

Public Abstract

First Name:Christine

Middle Name:Marie

Last Name:Johnson

Adviser's First Name:Barbara

Adviser's Last Name:Martin

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:FS 2016

Department:Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Degree:EdD

Title:ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF ACADEMIC OPTIMISM IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS WITHIN A MISSOURI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This qualitative case study was created to study the established and embedded culture of one elementary school experiencing changes in student demographics. The identification of cultural components effective in closing the academic achievement gap among students living in poverty and their more affluent peers was the basis for the research. Therefore, focus groups, interviews, and document analysis sought to uncover certified faculty and classified staff's perceptions related to organizational culture. The conceptual framework for this study is academic optimism, which falls under the broader theory of positive psychology (Hoy & Tarter, 2011; Peterson, Park, & Sweeney, 2008; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The three constructs of academic optimism were extracted during the research, which included academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust in parents and students (Hoy & Tarter, 2011; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk, 2006). Additionally, the elementary's application of Professional Learning Communities led research participants to apply an understanding of academic optimism when interpreting their experiences within the organization.

The triangulation of three data sources, focus groups, interviews, and document analysis, uncovered themes related to organizational culture as determined by the artifacts, beliefs and values, and assumptions uncovered during analysis (Schein, 2010). Moreover, data analysis revealed components of the culture conducive to that of academic optimism, while also pinpointing elements in need of support.