Original Research

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

A Comparison of School Climate Ratings in Urban Alternative and Traditional High Schools

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Abstract

We investigated whether there are significant differences in ratings of school climate from the perspectives of students, parents, and school staff across four types of urban secondary schools. Data originated from a school climate survey administered in a large urban Midwestern school district to students attending traditional and alternative high schools. We coded all high schools in the sample district into four school types, including traditional, innovative, behavior-focused, and academic remediation-focused. We analyzed data using linear mixed-model regression. Results showed statistically significant differences in specific dimensions of school climate across stakeholder groups and the four school types. Analysis of student data indicated ratings of Learning-Focused Environment are significantly lower in traditional schools. Analysis of parent data indicated ratings of Academic Preparation and Community Engagement are significantly higher in innovative alternative schools. Analysis of staff data indicated ratings of Staff Engagement are significantly lower in traditional schools. These findings suggest discrepant educational opportunities related to specific dimensions of climate according to school type.

Introduction

The National School Climate Center (2018) broadly defines school climate as the quality and character of school life and is a phenomenon strongly associated with student achievement. Generally, conceptualizations of school climate include multiple dimensions, such as perceptions of safety and access to rigor. Payne (2018) identified positive school climate as a protective factor for students with disabilities and for students facing dropout risk for non-school factors (e.g., low income, experience with trauma). A 2014 report published by the U.S. Department of Education recognized school-wide climate initiatives for simultaneously increasing student engagement and decreasing poor behavior. Further, empirical evidence suggests positive school

climate is correlated with improved student outcomes such as increased graduation rates, attendance, prosocial behavior, and general academic achievement (Cornell et al., 2016; Duckenfeld & Reynolds, 2013; Thapa et al., 2013; Van Eck et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014).

Considering its impact on the student experience, school climate is an important area of inquiry in efforts to understand causes and effects of school characteristics. In seminal work in this area, Hoy and Hoy (2006) suggested that student achievements—or lack thereof—cannot be fully examined without understanding the climates from which those outcomes emerged. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to analyze student, staff, and parent ratings of school climate across different types of high schools in an effort to understand how perceptions of climate may differ across school types in one urban district.

School districts operate a variety of high school settings, including traditional neighborhood schools and alternative placements tailored to special interests or more intensive needs. Climate may differ between traditional and alternative school types, but most research investigating climate does not explicitly identify the type of school in which the research occurred. Therefore, we were prompted to ask if school climate varies between particular high school types. Previous research suggests healthy school climates are particularly important for the success of students who present academic or behavioral difficulties (Duckenfield & Reynolds, 2013; Fan et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2014). Therefore, it is critical to examine perceptions of climate in school placements that cater to educationally at-risk and disenfranchised youth. Specifically, we addressed the following two research questions:

1. To what degree do three groups of stakeholders—students, parents, and school staff—rate the quality of their affiliated school's climate?

2. Do climate ratings differ significantly by school type and/or by stakeholder group?

School Climate and Student Performance

Characteristics of schools, such as emphasis on rigor, behavior support, collaboration between staff and parents, teacher competence, and resources to which students have access, influence stakeholder perceptions of climate and predict the level of investment felt toward the school (Dulay & Karadag, 2017; Cohen et al., 2009; Hammond et al., 2007; Maxwell et al., 2017, National School Climate Council, 2012; Shukla et al., 2016). The relationships between these characteristics and the student experience are widely documented. For example, when climate-related practices and policies (e.g., PBIS) reduce occurrences of problem behavior (e.g., office referrals), attendance rates and academic achievements increase (Cornell et al., 2016; Netzel & Eber, 2003; Payne, 2018; Thapa et al., 2013; Van Eck et al., 2017). Similarly, schools with learning environments perceived more rigorously by students and staff report higher student achievement, increased staff attachment, and fewer incidences of misbehavior and its resulting discipline (Dulay & Karadag; Maxwell et al.; Sugai & Horner, 2002). In turn, climate reform efforts (e.g., restorative justice) that reduce punitive discipline result in higher attendance rates and higher grade point averages (Boccanfuso & Kuheld, 2011; Payne; Whisman & Hammer, 2014).

School climate is broadly understood as multi-dimensional. For example, collaboration between staff and parents or students' feelings of safety are two of many dimensions observed and investigated within school climate. In this study, we conceptualize school climate based on our analysis of the measurement instrument used by the sample district and includes the following dimensions: Learning-Focused Environment, Academic Preparation, Community-Engaged School, and Staff Engagement. Thus, we define school climate as the degree to which the learning environment maintains academic preparation, staff engagement, and community orientation. We present further description of these dimensions in the methodology.

School Types

Urban school districts operate a variety of high school settings, including comprehensive neighborhood schools as well as alternative placements designed to serve students at-risk of school failure. Urban school districts offer more alternative placements than suburban or rural districts, in part due to the larger proportion of students considered at-risk of school failure located in urban centers (Carver & Lewis, 2010; McFarland et al., 2018; Hodge et al., 2014). Further, evidence shows that urban school districts are responsible for greater proportions of students with academic and behavioral difficulties compared to other district settings (Lehr et al., 2009; Lippman et al., 1996; McCurdy et al., 2007). In some urban alternative schools, certain student groups are disproportionately represented. For example, Black students and students with disabilities are overrepresented in academic remediation-focused and behavior-focused alternative schools compared to their proportional representation in traditional schools (Perzigian et al., 2017).

Previous research conceptualized alternative education into three specific types: innovative, behavior-focused, and remediation-focused (Perzigian et al., 2017). An innovative alternative school has particular pedagogical focus (e.g., entrepreneurship) or targets a specific student population for reasons other than school failure. Innovative schools are those to which students typically apply and gain acceptance to attend. Behavior-focused alternative schools are dedicated to behavior modification and support. These placements serve students referred for difficult or inappropriate behaviors and are often enrolling students as a final option before more punitive discipline such as removal from the district. Academic remediation-focused alternative schools are designed to serve students in need of increased academic support. Students are referred to them for reasons related to poor academic performance or credit deficiency. Credit recovery programs typically fall within this category.

Despite having a presence in numerous urban school districts, alternative schools, evidence suggests, show little-to-mixed effectiveness. For example, students attending behavior-focused alternative schools experienced fewer suspensions and office discipline referrals but earned fewer credits and attended fewer school days than a matched comparison group who remained in traditional schools (Wilkerson et al., 2016a). Similarly, students enrolled in academic remediation-focused alternative schools earned more credits but experienced more suspensions and attended fewer school days than students attending traditional schools (Wilkerson et al., 2016b). Yet additional research shows reduced scores on standardized assessments, lower grade point averages, and decreased general engagement exhibited by students in alternative schools compared to their peers (Carruthers & Baenen, 1997; Carswell et al., 2014; Chiang & Gill, 2010;; Schwab, Johnson et al., 2016; Tenenbaum, 2000). However, there is also evidence of some success: Zolkoski et al. (2016) reported strong feelings of resiliency by students attending an urban alternative school, and Franco and Patel (2011) demonstrated positive credit recovery by students attending an alternative summer school program. Echoing Hoy and Hoy (2006), alternative school effectiveness research may be more meaningful with a greater understanding of the climates within them.

Methodology of Present Study

Setting

Data for the study originated from a school climate survey administered to the stakeholder groups associated with all K–12 schools within one large, urban school district. The sample district is in a city of 750,000 in the Midwestern United States. According to census data, 20–25% of residents live at or below the national poverty line. Approximately 40% of the population identifies as African American, 38% as White (non-Hispanic), and 17% as Hispanic or Latino, and the median family income is $35,000–$40,000. The sample district serves about 65,000 K–12 students each year. According to the state education agency (SEA), 85% of the students in the district are economically disadvantaged, defined as qualifying for free or reduced-priced

lunch. Further, the SEA indicated that the high school completion percentage (with a regular diploma) in the district was approximately 65% and that 80% of the district's 10th-grade students did not meet proficiency on standardized assessments of reading and mathematics during the 2017 academic year. Approximately 20,000 secondary students were enrolled in the district's high schools and approximately 3,000 staff were employed in the district's high schools at the time of data collection.

In this study, we examined four types of schools: traditional schools, and innovative, behavior-focused, and academic remediation-focused alternative schools. The sample district does not categorize schools using this categorical nomenclature, but rather groups all non-traditional schools as "alternative." To code schools into one of the four school types, the following protocol was used to guide the evaluation of publicly available information obtained from the district's website:

a) Was the school listed as an alternative, charter, intensive, transformative, or something other than high school (e.g., credit recovery program)?

b) Do the majority of students attend by choice or by referral/assignment?

c) Does the school curriculum focus on a specific skill area (e.g., international baccalaureate, arts or technology)? or Does the school target a select student demographic other than students identified at-risk (e.g., LGBTQ youth)?

d) Is the school aimed at academic recovery or behavior modification?

School Climate Survey Instrument

We obtained ratings of school climate from a dataset containing results from the District School Climate Survey in which students, their parents, and school staff were asked to respond to items inquiring about the quality of their associated school's climate. The survey was administered in the district's elementary, middle, and high schools. The present study focuses on secondary schools, and so data from the elementary and middle schools were not analyzed. The District School Climate Survey was administered in printed form. All school staff were asked to complete the survey, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel. Staff and students completed the survey during a school day. Parents and guardians of students were mailed copies of the survey at approximately the same time. In cases where parents had children in more than one school in the district, they were asked to complete separate surveys, one for each school, with one survey per school per household. In all, 10,866 students, 1,236 parents, and 926 staff completed at least some portion of the survey, which translates to a 50% response rate for students and a 30% response rate for staff; data were not available to calculate the response rate for parents.

The sample district, in conjunction with a local consultant group, developed the survey to assess perceptions of school climate in the district's schools across four dimensions (i.e., rigor, safety, environment, and governance). Information about the construction of the instrument was obtained through telephone conversations and email exchanges with an associate researcher employed by the consultant firm at the time of survey development. Items for the survey were created with guidance from climate surveys of peer school districts, the SEA, and a commercial climate survey instrument. We were unable to obtain samples of those model documents; however, it was confirmed that all items for the survey were modeled after the Essentials Survey from the University of Chicago Consortium of School Research (Sebring et al., 2006). The format of responses to items measuring school climate was a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree—4 = strongly agree) with a fifth option labeled "Not Sure." In our analysis we treated "Not Sure" as missing data, which is appropriate given the confounding nature of a forced selection (Ryan & Garland, 1999).

To prepare the data for analysis, we first assessed missing data. First, all item responses of "Not Sure" were removed from the data: 5701 student item responses; 600 parent item responses; and 389 staff item responses. Second, the amount of missing data for all cases (that is, an individual participant's amount of total missing responses) was calculated. Following guidance from Warner (2008), any case with fewer than 80% of items completed was deleted from the dataset. Using this standard, students had to answer at least 15 out of 18 climate items, parents were required to answer at least 17 of 21 items, and staff had to answer at least 13 out of 16 items. Removing these participants left a sample of 8,694 (80.01%) students, 1,057 (85.52%) parents, and 872 (94.17%) staff.

Scores were then screened for extremity. Following guidance from Meyers and colleagues (Meyers et al., 2013), we calculated standardized total climate scores and identified cases with z-scores exceeding +3.0. We then deleted these scores, considering them extreme and unreliable. In all cases, the deleted outliers had recorded extremely negative school climate ratings (generally because they answered "strongly disagree" to all items). We removed 92 students, 10 parents, and two staff. The final sample for analysis was thus 8,602 students, 1,047 parents, and 870 staff.

The survey was initially designed to produce four subscales of climate (i.e., rigor, safety, environment, and governance). Although items were informed by the Essentials Survey from the University of Chicago Consortium of School Research (Sebring et al., 2006), we could locate no evidence to suggest the specific scale was ever validated and our exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis failed to support a four-factor solution. Additionally, because of extensive deviation in item phrasing, we did not consider the scales administered to students, parents, and teachers to be equivalent. As such, each set of items was analyzed separately. Thus, though the measures can be considered generally related to school climate and some items overlap between measures, the factors identified in each of the three surveys are conceptually independent.

For students, two interpretable factors emerged. The first factor (Eigenvalue = 8.6, % variance explained = 48.0%), labeled Learning-Focused Environment, contained 10 items related to school climate that encouraged learning such as "the students and adults in my school respect each other," and "my school has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere." Reliability for these items was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .924), so the items were averaged for use in analysis. The second factor (Eigenvalue = 1.1, % variance explained = 6.1%), labeled Academic Preparation, contained four items such as "I have the books and supplies I need to do well in school," and "my teachers give me challenging work"). Reliability for this factor was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .699), so the items were averaged for use in analysis.

For parents, two interpretable factors emerged. The first factor (Eigenvalue = 11.9, % of variance explained = 56.9), labeled Community-Engaged School, contained 10 items related to parental engagement with the school and the school's position in the community. Reliability of these items was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .938), so the items were averaged for analysis. The second factor (Eigenvalue = 1.1, % variance explained = 5.1%), labeled Academic Preparation, contained six items related to the rigor of education offered at the school. Reliability of these items was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .874), so the items were averaged for use in analysis.

For staff, two interpretable factors emerged with Eigenvalues above 1.00. Upon further inspection, however, there was no theoretical justification to separate the items into two factors. As reliability was acceptable for the nine items together (Cronbach's alpha = .914), all nine items were averaged together for analysis. The factor called Staff Engagement contains items such as "my school has high expectations with regard to student achievement," and "school staff participate in making decisions that affect teaching/learning."

To answer the research questions, we used linear mixed-models, as survey participants were nested within schools and thus their ratings were not completely independent. The between-subjects factor was Type of School with four levels: (a) traditional, (b) innovative, (c) behavior-focused, and (d) academic remediation.

Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections were used to further assess significant differences between school types. All statistical analyses was performed using IBM SPSS.

Results

Student data was analyzed first, using a linear mixed model that allowed us to control for within-subjects effects (given that some participants were rating the same schools) while also examining differences between school types. Differences in ratings of Learning-Focused Environment were calculated first. There was a significant effect of school type, F (3, 8598) = 79.66, p < .001. Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections showed that ratings of traditional schools (M = 2.72, SD = .582) were lower than ratings of all three other school types, innovative (M = 2.83, SD = .599), behavior-focused (M = 2.96, SD = .396), and academic-remediation (M = 3.09, SD = .541). Additionally, ratings of innovative schools were lower than ratings of academic-remediation schools. Next, ratings of Academic Preparation were compared. There was no difference by school type for this factor, F (3, 8598) = 2.08, p = .101. (See Table 1 for factor ratings by stakeholder and school types.)

Next, parent data was analyzed using the same method. We first examined differences in ratings of Academic Preparation by school type. There was a main effect of school type, F (3, 1043) = 15.24, p < .001. Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections showed that ratings of innovative schools (M = 3.45, SD = .489) were significantly higher than ratings of traditional schools (M = 3.24, SD = .521) and behavior-focused schools (M = 3.15, SD = .382); there was not enough evidence to conclude a difference with ratings of academic-remediation schools (M = 3.39, SD = .484), and no other school types significantly differed from each other.

Parent ratings of Community-Engaged School were analyzed next, and there was again a significant difference by school type, F (3, 1043) = 12.24, p < .001. Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections showed that ratings of traditional schools (M = 3.18, SD = .507) were significantly lower than ratings of innovative schools (M = 3.38, SD = .511) and academic-remediation schools (M = 3.38, SD = .506); there was not enough evidence to conclude that a difference existed between behavior-focused schools (M = 3.30, SD = .410), and no other school types significantly differed from each other.

Finally, staff ratings of Staff Engagement were analyzed. There was a significant effect of school type, F (3, 866) = 9.26, p < .001. Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections showed that staff in traditional schools (M = 2.75, SD = .591) rated Staff Engagement significantly lower than staff in innovative schools (M = 2.90, SD = .687) and academic-remediation schools (M = 3.14, SD = .601). Additionally, staff in innovative schools rated Staff Engagement significantly lower than staff in academic-remediation schools. The ratings of Staff Engagement in behavior-focused schools (M = 3.02, SD = .745) did not differ significantly from any other school type, and no other comparisons were significant.

Table 1: *Factor Ratings by Stakeholder and School Types*

Stakeholder Type	Factors	
Student	Learning Environment M (SD)	Academic Preparation M (SD)
Traditional (n = 2847)	2.72 (.582)	3.13 (.494)
Innovative (n = 4906)	2.83 (.599)	3.14 (.507)
Behavior-Focused (n = 79)	2.96 (.396)	3.17 (.406)
Parent	Community Engagement M (SD)	Academic Preparation M (SD)
Traditional (n = 374)	3.18 (.507)	3.24 (.521)
Innovative (n = 563)	3.38 (.511)	3.45 (.489)
Behavior-Focused (n = 32)	3.30 (.410)	3.15 (.382)
Academic Remediation (n = 78)	3.38 (.506)	3.38 (.484)
Staff	Staff Engagement M (SD)	
Traditional (n = 320)	2.75 (.591)	
Innovative (n = 443)	2.90 (.687)	
Behavior-Focused (n = 18)	3.02 (.745)	
Academic Remediation (n = 89)	3.14 (.601)	

Discussion

The relationship between school climate and the student experience is noted by many researchers. Hoy and Hoy (2006) asserted that student outcomes are best examined when considering the climates from which they came, as climate is a central predictor of students' successes or failures. Further research identified positive school climates as powerful enough to relieve many of the negative learning consequences of poverty (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Cohen et al., 2009). Indeed, there is evidence that positive climates are an especially important factor for students who tend to struggle academically and behaviorally, including students with disabilities. For example, a series of studies investigating characteristics of supportive educational settings found schools that successfully educate students with disabilities share common climate characteristics, such as high rigor and inclusive environments (Brigham et al., 2006). Students at risk of school failure, including students with disabilities, are disproportionately represented in non-traditional school placements, including

specific types of alternative settings (Perzigian et al., 2017). Thus, in the context of educational accountability for marginalized youth, it is important to understand the climates of alternative schools.

According to student data, the climate dimension Learning-Focused Environment is perceived less positively in traditional schools than in innovative, behavior-focused, or academic remediation alternative schools. This may indicate that alternative schools, regardless of the specific type, offer students a learning environment more apt to meet their specific needs. Considering a central purpose of alternative education is to provide services to disenfranchised or disengaged students, this finding confirms, at least in relation to perceptions of learning environment, that this purpose is being realized.

Another interesting finding is that Learning-Focused Environment is rated lower by students in innovative alternative schools compared to academic remediation alternative schools. Typically, innovative alternatives enjoy positive reputations and a student body excited to enroll, more so than credit recovery or dropout prevention programs. We know from previous research that innovative alternatives are significantly larger in size than academic remediation alternatives (Perzigian et al., 2017), so perhaps school enrollment size figures into perceptions of learning environment. There is evidence that schools with lower enrollment figures and lower student-to-staff ratios, in combination with focused instructional factors, predict better student experiences (e.g., Ehrenberg et al., 2001). Further, past research found that students enrolled in smaller schools reported their climates more positively than did students enrolled in larger schools (Cotton, 1996; Stevenson, 2006).

Alternative placements in general have lower enrollment numbers per school than do traditional settings and offer a more focused curriculum, which tends to be concentrated on student needs (Perzigian et al., 2017; Raywid, 1994; Wilkerson et al., 2018). For example, students who are experiencing credit deficiencies due to academic difficulty may attend an academic remediation-focused alternative school in which the curricular focus is on remediation and credit recovery. Because alternative settings have lower enrollments than traditional schools and some alternative school types are theoretically more attentive to individualized student needs, it is a positive and meaningful finding that students in all three alternative school types rated their learning environments more positively than those in traditional schools. The result that students in academic remediation-focused alternative schools rated their Learning-Focused Environments climates significantly higher than peers in innovative alternative schools may be further evidence of the unique learning context existing in small schools critically focused on leaving no student behind.

It is important to note that Cotton's (1996) and Stevenson's (2006) work focused on school enrollment size and not school type (i.e., traditional and alternative). However, their body of work aligns with the findings in the current study. In smaller schools, students reported better attitudes toward school, a greater sense of school attachment, more positive interpersonal interactions, and the perception of more positive staff interactions (Cotton). Ehrenberg et al. (2001) suggested smaller enrollments and, therefore, smaller staff-to-student ratios allow for more creative, challenging, and time-consuming instructional activities and methods, which may promote rigor and student learning in ways unfeasible in larger schools. Our research, in part, may indicate that a unique feature of alternative school climates is related to the lower enrollments in these settings.

No differences were observed in students' ratings of Academic Preparation. This lack of difference is interesting and merits further investigation. For example, if there is no difference in perceptions of Academic Preparation, why do disparate outcomes between students in traditional and alternative schools occur? Might the type of student (e.g., previous educational experiences) be more significant in determining outcome than school placement? This is beyond the scope of the current study and is an important consideration for future research.

In analyses of parent data, we found an effect of school type on ratings of Academic Preparation. Parents rated the academic preparation of their children significantly more positively in innovative alternative schools than traditional and behavior-focused alternative schools. This finding supports the theoretical intent of innovative alternative schools: to offer innovative pedagogy or content, typically within a framework of increased rigor and specific performance standards. According to the data, parents viewed innovative alternatives holding to this purpose and offering greater academic preparation. Parents rated Community Engagement highest in innovative alternative schools as well, which supports characteristics of many of the innovative alternatives in the sample district (e.g., provide community service opportunities for students and staff, strong community reputation).

Staff ratings of engagement (i.e., Staff Engagement dimension) was less positive in innovative alternative schools compared to academic remediation-focused alternative schools. Traditional schools received the poorest ratings, however. Although this study cannot attest to specific examples of staff engagement in individual schools, it is noteworthy that staff working with academically deficient students, or students in need of credit recovery or dropout prevention efforts, report stronger feelings of engagement than staff in other settings. This is encouraging, as it potentially indicates school commitment and engagement for those working with the most educationally vulnerable youth in urban districts.

Conclusions and Future Research

This study revealed important information related to perceptions of specific dimensions of school climate in different school types. Perhaps the most significant finding is that students enrolled in three types of alternative schools felt more positively about their Learning-Focused Environments than did students in traditional schools. Although this study does not attempt to examine the instructional factors that influence how school climates are perceived, we should acknowledge that smaller enrollment sizes of alternative schools may afford staff opportunities for differing instructional activities than is often possible in larger settings. Further, this study suggests that alternative schools' smaller enrollments are potentially a unique factor in how students, parents, and staff experience their climates. One should note the potential impact this could have on perceptions of climate if, in fact, the alternative schools examined in this study employed alternative instruction. Further research should examine school-level factors in alternative schools, such as instruction and pedagogy, which might influence student performance by way of enhancing school climate. Also, further research might control for school size in analysis of school climate across alternative and traditional schools in attempt to isolate school size from alternative school characteristics which may influence perceptions of climate. We recognize that the purpose of this study was not to investigate school size. However, we are encouraged at the prospect of school size as a unique characteristic of alternative schools, which influences the climates in these placements.

Although this study did not examine variables related to race and ethnicity, it is important to note that previous research suggests a significant overrepresentation of African-American students enrolled in behavior-focused and academic remediation-focused alternative schools (Perzigian et al., 2017; Wilkerson et al., 2018). These types of alternative schools may be associated with reduced expectations and an emphasis on "quick fix" credit recovery rather than meaningful learning (Kim & Taylor, 2008, p. 23). Concurrently, White students tend to be underrepresented in these schools, while overrepresented in innovative alternative schools (see Perzigian et al., 2017 for a discussion of race and alternative education).

It is interesting to consider the findings of this study in the larger context of school accountability and educational outcomes across school types and student profiles. As indicated previously, past research implies mixed efficacy of alternative schools, yet this study indicates that some dimensions of school climate are reported more positively in alternative schools than in traditional schools. Considering the relationship

between positive school climates and educational outcomes, we believe further research should examine alternative schools more closely in an attempt to answer why, despite better climates, alternative schools often produce poorer outcomes than traditional schools. This consideration holds implications regarding the efficacy of removing students from one school type and reassigning them to another, especially in light of the racial disproportionality between and among alternative and traditional schools. And it raises this question as well: What might be occurring within alternative education settings, which, despite their greater intimacy and students' more positive feelings toward the learning environment, do not predict increases in academic preparation or performance? In response, further research should examine critical alternative school characteristics (e.g., overrepresentation and low teacher retention), which may annul positive climate effects of smaller settings.

There are limitations to this study, most notably the absence of survey instrument validation from the instrument creators. Although we do not believe this issue to confound the results of our study, external instrument validity would be a welcomed addition. Further, we knew relatively little about the profiles of students enrolled in each school, as well as the demographic profiles of responding parents and staff. Access to this information may have provided further critical context for the findings of this study.

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