive culture.

This is substantiated in a study conducted by Myers (2009) who used the School Culture Audit developed by Masden-Copas and Wagner in a correlational study on teacher perceptions of school culture in three middle schools in Georgia. She compared teachers' perceptions of culture to student achievement. In order to use the correlational design, the researcher had to find a school with a minimum of 60 participants. The researcher chose schools that met AYP defined by NCLB that annually determines the academic performance of schools. Myers obtained reading scores from the teachers who participated in the study and analyzed the relationship between scores on teachers' perceptions of culture and student performance on the state test for reading (Myers, 2009).

According to Wagner and O'Phelan (1998), schools could be improved by administering and analyzing the results from school culture audits and would attain better results from attempts at school reform by first addressing the issue of school culture. Conducting the school culture survey is an additional tool to use to diagnose the environmental deficiencies in the school, especially when one considers the understanding of culture that goes deep and manifests itself in rituals, a shared sense of purpose, celebrations, and collegiality. From the survey results, observations, and interviews, the data collected can be triangulated to create a better picture of the school's situation (Wagner & O'Phelan, 1998). Masden-Copas and Wagner (2002) found through their research that schools with positive cultures have a better chance of raising student achievement; teachers who work in such schools have a healthier, more positive attitude and demonstrate a willingness to change and participate collaboratively with their colleagues. Teachers in such an environment provide students with the strategies and skills needed for academic success now and in the future (Masden-Copas & Wagner,

2002). Schools are places where there should be a sense of shared value among the adults and where the adults respect each other, support each other, and collaborate to plan for success (Wagner & O'Phelan, 1998).

### **Definition of Terms**

This research study used the following terms and definitions.

**Case study research.** The in-depth study of instances of phenomena in real-life settings and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

**Foreign language immersion.** A method of foreign language instruction where the curriculum in the school is taught consistently and with fidelity through the foreign language or target language. The foreign language is the means of instructional delivery for the curriculum content and is not the subject of the instruction (Met, 1993).

**Magnet schools.** Schools with specialty themes developed and operated in large urban school districts in the 1970s as a tool for the promotion and achievement of desegregation in the public schools to decrease racial tensions, designed to give parents and students a choice for school type (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2008).

**Organizational culture.** The definition that Schein (1986) gave for organizational culture was,

the pattern of basic assumptions that the group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 31)

**School culture.** Culture is what happens when people who have worked together over a period of time develop a set of principles, standards, behaviors, values, celebrations, and ceremonies that characterize the way things are done and that the members of the group use to solve problems and tackle challenges that may occur in the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The limitations of the study were those research items beyond the control of the researcher. The limitations include the study participants from the foreign language immersion magnet school who make up the population examined and were asked to participate in the research study by providing their consent on the following forms: the Informed Consent form for the Survey (Appendix B), the Informed Consent form for the Interviews (Appendix C) and the Informed Consent forms for the Observations (Appendix D). The researcher was not able to control the number of responses received from staff members in the school who received the online survey form.

### **Summary**

Through his study of culture, Wagner (2006) demonstrated that the culture of an organization is deeply influenced by the members of the organization who share experiences, traditions, trust, honesty, and open communication, and who celebrate the accomplishments of other members of the organization and the school community (Wagner, 2006). In addition, Wagner wrote that most important to the development of a school's educational mission is the school's culture because culture influences everything that happens in the life of a school. Culture is an important factor in determining whether any changes or reforms undertaken in the school will be successful or will fail (Wagner, 2006). Met and Lorenz (1995) concluded that the quality of teachers in a foreign

language program will have a definite impact on the success of the program and may influence the culture in the school.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This study sought to assess the culture in a K-8 language immersion school in an urban school district, discover how the culture is perceived by the members of the school staff, and determine the impact, if any, of the foreign language immersion program on the school's culture. This chapter provides a review of the literature on the background of school culture and a brief history of foreign language immersion in the United States. The chapter is organized into the three subscales of Wagner's (2006) SCTS: professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. These three subscales were used to collect the survey data for this study.

### **Research Questions**

This research study was designed to answer the following questions about the culture in a foreign language immersion school.

1. What type of culture exists in this foreign language immersion school, and how is the culture perceived by the staff members?
2. To what extent does language immersion impact the culture in the school?

### **Background to the Study of Culture**

Schein (1986) drew from his knowledge of organizations that studying culture might be relevant and that this type of research might help to increase worker productivity and the quality of the work environment. Culture is not found on the surface but can be seen in many varieties in an organization and, per Schein, must be taken seriously. The definition that Schein used to define culture is:

the pattern of basic assumptions the group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore,

to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 31)

There is no single way to define culture. It is a set of habits and methods practiced over time that become an integral part of an organization, creating patterns and ways of thinking that people do intuitively and that people in the organization take for granted. The “underlying assumptions” of the members of an organization must be taken into consideration when preparing to assess an organization’s culture to gain the full understanding of the phenomenon of the organization’s assumptions (Schein, 1986, p. 30). Determining the type of culture in a school takes time and energy according to Gruenert (2005) who extensively researched school culture. He explained that culture leaves footprints or markers of things that can be observed in the school such as how people behave and dress, things that people say including stories and language used, what people believe about student learning and support, and what is valued such as assessment scores/data. These footprints are examples of cultural artifacts. Gruenert’s pilot survey contained 79 artifacts reduced to six factors using item reduction methodology. The factor names are descriptions of the characteristics under each heading in the scale: collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships (Gruenert, 2005). Brinton (2007) adapted Gruenert’s culture scale for his research study conducted in a high school to determine how different sets of staff members in a school perceived the culture. He used a non-experimental quantitative case study design. He asked all of the staff members to participate in the study. He explained his case study design as non-experimental with the use of case study methodology used to help the researcher dive deeper to aid in the understanding of the phenomenon of culture. In the school he used for the study, the staff

consisted of 118 certified teachers and 61 noncertified staff members. Brinton defined two purposes for his research: the first was to create an instrument to determine how culture was perceived by noncertified staff in a high school, and the second was in response to what the researcher perceived as a lack of knowledge around culture by the staff members in the high school. Brinton used the School Culture Survey-Teacher form and School Culture-Staff Member Form to collect data to find out whether certified and noncertified staff members perceived the culture in the school differently. He determined the validity of the instruments, collected the survey data, and used various methods to analyze the data. The independent variables for the study were taken from the six subscales on the surveys he used. From the data analysis, Brinton concluded that the two instruments he used for certified and noncertified staff members were not congruent and did not yield similar results across the six factors (Brinton, 2007).

Sailes (2008) supported Wagner (2006) in her research on school culture and the value of assessing culture through the use of culture audits. Sailes asserted that schools should have a broader focus than just curriculum, assessment, and academic reforms. Discussions and actions in the school should take place around the critically important area of school culture. Culturally competent schools meet the needs of all students without regard to heritage or background. Sailes recommended that improving school culture be linked to school improvement and documented in the school improvement plan to ensure that thought and action are given to identifying the culture and its impact on the school and the community it serves. Sailes made the recommendation that a school undergo a school culture audit to determine where there are problems. The author insisted that school administrators and teachers must be deliberate in their efforts to build a positive culture in a school (Sailes, 2008).

Another instrument used in this research was the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014). The results were used as source of data to determine the culture in the school. The survey was first administered in 2002 across the State of North Carolina to all state educators to identify the schools across the state where there were satisfactory working conditions. The survey was created by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission (NCPTSC) after extensive research and analysis of survey data from around the country. The Commission found the areas that contributed most to how teachers felt about the working conditions in their schools. Each school unit was used as the base for the analysis. The domains that stood out were time, facilities and resources, professional development, school leadership, and educator leadership. From these domains, the NCPTSC created standards, and the first survey was administered across the state. Schools with positive working conditions are also schools with positive cultures. Since 2002, questions on the survey have been revised and updated. Questions from a sample of educators who took the 2004 survey were ranked and compared to a factor analysis used to determine “critical conditions” (New Teacher Center [NTC], 2008, p. 2). Questions found to be most important are included in the core questions that make up the survey and were used in the 2006 and 2008 surveys.

Construct validity of the instrument was measured using factor extraction, and factor loads were established for questions. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) included details clarifying and explaining the validity of the instrument. The instrument and its validity were validated by Swanlund (2011) as a part of the Measuring Effective Teachers (MET) project sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Swanlund identified patterns and structures in the data that were used to ensure confidence in the results. Additional information found in the North Carolina

Teacher Working Conditions Research Brief indicated that when administering this survey to similar groups and populations, there is the expectation that similar results will be attained across populations. The NTC also conducted an analysis of the validity of the instrument and came to the same conclusion as Swanlund that the instrument is stable and consistent with background research and theory used in the development of the instrument (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2014). The five constructs or domains measured in the survey mirror the similar characteristics found in schools with a positive culture.

### **Professional Collaboration**

Professional collaboration includes those ideas which are found in a collaborative school culture. The characteristics of professional collaboration include shared decision making, creating a shared vision, and celebrating the important traditions and rituals in the school community (Wagner, 2006). From Gruenert's (2005) correlational study of culture in 81 schools in Indiana, he found a higher chance of success for teachers and students in schools where teachers collaborate. Gruenert's survey, as referenced earlier, assessed the degree of collaboration in the culture of a school as it related to his six factors. For the research study, he collected data from the principals in 81 Indiana schools from 2002-2003. The scores from these schools provided the data for the survey which Gruenert used to determine whether there was a correlation between features of collaborative cultures that existed in schools and student achievement. Cronbach's alpha and internal correlations were used to determine the instrument's validity. Gruenert found a strong correlation existed between the factors of professional development, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships. Teachers who placed a high value on professional development were aware of the importance and value of continuing to grow as learners

and viewed themselves as learners. When teachers shared a common bond, they were able to understand and articulate the school mission, no matter how detailed, which Gruenert identified as unity of purpose. From his research, he discovered that in schools with strong partnerships between parents and teachers, students achieved high academic success. Elementary schools demonstrated the highest degree of parental involvement and partnership. The results from his findings indicated that across the board in elementary, middle, and high school, higher achieving schools exhibit collaborative cultures (Gruenert, 2005). Cronbach's alpha coefficient measures the different ways test-takers respond to items on a test which are not scored dichotomously (Gall et al., 2007).

In a school environment where there is a positive and effective school culture, this culture has a positive effect on the teachers in the school who subsequently have a positive impact on the students they teach. A positive culture promotes a sense of agreement around a common purpose among staff members willing to work together to achieve a common goal. Marzano et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis in the domain of school leadership. They reviewed more than 5,000 titles received from databases such as ERIC that met their research criteria. The research was limited to studies completed between 1978 and 2001 that took place in the United States or areas where schools closely resembled U.S. schools; studies that researched the relationship between school principals and the academic achievement of students in their schools. The researchers estimated that there were nearly 14,000 teachers and 1,400,000 students who were subjects for the data analysis. The researchers found that principals who support positive culture in their schools have certain characteristics. The characteristics include taking the responsibility of fostering common values among staff members in their schools, developing a sense of community and collaboration among the staff members, celebrating

the accomplishments of the members of the school community, and acknowledging problems when they exist (Marzano et al., 2005).

Changing culture begins with actions, especially the actions of the school leader. School leaders must put actions behind what they say they believe and their actions must speak clearly as to their directions, motivations, and purpose when working to change the culture in a school. In addition to leading the school toward change, school leaders must be available to do whatever job is necessary in the school to accomplish the school's goals, from helping out in the cafeteria to watching a class on the playground (Reeves, 2007). Waldron and McLeskey (2010) went a step further. From their research, they found that to bring about Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), the school leader must support a culture of collaboration and all members of the school community must be empowered to have a voice in open discussions regarding school improvement activities and its development. A collaborative culture is the vehicle through which teacher leadership is built in a school when the principal supports distributed leadership. This type of leadership builds trust among colleagues and allows other members of the school team to share in making decisions and taking on leadership responsibilities in the school. School decisions are made through active dialog among engaged members of the school community. The actions of the school principal are such that indicate his/her support of a culture of collaboration, models collaboration with staff members, and understands how important this is in the development of a positive culture in the school (Waldron & McLeskley, 2010).

Kenner (2000) used case study methodology to conduct a study of culture in a high achieving middle school to identify the types of practices and behaviors that contribute to a positive culture in an organization or school. Kenner noted eight

reoccurring themes as she conducted her research and noted those eight elements as major contributors to the positive school culture in the middle school that was the object of her research. Kenner identified the elements as “leadership, high expectations, assessment and evaluation, professional growth, organization and consistency, freedom and risk taking, teaming, and respect and recognition” (p. 72). These elements are consistent with the themes that Wagner (2006) assessed using the School Culture Survey. In her research, Kenner (2000) identified the organizational practices and artifacts that lead to sustaining a high achieving culture. The research participants were from a middle school in Texas designated by the Texas State Standard Accountability System as exemplary. Kenner drew the following conclusions from her research about how culture impacts student achievement in high performing middle schools: in successful schools, the staff is in agreement about the normal decisions affecting the school and are provided with opportunities to collaborate with each other in order to increase their professional knowledge; staff members work together in PLCs to solve the problems of the organization, increase their instructional practices using the power of the group for support, and to positively impact student learning in the school (Kenner, 2000).

MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) concluded from their research that focusing on goals and adapting goal focus is necessary to determine how successful students in a school will be. Participants for the research conducted by MacNeil, Prater, Busch, 2009) came from 29 schools in a large suburban school district in Texas. One thousand seven hundred and twenty-seven teachers were asked to take part in the survey. The researchers used the Organizational Health Inventory to determine the organizational health of the participants’ particular schools noting each school as a unit of study. The findings were reported using descriptive statistics. The researchers found that, as



measured by the Texas Accountability Rating System, exemplary schools were healthier and tapped into the collaborative culture that was supportive of teachers and staff members. These schools demonstrated healthy school cultures that encouraged improvements in teaching practices which subsequently led to improved student academics and to students who had developed better social skills (MacNeil et al., 2009).

### **Affiliative Collegiality (Collegial Relationships)**

Collegiality as it pertains to school culture is described as the way people behave toward each other (Masden-Copas & Wagner, 2002). Wagner (2006) noted that in a positive school culture, there is a high sense of efficacy as staff members take ownership for decision making and problem solving. Teachers and staff members are empowered and supported to try new ideas. The school staff demonstrates that they enjoy working together and meeting outside of school for social gatherings. They display a true sense of community by their shared traditions and celebrations. The members of the community communicate openly and share information formally and informally (Wagner, 2006). Wilms (2003) supported this type of community building from his research on lesson study and concluded that teachers must move away from working in isolated classrooms and move toward cooperative relationships providing opportunities for teachers to observe their colleagues, plan collaboratively, and teach in orderly surroundings where the most important priority is student learning (Wilms, 2003).

Teams of teachers who develop a culture of collaboration are result-oriented and value the individual members of the team and the contribution that each person makes to the group. Schmoker (2006), an educational consultant and author, noted that when teachers collaborate, they work together, learn from each other, and help each other. Teachers focus on effective instructional practices and goals clearly defined and based on

the curricular expectations and standards of the district and/or state that substantiate their work to improve instruction and student performance. Teams working together are smarter than individuals working alone because teachers working together in teams help to create a new culture in the school leading to school improvement and increased student achievement. Members of a group share successful strategies with others and celebrate the achievements of their colleagues, indicators of the presence of a positive culture in a school (Schmoker, 2006).

Barr (2011) researched teacher empathy and the existing perceptions of the culture that existed in their schools. He described empathy as a teacher's ability to show concern for students and to identify with the students intellectually. His study consisted of 100 female and male participants, most of whom were elementary school teachers enrolled in graduate studies at the university. To conduct his research, Barr used the School Culture Scale and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, both resembling a Likert scale. Likert scales are used to determine the level at which research participants agree or disagree with the variety of statements presented about the research object (Gall et al., 2007). Barr's findings indicated that interpersonal relationships, a subset of school culture, are not significantly impacted by teacher empathy; however, he did find that empathetic teachers who were able to understand the perspective of others and understood the importance of developing positive relationships with their peers were more positive when handling student discipline concerns, more sympathetic toward students when they had problems, and more positive about their own school setting and the school's administration. His research is consistent with other research demonstrating that a positive school culture positively influences student achievement, and teachers who work in these schools have a healthier, more positive attitude, demonstrate a willingness

to change, and participate in activities in collaboration with their colleagues (Barr, 2011). Teachers in this type of environment provide students with the strategies and skills needed for academic success now and in the future (Masden-Copas & Wagner, 2002). Schools are places where the adults share a common sense of values, respect each other, collaborate to plan for success, and support each other (Wagner, 2006).

Rooney (2005) is the co-director of the Midwest Principal's Center. During a visit, she observed a phenomenon around school culture at the Louis Pasteur School. She encountered a school where learning is taking place, students are engaged, and the school leader was acknowledged to genuinely care about the students in the school. She described the principal's invisible connections to the wholesome culture that has developed in the school. Additionally, Rooney noted that the school's culture revolved around what is essential and it has a clear direction. She noticed that the school is student-centered, warm, and inviting with a culture more felt than seen. Rooney recognized that there are healthy relationships among the adults in the school which is a characteristic of a healthy school culture. Further, Rooney observed that the school principal gently guided the school and her beliefs, and honesty helped to create the positive culture felt throughout the school. Jerald (2006) concurred with Rooney that when a positive culture is present in a school, a person can feel it in the air. In many cases, a strong organizational culture is overlooked but can be found in highly effective schools. Jerald observed that culture is an underlying current, important to a school's success, with an aligned vision and goals shared by staff members and students in the school. The adults in the building trust each other and work together to form strong bonds. The members of the school community make time to ensure that culture promoting acts such as ceremonies and rituals take place. Jerald took from other research

in the field that the strength of a culture depends on aligning the actions, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals with the vision of the organization. He asserted that a strong culture does more than provide safe conditions where students can learn and conduct themselves positively; it also means that the educators in the school are focused on what is important and are consistently working to shape and improve the culture of the organization to achieve the outcomes for students and help them become academically successful (Jerald, 2006).

Reames and Spencer (1998) conducted a research study of 275 Georgia middle school teachers. They administered and analyzed the results from The School Work Culture Profile, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, and Teacher Efficacy Scale to assess the correlation between the culture in a middle school and the sense of commitment of the teachers in the school. The researchers found correlations in the relationship between (a) the school work-culture process and the structure variable and (b) teacher belief of efficacy and commitment. Measures of school culture included in the study were planning, staff development, and productivity. The results of the study indicated that collaboration was significant to the study participants and collaboration significantly impacted teacher efficacy. From their research, they did not consider efficacy to be significant. The researchers, however, did note that teachers in middle school and in traditional junior high schools responded differently to the survey (Reames & Spencer, 1998).

Lipsitz and West (2006) are educators who are a part of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. The Forum initiated the Schools to Watch (STW) program in 1999 to find exemplary schools in the nation, to learn from them, and to recognize the achievement that those schools made with students. Although not

expressed outright, these successful schools display similar characteristics as those schools with positive collaborative cultures as described by culture researchers like DuFour (2004), Gruenert (2005), Peterson and Deal (1998), and Wagner (2006). These characteristics include teacher collaboration, collegiality, positive and inclusive relationships with all stakeholders, the establishment of a vision of academic excellence, and the shared allegiance to meet that vision. The Forum's research work also found that successful schools demonstrate academic excellence. These schools provide a curriculum that is rigorous and academically challenging to all students, employ teachers who are in tune to the challenges of adolescent students, have teachers who respect student sensitivities and deal with all students in a fair and equitable manner, and provide students with positive and supportive options that help them to excel. Teachers in successful schools have developed a vision and a consistent plan for academic excellence that is aligned and builds on the instruction that students have had. There is alignment in the curriculum, assessment, and instruction to meet high standards with the expectation that students will successfully meet the expectations set for them. Additionally, these teachers believe that professional development is ongoing and an important part of the school that allows them to address their practice and improve on it. The adults in high-performing schools demonstrate genuine caring and affection for their students and work to build relationships with them (Lipsitz & West, 2006).

### **Self-Determination/Efficacy**

Wagner (2006) described efficacy as teachers having the capacity to influence decisions made in the school. He added that there is tangible support for teachers and there are abundant resources available for teachers to use. Teachers feel empowered to problem solve instead of laying blame and have developed a level of trust and confidence

in the school leadership and to each other. Teachers show appreciation for each other and feel empowered in the school in their role as decision makers (Wagner, 2006). Protheroe (2008) took the definition from Hoy (1990) that efficacy is the optimism teachers demonstrate about how successful they will be in their abilities to impact student academic success. More experienced teachers seem to have a higher sense of efficacy because they can reflect on the past impact they have had on children and their successful teaching experiences. Teacher efficacy can be influenced by observing the effective instructional strategies of other teachers and successfully implementing them into one's own classroom or by coaching and feedback that specifically targets effective instructional practices. Additionally, principal leadership impacts teacher efficacy if the principal models a vision that is student-centered and based on student achievement. It is also important that principals hire and retain teachers who feel equipped to meet the challenges of reaching all students through intentional teaching behaviors and strategies (Protheroe, 2008).

Mason (2010) conducted research on teacher efficacy as demonstrated by Algebra 1 teachers in Western North Carolina to determine the impact of high-stakes testing on teacher efficacy. She chose Algebra 1 teachers because Algebra 1 is a course used to determine AYP for a district. Mason contacted high school principals and district administrators to obtain the names of Algebra 1 teachers. She distributed more than 100 packets of information with a questionnaire related to the study. From the 25 returned, the researcher chose 11 of the teachers to participate in the study because they represented a broad range of teaching experience. As the interviews were conducted, the researcher noted the common themes found from the surveys and interviews and coded them accordingly. Mason's definition of teacher efficacy used for the research study

defined efficacy as what a teacher believes about his/her own abilities to impact learning for students, especially for students with learning challenges. Mason's research did not find that experienced teachers were more efficacious than their new teacher colleagues; however, from her research, she did find two study participants who exhibited fairly similar efficacious behavior and worked harder than their colleagues to engage and motivate their students.

From the research on teacher perceptions of efficacy, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) concluded that how teachers perceive their own efficacy and that of other members of the group is important to the success or failure of the organization. The researchers determined that in organizations where its members possess a strong sense of purpose surrounding their beliefs and mission, the organization will continue to function when stressful situations arise. In organizations with low efficacy, members often act in a dysfunctional manner, leading to the possibility of failure within the organization. Additionally, what Goddard et al. described as "collective efficacy" and the positive impact it has on teachers' perceptions of themselves and their peers has been related to student academic success. The group establishes guidelines for the success of the organization which helps its members to set their sights on a goal and work toward it. The research, according to Goddard et al., suggested that the culture in a school as it relates to the efficacy of the group members may impact teachers' perceptions of their own instruction as well as how they perceive the entire staff coming together to achieve goals that will positively affect student achievement outcomes (Goddard et al., 2004). This premise of efficacy is supported by research conducted by WestEd for the USDOE (2008) to identify the characteristics needed to create and maintain successful magnet school programs. Among the findings, the student results showed that in successful

magnet schools, the school administrators positively contributed to the “culture of efficacy” (USDOE, 2008, p. 8) by promoting teacher development and challenging teachers to take the responsibility for meeting the educational goals developed for the school without fear of retaliation or backlash (USDOE, 2008).

From research conducted on organizational culture and student achievement in two middle schools and a junior high school in the northwestern corner of South Carolina, Woodall (2004) concluded that high-achieving teachers and students have significantly different perceptions of school culture and climate than their lower achieving counterparts. These perceptions are also impacted by the expectations that students have when they feel that their teachers, parents, and other significant adults have expectations for their achievement. The independent variables in the study were teacher/student perceptions, middle school grade levels, and socioeconomic status. The dependent variable was organizational culture. The researcher’s statistical analysis of the data collected from the School Organizational Culture Questionnaire developed by Isaiah Reid of the University of South Carolina, included a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Woodall determined from the research conducted that teachers in high-achieving schools perceived their schools to have a much better culture. Woodall (2004) compared her research to research conducted by Cantrell and Cantrell (2003) and concurred with their findings that communication and celebration play significant roles in cultures where motivation and achievement are also important to the culture (Woodall, 2004).

From 1995-1998, Reeves (2000) conducted case study research at the Center for Performance on *90/90/90 Schools* that included more than 30,000 students at all levels from elementary to high school and from all socioeconomic levels of society in the area



where the study was conducted: inner-city, suburban, urban, and rural. In addition to adding to the knowledge-base on effective schools and student achievement among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the study proved that socioeconomic status does not prevent a student from achieving academic success. 90/90/90 schools are significant because 90% or more of the students are economically disadvantaged and qualify for free or reduced lunch, 90% or more of the students stem from ethnic backgrounds other than Black or White, and 90% or more of the students are highly successful in their academic endeavors. The study found consistent relationships between the implementation of effective classroom strategies and student achievement in many subjects. From the research data, Reeves (2000) determined that when there is a culture of high expectations in the school and teachers hold the belief that students can achieve at high levels and succeed in school, students live up to those expectations and teachers are able to make a connection to the importance of consistently implementing goal-focused strategies of effective classroom instruction to maximize student achievement through professional collaboration to increase student achievement (Reeves, 2000).

### **Language Immersion Research**

Met (1987) defined language immersion teaching as the teaching of a foreign language consistently through the use of that foreign language. Successful foreign language immersion programs are supported by community stakeholders including school administrators, community members, parents, and qualified high-quality teachers. To ensure the success of the language immersion program, adequate resources and materials are available, professional development is offered, and stakeholders in the school community support programs to develop teachers and to ensure their success. In

order for students to become proficient in a foreign language, Met suggested total immersion in the foreign language is the only way for students to learn (Met, 1987). Further, from the case study conducted in Maryland in the early 1990s, Met and Lorenz (1995) concluded that the most economically feasible way to teach a foreign language is in the immersion setting. In foreign language immersion, the target language is the language of instruction used to teach the school curriculum. Students enrolled in foreign language immersion programs gain a higher level of knowledge and understanding of the foreign language and generally complete the program with near native-speaker skills when speaking and writing the language. Met and Lorenz also found that increasing language skills supported the development of English language skills (Met & Lorenz, 1995).

Curtain (1993) concluded from her research that there is a correlation between the amount of time students take to learn a language and the degree of proficiency attained in the language. Therefore, she surmised that students who begin foreign language instruction in the elementary school setting and continue in consecutive years of study will attain a higher level of proficiency in the language. Curtain laid the responsibility of helping a child to achieve language proficiency on the adults in a child's world who should expose the child to different cultures and experiences as part of the child's education. Subsequently, wrote Curtain, students who have learned a foreign language generally develop positive global attitudes and a broader view of the world. These positive attributes help to increase their future options for the workforce and the economy (Curtain, 1993). Craig (1995) added that children learn about their world through the vehicle of language. Language provides children with information about their own culture and ethnicity and teaches them to communicate with others. A language

immersion program introduces students to language as well as other cultures and helps them to develop positive attitudes toward other languages and the people who speak those languages (Craig, 1995).

The earliest bilingual programs in the United States and Canada were created due to pressure from parents who wanted their children to speak English and French fluently (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The first and oldest language immersion program was started in the 60s in Canada. Parents of English-speaking children in St. Lambert, a suburb of Montreal, requested a program that would provide their children with language instruction that would provide their children the opportunity to speak French fluently. Children were immersed in the French language beginning in kindergarten and the school curriculum was taught in French (Met, 1980). The success of foreign language immersion in the United States is due, in part, to the success of bilingual immersion programs started in Canada. Immersion became popular as Canada became a bilingual nation. Immersion is bilingual schooling which emphasizes what is called the minority or target language. Instruction in the early years in the target language is generally conducted over 90% of the instructional day because the academic language of the target language cannot be acquired outside of the school setting (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The first two-way immersion programs in the United States began in 1963 with small dual language programs in private schools begun by Cuban immigrants. These parents wanted their children to learn English while maintaining their native language. Subsequently, English-speaking parents enrolled their children in the program creating a model in the United States for two-way bilingual immersion. A successful program was started that began the experimentation into bilingual education and led to the rise and spread of foreign language immersion throughout the United States (Craig, 1995). Programs

followed in California in 1972 and Maryland in 1974; and by 1992, there were more than 125 immersion programs in schools across the United States. Public schools began offering bilingual programs as a way to bring back students to the public schools when enrollment started to decline (Met & Lorenz, 1995). Thomas and Collier (1997) made a valid argument for bilingual education noting that bilingualism taps into the power that comes from being able to speak another language, which the authors described as “linguistic diversity” (p. 23). The authors contended, as did Met (1980), that dual language bilingual programs are the most effective models for engaging English language learners in a foreign language because these programs provide students with enriching, stimulating, and educationally challenging classes that help them become proficient in two languages, increasing their academic and economic potential (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

The MCPS in Maryland have the oldest French immersion program in the United States as well as three of the longest established language immersion programs. Met and Lorenz (1995) conducted a case study of foreign language immersion programs started in the MCPS. The researchers concluded that students in immersion programs demonstrated better academic outcomes, developed speaking fluency in the foreign language, and had a greater cultural knowledge. Additionally, the findings indicated that students from different abilities and backgrounds were equally successful in the language program (Met & Lorenz, 1995). French immersion and Spanish immersion were the first languages instructed in the MCPS program. The program sought to hire quality teachers who were highly effective to help make the program successful. The researchers found this to be critically important to the success of a language immersion program. They also determined that in order for the language immersion program to be successful, immersion

teachers must demonstrate a willingness to develop positive relationships with parents and other community stakeholders and be willing to represent the program in the community. In conclusion, Met and Lorenz (1995) found that immersion works. Through the expertise that language immersion teachers bring about the culture, history, and language of the country they represent, immersion teachers transfer more than language competency to the students that they teach (Met & Lorenz, 1995).

Soderman is the principal of the 3e International School in Beijing. Through observations and interactions at the school, she deduced that children who speak more than one language or multilingual children enrolled in a language immersion program demonstrate higher cognitive abilities than their peers who only speak a single language. 3e stands for “explore, experiment, and express” (Soderman, 2010, p. 59). Students are provided authentic opportunities to explore language and reflect on its usage while learning the language first hand. Soderman observed that those students who attend the school and who are neither native speakers of English nor Mandarin still learned to speak those languages successfully. The research used to substantiate the thesis for Soderman’s conceptions about the mathematical skills in bilingual children being more highly developed than their single language peers comes from sources that include the research of Abbott, Caccavale, and Stewart (2007). Abbott et al. supported learning a second language at an early age because of the impact that they concluded second language learning has on the cognitive development of a child’s brain. In addition, Soderman referenced the research of Kovelman, Baker, and Petitto (2008) to prove that due to the additional stimuli the brain receives from learning a second language, bilingual children have developed more neural pathways. This finding led to the conclusion that children who learn a second language early have a more oxygenated brain than their counterparts

who only speak one language (Soderman, 2010).

The South Boulevard Foreign Language Immersion Magnet is located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It was created to offset the demands from the 1966 desegregation laws that considerably reduced the student population in the school (Beal, 2009). Beal (2009) conducted a qualitative single case study at the South Boulevard Foreign Language Academic Immersion Magnet during the time when there was an average student enrollment of 220 students and 45% of the students were considered to be economically disadvantaged. The school is located in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. The ratio of African-American to non-African-American students decreased over the years from 2001 when the ratio was 80:20 to the 2007 ratio of 58:40. Beal used document reviews, interviews, and observations to collect data for the study. Raw data from interviews was broken into themes and ideas. Common themes were coded, put into categories, and used as the basis for the data analysis. Beal concluded from her study that the effectiveness and caring nature of the foreign language teachers positively impacted the school environment and the culture of the school. Beal's research also correlated with findings from ACTFL that engaged quality teachers in a foreign language immersion program make a major contribution to the success of the program.

WestEd completed a study at the request of the USDOE in 2008. Its findings were presented in a guide that identifies the characteristics and qualities of successful magnet schools that includes language immersion magnet programs. The results of the study indicate that teachers in successful magnet schools are aware of the positive cultures in their schools and as a result feel empowered to help students in the school achieve academic success. The researchers also noted that successful schools displayed a culture of high academic achievement for all students and no excuses were made for

economic status or language background. The teachers demonstrated an earnest effort to support the academic success of students and felt that the resources they received were more than adequate to get the job done. One school's culture was transformed from a culture of complaining to one of collaboration after a school reorganization by the principal who provided targeted professional development and consistent support for teachers. Subsequently, teachers in the school became more supportive of each other and took responsibility for the academic success of the students (USDOE, 2008).

### **Summary**

In summary, the phenomenon of school culture impacts all areas of a school. It provides the support for creating a positive and collaborative learning environment for teachers and students that supports academic achievement. Culture research has proven that a positive school culture is an important factor when considering the success of teachers and students in a school. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the type of culture in any school to determine how staff members in the school perceive the culture and to establish whether the culture needs improvement. The process of investigating the culture was undertaken for this research project to determine whether there is a positive culture in the school that is perceived as such by the staff members and whether the presence of the language immersion program is a contributing factor to the culture of the school. The success of a foreign language immersion program may be related to the type of +culture the school has and how that culture is perceived by the members of the staff.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Culture has an influence on everything that happens in a school. It is the distinct characteristic of a school that penetrates to the core of the school's business, according to Wagner (2006). Wagner (2006) continued that analyzing a school's culture is the best tool to use when it is necessary to enhance or affect school improvement. Understanding and improving the culture in a school is a better solution to fixing the school's problems than extending school hours to increase instructional time and increasing the amount of professional development. Wagner further explained that a positive culture is characterized by members of the organization who work together to achieve a common goal. This includes having rituals and habits, celebrations, and a shared sense of community. Members understand the organization's goals and visions and work together to help the organization achieve its vision (Wagner, 2006).

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The new Common Core State Standards, the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System, and the adoption of new state and district assessments are areas of major concern for teachers in the language immersion school, especially the assessments that are part of the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. Staff members are concerned about the impact that these changes and instructional shifts will have on the fidelity of the foreign language immersion curriculum, the instructional delivery, and the culture of the school. Instructional delivery in the foreign language may suffer due to the increased emphasis on reading proficiency, bringing about changes which may affect the positive results in immersion teaching and learning that the school has achieved. Additionally, the district is taking its own steps to measure the culture in all schools. Beal (2009) described how the culture was changed and improved at the South Boulevard



Foreign Language Academy Magnet School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, through the introduction of the foreign language immersion program and the subsequent staffing of the program with qualified foreign language teachers who took pride in their work, were highly engaged in the school, and had high expectations for their students.

### **Purpose**

The purpose for conducting this mixed-method single case study was to assess the culture in a foreign language immersion school, determine how the members of the school staff perceive the culture, and determine the extent to which the foreign language immersion program impacts the school's culture. Tuckmann (1999) asserted that one of the themes of qualitative research is the data resulting from the study that provides rich, thick descriptions and includes perspectives and perceptions of the study participants. This researcher hoped to expand the knowledge-base on culture as it relates to its impact on foreign language immersion programs and their success.

This research study was designed to answer the following questions about the culture in the foreign language immersion school used for this study.

1. What type of culture exists in this foreign language immersion school, and how is the culture perceived by the staff members?
2. To what extent does foreign language immersion impact the culture of the school?

### **Design**

This mixed-method study was designed to integrate the results from quantitative and qualitative data. Many researchers have acknowledged positively the practice of mixed-method research (Creswell, 2003; Gall et al., 2007). When considering the complexity of the study of culture, it is important to understand Schein (1986) and his

views when one looks to uncover the underlying aspects and the perceptions of the culture in a school. The researcher used the SCTS to collect the quantitative data. The SCTS was adapted by Wagner (2006) to audit and assess school culture. The survey is a 17-item instrument that uses a 5-point Likert scale. Wagner has divided the survey into three subscales: professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. Quantitative data from the SCTS provided the initial set of data displayed for this study. The researcher used descriptive statistics as a means to organize and display the data from the survey.

According to Tuckman (1999), case study researchers use the qualitative method to collect data in the setting where the research will take place. The case study method provides rich descriptions of the phenomenon under study and helps the researcher to identify common views, values, and qualities for the group as well as characteristics, behaviors, and patterns of the group in the educational setting (Gall et al., 2007; Hoy, 1990). Qualitative data from the observations and interviews helped the researcher to provide the rich ethnographic descriptions to describe the patterns in the data that the participants for the research in the school provided. The researcher's hope was that data from the survey would provide clues to the basic underlying assumptions that staff members have about beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions as they relate to Level 3 of Schein's organizational culture model and uncover any differences in perception of the school culture between the foreign language immersion staff members and the non-foreign language immersion staff members.

The researcher used Wagner's SCTS to collect data on the staff member perceptions of the culture in the school. A packet of consent forms was distributed that included consent forms for the survey, the semi-structured interviews, and for the

observations. Upon receipt of the signed survey consent forms, the survey was sent electronically via Survey Monkey to the email addresses of 100 staff members. The researcher used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to quantify the results from the survey. Demographic data were collected from the survey participants through survey questions 17, 18, and 19. These questions asked staff members to indicate their role in the school, the language with which they were involved, and the number of years worked in the school. Parametric statistics provide information on determining variances and differences in data sets. Tests from the parametric statistics report “degrees of freedom, significance level and effect size” from the statistical analysis of the data (Morgan, Reichert, & Harrison, 2002, p. 51).

Additional qualitative data were acquired from the semi-structured interviews and observations conducted in the natural setting of the school. The interview protocol questions (Appendix E) were adapted by the researcher from Wagner’s interview questions that accompanied the SCTS. Questions on the interview protocol were divided into sections and included questions about why the staff member came to the school; how the staff member felt about working in the school; what the staff member felt to be important about the school; the staff member’s view of the instruction at the school; and, finally, recommendations for improving the school. The reviewer from the district who approves research projects in the district questioned the wording and relevancy of some questions and suggested that some of the questions be reworded for clarity. In small group sessions, the researcher interviewed 23 staff members who eagerly provided answers and insight into the culture of the school. The main themes from the interviews are listed along with the number of participants from each role group who took part in the group interviews. Group interviews were conducted to make the best use of the time

available. All 18 questions were asked, and the responses were recorded and sorted. The first meeting was a mixed group of middle school teachers, elementary English literacy teachers, Japanese teachers, and assistants. The second group consisted of German, Japanese, and English literacy teachers. The researcher interviewed two noncertified staff members individually. Major themes from the interviews were noted. Responses from the interview questions provided the researcher with information about staff member beliefs about the organization, their basic underlying assumptions, and the things that they valued in the school that related to the three levels from the model of Schein's organizational culture levels. Three persons were requested by the researcher to review the data collected around the main themes that were revealed during the interviews and recorded. The observation protocol (Appendix F) was created from Wagner's SCTS observation protocol. The protocol was used by the researcher to collect the observation data. Observations were conducted in the school setting during two staff meetings, an elementary PLC meeting, a middle school PLC meeting, and professional development training on classroom management strategies. Observation data shed light on the artifacts in the culture such as structures and processes in the school from Level 1 of Schein's model. Supporting data for this research study were also found in the document review that included the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014).

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey was first administered in 2002 across the state to all state educators to determine the quality of teacher working conditions in every school, with the school as the basis for the analysis. Five constructs or domains are measured in the survey under time, facilities and resources, professional development, school leadership, and educator leadership. Questions on this anonymous survey have been revised and updated since the first release of the survey, and the

validity and reliability of the instrument has been consistently confirmed with administration of the survey. The most recent validation occurred with the spring release of the survey. As a part of MET, Swanlund (2011) analyzed the data from over 250,000 teachers from 11 states. In analyzing the data, Swanlund found patterns that provided structure and confidence to help him interpret the results. The external validity of the instrument was assessed using the Rasch rating scale. The scale measures how the response scale is structured and how the survey items are aligned with the wider constructs of the instrument. Due to the results from the external validity testing, edits were made to stabilize the statistics of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Rasch scale and Cronbach's alpha. The study conducted by Swanlund again confirmed that the instrument is reliable and that results from the survey will be consistent across the groups of people who participate in the survey (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2014).

Kenner (2000) used mixed-methods research to study the culture in a high-achieving middle school as the most effective way to determine the background and underlying currents of the culture that affect the school environment. Kenner collected data about the setting of the school observed through interviews, observations, surveys, and document reviews to draw conclusions about the culture of the school. The researcher found the use of the ethnography technique to be best suited for the study because at the time of the study, she could explain rituals and ceremonies in the school from her own perspective. Kenner used the case study method to identify the types of practices and habits in the organization and the artifacts and symbols of the culture that were significant in developing and maintaining the positive culture in the school. The researcher noted that the most effective way to analyze the cultural phenomena in the

school would take more than surveys and questionnaires. Kenner found that the case study method provided a complete view of the culture in the high-achieving middle school. She was able to relate the school's success to its culture of high performance. Teachers in the school were provided with opportunities to participate in the school's decision-making process; teachers were encouraged to take on leadership roles; and teachers collaborated and participated in the quality professional development that was offered to help them to grow professionally (Kenner, 2000).

Table 3

*Assessment Plan*

Information Needed	Method of Data Collection	Data Analysis
Cultural perceptions of certified language immersion staff	Survey Observations Interviews	Statistical analysis Notes Frequency Table
Cultural perceptions of noncertified language immersion staff	Survey Observations Interviews	Statistical analysis Notes Frequency Table
Cultural perceptions of certified non-language immersion staff	Survey Observations Interviews	Statistical analysis Notes Frequency Table
Cultural perceptions of other noncertified staff members	Survey Interviews	Statistical analysis Frequency Table

**Population**

The population for the study consisted of the certified and noncertified staff members in the foreign language immersion school that numbered approximately 100 in addition to the three school administrators. In the K-5 setting, staff members are assigned

to teach one of four foreign languages: Chinese, French, German, or Japanese.

Additional K-5 teachers are the literacy facilitators and special area teachers who are shared with the middle school. Staff members in the 6-8 setting include foreign language teachers in French, German, Japanese, and Spanish as well as the academic facilitator and the additional staff members who teach the traditional middle school curriculum in English language arts, math, social studies, and science. Support staff for the K-8 school includes two school counselors; a school psychologist; and special area teachers in music, dance, physical education, media, and exceptional children's teachers; and a school nurse. Noncertified staff members include the teacher assistants, school secretaries, and the school safety associates. Eighty-seven staff members participated in the survey; one opted out and did not respond to the survey questions; one staff member did not complete the survey.

### **Procedures**

The researcher began this study with the background of culture and the history of language immersion to assess the culture in a foreign language immersion school setting. The SCTS was electronically distributed to 95 members of the K-8 staff who completed the survey consent forms for the research. The survey was completed by 86 staff members on Survey Monkey. A convenience sample of school staff members were selected to be a part of the interview groups to represent the diverse curricular areas in the school that also included noncertified staff members using Randbetween, an Excel program. This equation randomly assigned a number to each member of the group for the random sampling, and the first 10 from each group were chosen for the interviews. Research samples should be selected randomly in order to give the research "good population validity" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 169). Each participant had an equal chance of

being selected and was not discriminated against per CITI criteria. The researcher requested three persons to review the data collected from the main themes that were revealed during the interviews and recorded. The data results from the semi-structured interviews were validated by Dr. Shoufen Jacobson, Ed.D., and Dr. Frank Wilson, Ed.D., graduates of Gardner-Webb University; and Dr. Constance McKoy, Ph.D., professor at UNC-Greensboro (Appendix G). The researcher conducted observations of the staff members during staff meetings and planning meetings at the school site where the research study was conducted. The observation data and summary results were validated by Ms. Jennifer Bonack, M.Ed., and Ms. Rebecca Crawford, M.Ed., recent graduates of the Educational Leadership Program at Winthrop University (Appendix H).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place in the natural setting of the foreign language immersion school. The researcher contacted the school principal who provided the consent for the research to be conducted in the school (Appendix I). Subsequently, permission was granted by the IRB (Appendix J) and the school district (Appendix K). The survey questions were distributed electronically via Survey Monkey to all certified and noncertified staff members in the school across all foreign language and curricular areas who completed the consent form. Conducting an ethnographic study in the natural setting of the school established the association between immersion, non-immersion, certified and noncertified staff members, school culture and the impact, if any, that language immersion may have on the culture of the school (Creswell, 2003). The researcher used the quantitative data from the SCTS, the instrument Wagner (2006) designed to assess school culture to assist school leaders in determining a course of action to take to initiate culture improvement in a school. Qualitative data from the semi-



structured interviews and the observations were used to answer Research Question 2.

Wagner wrote that school culture includes tradition, celebrations, and “the shared experiences both in school and out of school that create a sense of community, family, and team membership” (p. 41).

The researcher received permission to use the SCTS for this research from its developer and found this instrument best suited to assess the culture in this school (Appendix L). The instrument was developed as a diagnostic tool for assessing the culture in any type of school setting and has been used in schools in Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia (Wagner, 2006). The positive effects between school culture and student achievement have been documented by many school culture researchers. The SCTS survey consisted of 17 items using a 5-point Likert scale. The 17 items on the survey are divided into three subscales. After IRB and school district approval were received, the researcher distributed the consent forms and began the survey once the consent forms were received. The researcher used Survey Monkey to create and distribute the survey electronically. A link was provided to allow the 95 staff members who agreed to be a part of the research to access the survey. Small group interviews were conducted with randomly selected staff members. The researcher used the interview protocol developed for this study to solicit honest, candid responses regarding the impressions of the randomly selected staff members about the culture of the school. The researcher looked for sources of emotion and ideas as to what is important to the group and to the school and what staff members felt contributed to the culture of the school (Wagner, 2006). Questions 18, 19, and 20 were used to collect data about the teaching/language immersion specialty and number of years in the school.

A review of school records found additional data in the results from the 2014

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey to support the hypothesis that there is a positive culture in the school. The survey was distributed electronically in the spring of 2014 to all educators in the state. The survey was anonymous. At the school used for this research, 88% of the staff members participated in the survey. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) was first administered in 2002 and has subsequently become an instrument used to gauge whether the conditions in a school are productive and positive places for teaching and learning. Teachers responded to the questions on a Likert scale with the range as follows: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly disagree. The survey domains included Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, Instructional Practices, and Support.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher triangulated the acquired data to compare and contrast patterns. Triangulation of the data helps to ensure that findings are corroborated across areas and to validate the findings in the study (Creswell, 2003; Gall et al., 2007). The triangulation of the data subsequently provided the evidence for the positive culture that is found in the school and aided in providing validity to the research findings (Gall et al., 2007). Key words revealed through observations and interviews were coded and organized in a frequency table. A frequency table was useful for coding common themes and characteristics of culture described by staff members in the interview groups. The use of rich description helped the researcher to ensure that the purpose of the research was achieved in discovering the culture in the school, its perception, and the impact of the foreign language immersion program on the culture. This data provided the researcher

with information about the characteristics of culture that staff members find significant and how these characteristics were viewed by different members of the school staff.

There is an indication that teachers in the foreign language immersion program and other teachers in the school demonstrate a shared responsibility to increase the academic success and the language proficiency of their students. From the comments in response to the questions from the semi-structured interviews, it is clear that the foreign language immersion staff members are proud of their accomplishments in helping students to learn a foreign language to near native-speaker ability.

Collecting, analyzing, and displaying data from surveys, interviews, and observations provided enough data to draw conclusions and make inferences about the school culture and its impact on the greater school life of the school with its rituals, patterns, and celebrations. Statistical analysis of the data was done through SPSS to find the average scores and mean for each of the three subscales by language taught, teacher role in school, and number of years in school. Statistical analysis included a one-way ANOVA which provided information that helped the researcher to identify statistically significant responses in the data. This information helped the researcher determine whether the null hypothesis that foreign language immersion teachers have a more positive view of the school culture can be rejected.

### **Duration of the Study**

The document and archival data review covered 2012-2013 and available data for the research as it was available. Creating a 4-month plan with milestones helped to delineate the sequence of the task.

### **Limitations**

1. This is a K-8 language immersion magnet school and the school.

2. Factors that might impact impressions of school culture are background of foreign language immersion instructional staff and fluidity of noncertified staff, i.e., teacher assistants.
3. Generalizations made regarding the teaching staff which make it unique when the staff is compared to staff members at other area schools.

**Delimitations**

This school was selected for the study after several attempts at site selection. The researcher was a former staff member in this school and has a relationship with the staff members. The impression of the culture in the school was an interesting phenomenon for staff members in the school but has never been formally assessed or researched.

Assessing the culture in this school will provide valuable information to the school administrators and help them to plan for professional development and to have some crucial conversations as needed. Gall et al. (2007) wrote that additional limitations to the study may occur with the collection of data through interviews, including such variations as eliciting and coding responses from participants. Interviewer bias as well as response effects are additional delimitations (Gall et al., 2007).

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to assess the culture in a K-8 foreign language immersion magnet school in an urban school district in the southeastern United States and to determine how the staff members perceived the culture. Additionally, the researcher hoped to determine whether the foreign language immersion program impacted the culture throughout the school and to add to the knowledge base on school culture in a foreign language immersion school setting. This chapter presents the results and the analysis of the data from the SCTS, the interviews, and observations.

This research study was designed to answer the following questions about the culture in the foreign language immersion school used for this study:

1. What type of culture exists in this foreign language immersion school, and how is the culture perceived by the staff members?
2. To what extent does language immersion impact the culture of the school?

The first data presented represents the demographics of the study participants including the number of participants and their teaching specialty: certified language immersion, noncertified language immersion staff, other staff members. Subsequently, the results of the statistical analysis are reported. This section of the document includes the tests of the means and the one-way ANOVA of the responses given by the survey participants. Finally, there is a description of the qualitative research of the data taken from the semi-structured interviews and observations in the school. This includes statements from the interview participants and observations about the school.

### **Analysis of Research Question 1**

The results and analysis of the survey data from the SCTS were used to answer

Research Question 1 about the type of culture in the school and how the culture is perceived by the staff members. Additional information about the school and its culture were found in the document review which included the 2014 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey results. Referencing information from surveys administered in the school through the state provided additional information about the culture in the school. These were the most recent surveys conducted during the time of the research study. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey has become an instrument used to gauge the type of conditions in schools and whether the school has an atmosphere that promotes teaching and learning (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2014).

The SCTS was distributed electronically via Survey Monkey to all staff members who completed the survey consent form. Descriptive statistics and a one-way ANOVA were used to determine the mean rating and standard deviation for the questions from the survey and for the three additional questions that related to survey participant demographics. Additionally, data was disaggregated by language taught – Chinese, French, German, and Japanese – to assess the perception of the culture from the perspective of the foreign language immersion teachers.

### **Analysis of Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 about the impact of the foreign language immersion program on the culture of the school was answered in the descriptive data from observations and interviews. The researcher took into consideration staff member perceptions of the culture in the school based on their status as a certified or noncertified staff member, language immersion teacher, or non-language immersion staff member with the administrator who participated in the survey included in the numbers with the certified

non-language immersion staff members. Each group would possibly have their own perceptions of the culture of the school. Observations were conducted during staff meetings and after school PLC meetings over a period of 4 weeks. Staff interviews were also conducted during that time period.

Table 4

*Total Participants by Role*

Survey Participants by Instructional Area	Number
Certified Language Immersion Teachers	34
Certified Non-Language Immersion Staff	37
Noncertified Language Immersion TA	5
Other Noncertified (Teacher Assistants, Secretaries)	8
Administrator	1
Total	85

Table 5

*Participants by Foreign Language*

Language	Number
Chinese	13
French	8
German	11
Japanese	9
Total	41

Table 6

*Participants by Years of Service*

Language	Number
0-5	35
5-10	24
10-15	14
15 +	12
Total	85

Table 4 indicates the total number of participants from the foreign language immersion school who took part in the SCTS. Table 5 represents the number of participants from the survey and their foreign language immersion program. Table 6 represents the participants from the survey by the number of years they were in service at the foreign language immersion school. Responses for the 17 statements from the SCT survey showing the degree of professional collaboration, collegial relationships, and self-determination/efficacy were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The range of the scale was from 1=never to 5=always/almost always. Questions 18-20 referenced the respondents' roles in the school and the number of years worked in the school. Question 18 asked respondents to select the answer that best indicated their role in the school as certified language immersion staff member in Chinese, French, German or Japanese; certified non-language immersion staff member which included all other instructional staff, middle school teachers, facilitators, counselors, special area teachers and support staff; noncertified language immersion teacher assistants; other noncertified staff which included all other teacher assistants and secretaries; and certified school administrators. In question 19, respondents were asked to indicate the language involvement for the



majority of the day: Chinese, French, German, or Japanese. Question 20 requested that respondents indicate the number of years worked in the school. The ranges were 0-5 years to 15+ years in increments of 5 years. Data were taken to compare the responses of language immersion staff members to other staff members in the school and were also compared to the number of years staff members had been in the school.

Based on a nonparametric ANOVA (Kruskal Wallace Test) the average score for Professional Collaboration is 3.8 on a 5.0 scale.

Table 7

*Professional Collaboration Scores*

Question	N	Mean
1. Do teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues?	85	4.2
2. Do teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule?	85	3.5
3. Are teachers and staff involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources?	85	3.7
4. Is the student behavior code a result of collaboration and consensus among the staff?	85	3.9
5. Is the planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals?	85	3.5

The mean data from this table indicates that across the categories of staff members, there is no significant difference in the way teachers view the subscale professional collaboration in the school. However, the mean of 4.2 is the highest rated item here and provides an indication that there may be something in the culture that staff members see as an avenue to discuss instructional strategies and curriculum. Conversely,

staff members do not feel included in developing the schedule or that the allotted planning time is sufficient.

Table 8

*Professional Collaboration Scores by Role*

Question	Admin	Cert. LI	Cert. Non LI	Noncert. LI (TA)	Other Noncert. Staff
1. Do teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues?	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.2	3.8
2. Do teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule?	4.0	3.4	3.2	4.0	4.5
3. Are teachers and staff involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources?	4.0	3.6	3.7	3.6	4.5
4. Is the student behavior code a result of collaboration and consensus among staff?	4.0	4.1	3.6	3.6	4.6
5. Is the planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate Individuals?	3.0	4.1	3.1	3.2	4.1

This data represents the mean of the responses in the category Professional Collaboration based on the participants' role in the school. The average score, based on a 5.0 scale, was 3.8 for certified language immersion teachers; the score for certified non-language immersion teachers was 3.6; the average score for noncertified language immersion teacher assistants was 3.7; and the average score for other noncertified staff

was 4.3. The data in this table may indicate that in the existing culture, the certified Language Immersion teachers and non-Language Immersion staff members do not see professional collaboration as something that is a priority in the school. However, other noncertified staff indicates professional collaboration is a strength of the school.

Table 9

*Professional Collaboration Scores by Language*

Question	Chinese	French	German	Japanese
1. Do teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues?	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.0
2. Do teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule?	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.7
3. Are teachers and staff involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources?	3.5	3.3	4.0	3.6
4. Is the student behavior code a result of collaboration and consensus among staff?	3.6	4.0	4.2	4.2
5. Is the planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals?	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.4

The average score for professional collaboration by language taught on a 5.0 scale is 3.7 for Chinese and French, 3.9 for German, and 3.8 for Japanese. These scores by language taught are higher than the average mean and indicate that there is no significant difference in scores and that professional collaboration is held high among members of the school staff.

Table 10

*Professional Collaboration Scores by Years of Service*

Question	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+
1. Do teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues?	4.2	4.3	3.9	4.3
2. Do teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule?	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.8
3. Are teachers and staff involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources?	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.8
4. Is the student behavior code a result of collaboration and consensus among staff?	3.9	3.7	3.9	4.3
5. Is the planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals?	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.8

The average score by years at the language immersion school was based on a 5.0 scale and indicates that staff members with a longer tenure at the school rate professional collaboration higher. The score for staff members with 15+ years was 4.0. Scores for those employed for a shorter time were lower. The average score for teachers at the school from 0-5 years was 3.7; 5-10 years was 3.6; 10-15 years was 3.7.

Table 11

*Affiliative Collegiality – Collegial Relationship Scores*

Question	N	Mean
6. Do teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values?	85	3.9
7. Do teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company	85	2.9
8. Does the school reflect a true "sense" of community?	85	3.9
9. Does the school schedule reflect frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff?	85	3.6
10. Does the school support and appreciate the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff?	85	3.9
11. Is there a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment?	85	4.3

The overall average for collegial relationships was 3.8, based on a 5.0 scale.

From the data, the mean from statement 7 regarding staff meeting after school to enjoy each other's company was much lower than the other responses. Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) described how learning teams excel in their craft when they meet and collaborate as often as possible to discuss learning and how to help students grow. Teams also demonstrate that they genuinely care for one another and share successes and failures (Eaker et al., 2002). On the other hand, the mean for statement 11 was higher at 4.3, indicating that there are staff members who believe that there is a tradition of celebrations and rituals in the school. Hoy (1990) found that when there are certain rituals in school that staff members actively participate in, this helps to build and support

a positive culture in a school.

Table 12

*Affiliative Collegiality – Collegial Relationships Scores by Role*

Question	Admin	Cert. LI	Cert. Non LI	Noncert. LI (TA)	Other noncert. Staff
6. Do teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values?	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	4.3
7. Do teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company?	4.0	2.9	2.9	2.6	3.0
8. Does the school reflect a true "sense" of community?	5.0	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.3
9. Does the school schedule reflect frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff?	3.0	3.5	3.4	4.0	4.0
10. Does the school support and appreciate the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff?	5.0	3.6	4.1	3.8	4.0
11. Is there a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment?	5.0	4.1	4.4	4.4	4.0

The average score for collegial relationships by role in the school, based on a 5.0 scale, was 3.7 for certified language immersion teachers and certified non-language immersion teachers. Noncertified language immersion teacher assistants had an average score of 3.6. The average score for other noncertified staff members was 4.0. The data

indicate that all study participants except the school administrator rated statement 7, about staff meeting together outside of school, lower than any other area in this subscale, which brought the overall mean down. When developing a positive culture in a school, it is important that staff members are able to share and build relationships with their colleagues (Eaker et al., 2002). Huffman and Hipp (2003) shared the view that in effective schools, staff members are democratically involved in the school's decision-making processes and share in creating the vision as well as some of the authority in the school.

Table 13

*Affiliative Collegiality – Collegial Relationship Scores by Language*

Question	Chinese	French	German	Japanese
6. Do teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values?	3.8	4.4	3.9	3.7
7. Do teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company?	2.7	2.9	3.2	2.8
8. Does the school reflect a true "sense" of community?	3.5	3.9	4.3	3.8
9. Does the school schedule reflect frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff?	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.7
10. Does the school support and appreciate the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff?	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.8
11. Is there a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment?	4.2	3.9	4.2	4.3

The average score by language for collegiality, based on a 5.0 scale, was 3.8 for Chinese and German. The average score for French and Japanese was 3.7. The data imply no significant difference in the way staff members in the languages view collegial relationships in the school. This is consistent with data from previous tables indicating that staff members rate this area of collegial relationships lower than the other areas and this may have an impact on building relationships with others that would include socializing with other teacher colleagues outside of the school day.

Table 14

*Affiliative Collegiality – Collegial Relationship Scores by Years of Service*

Question	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+
6. Do teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values?	4.0	3.6	3.7	4.3
7. Do teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company?	2.8	2.8	3.4	3.6
8. Does the school reflect a true "sense" of community?	3.9	3.8	3.5	4.3
9. Does the school schedule reflect frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff?	3.6	3.5	4.1	3.6
10. Does the school support and appreciate the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff?	4.0	3.8	4.3	4.3
11. Is there a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment?	4.4	4.1	4.1	4.5

The average score for years in service was a 3.6 for staff members in service 5-10 years and 10-15 years. The average score for staff members at the school 0-5 years was 4.0 and 15+ years was 4.1. In this instance, the indication may be that staff members



new to the school have made connections with their colleagues and built collegial relationships through mentors and others in the school who support them.

Table 15

*Self-Determination/Efficacy Scores*

Question	N	Mean
12. When something is not working in the school, do the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat?	85	3.8
13. Are school members interdependent and do they value each other?	85	4.0
14. Do members of the school community seek alternative to problems/issues rather than repeating what has always been done?	85	3.8
15. Do the members of the school community seek to define the problems/issues rather than blame others?	85	4.0
16. Is the school staff empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do?	85	4.1
17. Do people work at this school because they enjoy it and choose to be here?	85	4.4

The overall average score for self-determination/efficacy was 4.0, based on a 5.0 scale. The data indicate that across the staff, individuals may feel empowered to make decisions in the school and feel supported by their colleagues and the administrators. It is important that principals hire and retain teachers who feel that they are equipped to meet the challenges of reaching all students through intentional teaching behaviors (Protheroe, 2008).

Table 16

*Self-Determination/Efficacy Scores by Role*

Question	Admin	Cert. LI	Cert. Non LI	Noncert. LI (TA)	Other noncert. Staff
12. When something is not working in the school do the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat?	5.0	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8
13. Are school members interdependent and do they value each other?	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.4	4.4
14. Do members of the school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what has always been done?	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.6	4.1
15. Do the members of the school community seek to define the problems/issues rather than blame others?	5.0	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.3
16. Is the school staff empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do?	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8	4.4
17. Do people work at this school because they enjoy it and want to be here?	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.8

The average score, based on a 5.0 scale, by role for certified language immersion teachers was 3.9. The average score for certified non-language immersion teachers and noncertified LI teacher assistants was 4.0. The average score for other noncertified staff members was 4.3. The data indicate that there is no significant difference in the way

these staff members perceive the efficacy in the school. Teacher efficacy and the way teachers feel about the job they are doing is important when considering a school's culture. Teachers feel empowered when they feel that the work they are doing positively impacts student learning (Deal & Peterson, 2003).

Table 17

*Self-Determination/Efficacy Scores by Language*

Question	Chinese	French	German	Japanese
12. When something is not working in the school do the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat?	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.9
13. Are school members interdependent and do they value each other?	3.8	3.8	4.2	4.4
14. Do members of the school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what has always been done?	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.6
15. Do the members of the school community seek to define the problems/issues rather than blame others?	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.0
16. Is the school staff empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do?	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.9
17. Do people work at this school because they enjoy it and want to be here?	4.1	3.6	4.5	4.6

The average score by languages, based on a 5.0 scale, was 4.1 for the German Immersion and Japanese Immersion staff members participating in the survey. The average score for Chinese Immersion staff was 3.7 and for French Immersion staff 3.8. According to these results, there appears to be a higher sense of teacher self-

determination/efficacy among the German and Japanese language immersion staff members than among the Chinese and French language immersion staff members. The data indicate that language immersion staff members at the school feel empowered to make instructionally sound decisions and do what is best for students.

Table 18

*Self/Determination/Efficacy Scores by Years of Service*

Question	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+
12. When something is not working in the school do the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat?	3.7	3.8	3.6	4.3
13. Are school members interdependent and do they value each other?	4.1	3.8	3.8	4.6
14. Do members of the school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what has always been done?	3.8	3.8	3.6	4.3
15. Do the members of the school community seek to define the problems/issues rather than blame others?	3.9	4.0	3.8	4.3
16. Is the school staff empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do?	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.5
17. Do people work at this school because they enjoy it and want to be here?	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.4

The average scores by years at the language immersion school, based on a 5.0 scale: 0-5 years, 3.7; 5-10 years, 3.9; 10-15 years, 4.4; 15 + years, 3.9. From the data, staff members who have been at the school from 10-15 years rated this subscale higher.

A one-way ANOVA was applied to the data to determine whether there was any difference between groups or within groups regarding the statements on the subscales of

professional collaboration, collegiality, or self-determination/efficacy by language taught.

Table 19

*ANOVA Results for Professional Collaboration by Language*

Statement	Respondents	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1. Teachers/staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues	Between groups	2.381	3	.794	1.399	.258
	Within groups	22.131	39	.567		
	Total	24.512	42			
2. Teachers/staff work together to develop the school schedule	Between groups	.613	3	.204	.221	.881
	Within groups	36.131	39	.926		
	Total	36.744	42			
3. Teachers/staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources	Between groups	2.957	3	.986	1.124	.352
	Within groups	33.329	38	.877		
	Total	36.286	41			
4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff	Between groups	3.242	3	1.081	1.860	.152
	Within groups	22.665	39	.581		
	Total	25.907	42			
5. Planning/organizational time allotted to teachers/staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals	Between groups	.733	3	.244	.304	.822
	Within groups	31.314	39	.803		
	Total	32.047	42			

*Note.* Significance measured at 0.05 level.

The ANOVA data indicate no significant differences in the perception of professional collaboration between groups or within the groups by language.

Table 20

*ANOVA Results for Affiliative Collegiality (Collegial Relationships) by Language*

Statement	Respondents	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
6. Teachers/staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values	Between groups	2.387	3	.796	1.800	.163
	Within groups	17.241	39	.442		
	Total	19.628	42			
7. Teachers/staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company	Between groups	2.729	3	.910	1.409	.255
	Within groups	25.178	39	.646		
	Total	27.907	42			
8. The school reflects a true "sense" of community	Between groups	2.328	3	.776	1.074	.371
	Within groups	28.184	39	.723		
	Total	30.512	42			
9. The school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers	Between groups	.733	3	.244	.349	.790
	Within groups	27.314	39	.700		
	Total	28.047	42			
10. The school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff	Between groups	1.307	3	.436	.655	.585
	Within groups	25.265	38	.665		
	Total	26.571	41			
11. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events/recognition of goal attainment	Between groups	1.321	3	.440	.468	.706
	Within groups	35.751	38	.941		
	Total	37.071	41			

*Note.* Significance is shown at the 0.05 level.

The data indicate no significant difference in the data by language  $P > 0.05$ .

Table 21

*ANOVA Results for Self-Determination/Efficacy by Language*

Statement	Respondents	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
12. When something is not working in the school, faculty/staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat	Between groups	.518	3	.173	.306	.821
	Within groups	21.994	39	.564		
	Total	22.512	42			
13. School members are interdependent and value each other	Between groups	3.851	3	1.284	.391	.083
	Within groups	20.940	39	.537		
	Total	24.791	42			
14. Members of the school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what has always been done	Between groups	.859	3	.286	460	.712
	Within groups	24.257	39	.622		
	Total	25.116	42			
15. Members of the school community seek to define the problems/issues rather than blame others	Between groups	1.035	3	.345	.539	.658
	Within groups	24.965	39	.640		
	Total	26.000	42			
16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do	Between groups	.176	3	.059	.080	.970
	Within groups	28.614	39	.734		
	Total	28.791	42			
17. People work at this school because they enjoy it and choose to be at this school	Between groups	4.300	3	1.433	2.685	.060
	Within groups	20.817	39	.534		
	Total	25.116	42			

*Note.* Significance is shown at the 0.05 level.

The data indicate that from the subscale self-determination/efficacy, statement 17, people choose to be at this school is approaching significance at the 0.06 level.

Table 22

*Scheffe Post Hoc Test by Language*

Dependent variable	(I) Language	(J) Language	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
People work at this school because they enjoy it and choose to be at this school	Chinese	French	.51786	.32380	.474	-.4281	1.4638
		German	-.31169	.29436	.772	-1.1717	.5483
		Japanese	-.35714	.30249	.709	-1.2409	.5266
	French	Chinese	-.51786	.32380	.474	-1.4638	.4281
		German	-.82955	.33947	.131	-1.8213	.1622
		Japanese	-.87500	.34655	.113	-1.8874	.1374
	German	Chinese	.31169	.29436	.772	-.5483	1.1717
		French	.82955	.33947	.131	-.1622	1.8213
		Japanese	-.04545	.31922	.999	.9780	.8871
	Japanese	Chinese	.35714	.30249	.709	-.5266	1.2409
		French	.87500	.34655	.113	-.1374	1.8874
		German	.04545	.31922	.999	-.8871	.9780

The descriptive data for statement 17 that staff members work at the school indicated that this statement was approaching significance at the 0.06 level. The Scheffe post hoc test on the data indicates that there is no significant difference in the way the staff members rate this statement.

Table 23 represents a one-way ANOVA that was applied to the data to determine any differences in the statements on professional collaboration, collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy by role in school.



Table 23

*ANOVA Results for Professional Collaboration by Role*

Statement	Respondents	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1. Teachers/staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues	Between groups	4.871	3	1.624	3.028	.034
	Within groups	43.435	81	.536		
	Total	48.306	84			
2. Teachers/staff work together to develop the school schedule	Between groups	12.667	3	4.222	5.004	.003
	Within groups	68.345	81	.844		
	Total	81.012	84			
3. Teachers/staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources	Between groups	6.332	3	2.111	2.605	.057
	Within groups	64.811	80	.810		
	Total	71.843	83			
4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff	Between groups	5.980	3	1.993	2.430	.071
	Within groups	66.443	81	.820		
	Total	72.424	84			
5. Planning/organizational time allotted to teachers/ staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals	Between groups	8.639	3	2.880	3.303	.024
	Within groups	70.608	81	.872		
	Total	79.247	84			

*Note.* Significance is shown at the 0.05 level.

From the results of the ANOVA test on professional collaboration by role in school, four statements are significant at the  $P < 0.05$  level with the responses in this subscale ranging from .003 to .071 which indicated there could be some relevance to this statement as well. The data indicate that there are differences in the perception of professional collaboration between the groups and within the groups. The five statements

from this subscale were subjected to the Scheffe post hoc test to determine the yield of any significant differences in the data. Table 24 shows the differences between groups from the Scheffe post hoc test.

Table 24

*Scheffe Post Hoc Test by Role*

Dependent variable	(I) Role	(J) Role	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Scheduling	Cert. LI	Other	-1.11765	.36095	.028	-2.1482	-.0871
Scheduling	Cert. Non LI	Other	-1.28947	.35732	.007	-2.3097	-2.693

*Note.* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

The Scheffe post hoc test of the data from the subscale Professional Collaboration indicates that there is model significance for the ANOVA indicating at least one significant difference among the means. The Scheffe post hoc comparisons showed that there was a degree of significance in the variable scheduling. Comments from the semi-structured interviews indicate that the certified non-language immersion teachers would like to have increased planning time built into the schedule.

Table 25

*ANOVA Results for Affiliative Collegiality (Collegial Relationships) by Role*

Statement	Respondents	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
6. Teachers/staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values	Between groups	.673	3	.558	.870	.460
	Within groups	51.904	81	.641		
	Total	53.576	84			
7. Teachers/staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company	Between groups	.743	3	.248	.372	.774
	Within groups	53.963	81	.666		
	Total	54.706	84			
8. The school reflects a true "sense" of community	Between groups	1.566	3	.522	.681	.566
	Within groups	62.178	81	.767		
	Total	63.694	84			
9. The school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers	Between groups	2.518	3	.839	1.262	.293
	Within groups	53.882	81	.665		
	Total	56.400	84			
10. The school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff	Between groups	4.552	3	1.517	2.872	.041
	Within groups	42.258	80	.528		
	Total	46.810	83			
11. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events/ recognition of goal attainment	Between groups	1.186	3	.395	.558	.645
	Within groups	55.995	79	.709		
	Total	57.181	82			

Note. Significance is at the 0.05 level.

The response to Statement 10, the school supports the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff, indicates significance since  $p < 0.05$ . The researcher used a Scheffe post hoc test to further analyze the data.

Table 26

*Scheffe Post Hoc Test by Role*

Dependent variable	(I) Role	(J) Role	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff	LI	Non LI	-.49920*	.17294	.047	-.9931	-.0053
		Noncert.	-.19394	.34879	.958	-1.1900	.8022
		Other	-.39394	.28642	.597	-1.2119	.4240
	Non LI	LI	.49920	.17294	.047	.0053	.9931
		Noncert.	.30526	.34575	.854	-.6822	1.2927
		Other	.10526	.28272	.987	-.7022	.9127

The Scheffe Post hoc test run on the ANOVA data indicates that  $p < .050$  within the group for the Language Immersion to Non-Language Immersion certified staff members and the Non-Language Immersion certified staff members to the Language Immersion staff members on the statement that the school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by staff members.

Table 27

*ANOVA Results for Self-Determination/Efficacy by Role*

Statement	Respondents	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
12. When something is not working in the school, faculty/staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat.	Between groups	.437	3	.146	.215	.885
	Within groups	54.786	81	.676		
	Total	55.224	84			
13. School members are interdependent and value each other	Between groups	1.066	3	.355	.506	.679
	Within groups	56.934	81	.703		
	Total	58.000	84			
14. Members of the school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what has always been done	Between groups	.387	3	.129	.178	.911
	Within groups	58.601	81	.723		
	Total	58.988	84			
15. Members of the school community seek to define problems/issues rather than blame others	Between groups	1.052	3	.351	.528	.665
	Within groups	53.842	81	.665		
	Total	54.894	84			
16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to them what to do.	Between groups	3.017	3	1.006	1.668	.180
	Within groups	48.221	81	.603		
	Total	51.238	84			
17. People work at this school because they enjoy it and choose to be at this school	Between groups	3.259	3	1.086	2.248	.089
	Within groups	39.141	81	.483		
	Total	42.400	84			

*Note.* Significance measures at the 0.05 level.

The data from the results indicate that there is no significant difference within or

between groups in the perception of self-determination/efficacy.

Question 2 regarding the extent to which language immersion impacts the school's culture is answered through the rich descriptions from the observations and semi-structured interviews. Observations were conducted at the school site used for the research study at two staff meetings, during a first-grade PLC meeting, a middle school PLC meeting, and training on classroom management strategies. Using the Random selection option from the EXCEL spreadsheet, 35 participants were randomly selected for the interviews from across the staff population including certified and noncertified staff members. Participants were contacted via email as to the time and date for the interviews. An attempt was made to interview the 35 randomly selected interview participants; however, only 23 were available to participate, and their responses were recorded. Table 28 shows the key words and themes from the semi-structured interviews in a frequency table.

Table 28

*Frequency Table – Interview Results*

Theme	Group	Participants	Frequency	Percent
Unique school environment	Cert. LI S	9	9	39.1
	Cert. Non LI	10	10	43.5
	Noncert	4	4	17.4
	Total	23	23	100.0
School reputation	Cert. LI S	9	9	45.0
	Cert. Non LI	10	9	45.0
	Noncert	4	2	10.0
	Total	23	20	100.0
Student/staff diversity	Cert. LI S	9	9	45.0
	Cert. Non LI	10	9	45.0
	Noncert	4	2	10.0
	Total	23	20	100.0
Interest in the foreign languages	Cert. LI S	9	9	50.0
	Cert. Non LI	10	8	44.4
	Noncert	4	1	5.6
	Total	23	18	100.0
Collaboration	Cert. LI S	9	9	47.4
	Cert. Non LI	10	9	47.4
	Noncert	4	1	4.3
	Total	23	19	100
Collegiality	Cert. LI S	9	9	45.0
	Cert. Non LI	10	9	45.0
	Noncert	4	2	10.0
	Total	23	20	100.0
Leadership, administrative trust, support	LI S	9	8	47.1
	Non LI	10	8	47.1
	Noncert	4	1	5.9
	Total	23	17	100.0
Autonomy – allowed to experiment	Cert. LI S	9	9	50.0
	Cert. Non LI	10	9	50.0
	Noncert	4	0	
	Total	23	18	100.0

(continued)

Theme	Group	Participants	Frequency	Percent
Dedicated staff members	Cert. LI S	9	8	36.4
	Cert. Non LI	10	10	45.5
	Noncert	4	4	18.2
	Total	23	22	100
Fewer behavior problems	Cert. LI S	9	5	35.3
	Cert. Non LI	10	10	52.9
	Noncert	4	2	18.2
	Total	23	17	100.0
Planning Time	Cert. LI S	9	4	40.0
	Cert. Non LI	10	6	60.0
	Noncert	4		
	Total	23	10	100.0

Table 28 includes a complete list of the reoccurring themes from the semi-structured interviews in a Frequency Table. One hundred percent of the staff members who participated in the semi-structured interviews indicated that they chose to work at the school because of the unique environment provided by the foreign language immersion program. Several staff members also mentioned the school events relating to ethnicity and culture that make the school unique. Comments from participants in the semi-structured interviews indicated that the school has staff members who are dedicated to the success of the school and the students. Staff members welcome the diversity of languages and cultures in the school, the collaboration, and collegiality. According to Sailes (2008), culturally competent schools meet the needs of all students without regard to heritage or background. Sailes recommended that improving school culture be linked to school improvement and documented in the school improvement plan to ensure that thought and action are given to identifying the culture and its impact on the school and the community it serves. Sailes also made the recommendation that a school undergo a



school culture audit to determine where there are problems. Sailes insisted that school administrators and teachers must be deliberate in their efforts to build a positive culture in a school. From the assessment of the culture in this foreign language immersion school, there are indications from the data that there are areas in the school, such as relationship building, that may need to be reviewed.

In addition, the observations conducted in the school used for this research study indicate the presence of characteristics of school culture: celebrations, collaboration, collegiality, autonomy, shared vision, and trust. Both persons who validated the observation protocol commented on this phenomenon. These characteristics are strong indicators of the presence of a positive school culture (Wagner, 2006).

Table 29

*North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Data*

Domain	Statement	Response from school staff %
Teacher Leadership	Teachers are recognized as educational partners	89.2
	Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction	90.4
	Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles	94.6
	The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems	87.7
	In this school we take steps to solve problems	91.8
	Teachers are effective leaders in this school	91.5
School Leadership	The faculty and staff have a shared vision	94.4
	There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school	89.2
	Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction	98.6
	The school leadership consistently supports teachers	93.2
	The faculty are recognized for accomplishments	95.8
Professional Development	Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan	98.5
	Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice	97.3
	Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning	94.4
Instructional Practices and Support	Teachers work in a PLC to develop and align instructional practices	91.9
	Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction	93.2
	Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. Pacing, materials, and pedagogy)	94.5
Time	Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues	73.1
	The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	62.8
	Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	66.0

*Note.* Source – North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014).

Table 29 is a representation of the portion of the data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2014 that correlates with building a positive school culture. Seventy-four of 84 educators at the school participated in the survey that is distributed electronically to public school and charter school educators in the state. The school used for this research study had an 88% participation rate. The full survey domains include Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, and Instructional Practices and Support. The domains that this researcher used which are closely related to school culture were Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, Instructional Practices and Support, and Time.

### **Summary**

In summary, the data answering Research Question 1 regarding the culture in the school and the staff member perception of the culture indicate that the school has a culture that staff members are aware of. According to the survey data, there were no significant differences in the way staff members perceive the culture in the school, except in the subscale professional collaboration about colleagues meeting outside of the school for activities and the statements regarding building the schedule and staff members contributing new ideas. Eaker et al. (2002) noted that often staff members in a school are not aware of the unique culture in their school. Research Question 2 regarding the impact of the foreign language immersion program on the school culture was answered through the responses from the semi-structured interviews and the observations conducted at the school. Information from the interviews and observations provides evidence that there is a positive culture in the school characterized by shared vision, collegiality, and collaboration. Additional data to support the evidence of a culture in the school is found

in the results from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014). The school staff members feel an overall sense of community and a shared responsibility for student success and feel empowered to do what is best for students.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Overview of the Findings**

The SCTS is designed to determine the type of culture present in a school and to make recommendations about how the culture can be improved. The instrument consists of 17 statements divided under three subscales: professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. The statements were included on a Likert scale with values as follows: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, and 5=always or almost always. The statistical data from the SCTS were analyzed using a nonparametric ANOVA (Kruskal Wallace Test) to find the mean and overall average scores for each subscale. A one-way ANOVA was applied to the data to determine whether there were any significant differences in participant responses.

Research Question 1 regarding the type of culture in the school and how the culture is perceived by the staff members was answered from the statistical analysis of the results from the survey. The statistical analysis of the results indicates that the staff members have a perception of culture in the school, but there are no strong significant differences in how they perceive the school's culture. DuFour and Eaker (1998) wrote that many times the staff members in a school do not realize that their school has a culture that is unique to that place. The means of the data from the three subscales by role in school, language immersion, and years in service at the school only indicated a few instances of significance in the ratings of statement 7 on whether staff members visit and enjoy each other's company outside of school. This is an area that may be considered for discussion among the school leadership team to incorporate collaborative practices to build and enhance relationships among staff members and find ways for them to meet with each other away from school. Although not statistically significant at the

0.05 level, the variable for inclusion in the decision-making processes was approaching significance at the 0.06 level, which may indicate that noncertified staff members do not feel included in the school's decision-making processes. Huffmann and Hipp (2003) noted that when building a collaborative culture in a school, it is important to include everyone in the organization who may have special talents to share for the good of the school. Huffman and Hipp also contended that part of the learning process in creating a learning community is to help the members of the community to grow and learn to make decisions about school improvement. It is evident from the themes in the frequency table that the participants of the semi-structured interviews feel strongly about what it means to be a part of a culture where staff members work together. This data about the feelings of collaboration in the school are supported by data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) results under the domain of Instructional Practices. The educators rated the statement that teachers work in PLCs to develop and align professional practices at 91.9%. The majority of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2014). Teachers support each other and share the responsibility for students to attain success in a second language. They understand the importance on a broader scale as indicated in the article by Robinson, Rivers, and Brecht (2006). Robinson et al. wrote that there is an immediate need for specialists who are foreign language speakers. The inability to speak a foreign language could become a national security issue impacting the country's ability to compete effectively on the global marketplace because of the deficits in foreign language learning in the United States. The researchers included information from the General Social Survey conducted by the University of Chicago and published in The Modern Language Journal. The research found that 25% of those sampled claimed to

speaking a foreign language, while only 10% said they spoke the foreign language with any fluency. Location and demographics also made a difference in the ability or lack of ability to speak a language fluently. The researchers found that people who lived in the northeast or the northwest had a higher language proficiency rate as well as higher skills in the foreign language than those who lived in other parts of the country (Robinson et al., 2006).

Research Question 2, the extent to which language immersion impacts the culture in the school, was answered using the rich descriptions from the observations and semi-structured interviews. Twenty-three staff members participated in the interviews of the 35 randomly selected staff members who were sent invitations. The most feedback during the interviews came from themes which included the unique school environment, the foreign language immersion program, and low incidences of student behavior problems. Table 28 indicates that 100% of the staff members from each category who participated in the semi-structured interviews spoke of the unique school environment with the foreign languages as a major factor that contributed to the unique culture found in the school. Non-language immersion staff members commented more on the number of shared cultural events in the school that are a part of the school rituals as a result of the school's foreign language immersion program.

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to assess the culture in a foreign language immersion school, determine the type of culture in the school, and find out the extent to which the foreign language immersion magnet program impacts the school's culture. Following the overview and discussion, this chapter is divided into findings from the subscales of the SCTS professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality/

collegial relationships, self-determination/efficacy, a summary of the findings, and recommendations for further study.

The research was conducted in a K-8 foreign language immersion magnet school in an urban school district in the southeast. From a review of the literature on culture, there is the indication that a positive culture in a school positively impacts student achievement and school success (Gruenert, 2005). It is important to understand the background of the school in order to understand the implications for the study based on the accumulated and analyzed data. The school is a foreign language immersion school with many teachers who are foreign nationals. These teachers bring artifacts of culture as well as their own rich cultural traditions and teaching practices to the school. These practices and traditions provide students with experiences that help to increase their picture of the world and give them a broader understanding of other cultures and people. This broadens students' horizons and provides a unique learning environment for language learners and all students in the school. Cultural artifacts from foreign countries are present throughout the school such as national flags and ornaments. Staff members and students dress in native costumes on special days and for assemblies to celebrate the different countries represented by the languages taught in the school. Teachers share practices across languages and grade levels which help to increase teacher collaboration and student efficacy as the language proficiency increases. This in turn increases teacher efficacy as it impacts instructional input and teacher practices to improve and increase student language proficiency, achievement, and academic success.

The researcher focused on data obtained from the participant surveys of the three subscales in Wagner's (2006) SCTS used to assess school culture: professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality/ collegial relationships, and self-determination/



efficacy. From his research, Wagner determined that the three subscales provide information that can be used to determine the type of culture in a school. Data from the survey completed by the participants in the study provided the researcher with information about the culture in this foreign language immersion school, and the semi-structured interviews and observations gave the researcher insight into how the culture is perceived by staff members. According to Wagner, a healthy school culture represents one of the strong pillars supporting a positive school environment. Barth (2002) stressed that in order for teaching and learning to improve in a school environment, the school must have a positive culture. The hope is that this study will contribute to the research base on the impact that a positive culture has on a foreign language immersion school.

Masden-Copas and Wagner (2002) contended that it is important for schools to understand the importance of getting the culture right before engaging in other school improvement activities because a healthy school culture is essential for a school. In a sound culture, colleagues willingly participate in professional development to improve their own instructional practices and the academic success of students in the school (Masden-Copas & Wagner, 2002). Peterson and Deal (1998) wrote that having a strong culture in a school benefits the school and contributes to teacher productivity and effectiveness. Eighty-five staff members completed the online survey through Survey Monkey. Twenty-three staff members were available to participate in the interviews and those participating staff members provided insight into their perceptions of the school and its culture as well as their understanding of how the foreign language immersion program impacts the school. In the interviews, middle school staff members were more prone to indicate personal reasons for wanting to be a part of the staff of this school and exercising the ability to take advantage of the opportunity for their own children to learn a foreign

language at an early age. One staff member remarked in the semi-structure interviews, “This school has an amazing reputation and I wanted to be a part of something different.”

### **Professional Collaboration**

DuFour and Eaker (1998) wrote that one of the ways to create significant change in a school is to provide collaborative time for teachers and to ensure that this collaborative time is an essential part of the teachers’ day. Further, teachers must have time to collaborate about the curriculum and to work together to enhance the teaching and learning in their school (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The data indicate that the noncertified language immersion staff members had the lowest average under professional collaboration. This may be explained by the fact that noncertified staff members are generally not included in planning or curriculum activities in the school due to the nature of their employment and the restrictions on the number of hours they are allowed to work. In most schools, these activities are undertaken by certified staff members who are salaried employees. However, one of the noncertified staff members who has worked at the school for more than 10 years indicated in the interview that “I feel at home in this school. I also feel that the job that I do contributes to the success of the school and the language programs.” The one-way ANOVA applied to the Professional Collaboration subscale indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the responses to the variables discussions, scheduling, decision-making processes, and planning time. The Scheffe post hoc test performed on the ANOVA data indicates that there was a model significance for the ANOVA, where  $p < .05$  indicating at least one significant difference among the means. The Scheffe post hoc comparisons showed that there was a significant difference in the responses between the Language Immersion role and the Other role ( $p=0.028$ ) and the responses between the non-Language Immersion role and the Other

role ( $p=0.007$ ). In addition, the Scheffe tests indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in responses between any of the roles as related to the variable teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues; there are no statistically significant differences in responses between any of the roles in the variable teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources; there are no statistically significant differences in responses between any of the roles in the variable the student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff; there are no statistically significant differences in responses between any of the roles in the variable planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals. The “Other” category includes those noncertified staff members such as secretaries and teacher assistants who are not language immersion teacher assistants. This is an area that the school administration could take into consideration to be more inclusive of the noncertified staff members on school decision-making committees to build relationships with those stakeholders.

Wagner (2006) described how teachers in successful schools share a common belief that all students can learn and work together collaboratively. As a result of the focus on collaboration, there is the assurance that learning is taking place. DuFour (2004) supported the idea that a positive culture promotes an optimal learning environment for teachers, and collaboration is an important asset in a school when developing and maintaining a positive school culture. There is collaboration among the staff members as noted by a comment from a Japanese Language Immersion teacher during the semi-structured interviews, who stated, “We are a team. The Japanese

teachers work together.” Another teacher from the middle school noted that the school has a diverse learning environment, but everyone works together.

Waldron and McLeskley (2010) indicated the importance of a school leader who also supports a culture of collaboration in the school, understands the importance of supporting a culture of collaboration, and models collaboration with staff members. The school leader’s approach to developing a supportive culture in the school is evident. The principal believes in the tenets of effective instructional practices and includes the 12 characteristics of a positive climate on each communication for the staff. She also develops a yearly planning calendar for meetings and professional development opportunities. The use of structures and planning in the school are indications of artifacts from Level 1 of Schein’s levels of organizational culture around structures and processes. Additional evidence of the desire to create a positive culture in the school is the relaxed and collegial way that staff meetings are held, the fact that teachers are held to high expectations for teaching and learning, and the support shown to teachers during staff meetings as commented on by the persons who reviewed the observation protocol. The results from the survey also indicate that teachers feel empowered by the school administration to collaborate and trust their colleagues to build relationships that lead to successful collaboration. Teachers who collaborate and work together in a positive manner and communicate freely and problem solve together impact the relationships they build and grow as their colleagues grow. These teachers are involved in the change process to improve the school and are helping to build a strong culture in the school which brings together students, staff, and members of the community (Deal & Peterson, 2003). Data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) showed that 91% of the educators surveyed indicated that teachers collaborate in PLCs to

create and plan for instruction. Data from the SCTS indicate that staff members in the school have thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the school that color their idea of what the school is like. These perceptions of the school and the feelings that staff members have about the school are found in Level 3 of Schein's organizational culture model with regard to underlying assumptions, thoughts, perceptions, and basic beliefs about the school.

### **Affiliative Collegiality/Collegial Relationships**

"There is a community here that appreciates what I do and I have a connection to others on the staff." From the interview comments, most of the foreign language immersion teachers felt a greater connection to the school and its purpose. Data from collegial relationships showed no significant differences in responses across staff members by role in school, whether certified language immersion, noncertified language immersion, or other staff members. Results from the nonparametric ANOVA (Kruskal Wallance Test) indicated an area of concern in collegial relationships. Statement 7 regarding staff meeting outside of the school day for socialization was an area of significance across languages, role in school, and years of service. This may be an indication that there is a need for relationship building in the school that encourages staff members to work on building relationships with their colleagues across all groups. Comments of staff members from the semi-structured interviews across roles indicated that the school is a welcoming place for all; they were welcomed as new staff members; and diversity is accepted at this school. "This is a global school," remarked one staff member who continued, "the United Nations of schools."

The data from statement 10, the school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of the school staff, indicate an alpha level of less than 0.05

indicating significant differences in the responses to this statement. There were no significant differences in responses noted by language taught or number of years in the school. In other areas, noncertified staff members ranked collegial relationships high. The results from the survey indicate that the staff members are comfortable with each other and enjoy working together but do not meet outside of the school for social gatherings. They display a true sense of community by their shared traditions and celebrations. From the data, it seems that members of the community communicate openly with each other and share information formally and informally (Wagner, 2006). Members of a group who share successful strategies with others and celebrate the achievements of their colleagues are two of the indications of the presence of a positive culture in a school (Schmoker, 2006). This information aligns with Level 1 of Schein's organizational culture model about structures and processes which are artifacts of a school's culture. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey was created to determine schools in the state where there are positive working conditions for teachers who in turn provide a positive environment where students can learn. According to the overall results from the survey, 81.9% of the 84 educators from the school used in this study agreed that this school is "a good place to work and learn" (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2014). From additional comments shared during the semi-structured interviews, staff members feel at home in the school. Interview participants who were not language immersion staff members indicated that working at this school gives them a broader understanding of other cultures and the world. A staff member commented, "I grew up in Asia. When I graduated from college, I was looking for a language program and this program was a good fit for me and for the skills that I have." One of the interviewees indicated that "everyone works together here." Additional data

from the interviews indicate that the majority of staff members feel they have built collegial relationships with the people they work with. Results from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) under the domain of School Leadership showed 89.2% of the educators indicated that “there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.” An indicator of a positive culture in a school, according to educational theorists such as DuFour and Eaker (1998) and Peterson and Deal (1998), is an atmosphere of trust and respect in a school.

### **Self-Determination/Efficacy**

The analysis of the results from subscale three, self-determination/efficacy, also indicates that the school has a positive culture. As an English language arts teacher stated in the semi-structured interviews, “This is a high quality staff with a high level of professionalism and positivity. There is also consistency of support when issues arise.” From the research around teacher perceptions of efficacy, Goddard et al. (2011) concluded that how teachers perceive their own efficacy and that of other members of the group is important to the success or failure of the organization. The researchers determined that in an organization where its members possess a strong sense of purpose surrounding their beliefs and mission, the organization will continue to function when stressful situations arise (Goddard et al., 2011). The statistical analysis in this area continues to be consistent with responses from the previous two subscales. The results from the SCTS are consistent in the indication that there is a culture that exists in the school where the teachers feel empowered to do what is best instructionally for students. This phenomenon is perceived across all groups represented by the survey participants: certified language immersion teachers, certified non-language immersion staff members, noncertified language immersion teacher assistants, other noncertified staff members, and

the administrator.

These results are also supported by the information received from the semi-structured interviews and observations. One language immersion staff member expressed her reasons for wanting to work at this school. "I speak a foreign language," she said, "and I wanted to be able to expand and change student futures." Another staff member added during the interviews that she had no dread about coming to work and was eager to make an impact on student learning when she was at the school. Wagner (2006) added that efficacy is present among teachers when they feel empowered as decision makers in the school and when teachers feel there is tangible support for the work they do and enough resources to help them to be successful in their teaching. Staff members in the entire school are invested in the students they serve and believe that all students can learn a foreign language to near native-speaker capacity. This is evident in the responses from the semi-structured interviews, that especially language immersion teachers feel a shared responsibility in helping students to achieve their goals of language proficiency. Students in the school learn to speak the language with a high degree of fluency. This degree of language proficiency with students impacts student efficacy. Students also experience the language in the school and in the community through connections with the Alemannia Club, the Alliance de Francaise, and the Japanese Saturday School. Student efficacy impacts teacher efficacy, increasing teachers' attitudes and their support of the students and each other to bring about student academic and language success. This indicator of teacher efficacy contributes to a positive culture in the school. Hoy (1990) wrote that an organization has a positive culture when the members of the organization have a shared common view of their world and a shared sense of values that help the organization's members understand what must be done for them to be successful and to help students be



successful. Another language immersion staff member made the following statement: “I see students learning every day; I want to teach students the skills they will need to be successful in the language that I teach.” The EOG results in Table 2 are further indications of the determination and dedication of the staff members. Met and Lorenz (1995) wrote that success in a foreign language also helps English speaking students to be successful in English. Further, the teachers understand how valuable it is to speak a foreign language in the 21st century and are preparing students to compete in the global marketplace for jobs. A staff member added that she sees tangible evidence of the progress students are making in the foreign language immersion program.

An article published by WestEd (USDOE, 2008) supported the idea of efficacy in its research and concluded that one important characteristic that identifies a successful magnet school program is the school administrator. This is the person who makes positive contributions to the efficacy in the school by promoting teacher development and challenging teachers to be responsible for meeting the educational goals that have been set for students (USDOE, 2008). The principal at this school has been instrumental in the creation of foreign language exchange programs with schools in China, France, Germany, and Japan. She has challenged all members of her staff to support the school’s programs for the benefit of the academic and language success of the students. As a result of the influence of the foreign language program, many of the language immersion students have studied abroad, chosen foreign language as a major or minor degree of study at university, and acquired jobs that require fluency in one of the foreign languages offered in the foreign language immersion program.

Protheroe (2008) furthered the idea of the impact of principal leadership on teacher efficacy and added that principals who model a shared vision for success that is

student-centered and based on student achievement, focused on hiring and retaining teachers equipped to meet the challenges to reach all students through intentional teaching and strategies, help to build teacher efficacy in their schools. In the interviews, one staff member indicated that building efficacy among the staff is a definite strength of this principal. The principal is consistent in her behavior and attitude; she is positive and realistic in her expectations of staff members; and she is confident and a leader who empowers staff to make instructional decisions that positively impact the lives of children. Another staff member added that the principal values the opinions of the staff members and openly communicates with the staff to make the school a better place for all stakeholders. Gruenert and Whitaker (2014) affirmed that because a big part of a school's success or failure depends on the culture, it is important for the school leader to know about the school's culture and be willing to build it into one that is strong enough to support student achievement. From the comments, surveys, and interviews, it appears this principal has done just that.

Both persons who validated the observation notes indicated the presence of characteristics of a positive culture in the school. The staff seems to have very collegial and trusting relationships with each other. It is evident that there is teacher leadership in the school. The principal is transparent when she shares information with the staff. Staff members are appreciative of things that happen for them in the school. Teachers share information and compliments as well as trouble-shoot with each other in both PLC and staff meetings. There is less evidence of efficacy, noted one of the validators, but the participation level in meetings suggests that teachers do not mind a slightly longer meeting. In addition, it was noted that staff meetings are warm with lots of cheering, affirmations, and support. Teachers appear to know what is happening with each other

and other teams, and this gives the indication that this is an open school. The validators noted that there is a level of trust among the staff members indicating a correlation to a positive culture in the school. There is a shared staff issue over visas and the difficulty in obtaining visas which gives them a rallying point to work together as a team.

Subsequently, validator number one noticed that there seems to be an expectation of recognition and support as well as a willingness to change teaching strategies and routines. The second validator responded that the school used for this research seems to be a nice, pleasant place to work and that people have a desire to work there. The principal appears to be kind, realistic, and informed. She added that from the observational data, the principal is an advocate for the students and staff. The artifacts indicated in the three levels of Schein's organizational culture chart are evident in information obtained from the observations. There are structures and processes in place for small group and whole group staff meetings as found in Level 1 of the organizational culture chart about the artifacts of the culture. It is evident that the principal has shared the philosophy of the foreign language immersion school and her vision with the staff members who share in her vision of making the school successful. These are the espoused values that are identified in Level 2 of Schein's Organizational Culture chart. There are beliefs that are taken for granted. The staff members believe that every child can learn a foreign language. Staff members also believe in their colleagues and have their own perceptions about the school in general. These are the basic underlying assumptions of the culture found in Level 3 of Schein's Organizational Culture chart.

The fact that the principal creates a staff meeting agenda for each staff meeting and a professional development calendar that is shared with all staff members gives an indication that there is a high level of support for the staff in this school. The calendar

includes dates for the entire school year with dates for general staff meetings, on-site professional development opportunities and other noteworthy school dates important for the school. At each staff meeting, teachers receive a staff meeting agenda. Printed at the bottom of each agenda as well as all staff memos are the 12 dimensions of school climate. It is obvious that the 12 dimensions are important to the principal, and she keeps them in the forefront for her staff. Collegiality, collaboration, shared vision, and open/honest communication were all noted during the observations. Comments from the semi-structured interviews and the observations indicate that principal leadership is important in this school, and there is tangible evidence in the school that the characteristics of and school culture are evident and help to support the positive culture found in the school.

### **Document Review**

Document review for the school consisted of referencing information from a survey administered to all schools in the state to compare the teaching and working conditions. The most recent iteration of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey: TELL Survey was 2014. Results from the survey revealed that 88% of the staff members at the school used for this study participated in the survey. Subsequently, the survey results indicated that overall, 81.9% of those who completed the survey felt that the language academy is a “good place to work and learn” (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Results, 2014). The results from the survey were higher for this school than those of comparable schools in the state and district in all domains but Time and Facilities and Resources. The results of the survey indicate that teacher responses were positive in the domains associated with positive school culture and support the findings from this study about the culture in this school. The domains from

the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey are Professional Development, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, and Instructional Practices and Support. In these domains, the respondents scored the statements between 87-98%. As previously mentioned, other documents reviewed for this research included the staff calendar created by the principal to inform staff members of important dates for this school and the staff meeting agenda that is prepared and ready for distribution at each staff meeting that always include the 12 dimensions of school climate.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

In conclusion, results from this study support the findings from the state survey administered at the school, that there is a positive culture in this school. The results from the semi-structured interviews and the observations indicate that the language immersion program positively impacts the culture of the school. Staff members work collaboratively, demonstrate a shared responsibility, and share rituals and celebrations that give the school its identity, all of which are indicators of a positive culture in the school, influenced by the presence of the foreign language immersion program (Hoy, 1990). Beal (2009) concluded from her study of culture in a foreign language immersion school in Louisiana that positive teacher attitudes positively affected the culture in the school. The foreign language immersion teachers in the elementary school not only provide instruction in the Core Curriculum and the content in the foreign language but also provide students in the four elementary foreign languages – Chinese, French, German, and Japanese – with a rich background of cultural knowledge and identity. These teachers use authentic materials and artifacts during instruction and create cultural activities native to their countries to enhance student learning experiences. Students in Grades 5 and 8 participate in school exchange programs planned and coordinated with

their foreign exchange school partners, providing students the opportunity to travel abroad, increase their language proficiency, and acquire an expanded view of the world. The foreign language immersion magnet program is distinct and plays an important role in determining how staff members feel about the school. The principal is supportive of teachers who feel they have a voice in planning and collaborates to ensure the success of teachers and the academic success of all students in the school (principal comments on school webpage). This study adds to the knowledge base about school culture. The positive culture that exists in this foreign language immersion school may provide the impetus for further study of school culture in other foreign language immersion programs.

This study's purpose was to assess the culture in a foreign language immersion magnet school, determine the perception of culture by staff members, and investigate whether the foreign language immersion magnet significantly impacts the culture of the school. Several studies have noted the importance of having a positive culture in a school, but only a few studies substantiate the impact that a positive culture has on a foreign language immersion school. A study conducted by WestEd (USDOE, 2008) found that successful magnets, including language immersion magnet programs, had a culture of high academic achievement for all students, especially when teachers supported each other and took responsibility for the academic achievement of their students. According to the data from this study, this foreign language immersion school has a school culture that is positive, and the foreign language immersion program impacts the culture in the school. The school motto is "Creating bright futures in six languages" (school website, 2014). The school brand is intricately tied to the foreign language immersion program. Information from the observations and semi-structured interviews

supports these findings. Staff members indicated their desire to work at the school because of the positive brand image of the school. Future study might investigate replicating this study in other foreign language immersion programs in this district or other districts to determine whether these findings are true for the impact of foreign language immersion programs on a broader scale. Additional studies may consider whether the ethnic background of the teachers influences their perception of the school culture and whether the perception of culture changes dramatically between the elementary teachers and the middle school teachers in the school if it is a K-8 program.

Data from the SCTS indicated significance in the area of staff members sharing ideas and being involved in the decision-making processes. Culture researchers indicate that in order to maintain a positive culture in a school, all stakeholders must be valued for the contributions they make to the success of the school's program. There is also an indication that to sustain a positive culture, all stakeholders must be invited to be a part of the decision-making processes to ensure buy-in.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that school culture is highly dependent upon the people in the school and how positive they feel about what is happening in the school from year to year. Additionally, several surveys were administered during the course of the school year, and a certain survey fatigue may have slightly impacted the results.

### **Conclusion/Summary**

Three main ideas were learned from this study of culture in a foreign language immersion program. First, there is a positive culture in this foreign language immersion magnet school. There are no significant differences in the way the different sets of staff members perceive the culture, as indicated from the results of the survey data. The

observation and interview data clearly note the characteristics found in schools with a positive culture: collegiality, collaboration and communication, trust and feeling valued, shared rituals and celebrations. From the semi-structured interviews, there is the indication that 90% of the staff members talked positively about the characteristics that make up a school culture evident in this school such as collaboration, feeling valued, the importance of rituals, and the celebration of accomplishments.

Triangulation of the data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, the observation, and interview data support these findings. Under the survey domain Teacher Leadership, 89.2% of the educators indicated that teachers feel they are partners in the education of students, and 90.4 % indicated that as teachers in this school, they feel trusted to make sound instructional decisions. This premise is also supported in the data from the statistical analysis of the staff member survey responses who participated in the SCTS. Data analyzed from the SCTS indicate that there are no significant differences in the way staff members perceived self-determination/efficacy in the school. Drs. Jacobson, McKoy, and Wilson concurred with the researcher that information and data from the semi-structure interviews indicate that teachers and staff members have a sense of shared responsibility to help students be successful in the acquisition of a second language so that the students achieve their foreign language goals. This shared responsibility contributes to the success of the teachers and the academic success of the students. The data indicate that there is strong efficacy among the teachers, and this supports a positive culture in this school. The data from the interviews, observations, and survey for this study indicate that there is shared responsibility, collegiality, and collaboration which are important to the members of the staff, and this is substantiated in the results from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey



(2014) data.

The principal provides tangible support to staff members, another indicator of a school with a positive culture. Staff members feel empowered to make instructional decisions and are proud to be members of this school's staff. Staff members support the vision of the school and participate actively in celebrations and school rituals. The staff members trust and respect each other as indicated in the semi-structured interview data and observation notes. Gruenert and Whitaker (2014) wrote that although trust is complex, staff members who work in a school that has a culture that is working feel as if they can share what is bothering them with anyone in the school's culture without them or the work that they do in the classroom being judged.

Secondly, the researcher learned from this study that in spite of the good communication and collaboration noted during planning and rated high on the survey, one of the areas rated low across groups and within groups on the survey was that staff members do not feel the school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of the staff which had a  $p=.041$ , less than  $p<0.05$ . However, data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) results indicated that 93.2% of the educators who participated in the survey responded under the domain Instructional Practices and Support that teachers in the school were encouraged to try new ideas. In addition, the results show that 91.4% of the certified staff members support the premise that teachers work in PLCs, an indication of collaborative practices in the school which also supports the idea that there is a positive culture in this school.

Finally, there is a clear indication that the culture in the school is impacted by the language immersion program. Not only were there comments from language immersion and non-language immersion staff members about the impact of the foreign language

immersion program and the unique school environment that it creates but also about the staff investment and shared responsibility in the success of the students. According to DuFour (2004), teachers who collaborate demonstrate a shared sense of collective responsibility for their students and their learning. Additional information that supports the premise of a positive culture in the school was obtained from the results of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey domains that relate closely to the three subscales of the SCTS. Gruenert (2005) found a strong correlation between unity of purpose and learning partnerships. Teachers who share a common bond understand and are able to articulate the school mission. Foreign language programs tap into the power that comes from the ability to speak a second language. Foreign language immersion programs provide students with a curriculum that is enriching, stimulating, and educationally challenging. Student proficiency increases in two languages which leads to an increased potential for students' future academic and economic successes in the global economy (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Subsequently, teachers are interested in being a part of such a program. The teachers in this school share a vision and are motivated by this shared vision to provide students with the tools needed to obtain proficiency in a foreign language that will help them be successful well after completion of school. This is evident in the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey data under the domain School Leadership. The data indicate that the faculty and staff believe that they share a vision that helps their school to be successful.

Wagner (2006) noted in his research that school culture is important to everything that happens in a school. From the observations, it was noted that the staff members are cordial and collegial toward each other and are willing to help each other. Staff members also recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of their colleagues during staff

meetings with the presentation of the globe and the apple. One of the external reviewers noted in her comments, validating the observation protocol, that teachers have an expectation of recognition and support and have developed collegial and trusting relationships which is evident in their interactions with each other. She added it is clear that the staff members in the school seem to have a shared vision for success. The second external reviewer commented on the respect, collaboration, and personal relationships among the teachers. Both reviewers mentioned the friendly atmosphere among the staff members who obviously want to be at this school. The researcher noted that teachers used small group time after school to plan for upcoming events and future lessons. The professional development coach facilitated a professional development on improving classroom management strategies in order to maximize instructional time in the classroom. Protheroe (2008) wrote that teacher efficacy can be influenced by observing the effective instructional strategies of other teachers and successfully implementing them in one's own classroom or by coaching and feedback that specifically target effective instructional practices.

Principal leadership impacts teacher efficacy if the principal models a vision that is student-centered and based on student achievement. It is also important that principals hire and retain teachers who feel that they are equipped to meet the challenges of reaching all students through intentional teaching behaviors (Protheroe, 2008). Both validators commented on the personality of the principal and that the principal is an advocate for students and teachers. The researcher found there to be trust in an administration that has a vision shared with staff that sets the stage for instruction, celebration, and the success of the school. The literature on culture strongly suggests that school administrators play a major role in helping to develop a positive culture that

subsequently leads to the success of teachers and students. DuFour (2003) called for a culture of collaboration in schools systematically driven by a process that includes collaboration in everything that happens in the school. He added that teachers must be provided with guidelines, tasks, and time to gain a laser-like focus on increasing student proficiency and achievement. The school leader helps to foster the culture of collaboration by including teachers in the decision-making processes of the school, helping teachers to identify essential skills needed, and helping teachers to create goals and plans of action that help to improve student success in school (DuFour, 2003).

Research conducted on effective teaching indicated a correlation between positive school culture and the academic success of students in a school that Lezotte and Snyder (2011) referred to as “academic press” (p. 104). This term describes a school with a positive culture, order, students who show academic proficiency, educators who share a vision for academic excellence and share the idea that the education of students is their main goal, work in collaboration with each other, and work hard and show genuine respect for each other (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). The staff of the language immersion school used for this research study demonstrates the characteristics of academic press through a shared vision among staff members who see instructing students and helping them become proficient in a foreign language as one of their major goals; all teachers at the school work hard; students are academically successful; and the teachers show respect for each other. In addition, staff members collaborate with each other and have developed collegial relationships.

The findings from this study indicate no significant differences in the way staff members perceive the culture in this foreign language immersion magnet school. Through triangulation of the study data, it is clear that the foreign language immersion

program positively impacts the culture in the school which is unique in many ways: the method of instructional delivery; the diversity of the staff and student population; and the cultural artifacts, events, and celebrations that make up the school's identity. These contribute to the unique conditions in every school that help to create the culture in the school (Wagner, 2006).

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Appendix A  
School Culture Triage Survey

## School Culture Triage Survey

School culture is assessed by examining three types of behavior (Phillips, 1993):

- **Professional collaboration**  
Do teachers and staff meet and work together to solve instructional, organizational, or curricular issues?
- **Affiliative/Collegial Relationships**  
Do people enjoy working together, support one another, and feel valued and included?
- **Self-determination/Efficacy**  
Are people in this school because they want to be? Do they work to improve their skills as professionals, or do they see themselves as victims of a large uncaring bureaucracy?

SCORING 1 =NEVER 2 =RARELY 3 =SOMETIMES 4 =OFTEN 5 =ALWAYS  
OR ALMOST ALWAYS

### Professional Collaboration

1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.....1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.....1 2 3 4 5
3. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.....1 2 3 4 5
4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.....1 2 3 4 5
5. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to Plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.....1 2 3 4 5

### Affiliative Collegiality (Collegial Relationships)

6. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.....1 2 3 4 5
7. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company.....1 2 3 4 5
8. Our school reflects a true "sense" of community.....1 2 3 4 5
9. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.....1 2 3 4 5

10. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.....1 2 3 4 5

11. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, Special events and recognition of goal attainment.....1 2 3 4 5

### **Self-Determination/Efficacy**

12. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repeat.....1 2 3 4 5

13. School members are interdependent and value each other.....1 2 3 4 5

14. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.....1 2 3 4 5

15. Members of our school community seek to define the problems/issue rather than blame others.....1 2 3 4 5

16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.....1 2 3 4 5

17. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.....1 2 3 4 5

### **Indicate your role at this school**

Select your role in this school and the number of years you have worked in this school.

18. Select one answer choice that best describes your role in this school.

1. Certified Language Immersion staff member
2. Certified non-language immersion staff member (all other instructional staff, MS Teachers, Facilitators, Counselors, Special Area
3. Certified Administrator
4. Noncertified Language Immersion Teacher Assistant (Chinese/French, German/Japanese)
5. Other noncertified staff member (EC asst, secretary, registrar, ISS asst, RTI asst)

19. Language Immersion teachers/teacher assistants, indicate the language of instruction for the majority of the day.

Chinese  
French  
German  
Japanese

20. How many years have you worked in this school?

- 1 - (0-5 years)
- 2 - (5-10 years)
- 3 - (10-15 years)
- 4 - (15+ years)

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form – Survey

## Informed Consent Survey Participation

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research study to analyze and assess the culture in this school. This study is conducted as the result of a doctoral dissertation for Gardner-Webb University. All staff members are asked to complete Wagner's School Culture Triage Survey (2002) electronically on Survey Monkey. Masden-Copas and Wagner (2002) created the School Culture Triage to assess a school's culture to determine the type of culture present in the school and whether improvements need to be made to the culture. The survey consists of 17 questions divided into three subscales, professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. It should take each participant approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Once the surveys have been received, additional data will be collected through individual and group interviews of staff members and school administrators. When the research is completed, the results of the data collection will be shared with the school principal and subsequently with the staff members.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the culture in this foreign language immersion school and compare the assessed culture with the perceived culture of the staff members in the school.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and all responses submitted through the Survey Monkey site will remain anonymous. You may choose not to be a participant in this study. However, if you do participate, please complete the survey in its entirety to uphold the validity of the survey instrument. You also have the option to leave the study once it has begun.

I will use the results of this study for my dissertation. The results may be published to increase the knowledge base in this area. All participant information will remain anonymous, only data from the categories of certified staff, language immersion teacher, and noncertified staff will be reported. Results of this survey are not evaluative and will not be used as such.

Completing this survey will cause no harm or risk, mentally or physically for the individuals who participate. Individual performance will not be affected by whether an individual chooses to participate, or not, in this research study, and there is no personal gain to be won from participation. Participating in this study will increase the knowledge base surrounding school culture and its impact in a language immersion school.

I consent to participate in this survey for the research study on school culture.

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The researcher may be contacted at:  
Felicia Eybl, XXXXXXXXXXXX or by email at XXXXXXXXXXXX



## Appendix C

### Informed Consent – Interviews

## Informed Consent

### Interviews

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research study to analyze and assess the culture in this school. This study is conducted as the result of a doctoral dissertation from Gardner-Webb University. All staff members have been asked to complete Wagner's School Culture Triage Survey (2002) electronically on Survey Monkey, a survey used to assess a school's culture to determine the type of culture present in the school and whether improvements need to be made to the culture. Staff members are asked to allow the outside observer to collect data through individual and group interviews of randomly selected staff members and school administrators as this information relates to the characteristics of school culture that will provide additional data for the research.

The random selection of staff members to participate in interviews will provide supporting data regarding the culture in the school and how it is perceived by the staff members. The researcher will use the Interview Protocol developed for this particular research.

When the research is completed, the results will be aggregated and shared with the school principal and subsequently with the staff members.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the culture in this foreign language immersion school and compare the assessed culture with the perceived culture of the staff members in the school.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and all responses to the interview questions will remain anonymous and all identifying markers removed. You may choose not to be a participant in this study and you have the option to leave the study once it has begun. However, if you do choose to be a participant in the interviews, please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge.

I will use the results of this study for my dissertation. The results may be published to increase the knowledge base in this area. All participant information will remain anonymous, only data from the categories of certified staff, language immersion teacher, and non-certified staff will be reported. Results of this survey are not evaluative and will not be used as such.

Participating in the interviews will cause no harm or risk, mentally or physically for the individuals who participate. Individual performance will not be affected by whether an individual chooses to participate, or not, in this research study, and there is no personal gain to be won from participation. Participating in this study will increase the knowledge base surrounding school culture and its impact in a language immersion school.

I consent to participate in the interviews for this research study on school culture.

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The researcher may be contacted at:

Felicia Eybl, (704) 844-2603 or by email at F.EYBL78@GMAIL.COM

## Appendix D

### Informed Consent – Observations

### Informed Consent – Observations

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research study to analyze and assess the school's culture. This study is conducted as the result of a doctoral dissertation from Gardner-Webb University. The researcher will conduct observations during staff meetings to collect additional data about the culture in the school. Staff members are asked to allow the outside observer to collect data during staff meetings and discussions on information related to the characteristics of school culture that will provide additional data for the research.

Observations will be conducted, as unobtrusively as possible, of staff members during staff meetings. During the observations the researcher will be looking for evidence of professional collaboration – staff members who work together to solve curricular and instructional issues; affiliative collegiality – staff members are happy to be working in this school, support each other and feel valued; self-determination/efficacy – staff members are in the school because they want to be and work to improve their teaching practices for the benefit of themselves and the students.

When the research is completed, the results of the data collection will be aggregated and shared with the school principal and subsequently with the staff members.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the culture in this foreign language immersion school and compare the assessed culture with the staff members' perceived culture.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and all data collected during the observations will remain anonymous with no identifying markers. You may choose not to be a participant in the observation portion of the study and any comments shared during the observation will not be noted. You also have the option to leave the study once it has begun.

I will use the results of this study for my dissertation. The results may be published to increase the knowledge base in this area. All participant information will remain confidential, only data from the categories of certified staff, language immersion teacher, school administrator and noncertified staff will be reported. Results of this survey are not evaluative and will not be used as such.

The observations will cause no harm or risk, mentally or physically for the individuals who participate. Individual performance will not be affected by whether an individual chooses to participate, or not, in this research study, and there is no personal gain to be won from participation. Participating in this study will increase the knowledge base surrounding school culture and its impact in a language immersion school.

I agree to participate in the observation portion of this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The researcher may be contacted at:

Felicia Eybl, (704) 844-2603 or by email at F.EYBL78@GMAIL.COM

Appendix E  
Interview Protocol

## Interview Protocol

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

Foreign Language/Grade level/Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Years at this school: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for participating in this interview as part of my research on school culture. The information you provide in this interview will be used to help to assess the culture in the school to determine whether there are different perceptions of the culture between immersion and non-immersion staff members, certified and noncertified staff members. My interest is in learning from your experience. The collected comments, experiences and suggestions from the interview will be summarized and included in the data for my research. They will be shared with the school administrators and with you at the conclusion of the research.

**All information is confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Confidentiality is guaranteed and identities will be protected. Names and identifying information will be removed.** I am focusing on your experiences as a member of the staff at this school. The purpose of this interview is to compare responses from foreign language immersion and non-immersion staff members and certified and noncertified staff members.

This interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will tend to focus on characteristics of school and organizational culture.

**I would like to begin by learning about how you came to the organization:**

1. What attracted you to a language immersion school?
2. What initially excited you and provided you with impressions when you came to work at this school?
3. How long have you been a member of this staff?

**I would like to learn about your picture of the future.**

4. When you awoke this morning and thought about another day at this school as a teacher, what was the dominant feeling or emotion that you experienced?
5. What factors caused you to feel this way?
6. As you recall the previous weeks, what were some highs and lows that you experienced as they relate to the work environment? Can you identify what triggered the positive feelings/negative feelings? Were there people involved

that contributed to either? Name the factors that contributed to positive feelings.

7. As you look forward to next week, imagine a positive situation that might occur. How would you set it up for yourself? As you reflect on your experiences at this school, can you recall a time when you felt most involved or most excited about being a part of this organization? Explain.

**I would like to find out what is important to you as it relates to this school.**

8. What is it about the organization that you value?
9. As a teacher (or administrator, etc) at this school, recall one way you have improved in the past year. What is something that you are doing differently or better?
10. What were the major forces or who contributed to your improvement?
11. What is one way you would like to improve in the next 12 months? How could you make this happen?

**I am interested in your view of the instruction at this school.**

12. Have students changed over the past few years? How have they changed?
13. Do you perceive students as having changed since you began your teaching career? How do you perceive the changes? What has changed? How have you adapted/ modified your instructional practices to reach each child?
14. What organizational factors (leadership, teamwork, culture) foster in you the determination to achieve or excel? Name one thing that motivates you to come to school each day.
15. What are some of the instructional highlights in your day? What can you do to experience them more often?

Organizations function best when people at all levels share a basic common vision related to the vision of the organization. Knowing the big picture helps people to experience a sense of purpose, pride, significance and unity.

16. How could we make this staff come together in a unified, collective, and supportive manner?
17. How can certified staff members and administrators make the noncertified staff members and teacher assistants feel more valued and respected?



18. In conclusion, if you could develop or transform this school, in any way you wished, name three things you would do.

Appendix F  
Observation Protocol

**OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**  
**School Culture Triage Survey**

Form to document the characteristics of positive school culture observed during staff meetings.

Professional Collaboration

Affiliative Collegiality

Self-determination-efficacy

<b>Characteristics of positive culture</b>	<b>Obs 1 - small group</b>	<b>Obs 2 - small group</b>	<b>Obs 3 – Training</b>	<b>Obs 4 – staff meeting</b>	<b>Obs 5 – staff meeting</b>
Collegiality					
Efficacy					
High expectations of self and others					
Experimentation/ entrepreneurship					
Trust and confidence					
Tangible support					
Appreciation and recognition of improvement					
Humor					
Shared decision making by all participants					
Shared vision					
Open/honest communication					
Metaphors and stories					

## Appendix G

### Validation for Frequency Table



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

*School of Music, Theatre and Dance*

PO Box 26170 Greensboro, NC 27402-6170  
336.334.5789 Phone 336.334.5497 Fax  
<http://performingarts.uncg.edu/>

March 19, 2015

To Whom it May Concern:

Doctoral candidate Felicia Eybl requested that I review the findings of a frequency table that she compiled based upon responses to surveys and group interviews she conducted as a part of her research study. The research questions serving as the focus of Mrs. Eybl's study were: (1) what type of culture existed in a specific foreign language immersion school? and (2) to what extent did language immersion impact the culture of the school? I was asked to determine whether I concurred with Mrs. Eybl's conclusions about the school as they related to the themes that emerged from the investigation.

After reviewing the themes presented in frequency table, I agree with Mrs. Eybl's assessment that the school environment is unique and positive, and the responses of teachers and staff members indicate shared responsibility for student achievement in the languages and led to an indication that there is a positive culture in the school.

Sincerely,

Constance L. McKoy, PhD  
Associate Professor of Music  
Director of Undergraduate Studies in Music Education

**Jacobson, Shoufen A.**

Mar 15 (7 days ago)

to me

Felicia,

Reading your frequency table, I have perceived that there is unique school environment which tailors to the language immersion setting in this school. The responses from the staff members indicated that they have shared responsibility for students' achievement in their 2nd language acquisition and their academic success, which resulted into a positive school culture. In summary, shared responsibility, collegiality and collaboration are crossed referenced in the interviews, observations and survey of this study. Please let me know if there is anything else that I can help,

Shoufen  
Dr. Shoufen Jacobson  
Math, AP Computer Science, and Sci Vis I Teacher  
South Mecklenburg HS  
8900 Park Rd.  
Charlotte, NC 28210  
[980-343-3600](tel:980-343-3600)  
[980-343-3607](tel:980-343-3607) - fax

On Mon, Mar 16, 2015 at 7:52 AM, FRANK WILSON <[FRANK.WILSON@cherokee1.org](mailto:FRANK.WILSON@cherokee1.org)> wrote:

Felicia,

If I am reading your table right and I think I am, then yes I would concur that the teachers interviewed all shared a responsibility to student learning and that there is a positive culture that exists in this school.

*Dr. Frank E. Wilson, Jr.  
Gaffney High School  
Social Studies Department Chair*

## Appendix H

### Validation for Observations



From: Bonack, Jennifer

Sent: Saturday, January 25, 2015 9:21 PM

To: Felicia.eybl

Subject: Observations

This staff seems to have very collegial, trusting relationships. The principal shares information in a timely, transparent manner, and from the observational data the teachers are appreciative. The staff leadership is also evident. The teachers share information and compliments, as well as trouble shoot with each other, in both PLC and staff meetings. There is less evidence of efficacy, but the participation level in meetings suggests that teachers do not mind a slightly longer meeting.

As I read it, I kept thinking about what warm meetings they sounded like--lots of cheering and support, open questions. I think trust is a huge cultural factor and the teachers seem to know what is going on with each other and other teams, so it must be a very open school. I think the shared issue they are facing (visas and the difficulty getting them) also gives them a rallying point to work together as a team. There seems to be an expectation of recognition and support, and a willingness to change teaching strategies or routines (parking).

Jenny Bonack, NBCT, M.Ed.  
Dean Of Students  
Talent Development Teacher  
Selwyn Elementary School #522  
2840 Colony Road  
Charlotte, NC 28211

980-343-5835 -phone  
980-343-5864 -fax  
<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us>  
<http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/selwynES>  
<http://jenniferbonack.cmswiki.wikispaces.net/>

Every Child. Every Day. For a Better Tomorrow.

From: Crawford, Rebecca C.  
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 12:04 PM  
To: Felicia.eybl  
Subject: Validation

I see that the culture of this school is one of respect, collaboration, and personal relationships. The principal seems kind, realistic, informative, and an advocate for the students and staff. The information indicates that there is desire to work there, friendliness amongst the staff, and overall a pleasant place to work.

Becky Crawford  
NBCT, M.Ed Reading, M.Ed School Leadership  
Literacy Facilitator  
Selwyn Elementary  
Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools  
2840 Colony Road  
Charlotte, NC 20211  
980-343-5835  
Courier #522  
rebecca.crawford@cms.k12.nc.us

## Appendix I

### Principal Consent to Conduct Research at the Selected School

**Waddell Language Academy**

7030 Nations Ford Road

Charlotte, NC 28217

Tel (980) 343-5815

Fax (980) 343-5854

April 2013

SUBJECT: Felicia Eybl – Dissertation Research at Waddell Language Academy

Dear Ms. Eybl,

We are delighted that you are interested in exploring the topic of school culture through research at our school. This letter confirms my support for your dissertation research project at Waddell Language Academy during SY 2013-2014.

I agree that school culture is very relevant to overall school effectiveness and to teacher and student success. Your use of the School Culture Survey instrument developed by Wagner may help to assess the type of culture prevalent at Waddell as it is perceived by the staff members; this kind of self-assessment is an important component of the School Improvement process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ynez Olshausen'.

Ynez Olshausen  
Principal

## Appendix J

Gardner-Webb University IRB Approval



THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
of  
GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY

This is to certify that the research project titled  
In Analysis of the Culture in a Foreign Language Immersion School  
being conducted by Amy Eybl  
has received approval by the Gardner-Webb University IRB. Date 11/18/13

Exempt Research

Signed [Signature]  
Department/School/Program IRB Representative  
[Signature]  
Department/School/Program IRB Member

Expedited Research

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Department/School/Program IRB Representative  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Department/School/Program IRB Member  
\_\_\_\_\_  
IRB Administrator or Chair or Institutional Office

Non-Exempt (Full Review)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
IRB Administrator  
\_\_\_\_\_  
IRB Chair  
\_\_\_\_\_  
IRB Institutional Officer

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

IRB Approval:

\_\_\_\_ Exempt \_\_\_\_ Expedited \_\_\_\_ Non-Exempt (Full Review)

## Appendix K

### Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Research Approval


**Office of Accountability**

600 East Fourth Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 Charlotte, North Carolina 28202  
 980-344-0037

January 9, 2014

Felicia Eybl  
 6638 Flat Creek Drive  
 Charlotte, NC 28277

RE: An analysis of the culture in a foreign language immersion school

Dear Felicia Eybl,

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Your proposal summary and application for "An analysis of the culture in a foreign language immersion school" has been reviewed and approved by the Office of Accountability.

Please register at <https://www.cmsvolunteers.com/> for clearance if you plan to enter any school for research-related purposes at any time.

Given the increasing level of accountability placed upon schools, and the need to recruit and retain quality teachers, identifying programs and strategies that work is of paramount importance. CMS asks that you share your results within 30 days of completion, including any recommendations for the district based upon your findings.

Please sign and return one copy of the enclosed CMS "Memorandum of Understanding" indicating your agreement with its terms. Please retain the remaining copy for your records. Should you have any questions or future needs, please feel free to contact Lindsay Messinger, Director of Research, Evaluation, and Analytics, at [lindsayl.messinger@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:lindsayl.messinger@cms.k12.nc.us). Best wishes and continued success as you begin your study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank D. Barnes", is written over a faint, larger blue outline of the signature.

Frank D. Barnes  
 Chief Accountability Officer  
 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools  
[frankd.barnes@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:frankd.barnes@cms.k12.nc.us)



## Appendix L

Consent from Wagner to use Survey



Felicia Eybl &lt;f.eybl78@gmail.com&gt;

**School Culture Triage**

2 messages

**Felicia Eybl** <f.eybl78@gmail.com>  
 To: christopher.wagner@wku.edu

Sat, Dec 8, 2012 at 4:06 PM

Dr. Wagner,

I contacted you two years ago and asked permission to use the School Culture Triage to obtain information about the school that I am using for my doctoral research at Gardner-Webb University. I have had several setbacks and am again on track to complete the dissertation. Since at least two years has passed since my original request, I am again asking permission to use the School Culture Triage to assess the culture of a language immersion K-8 magnet school to determine whether the disposition of teachers in the school affects the culture in the school. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Felicia Eybl

Amy Felicia Eybl,  
 6638 Flat Creek Drive  
 Charlotte, NC 28277  
 Ph: 704-844-2603  
 Email: F.EYBL78@GMAIL.COM

**Wagner, Christopher** <christopher.wagner@wku.edu>  
 To: Felicia Eybl <f.eybl78@gmail.com>

Fri, Jan 18, 2013 at 5:15 PM

Amy,

I have been out of the country and apologize for the tardiness of this response.

Of course you have my permission to use the School Culture Triage Survey for your research. Please let me know if you have questions about the survey.

Best regards,

Christopher

Christopher R. Wagner, Ph.D.  
 Professor - Educational Administration, Leadership, and Research  
 GRH 3074 - Western Kentucky University  
 1906 College Heights Blvd. #41031  
 Bowling Green, KY 42101