# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SCHOOL CLIMATE FACTORS AND SCHOOL CHOICE OUT-MIGRATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN SCHOOL LEADERS.

A Doctoral Research Report

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Associate Professor Robert Bradley

Doctoral Committee Chair

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Keith E. Babuszczak

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the relationship among factors of school climate and first time out-migration rates from schools in Massachusetts urban public school districts through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment. By looking at these relationships, educational leaders would be able to consider how strategies relating to improving school climate may relate to the factors motivating families to enroll their pupils into schools other than those in their local school district.

Seven schools from four Massachusetts urban public school districts comprised this study's sample. These schools, serving students in all grade bands between K-12, were selected from districts which primarily assign students to public schools within their districts based on residential address. The researcher computed the first time out-migration rate of students who enrolled into charter schools and public schools through inter-district school chose from those schools comprising this study's sample. Faculty members from these schools evaluated their school climate using the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). The researcher also reviewed the School Improvement Plans from each of these schools in order to determine the support, specificity, and measurability of goals relating to school climate.

The first time out-migration rate for these seven schools varied from 0.00% to 9.68%. Three schools had higher first out-migration rates through inter-district school choice, while three schools had higher first time out-migration rates into charter schools. Faculty generally ranked factors of school climate between average and above average. Reviews of school improvement plans generally found these plans lacking in supported, measurable, and specific goals relating to all factors of school climate except for student achievement.

Independent sample t-tests calculated using individual teachers' rankings revealed that the school climate factors of physical environment, student interactions, culture, and safety were significantly higher in the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates than those schools with lower first time out-migration rates. A comparison of means among rankings of factors of school climate also showed that means were higher, or equal, in all factors within the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates than those with lower first time out-migration rates. Evaluations from School Improvement Plans indicated all factors of school climate were higher or equally rated in all factors of school climate, except for community involvement, in the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates. Leadership/decisionmaking was the only factor of school climate that was found to be negligibly different in both the mean faculty rankings and review of School Improvement Plans.

Four conclusions were drawn based on this study. The data suggest an imbalance of inter-district school choice and charter school options for students. School Improvement Plans were often singularly focused on student achievement, sometimes leaving out factors of school climate including those required by statute. The finding that school climate was generally higher in the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rate indicate that families consider a variety of factors when making enrollment decisions. These findings seem to contradict prior studies in which families reported academic and social reasons why they enrolled their students into schools through inter-district choice or charter schools options.

Recommendations from this study indicate that school leaders should consider the impact that school climate may have on school choice out-migration. Plans to improve school climate should ensure that all stakeholders and perspectives are supported so that students do not feel left out even when most of those close to the school would report that they experience a positive

school climate. School leaders should also consider a variety of reasons why students might migrate out through educational options when looking at educational reforms. Finally, educational leaders should include supported, specific, and measurable goals relating to factors of school climate in their school improvement plans, especially those areas required by statute.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Background.

Historically, American public schools have been charged with providing educational services to youth residing within a particular community (Marsh & Willis, 2003). These schools were charged with preparing youth to serve as active citizens and learn subjects that would prepare them for that purpose. Curricula were developed locally and schools lacked the larger bureaucratic central offices that exist today (Chubb & Moe, 1990). In the late 20th century, public distrust of governmental institutions grew and constituents demanded accountability for public agencies and services (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Marsh & Willis, 2003). Among many educational reforms in the 1980s, the traditional educational monopoly of the public school district was challenged. A variety of publicly funded options including vouchers, charter schools, and inter-district choice opened the educational marketplace to a form of marketplace competition called school choice. (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Weiss, 1996; Hess, 2002).

Theories supporting public school choice posit that competition among schools will necessarily cause improvements in order to attract quality students and teachers (Freeman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hess, 2002; Greene et al., 2010). According to these models and their supporters, underperforming public schools would either improve educational quality or close due to underenrollment. In order to remain competitive, public schools would have to continually improve instructional practice, innovate programs based on the desires of students and families, employ highly qualified staff, and keep tight budgets that focus resources directly to student learning.

For school leaders to compete in this open market, they first have to determine what makes a quality education that would encourage families to enroll in one school over the other

(Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996). Operationally defining educational quality, and tying those quality factors directly to student enrollment decisions, has proven difficult as school leaders struggle to improve educational opportunities and compete with public schools of choice (Hamilton & Guin, 2005). Questions such as "what makes a good school?" and "why would students leave (or enroll into) a specific school?" seem simple; however, they are often elusive when considering socioeconomic, racial, and community effects (Schneider & Buckley, 2002).

**Why school climate?**

School climate is defined as the personality of a school (Halpin & Croft, 1963) and has been shown in many studies to relate directly to improvements in student achievement (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Esposito, 1999; Freiburg, 1999). School climate looks at interactions, values, decisions, and expectations among all stakeholders in the school and those influencing the school, including parents and the community.

The literature demonstrates an alignment of the effect of school climate factors on student achievement, qualities of effective schools, and the reasons why families participate in school choice programs. Common themes of academic quality and student safety emerge in research relating to school climate (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston, 1979; Anderson, 1982; Esposito, 1999; Shindler, Jones, Williams, Taylor & Cadenas, 2009), effective schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Marzano & Waters, 2009), and participation in school choice (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994; Daring, 2005; Hamilton and Guin, 2005; Kleitz, Weiher, Tein, and Matland, 2005).

**Purpose of the research.**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate relationships among specific factors of school climate as they relate to rates of student out-migration through participation in inter-district

school choice or charter school enrollment. Specifically, urban schools in Massachusetts will be considered. If these relationships prove to be significant among this population, then leaders could look to them as areas of improvement that would affect their own school climates, student achievement, and school choice out-migration rates. District leaders could use these findings to empower building-level leaders to raise the profile of specific factors of school climate in improvement planning and site-based decision making.

Marzano and Waters (2009) provide a framework of how district and building-level leadership interact to improve student achievement. Through their model of defined autonomy, expectations are set at the district level with school-level leadership being given autonomy to manage responses and goals relating to the local context while still reflecting district expectations. Following Marzano and Waters' model, district leaders would collaboratively set expectations and goals relating to student achievement and instruction with school leaders both representing their school's context to district-level discussions and representing the district's expectations when collaboratively setting school-level goals.

Marzano and Waters' (2009) furthered their 2005 research on principal responsibilities to consider research on highly reliable districts. These 21 building-level leader responsibilities include factors of school climate such as culture, discipline, visibility, contingent rewards, affirmation, relationships, and ideals/beliefs. Out of this list, discipline, visibility, and relationships are seen to be solely attributable to the school level. Their definitions of defined autonomy can be used by district and school leaders to set specific and measurable goals that balance district-wide expectations with school-based goals and actions.

**Research problem.**

Relationships among factors of school climate and individual schools' out-migration rate were evaluated through this research. The researcher studied relationships among specific factors of school climate related directly to out-migration rates. School climate and first time school choice and charter school out-migration rates needed to be determined within individual schools.

The researcher surveyed faculty members of individual schools among Massachusetts urban public school districts to determine strengths and weaknesses relating to eight school climate factors: physical, faculty relations, student interactions, leadership/decisions, discipline/environment, learning/assessment, culture, community relations, and safety. The School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) was administered electronically to faculty members in schools that chose to participate in this research project. School improvement plans of these participating schools were also reviewed to determine if these factors of school climate were included through supported, specific, and measurable goals.

Individual first time out-migration rates, specific to pupils who enrolled in public charter schools and schools in public districts outside of their district of residence, were calculated by confirming individual student addresses and determining what school they would have attended through district neighborhood assignment policies.

**Research questions.**

The following research questions served as the foundation of this research:

1. What is the first-time out-migration rate of students from individual schools from the selected Massachusetts urban public school districts through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment?
2. How do faculty members of selected schools within Massachusetts urban public districts rate specific factors of their individual school's climate?

3. What goals related to school climate are included in the publicly reported School Improvement Plans of selected Massachusetts urban public schools? How detailed and specific are the goals in the School Improvement Plans that relate to school climate?
4. Are there relationships among the ranking of specific factors of school climate and the rate of student out-migration through inter-district school choice and charter school enrollment within the sampled Massachusetts urban public schools?

**Significance.**

This study lies at the nexus of why families say they participated in school choice, how schools identify their climate and recognize its importance, and what school effects might relate to family's educational choices. The research into why families enroll their students into public schools outside of their district of residence seems contradictory. Self-reported reasons for participating in school choice, such as academic quality and student interactions, conflict with findings from studies into what families actually consider in their information-gathering about a school, such as social factors (Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider and Buckley, 2002).

Many of the socioeconomic factors relating to school choice out-migration are difficult for school and district leaders to control. Public school principals and superintendents work in schools that are products of, and provide services to, a specific community. Class sizes may be difficult to control, especially under tight budgets and other mandates for student services requiring funds to be spent other places than hiring more teachers. Opportunities for advanced academic programming may be limited due to budgetary or personnel considerations.

Chapter two will present research and theories about the relationship between school climate and student achievement. Connections among factors of school climate and the reasons why families reported that they participated in school choice will also be presented. By

understanding the relationship between school climate and school choice, school leaders would be able to use improvements in school climate as ways to both improve student achievement and stem out-migration of students through school choice.

**Definition of terms.**

**School choice**: School choice is a reform model whereby families exercise the option to enroll their pupils into their choice of public schools, including charter schools, based on self-selected criteria rather than geographic location (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fuller et al., 1996; Hamilton & Guin, 2005; Greene et al., 2010).

**Inter-district school choice**: For purposes of this study, inter-district school choice is defined and delimited to the process in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts established by the statutory amendments to Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. c. 76 § 12b (1991) and further amended by the Education Reform Act (1993) allowing families to enroll their pupils into schools in public school districts other than their district of residence, provided that the receiving district's school committee has voted to accept students through school choice and that the pupils are admitted through approved admissions processes.

**Intra-district school choice**: Intra-district school choice refers to the practice of a district assigning students to specific schools within the boundaries of the student's home district based on the family's choice instead of on their residential address. This process is sometimes weighted to ensure socioeconomic diversity or to keep pupils from the same family attending the same school (Glenn, 1991; Glenn, McLaughlin, & Salagnik, 1993; Cambridge Public Schools, n.d.). Intra-district choice lies outside of the scope of this research since the student remains enrolled in his or her public school district of residence.

**Charter schools**: For purposes of this study, charter schools are defined and delimited as schools that meet the definition of a charter school under Massachusetts law. Specifically, "A charter school shall be a public school, operated under a charter granted by the secretary of education, which operates independently of any school committee and is managed by a board of trustees" (Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 71 § 89). Charter schools are public schools, though they are not subject to many of the rules and requirements of public schools as part of school districts. Charter schools are able to form around a focus or instructional theme instead of solely based on geography. Charter schools have autonomy over personnel and fiscal responsibility. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010a)

**Out-migration rate**: For purposes of this study, the out-migration rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who live within the residential boundaries of an individual public school but who attend another public school through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment into the total enrollment of that particular school. For example, if seven students live within the residential boundaries of Majestic High School but attend a local charter school, and Majestic High School has a total enrollment of 700 students, the out-migration rate would be 1%.

**Limitations and delimitations.**

The main limitation of this study was the number of schools whose faculty responded to the survey instrument in adequate numbers to be considered for this research. Only four superintendents out of twelve potential participant districts gave their permission to participate in this research. From these four districts, 36 schools received surveys. One school principal mentioned that teachers were already overwhelmed with improvement planning work that

teachers would not have time to adequately complete the survey. Other superintendents echoed this concern and denied permission for their districts to participate, citing that they had too much going on or were already the subject of other research. Faculty from only seven responded in adequate numbers to be considered.

Difficulties with the delivery of the online survey instrument limited this study. This limitation may have reduced the number of schools or faculty members who responded to the survey. Some e-mail invitations were marked as spam and some school leaders commented that they did not receive the e-mail invitations. There was no way to ensure that principals received e-mail invitations nor could the researcher ensure that faculty members received the survey. Sending surveys to each faculty member would have required gathering individual e-mail addresses for each teacher at each school, which would have been labor intensive and required that school leaders even had such a list available.

This study was delimited to public school districts in which the primary method for school assignment is based on a student's address within specific attendance zones rather than by intra-district choice or other means. Out-migration rates for individual schools could not be determined in those districts who primarily assign students based on intra-district choice policies since there is no way to know which school a specific pupil would attend. Another delimitation was made to consider only urban schools, since urban schools often find extreme difficulty in defining and making changes based on the educational marketplace of school choice (Fuller et al., 1996; Hess, 2002). Findings are not generalizable to non-urban districts, especially since their context and challenges often differ greatly from those of urban schools. Finally, only districts and schools within Massachusetts were part of the sample. Each state addresses public

school choice differently, so findings may not apply directly to districts outside of Massachusetts.

Responses from the school climate survey instrument were delimited to only faculty members. A more thorough evaluation of school climate would include responses from students, administrators, other staff, and families. Only faculty members were asked to complete the instrument because of timeliness and access issues.

Student out-migration data were delimited to those students who enrolled into public charter schools and other public districts that accepted students through inter-district school choice. Programmatic enrollments, such as for special education or into state-approved vocational education programs, were not considered. Enrollments into private and parochial schools were not considered, since public funds only transfer among public Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in Massachusetts therefore not part of the public educational marketplace. While other states offer vouchers for private or parochial school education, Massachusetts does not.

**Summary.**

Through this study, the researcher attempted to determine the relationship among factors of school climate and school choice out-migration rates. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature including historical perspectives of public schooling in the United States, the emergence of public school choice as a reform model to the American educational system, contextual considerations on the effects of school choice, reasons why families participate in school choice, and educational leaders' responses to school choice. Research on school climate is also presented, including its definition, assessment, and links to student achievement. Chapter Three describes the research methodology of this study. Chapter Four provides an analysis of

the data provided by surveying teachers on school climate, coding site-based decision making plans for factors of school climate, and school choice out-migration rates. Finally, Chapter Five contains the researcher's conclusions and recommendations.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Background.

The second chapter of this doctoral research project represents a review of the literature relating to school choice and school climate, exploring their connections to each other and student achievement. A combination of historical perspectives, theoretical underpinnings, statutory references, and scholarly research is presented to set the framework behind this research study. Through the research, the following themes emerge:

- The expectation of school choice as an educational reform model is that schools will necessarily improve in terms of student achievement in order to attract quality students and faculty or they will shutter due to underenrollment (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hess, 2002; Greene et al., 2010).
- Research shows that families use a variety of factors to inform their decision to participate in school choice, including student achievement, the offering of a challenging curriculum, educational quality, class size, socioeconomic diversity, safety, and relationships (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994; Hsieh, 2000; Kleitz et al., 2000; Schneider and Buckley, 2002; Daring, 2005; Hamilton and Guin, 2005).
- An effective strategy for school improvement is the creation of improvement plans that contain collaboratively set goals for achievement and instruction. These plans should contain references to, and effects of, school climate factors. (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, §59C, 1993; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994; Waters, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2009).

- Factors of school climate are directly linked to high student achievement (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Rutter et al., 1979; Esposito, 1999; Marzano, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

**Historical perspectives.**

In 1642 and 1647, nearly 130 years prior to garnering its independence from the British crown, the Massachusetts colony passed the first laws in the colonies promoting public education. Pre-colonial, formalized education in the western world was historically reserved for scholars, clergy, and upper classes. The goals of this newly formed system of public education were aimed toward the creation of an informed and socially compliant citizenry (Marsh & Willis, 2003).

The governing structure of these early schools and their curriculum were determined and supported by the local community (Marsh & Willis, 2003). Variations existed among communities; educational systems were not centralized and did not require complex support systems (Chubb & Moe, 1990). As systems of state and federal government grew, educational systems mimicked this progression by organizing into more bureaucratic systems.

Until the mid-20$^{th}$ century, large public institutions, including school districts, in the United States were trusted to provide services, set controls, and meet social needs (Fuller et al., 1996). Public distrust in the ability of these systems to serve the public grew as global crises arose through the late 1960s and early 1970s (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Marsh & Willis, 2003). Americans had built themselves as a global superpower, but that position started to be challenged by other forces on the worldwide stage. In response to the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik, and fears that Americans would lose their prominence on the world stage, the federal government passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 as the first widespread

federal program supporting public elementary and secondary academic education (Marsh & Willis, 2003; United States Department of Education, 2011). The NDEA provided curriculum and resources to improve instruction in the sciences and mathematics, foreign languages, and vocational education. Subsequent threats of the cold war found the federal and state governments increasing funding for, and requirements of, educational systems to prepare youth to outthink America's enemies and hold fast perceptions of global dominance (Marsh & Willis, 2003).

The National Commission on Excellence (NCEE) furthered the clarion's call for educational reform in the 1980s, though the threat was seen to be economic. In *A Nation at Risk*, the NCEE claimed that the citizenry was well informed but that graduates were less well educated than in prior generations. This was seen as a threat to global economic dominance, as other nations were seen as better preparing their graduates for work and economic prosperity (Marsh & Willis, 2003).

Improving education was seen as the way to ensure global competitiveness and military superiority, thus fueling the fires behind the search for effective educational reform models. Among these reforms, school choice was seen as a reform that would contribute to better schools and higher-achieving students that also based itself in American values of competition in the open marketplace. This belief was expressed in the introduction to a report from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (1994) on school choice. Its authors wrote that "the role of education as a way to establish economic leadership in the world is unchallenged. Educators, policy makers, and the private sector are all searching for ways to improve the current system, and to many of them, choice offers an attractive option" (p. 1).

School choice was not only seen as a way to improve education through a competitive marketplace; supporters also saw choice as a way to break racial and economic barriers to a quality education. The civil rights movement in the United States strengthened the voices of minority populations. Desegregation of the public school system along with passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, among other movements, required the public school system to provide additional services to ensure equal access to instruction and learning (United States Department of Education, 2011). Schools, along with all other governmental programs, were required to meet the needs of all citizens. School choice was seen as an equalizer, empowering families to choose schools that met their definition of quality education instead of being assigned to schools based on their residential address (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fuller et al., 1996).

**The foundations of public school choice.**

The concept of school choice was not new to the political or educational landscape of the late 20th century. Economist Milton Friedman proposed a system of school choice in a chapter of the economics textbook Economics and the Public Interest (1955). Friedman noted a change in public climate during the middle 20th century away from governmental control and intervention, particularly economically. Conversations and reforms at that time centered on the funding of new initiatives while most of the public accepted historical funding streams and expenses. He wrote that governmental control of education had grown unfettered, as did its economic support, but changing times allowed for "such a re-examination for education" (p. 123). Friedman recommended a system of independent schools competing for students and resources.

Friedman (1955) agreed that education is a keystone of democratic society and that the benefits of education reached beyond pupil and family to the community as a whole. Friedman

termed this as a "neighborhood effect." Friedman's proposal centered on governmentally funded vouchers that would subsidize foundational education as determined by the community. He included concerns about what choices would be available in smaller or rural communities, whether choice would increase segregation, and a balance between financial and managerial responsibilities of the government within the public school system.

Even without public school choice policies, families do have educational options. Families are able send their students to private and parochial schools, should they be able to afford them and should such schools exist in their own communities. Moving to a residence within the boundaries of high-performing school districts is also an option. A recent study found that nearly 25% of families chose their residence so their children could attend a specific school (Greene et al., 2010).

School choice options vary among states and take on many forms beyond moving house or attending private school: magnet schools, charter schools, intra-district choice, inter-district choice, and educational vouchers (Weiss, 1996; Hess, 2002).

**School choice as educational reform.**

Friedman (1955) based his proposal for school choice in economic and governmental theory. As the political landscape changed through the 1970s and 1980s, concerns about governmental accountability and student achievement also resonated with those interested in school choice. Governmental bodies and educational institutions responded to these threats and shifts by creating larger systems and additional bureaucracies (Chubb & Moe, 1990). An extraordinary spotlight of public criticism shone on the public school system, especially on failing schools and ineffective practices. Public criticism of low-performing schools caused a shift toward even more accountability (Kotler, 1985; Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Large-scale improvements to public schools came slowly as the political and bureaucratic systems controlling education found themselves unable to produce quick and efficient responses (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hess, 2002). The influences of state regulations, teacher certification, student assessment programs, central office oversight, and labor unions were seen as getting in the way of true reforms (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

School choice seeks to improve schools by bringing competition into the educational marketplace (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hess, 2002; Greene et al., 2010). Proponents of school choice believe that by having schools compete for students, teaching staff, and resources in a market system, educational institutions would have to provide the most efficient and effective education to their students in order to remain viable. School choice requires a rethinking of the role of the public school system in society (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994). In its report, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (1994) stated, "school choice challenges the idea, implicit in our current system, that the local public school should have monopoly access to the local education consumers" (p. 1).

Many independent schools would exist outside of the current structure of the public school district, targeting specific curricula, populations, and services in the traditionally proposed system of total school choice (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Greene et al., 2010). In the educational marketplace created by school choice, families are empowered to enroll their students into schools that best meet their needs and expectations. Families are able to press for quality improvements in their local public school and enroll their students into another school if parents and guardians are not satisfied (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fuller et al., 1996; Hamilton & Guin,

2005). Schools would continually need to improve in order to retain students as well as attract new students (Hess, 2002).

Proposed theories of school choice diminish the influence of governmental bureaucracies on educational systems and outcomes (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fuller et al., 1996). For example, state governments would no longer require that public school teachers be certified; instead, market forces would ensure that schools only hire the highest-qualified teachers. Chubb and Moe (1990) suggest systems of government-proposed accountability and improvement measures that would also become redundant since the market would reward higher performing schools with an oversubscription of potential students while ineffective schools would shutter because parents would choose to send their children elsewhere. District offices would primarily house fiscal and support services, though they allow for some district-run schools.

School choice proposals are founded on research that school organization affects student performance (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Chubb and Moe (1990) define characteristics of effective schools to include:

> clear school goals, rigorous academic standards, order and discipline, homework, strong leadership by the principal, teacher participation in decision making, parental support and cooperation, and high expectations for student performance. (p. 16)

Chubb and Moe note further research that supports their conclusion that school improvement and effectiveness are best promulgated through competition in a market system of school choice. They write that effective schools benefit students, schools must be autonomous in order to become effective, and that the traditional public school system espoused in the late 20th century inhibits such autonomy.

**Choice in the local context.**

When developing school choice plans, policymakers and constituents must rethink the traditional role of public education in the community (Fuller et al., 1996). Individual family choices are not necessarily mirrors of the larger community and its values since those choices represent singular decisions (Hamilton and Guin, 2005). The success of school choice programs in spurring educational reforms and improved student achievement is highly dependent on local context and conditions (Fuller et al., 1996). Key considerations include how the choice policy is developed, various community factors, and parental commitment. Market-based reforms will only be successful in the public schooling arena to the extent that families value and reward the actions of the school in which they enroll their students (Hess, 2002).

A danger of segregation exists if valid and useful data relating to individual schools are either difficult to find or requires resources not readily available to all members of a community (Hamilton & Guin, 2005). Hamilton and Guin (2005) present a concern that data relating to individual schools be accessible to all members of a community and suggest that without equitable access to the data needed to make informed choices, school choice programs run the risk of an unequal participation and distribution of students. Policymakers have a tendency to generalize about certain populations when crafting their arguments and decisions in support of school choice (Fuller et al., 1996). Leaders often surmise that school choice will benefit low-income communities either only through significant investment in information and guidance or that these plans will be seen as immediately redemptive by empowering families to make individual decisions. Fuller et al. (1996) describe reasons why low-income families elect to remain in their public school systems or send their children to other schools. One of their most noteworthy findings is of a tendency toward a homogeneous self-segregation where families keep their children enrolled in the neighborhood school to maintain a sense of community

instead of enrolling into schools that have higher student achievement ratings, which contradicts claims of school choice being an equalizer.

**Choice in the urban context.**

The wide range of diversity within urban school systems creates a larger challenge when leaders are faced with competition among publicly supported educational options. With the diversity and population size inherent to a larger urban district, families and constituents hold different and often conflicting expectations of their school systems. Hess wrote "the challenge for educational leaders is that they must negotiate the question of what they *should* be doing before they can focus on how to do it more effectively" (2002, p. 33).

Competition confounds the clamor of constituents' values, needs, and desires. The educational leader may find difficulty in selecting specific areas on which to focus improvements, and these challenges cannot be simply attributed to market forces and constituent expectations (Hess, 2002). Hess uses a restaurant metaphor to illustrate this point. Just as there is little consensus on the best diner in a given city, not even considering other options such as take out, fine dining, vegan, or even home cooking, the expectation for an urban public school to compete on all levels of the educational marketplace is a daunting expectation according to Hess. Those in favor of school choice argue that the citizenry are asking too much of one large organization by expecting that the public school system serve all students (Fuller et al., 1996). Public schools were expected to be everything to everyone.

The constraints and requirements imposed by politics and state agencies on the public school system further hinder the urban district's opportunity to compete and respond to market forces even when school choice options are supported by state government (Hess, 2002). The nature of urban schools as a large public entity complicates simple market theory (Hess, 2002).

Hess wrote that external forces, such as local politics and the civic responsibility to educate all students with specific attention paid to disadvantaged children, influence schools in ways that cannot be directly attributed to, or fairly assessed within, a market-driven construct. Further explaining the difficulty of school choice in the urban context, Hess wrote, "In practice, the balky nature of large public bureaucracies, the political pressures that buffet school systems, the culture of public schooling, and the available tools of governance leave urban officials in poor position to answer the call of competition" (2002, p. 70).

School reforms are "more consistent with the pickax, rather than the bulldozer" (Hess, 2002, p. 25) because of these limitations. School administrators tinker around the edges with programming and procedures when faced with challenges in the marketplace. Sullivan, Campbell, and Kisida (2008) looked specifically at the response of Washington D.C. school leaders to the competitive educational marketplace, concluding that educational reforms were minor and that the educational marketplace was not wholly competitive due to bureaucratic safeguards, trivial consequences, and the inability for building principals to make necessary changes due to a lack of autonomy.

Urban school leaders must pay attention to accountability and funding considerations based on the breadth of diversity in their districts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports student data based on aggregate performance as well as individual subgroups as a measure of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These subgroups are defined as "students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, economically disadvantaged students, and students belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010b).

**Choice in Massachusetts.**

Many of Massachusetts' larger urban communities had been planning for, and experimenting with, intra-district school choice plans prior to statewide mandates for inter-district school choice and charter schools (Glenn, 1991). Intra-district plans applied only to options within a specific district. These plans were set in place to improve equity, parental involvement, student achievement, and racial diversity. Sixteen districts either abolished assignment to schools based on residence or provided a mix of residential assignment and school choice options during these early experiments with controlled choice (Glenn, 1991). Through intra-district choice policies, districts assign students to schools based primarily on family preference instead of through geographic boundaries.

In the mid 1960's, two choice programs were implemented in Massachusetts, one system of intra-district choice in Cambridge (Glenn et al., 1993) and one system that allowed inner-city Boston students the opportunity to enroll in suburban school districts (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). Subsequent to these two models, statewide inter-district choice and charter school options were introduced in the early 1990's.

**Cambridge and controlled choice.** The first major attempt toward controlled choice in Massachusetts was implemented in Cambridge Public Schools to address the pressures of school desegregation (Glenn et al., 1993). These early plans, developed in 1965, "included construction of three new schools with increased capacities and enlarged attendance areas, and a policy prohibiting any student transfer that would have a negative effect on racial balance" (p. 6). By creating larger schools with enlarged catchment zones, the district officials expected that the student population would reflect the diversity of various neighborhoods whose students would

now attend school together rather than being segregated into numerous smaller neighborhood schools.

These new schools and enlarged zones, combined with poorly enacted policies, actually increased racial imbalance instead of the goals of desegregation. Cambridge Public Schools enacted controlled choice between 1980-1981 in an attempt to remedy these imbalances and provide increased equity among schools within the district. This new plan eliminated the practice of assigning students to schools based on their residential address. Through Cambridge's controlled choice plan, families ranked schools in order of preference. Pupils were assigned to schools through a lottery, with controls including racial balance and siblings being able to attend the same school. Unlike the 1965 plan, these changes were found to improve racial balance as well as stem a trend of declining student enrollment (Glenn et al., 1993).

To date, Cambridge Public Schools continues to follow a program of controlled choice (Cambridge Public Schools, n.d.). Special consideration is given to racial and socioeconomic balance; keeping siblings together; and student's proximity to school. Families register their children through a centralized Family Resource Center that serves to provide information and assist parents selecting schools.

**Metco.** Students living within the boundaries of the Boston and Springfield public school districts have another avenue of school choice: Metco. Metco is defined as "a voluntary program intended to expand educational opportunities, increase diversity, and reduce racial isolation, by permitting students in certain cities to attend public schools in other communities that have agreed to participate" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). Students who wish to participate in Metco must apply through a lottery; if selected, students are able to enroll in surrounding receiving school districts.

Students from Boston and Springfield are able to access Metco as well as participate in other public school choice options such as enrolling into charter schools or other public schools through inter-district school choice. There are important differences between Metco and other school choice options. Metco does provide for student transportation; state funds are not allocated for transportation through inter-district school choice. Metco's service provider, METCO, Inc., has specific goals and participation criteria. Participation in Metco requires a detailed application process and some families may find the application process intrusive or complex. Only districts surrounding Boston and Springfield may elect to receive Metco students, so families do not have the breadth of choice as they do through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment. Finally, students with out-of-district special education placements are usually not included in Metco since their needs are met through other programs (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

The state-funded Metco program began as a result of protests, demonstrations, and boycotts held in 1963 and 1964 that raised awareness of the segregation of African-American students within Boston Public Schools (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc., n.d.). Metco became a plan that allowed students living within the boundaries of Boston Public Schools to attend a school in nearby suburban districts. The goals of Metco included providing educational opportunities represented by a diversity of race, gender, academic ability, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York were early supporters of Metco (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc., n.d.).

Metco was signed into law in 1965 (METCO, n.d.) During the first year, 22 students were selected to participate in the program. Funds allowed these students to be transported to,

and attended school within, seven suburban Boston-area public school districts. According to statistics from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 3,341 students participated in Metco during the 2010-2011 school year. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

**Statewide educational reforms.** Two sweeping educational reforms were passed by the Massachusetts legislature and enacted by then Governor William Weld in the early 1990s. In 1991, the first of these codified school choice into state statute in amendments to MGL c. 76, s. 12b (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1991). These amendments permitted students to enroll into districts other than the student's district of residence, if space permitted and that receiving district's school committee voted to participate in school choice. In his memo to school committees and superintendents, then Commissioner of Education Raynolds touted school choice as allowing "every student the opportunity to attend a public school in a community other than that of the student's residence if the school committee of the potential receiving district chooses to participate in the program" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1991, p. 1). School choice provisions included opportunities for students to enroll in schools other than in their district of residence and defined the funding stream that would follow these students

The Education Reform Act of 1993 enacted sweeping educational reform in Massachusetts. The statute included provisions for charter schools to be added into the landscape of public school choice as well further reforms touching curriculum, assessment, professional standards, teacher certification, administrative roles, school committees, school funding, school improvement, and educational technology (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1995). Amendments were also made to the school choice

laws passed in 1991, including district requirements, enrollment limits, and reimbursement procedures. Legislatures specifically included statutory language expecting that charter schools would innovate public educational practice and assessment as well as provide alternatives to traditional management structures (Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 71 § 89, 1993).

**Current state of school choice and charter schools in Massachusetts.** During the 2009-2010 school year, 11,807 full-time equivalent pupils participated in inter-district school choice. These students came from 267 public school districts, enrolling into 163 receiving public school districts. School choice tuition rates are calculated at 75% of the school's tuition rate for the prior year, up to $5,000, not inclusive of special education services. Net state school choice tuition was $67,678,401 in FY2010. These are not additional funds; rather they are funds that are transferred among municipalities for tuition purposes (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010c).

Massachusetts recognized 55 charter schools that enrolled students during the 2009-2010 school year (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010d). The FY2010 total district reimbursement for charter schools was $65,090,972 including facilities aid, which accounts for 24,550 full-time equivalent pupils enrolled in charter schools (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010e *file).

**Why do families participate in school choice?**

When parents are asked why they chose a specific school, most identify educational quality and/or student achievement as their most important consideration (Hamilton and Guin, 2005). The definition of a quality education can be even more vexing and difficult to define and measure, exacerbated with the diversity inherent to urban settings (Hess, 2002). Since there is no unified definition of school or student success, educational leaders either rely on their own

perception or through limited and direct feedback when proposing changes to their schools (Hamilton & Guin, 2005). Hamilton and Guin (2005) posit that leaders will, however, allocate resources toward demonstrating improvement on standardized metrics to at least improve their students' performance on those measures.

The quality and quantity of information available on an individual school district is crucially influential as parents make decisions to participate in school choice (Hamilton and Guin, 2005). Hamilton and Guin reported that school systems rarely self-report adequate information relevant to all families in a community. If parents or guardians want to research schools further, they rely on governmental reports, personal visits, experiences of friends/family, and other formal and informal modes of research.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (1994) stated, "every parent needs to make informed decisions about the education of their children, and the state has a wealth of information about everything from per-pupil spending to dropout rates" (p. 49). In the 1990s, the state started to make school data in a format accessible to families, particularly through district-supported Parent Information Centers. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (1994) noted this access to information as key to the success of the Commonwealth's school choice program.

When looking at reasons why families choose choice, one needs to consider many factors behind self-reported motivators (Hamilton and Guin, 2005). Parent self-reporting of the reasons that they chose one school over the other may be unreliable, since research has shown that parents have a tendency to publicly state more socially acceptable factors than the core reasoning behind their decision (Hamilton and Guin, 2005).

Research also shows that socioeconomic and racial trends underlie school choice decisions. Schneider and Buckley (2002) researched school choice in Washington, DC and found that families researching schools looked at location, demographics, and programming as the top three school attributes searched for on a governmentally-supported school choice resource website. They found that over 30% of families researched school demographics within the first five pages visited on the website DCSchoolSearch.com. An earlier study by Schneider, Marschall, Teske, and Roch found that far fewer families (less than 5%) responded that demographics were key factors in deciding which school their students would attend (as cited in Schneider and Buckley, 2002, p. 13). This discrepancy supports Hamilton and Guin's (2005) statements relating to the unreliability of self-reported reasons why families participate in school choice. A far fewer number of families reported that demographics were an important factor than was demonstrated by reviewing their research practices into schools of choice.

Uchitelle and Nault's (1977) study on intra-district choice found that families most often considered the school's atmosphere and their perceptions of the principal's philosophy and attitude when making educational decisions for their students. Perception often played an important role over direct research. Families reported that they would ask trusted friends and community members more often than they would visit the school itself. Also, 45% said that the principal's philosophy and attitude was a very important consideration; however, only 22% actually talked with the school principal. A final noteworthy finding from their research indicated that families representing lower socioeconomic statuses researched educational options with less rigor than those families of higher socioeconomic status.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (1994) surveyed families who decided to take advantage of school choice about why they chose to participate in school choice during

the early years of its implementation in Massachusetts. This study focused solely on inter-district school choice.

This study found that academic reasons were the highest rated criterion used by families when deciding to participate in school choice (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994). Overall, 63% of families responded that the quality of academic programs was a factor affecting their decision and 43% of families indicated that academic factors were their primary consideration. Anecdotal information collected on the questionnaire added detailed and personal reasons why families participated in school choice. Among these reasons was that the local schools were not challenging enough, other districts pushed their students more than their home district, communication was better in the other district, other districts had better teachers, and the home district was not meeting students' individual needs.

The next two most-highly ranked motivating factors for participating in school choice were resources and safety (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994). Half of the families responding to their survey expressed that a lack of resources was one of the reasons they left their home district.

Safety was the third highest-ranking factor in this study (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994). Overall, 26% of families expressed that they had safety concerns strong enough to be a factor in their decision to participate in school choice. Over half of the 26% identified that safety was their primary consideration. Safety was also expressed as an important concern specifically in urban districts. For example, 77% of Springfield respondents identified safety as a factor that families participated in school choice options; with 53% expressing that safety was their primary factor. Other urban districts where safety was a factor in school choice participation included Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Boston, Haverhill, Lynn, Fitchburg, and

Revere. Highlighting the connection between urban districts and safety, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education reported, "although the sample size for some urban districts was too small to be conclusive, overall, the responses indicated a consistently high level of concern about safety among urban parents" (1994, p. 19).

Hsieh (2000) found similar results in her review of the national 1993 Household Education Survey that asked parents why they chose to participate in school choice programs or enroll their students in private schools. She found that families chose schools that they perceived were more challenging, nurtured stronger teacher and student relationships, were safer, and held students to higher behavioral expectations. School characteristics such as location and racial makeup also affected choice decisions.

Daring (2005) studied the reasons why families participated in school choice from two Massachusetts public school districts, one urban and one non-urban. Results from these case studies demonstrated that academic quality and the provision of a challenging curriculum were important factors for families choosing to migrate out of those districts. Daring also noted that some parents cited bullying and disciplinary concerns as reasons why they out-migrated. Concerns about student discipline ranged across all grade bands in the urban district. The non-urban district only saw disciplinary concerns expressed in the high school. Daring also looked at why families enrolled into the district as well. Academic and programmatic quality was the number one reason in both districts why families enrolled their students into these districts. Daring reported, "learning about the Massachusetts interdistrict public school program was largely a function of talking to neighbors, friends, relatives, or other parents" (p. 296).

Kleitz et al. (2000) studied families who chose to enroll their students in Texas public charter schools and found that educational quality, class size, and safety were the top three

reasons families identified as being important or very important to their school choice decision. Daring's (2005) study did not indicate that class size was an important factor in her Massachusetts case study; however class size ranked second in this Texas study. Kleitz et al. disaggregated results based on race and socioeconomic status, finding that educational quality was ranked very highly among all studied populations (i.e. Anglo, Black, Hispanic, Low Income, Moderate Income, and High Income). Even though each subpopulation ranked safety as the third highest consideration, findings varied among subpopulations with 62.8% of Anglo, 73.8% of black, and 80.4% of Hispanic families indicating safety as being important or very important considerations. Findings also varied among economic status, with 68.3% of high-income families, 80.4% of moderate-income families, and 80.8% of low-income families indicating safety as being important or very important considerations.

**Student achievement and school improvement planning.**

Chubb and Moe's (1990) market theory of school choice is that school organization affects student performance; identifying characteristics of effective schools to include "clear school goals, rigorous academic standards, order and discipline, homework, strong leadership by the principal, teacher participation in decision making, parental support and cooperation, and high expectations for student performance" (p. 16). However, Chubb and Moe assert that district bureaucracy hinders educational reform and that school choice models free schools from the constraints of central administration.

Marzano (2003) directly challenges assertions that district leadership or bureaucracy necessarily hinders effective building level reforms: "While I share Chubb and Moe's concern that district-level administration can sometimes impede school reform, I believe that the current structure of public education is malleable enough to benefit from the changes recommended in

this book" (p. 10-11). Waters (2003) and Waters and Marzano's (2009) research demonstrate increased student achievement through a defined autonomous relationship between district and school leadership; collaborative decision-making; and setting non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction.

The cornerstone of school choice as an educational reform philosophy is that schools must demonstrate high student achievement and rigorous instructional practices in order to remain competitive in the educational marketplace (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990). Determining goals and processes to improve a school's educational practices, and ultimately student achievement, should not rest solely on the shoulders of the educational leader. Collaborative goal setting has been shown as an effective tool to bring about educational reforms. Marzano and Waters (2009) found that collaborative goal setting is a quality of effective educational planning, especially when the voices of numerous stakeholders were considered. Marzano and Waters also found that district goals must be concrete, specific, and monitored in order to continually improve student achievement.

By statute, schools in Massachusetts are required to develop annual School Improvement Plans that are generated by school councils in conjunction with school principals (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994). School councils are required to be comprised of faculty members, parents, other stakeholders, and students (only in councils representing high schools). These school councils were created, and are defined, as part of the Education Reform Act of 1993, specifically enacting Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, §59C (1993). This law also enumerates the responsibilities of school councils, including the creation of the school improvement plan.

School improvement plans must be developed collaboratively with the school principal and address the following considerations:

1. An assessment of:
    - The impact of class size on student performance.
    - Student-to-teacher ratios.
    - Ratios of students to other supportive adult resources.
2. A scheduled plan for reducing class size, if deemed necessary.
3. Professional development for the school's staff and the allocation of any professional development funds in the school budget.
4. Enhancement of parental involvement in the life of the school.
5. School safety and discipline.
6. Establishment of a school environment characterized by tolerance and respect for all groups.
7. Extra-curricular activities.
8. Means for meeting, within the regular education programs at the school, the diverse learning needs of as many children as possible, including children with special needs currently assigned to separate programs.
9. Any further subjects the principal, in consultation with the school council, shall consider appropriate. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994c, para. 1)

Further guidance on the creation of school councils and their role in improvement planning explains that these stakeholder groups, as a form of site-based decision making, have a significant role in setting educational goals and encouraging stakeholder investment into local school improvements (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

1994a). These improvements include aspects of student achievement, instructional strategies, professional development, and school climate.

**Defining school climate.**

Many researchers have use phrases such as "personality" (Halpin & Croft, 1963, p. 1), "internal environment, especially as experienced by the insider" (Tagiuri, 1968, p. 26), "pattern of shared perceptions" (Keefe, Kelley & Miller, 1985, p. 73), and "quality and character of school life" (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, p. 182, 2009) and "the heart and soul of a school" (Freiberg and Stein, 1999, p. 11) to describe school and organizational climate.

School climate does not exist in and of itself. In her exhaustive review of school climate literature, Anderson (1982) presents a model of school climate where milieu, culture, ecology, and social system not only interact with each other to define school climate, they interact individually with desired outcomes. Shindler et al. (2009) noted eight factors of school climate that related to student achievement: appearance and physical plant, faculty relations, student interactions, leadership/decision making, discipline environment, learning environment, attitude and culture, and school-community relations. Cohen, Shapiro, and Fisher (2006) enumerated essential school climate factors to include environmental; structural; safety; teaching and learning; relationships; sense of school community; morale; peer norms; school-home-community partnerships; and learning community.

Shared perception is an important factor in defining a school's climate. Satisfaction is a measure of individual experiences, such as "I feel" or "I value" while climate is a measure referring to experiences and feelings expressed by the majority. School climate considers the gestalt of organizational patterns made up of individual experiences (Keefe et al., 1985; Cohen et al. 2009).

A school's climate is not only defined by interactions, values, experiences, and personalities within the educational system (Anderson, 1982). External forces, such as student background, mediate the effects and measurement of school climate. School climate is also "affected by the district and community (local, state, and national) that it operates within" (Cohen et al., 2009).

**Problems assessing school climate.**

School climate is often measured by recording the responses of individuals. Unique biases, personalities, and experience color how each individual experiences climate. Even as a broad measure, leaders must consider school climate when evaluating current practice and planning new directions (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2002). Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002) wrote that school climate affects teachers' job satisfaction. School climate also has a direct effect on the student body, including student achievement.

The use of teacher surveys has been a common tool among researchers to determine school climate. Creemers and Reezigt (1999) comment that even though teacher surveys are not objective measures, subjectivity is inherent to the definition of school climate that relies on individual perception. Creemers and Reezigt also recommend that school leaders and schools should "decide which outcomes they want to pursue and then define their climate and effectiveness factors as instruments to achieve their intended outcomes" (p. 43).

**Difference between school climate and school culture.**

Although sometimes used interchangeably, culture is defined as a factor of climate instead of being synonymous with climate. Tagiuri (1968) defines culture as one dimension of climate, along with ecology, milieu, and social system, and defines organizational culture as "such aspects of social environment as belief systems, values, general cognitive structures, (and)

meaning" (p. 21). These facets are influential to members of the system but seem to be more agreed-upon artifacts of members of the system than the larger psychological effects of climate. Hoy and Feldman (1999) differentiate school culture (i.e. shared norms) from school climate (i.e. shared perceptions).

Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002) label school climate as the psychological aspect of a school while school culture is the symbolic aspect of a school. School climate is "born of the sum of teacher perceptions of the interpersonal life of the school as the faculty lives and works together" (p. 316). When the psychological needs of an organization's members are met, climate is felt and rates as being positive. More symbolic in nature, culture is manifest from shared values and interactions; therefore, members of the organization directly choose culture.

**School climate and student achievement.**

Hoy and Feldman (1999) characterize successful schools as having "healthy interpersonal dynamics linked with a press for achievement" (p. 98). Brookover and Lezotte (1979) compared various aspects of school climate among schools whose students improved or declined academically in order to link school climate and student achievement. Their findings indicated that there was a relationship between increased achievement and high student expectations, academic press, improved discipline, and "the commitment to get the job done and belief that it can be done" (p. 63). Brookover and Lezotte also found that lower performing schools had teachers that were more collegial than those in improving schools; the tensions and lack of congeniality felt in the improving schools were suggested to be attributable to struggles inherent to the change process.

Rutter et al. (1979) define school processes as "those features of the social organization of school life which create the context for teaching and learning, and which seem likely to affect

the nature of the school experience for both staff and pupils" (p 106). The authors found that shared actions and beliefs have specific effects on student learning. Teacher expectations of success were significantly correlated with higher rates of student attendance and achievement. Pupil conditions, defined both as positive working conditions and "a pleasant and comfortable environment" (p. 126) were linked to higher exam scores. Overall, data showed strong correlations, on a global scale, among school process measures, student behavior, and academic attainment. Rutter et al. commented that "the conclusion is clear: children's levels of examination success are affected by the school they attend, and the crucial features of schooling with respect to academic outcome include both school process and balance of intake" (p. 172).

Urban schools in low-income districts often reported major school climate issues existing alongside poor student achievement and concerns about student socialization (Esposito, 1999). Esposito's study of urban elementary schools found that, at least within grades K-2, school climate affected student achievement even when controlled for family influences.

Waters and Marzano (2009) reconceptualized their 21 responsibilities for building-based leadership by taking into account research on district effects on student achievement. They identified principal characteristics within highly-reliable districts that include aspects of culture, discipline, visibility, contingent rewards, affirmation, relationships, and ideals/beliefs. These characteristics were shown to directly affect student achievement. Marzano's (2003) research also found school, teacher, and student factors that affect student achievement, including areas of school climate such as parent and community involvement; safe and orderly environment; and collegiality and professionalism.

**School climate among educational choices.**

Krommendyk (2007) found that differences in school climate exist among public, private, and charter schools as educational choices. Krommendyk analyzed results from the 1999-2000 administration of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey, which is a data set that included national surveys of principals, teachers, and the school community, to determine the openness and health of school climate based on supportive leadership, teacher collegiality, positive teacher/principal relationships, teacher satisfaction, student discipline, and teacher involvement in decision-making processes.

Krommendyk (2007) found that teachers in public schools, as compared to peers in religious and charter schools, reported that they generally receive less support from their administrators, are generally less collegial among their fellow faculty members, have a weaker relationship with their principal, and are less satisfied in their positions. No significant differences were noted when comparing public schools and charter schools teachers' identification of student discipline problems and decision-making control; however teachers in religious schools reported fewer discipline concerns and more control over decisions that affect their teaching.

**Leaders respond to school climate.**

Even though there are many influences that affect a student's ability to learn and socialize, Esposito (1999) argues that school leaders must appreciate those specific factors that belong to the educational setting. Simply identifying a school's climate is a worthless endeavor unless the school leader understands the external factors that also affect student learning (Keefe et al., 1985). Leaders must consider social ideologies and limiting structures that also affect student achievement and school climate. These findings suggest an important link between school climate and community effects.

Cohen, Shapiro, and Fisher (2006) recommended that leaders engage in discussions within the school community regarding the findings of a school climate inventory. From these conversations, all stakeholders will be more likely to work together in the whole-school improvement process. Freiberg (1999) wrote that "education will be the next great global battle ground" (p. 2) and that school climate is in important consideration when strategizing educational reform and ensuring social stability.

**Summary.**

This chapter presented the historical context of governmentally-supported reforms and accountability measures that lie at the foundation of the school choice movement, the framework behind school choice models and their goal of educational reform, challenges faced in the implementation of school choice, statutory language enacting school choice and charter school options for pupils in Massachusetts, and research into the motivations behind families participating in school choice. Since school choice is an educational reform model, the researcher briefly reviewed the importance of collaborative decision-making as supported by the literature and as required by Massachusetts statute, as a means to improve public schools throughout the Commonwealth. Factors of school climate relate to both the reasons why families participate in school choice and the requirements of school improvement plans. The chapter presented definitions of school climate, links between school climate and student achievement, and strategies used by school leaders to consider climate in their school improvement process.

Chapter Three presents the methodology the researcher used to determine first time student out-migration rates through school choice and charter school enrollment among selected Massachusetts urban public schools and two ways used to determine school climate in these

sampled urban public schools. The chapter also presents the methodology behind analyzing the relationship among the independent variables of specific factors of school climate and the dependent variable of first time out-migration rates through school choice or charter school enrollment.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Background.

This chapter describes the methodology used by the researcher to explore the relationships among factors of school climate and first time school choice and charter school out-migration rates within a sample of urban Massachusetts public school districts. The following sections comprise this chapter: a restatement of the purpose of this research, individual research questions, a restatement of the definition of school choice as it applies to this project, methods of assessing school climate, sampling methodology, calculation of first time out-migration rates from participating schools, calculation of school climate factors, statistical methodology used for analysis, researcher bias, and summary.

## Purpose statement.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate relationships among specific factors of school climate and the rate of student out-migration through inter-district public school choice and charter school enrollment from selected Massachusetts urban public schools. The findings from this study may inform school leaders in planning for school-wide improvements that increase student achievement, school climate, as well as other areas that are generally important to the community while addressing factors of competitiveness in the educational marketplace created by school choice policies.

## Research questions.

This study will answer the following descriptive and inferential questions:

1. What is the first time out-migration rate of students from individual schools from the selected Massachusetts urban public school districts through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment?

2. How do faculty members of selected schools within Massachusetts urban public districts rate specific factors of their individual school's climate?
3. What goals related to school climate are included in the publicly reported School Improvement Plans of selected Massachusetts urban public schools? How detailed and specific are the goals in the School Improvement Plans that relate to school climate?
4. Are there relationships among the ranking of specific factors of school climate as independent variables and the dependant variable of the rate of student out-migration through inter-district school choice and charter school enrollment within the sampled Massachusetts urban public schools?

**Defining school choice.**

For the purpose of this study, participation in school choice will be defined by the family's decision to enroll their students into a school outside of their public school district of residence or into a charter school based on Massachusetts statute. Enrollment into or from vocational-technical education programs, magnet schools, and special education placements will not be considered school choice. Private and parochial school out-migration is also excluded from this study.

**Assessing school climate.**

The researcher used two methods to assess school climate. First, the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) was given to faculty members of selected urban Massachusetts public schools to rank factors of school climate in their respective schools. Second, the researcher reviewed and coded individual School Improvement Plans from schools in this study's sample to determine the importance of school climate factors as related to school improvement and required by statute.

**Teacher inventory.** Teachers of selected urban Massachusetts primary and secondary schools assessed the organizational climate of their school through the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). The review of literature noted that the concept of school climate can be difficult to define operationally. Researchers have developed a number of school climate assessments that meet a variety of theoretical foundations, populations, and contexts. Gagni (2009) reviewed 102 school climate instruments against the following criteria:

1. Assessment of school climate
2. Assessment of faculty relationships
3. Additional variables (safety, teaching and learning, and external environment)
4. Direct teacher measure
5. Viewable test items
6. Current and representative normative samples

7-8. Published technical characteristics (reliability and validity)

9. School level (p. 19-20)

For a tenth criterion, Gagni used an expert panel to review those instruments that met the prior nine criteria. Three instruments satisfied all nine criteria, including the SCAI. The researcher chose the SCAI after reading the expert panel reviews of these three and reviewing the instrument itself.

Gagni's (2009) research was used to determine an appropriate instrument for this study since the first three evaluation criteria reflect prior studies' findings of reasons why families state that they participated in school choice programs (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, 1994; Hseih, 2000; Daring, 2005). Criterion four, direct teacher measure, was important since having teachers evaluate school climate was the most accessible population for this study.

Creemers and Reezigt (1999), along with Shindler, et al. (2009), mention the value of faculty-based school climate instruments in the school improvement process.

The SCAI was developed by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate and consists of 73 items that are measured on an analytic trait scale (Shindler, Taylor, Cadenas, and Jones, 2003). The use of an analytic trait scale has many advantages, including the benefit of providing "a basic construct for defining good school climate" (p. 4). Table 1 provides example trait scales for each factor of school climate as taken directly from the SCAI. The version of the SCAI used for this study can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1

*School climate factors as defined by the SCAI, rating scale, and selected trait scale indicators*

| | High | *High-Middle* | Middle | *Middle-Low* | Low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Appearance | Purposeful use of school colors/symbols | | Some use of school colors/symbols but mostly associated with sports. | | Students associate school colors with "losers." |
| Faculty Relations | Faculty members approach problems as a team/collective. | | Faculty members attend to problems as related to their own interests. | | Faculty members expect someone else to solve problems. |
| Student Interactions | Many students attend school events. | | A few regulars attend school events. | | It is un-cool to attend school events. |
| Leadership Decisions | A sense of "shared values" is purposefully cultivated. | | Most share a common value to do what's best for their students. | | Guiding school values are in constant conflict. |
| Discipline Environment | School-wide discipline policy is consistently applied. | | School-wide discipline policy is used by some staff. | | School-wide discipline policy exists in writing only. |
| Learning Assessment | Students learn to work cooperatively and as members of teams. | | Some teachers buy into the idea of cooperative learning. | | Cooperative learning is seen as leading to chaos and cheating. |
| Attitude and Culture | Students speak about the school in proud, positive terms. | | Students speak of the school in neutral or mixed terms. | | Students denigrate the school when they refer to it. |
| Community Relations | School is perceived as welcoming to all parents. | | School is perceived as welcoming to certain parents. | | School is suspicious of why parents would want to visit. |

(Alliance for the Study of School Climate. 2004)

Along with the factors of school climate determined by the School Climate Assessment Instrument, the researcher combined responses from three existing questions into an additional category of Safety. These questions, numbers 3.C and 3.F from Student Interactions and 7.B from Culture cover violence and bullying. The researcher created this additional factor of school climate from these other questions in order to directly consider safety concerns families state as reasons they took advantage of school choice and charter school options.

The protocol for the SCAI required that the teachers read all three descriptors relating to the same indicator and chose the statement that most described the current climate in their school. A value of 5 was coded for "High," 3 for "Middle," and 1 for "Low." Teachers could determine that their current school climate was in-between indicators, allowing for a value of 4 to be coded for "High-Middle" and 2 to be coded for "Middle-Low." (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2011)

Shindler et al. (2003) determined the SCAI's face validity in its pilot through evaluations from participating teachers. Sub-scale construct validity was demonstrated by consistent ratings of descriptors within each sub-scale and through the interrelationship of sub-scale scores. Inter-rater reliability was shown for most items through strong correlations among pilot subpopulations from the same school. Variances among individual responses were found to be attributable to differing individual perspectives instead of the wording within the trait scale. The SCAI can be administered within a half-hour for the entire instrument and the piloted version of the SCAI demonstrated that participants required minimal instruction, demonstrating the instrument's usability.

**School Improvement Plans.** State statute requires School Improvement Plans from each public school in Massachusetts (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education, 1994c). School Improvement Plans must address items of student achievement, class size, professional development, parental involvement, safety, discipline, environment, activities, inclusion of students representing special populations into the mainstream curriculum, and other topics of importance to the school and district (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994c). School improvement plans are developed in consultation with the school's principal and must be approved annually by the district's school committee.

School Improvement Plans are created by individual school councils, which are a form of site based decision making (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994a). School improvement plans lie at the foundation of the school's initiatives, programs, and activities for a given school year. These plans are created by a broad base of stakeholders and based on their statutory requirements. Many of the statutory requirements of school improvement plans relate school climate, both directly through the required elements and indirectly through the inclusion of other areas of concern. These direct links include parental involvement, safety, diversity, and "the establishment of a welcoming school environment" (Mass. Gen. Laws Ann 71, §59C).

School councils are comprised of the stakeholders of that school: teachers, parents, and community members (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994b). Guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also recommends that students participate in school councils for schools serving grades 9-12. Additionally, the number of parents must be at least equal to the number of school staff. More than half of the council must have a direct relationship to the school, and diversity within the council must represent that of the school's community.

**Sampling methodology.**

The schools that were targeted for research were selected through a multi-stage criterion-based process. Twelve Massachusetts public urban school districts primarily use attendance zones based on residential addresses to determine which school each pupil attends. The home district of the researcher was eliminated from consideration to avoid potential bias in teachers' reporting of school climate, even though it was one of the twelve districts that assign students to schools primarily through the use of residential attendance zones.

The researcher contacted the superintendents of the remaining eleven urban Massachusetts public school districts which assign students to specific schools based on their addresses and received permission from four superintendents allowing faculty in some or all of their schools to participate in this research. The researcher removed from consideration early childhood centers that only served pre-K students as well as schools identified as being magnet, alternative, or another form of programmatic or selective enrollment. Superintendents from four districts permitted some or all of their schools to be part of this research. The researcher sent electronic links to the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) to principals in each school that met the grade band and school assignment criteria. Reviewing the number of responses, the researcher set the sample for this study to be those schools with at least a 10% faculty response rate to the online SCAI.

**Data collection.**

This research required two sets of data: student out-migration data and school climate data. All methodology was presented to, and approved by, the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB). Tenets of the methodology approved by the IRB include how the researcher would approach school leaders to garner their participation in this study, informing the voluntary consent of faculty members to take the online version of the School Climate

Assessment Instrument, ensuring the anonymity of survey results, and safeguarding confidential student data used to calculate out-migration rates. The researcher followed these agreed-upon methods to complete this research. Methods to obtain and analyze these data are explained further in the subsequent paragraphs. The letter from the Sage IRB approving this research can be found in Appendix B.

**Determining out-migration rates.** One set of data used in this study is student-level data from those families who enrolled their children into school districts other than their home district through inter-district school choice or into charter schools. The researcher submitted a request to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide the State Assigned Student Identification Number (SASID), grade, age, and home address data on those students who participated in public school choice and who enrolled into public charter schools as reported in 2010 and 2011. The request underwent formal legal and procedural review, culminating in the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the researcher's chair as primary investigator and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The purpose of this MOA was to ensure that the data were safeguarded and that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was afforded the opportunity to review findings prior to public presentation. A copy of an e-mail finding that the results of this research project did not disclose any confidential student information can be found in Appendix C.

The researcher stored files containing confidential student information on a password-protected external network storage devices and password-protected computers. Confidential student information was only used to calculate school choice and charter school out-migration rates. These data were used in accordance with agreed procedures approved by the Sage

Colleges Institutional Review Board and within the MOA with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Students from both lists were compared to identify those students who participated in school choice for the first time in the 2011 school year; that is, families who had left their residentially assigned school for the first time in 2011. First time out-migration rate was used because families may have chosen years ago to enroll in different schools and stay enrolled there due to peer relationships or other reasons that are not related to the climate of the school that would have been assigned them had they remained in their home district.

The researcher determined which school the student would have attended if the student did not migrate-out by looking up the student's home address in the district's school assignment street directory. The rate of student out-migration was calculated by determining the number of students who enrolled in other public school districts through inter-district school choice or who enrolled in charter schools during the 2010-2011 school year as a percentage of the school's current enrollment as reported on the individual school's public profile obtained from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

**Faculty surveys of school climate.** The researcher asked school principals from sampled schools to forward the link to the electronic version of the SCAI to faculty members in order to assess the climate of the individual chosen schools. Teachers accessed the survey through a secure website hosted by QuestionPro as suggested by the instrument's author through e-mail correspondence (J. Shindler, personal communication, November 23, 2010). A copy of this correspondence is included as Appendix D. The researcher used this instrument with permission from its authors and copied the instrument directly into a unique account created for this study. Increased online security was provided through the use of Secure Socket Layer

technology, which encrypts data passing between the respondent's computer and the host server (QuestionPro, n.d.). Each questionnaire remained anonymous.

Each school was assigned a unique URL to keep individual school responses separate. A unique URL was used to avoid the possibility of teachers either skipping a question that would have identified their school, entering incorrect information, or causing confusion if faculty took the survey from multiple schools with the same name.

The researcher garnered permission from district leadership prior to e-mailing principals with information regarding this research project, details regarding informed consent, and the link from which faculty members could take the survey. The researcher followed up with each principal and district leader to encourage faculty participation. These communications were all undertaken following procedures approved by the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board. The researcher determined that faculty from seven schools responded with an adequate response rate of above 10% of the entire faculty. These seven schools represent the sample for this study.

**Coding School Improvement Plans for school climate.** Each School Improvement Plan from the seven sampled schools with adequate response rates on the SCAI was reviewed, organized, and coded prior to analysis. All statements within individual School Improvement Plans that related to school climate were highlighted and color-coded based on specific factors of school climate. The researcher coded these statements based on the same factors of school climate that were measured on the School Climate Assessment Instrument (physical appearance, faculty relations, student interactions, leadership decisions, discipline/environment, learning/assessment, attitude/culture, and community relations) in order to maintain consistency. In addition, statements relating to safety were extracted and organized as another factor of school climate since the SCAI does not natively set aside safety as a separate factor of school climate.

The aggregate statements for each factor of school climate were coded following a rubric designed by the researcher, based on the strength of supporting detail and presence of specific and measurable improvement goals:

0. Non-Existent – There are no statements within the school improvement plan that relate to the specific factor of school climate.
1. Weak – Statements lack supporting detail and do not indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.
2. Supported – Statements contain some supporting detail yet do not indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.
3. Meaningful – Statements contain little supporting detail yet indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.
4. Strong – Statements contain strong supporting detail and indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.

**Methods of data analysis.**

This research required the analysis of data from three sources: school choice and charter school enrollment tables, school climate survey results, and school improvement plans. Data from each source represented different measures and were therefore managed and analyzed in different ways.

**School choice and charter school out-migration.** The researcher used school assignment zone tables obtained from each of the four districts included in the sample for this research and matched up the addresses of each student who had out-migrated through inter-district public school choice and charter school enrollment to which school the student would have attended if the student had remained in district. The Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education provided these student data in a Microsoft Excel table and the researcher entered school of residence information in an additional column in the provided worksheets. The researcher used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to calculate first-time out-migration rates by listing each school's 2010-2011 enrollment, the number of first-time students who out-migrated to charter schools, and the number of first-time students who out-migrated into other public school districts through school choice. Formulas in Microsoft Excel were used to determine the total number of first-time students who enrolled into charter schools or schools in other public school districts through school choice as well as the percentage of the total student population this number of first-time out-migrating students represented. The percent of first-time out-migration was copied into cells of data tables in the statistical software package SPSS v.19 as the dependent variable for analysis against the independent variables of school climate factors.

**School climate survey results.** The researcher exported the numerical results from the teachers' responses to the online School Climate Assessment Inventory (SCAI) into a separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for each school sampled. The researcher then used formulas within Microsoft Excel to calculate the mean of teacher responses for each item on the instrument as well as a mean for each factor of school climate. The mean for each factor of school climate was used in the subsequent analyses to analyze their relationship to school choice out-migration rates. The ratings for each factor of school climate, as ranked from individual teachers' responses, were imported into the statistical software package SPSS v.19 in order to perform statistical analysis.

**School improvement plans.** The researcher read through each participating school's School Improvement Plan, coding for detailed, specific, and measurable goals relating to each factor of school climate. The researcher compiled these data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

then imported this spreadsheet into the statistical software package SPSS v.19 in order to perform statistical analysis.

The researcher analyzed the relationships of factors of school climate and first time out-migration rates through independent sample t-tests and descriptive statistics. Schools with higher first time out-migration rates were grouped into one set; schools with lower first time out-migration rates were grouped into a second set. The researcher calculated the mean ratings of school climate in the higher first time out-migration group and the group of schools with lower first time out-migration rates, as reported by faculty members through their responses on the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). Independent sample t-tests were used to analyze the relationships among factors of school climate, as rated by teachers using the SCAI, between the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates and the group of schools with lower first time out-migration rates.

The researcher further described the relationship of factors of school climate and first time out-migration rates by calculating the means of School Improvement Plan ratings within the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates and the group of schools with lower first time out-migration rates. The researcher then compared the means for each factor of school climate between the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates and the group of those schools with lower first time out-migration rates.

The grouping of schools based solely on first time out-migration rates represents an independent sampling technique as members of each group do not have any other factors in common. According to Vogt (2005), Independent sample t-tests are used to analyze the means of two independent groups by calculating the difference between means and determining the significance of that difference. The researcher relied on two-tailed significance calculations

since the higher mean value between the two independent groups was not known prior to calculating the t-test. Levine's Test for Equality was used to determine whether or not variances were approximately equal. This determination was used when analyzing statistical results calculated by using SPSS v.19 (Archambault, 2000).

**Researcher bias.**

Any bias on the researcher's part stems from his personal and professional experience both attending and working in the public school setting. In a recent professional role, and the role held while most of this research was being undertaken, the researcher worked as a school administrator within a public, urban Massachusetts school district. The school committee and superintendent of this school district were concerned with school choice out-migration rates and initiated many strategies relating to retaining resident students. These activities spurred the researcher's interest in the motivation and factors behind school choice out-migration.

Many strategies were used to mitigate researcher bias in this study. The home district of the researcher was removed from the sample of districts used since faculty rankings may have been motivated by personal relationships or concerns about response anonymity. The researcher used an externally developed school climate instrument instead of creating one himself, further removing bias. Finally, the researcher no longer works directly for any public school district and no longer works in Massachusetts.

**Summary.**

This chapter covered the research design and methodology used by the researcher to evaluate the relationship of factors of school climate and school choice out migration.

The researcher quantified measures of school climate through two separate means: as directly reported by faculty members of selected Massachusetts urban public schools and through

a review of these schools' School Improvement Plans. The researcher calculated school choice out-migration rates as a factor of the number of students enrolling into another public school through inter-district school choice or into a charter school. Finally, the researcher described and defended the statistical models that will be used to analyze the relationship among the independent variables of factors of school climate and the dependent variable of first time school choice and charter school out-migration. Chapter Four contains the results of this analysis.

# Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results.

## Background.

The purpose of this study is to explore relationship of factors of school climate and first time student out-migration from residentially assigned schools through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment. The following four questions guided this research:

1. What is the first-time out-migration rate of students from individual schools from the selected Massachusetts urban public school districts through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment?
2. How do faculty members of selected schools within Massachusetts urban public districts rate specific factors of their individual school's climate?
3. What goals related to school climate are included in the publicly reported School Improvement Plans of selected Massachusetts urban public schools? How detailed and specific are the goals in the School Improvement Plans that relate to school climate?
4. Are there relationships among the ranking of specific factors of school climate as independent variables and the dependant variable of the rate of student out-migration through inter-district school choice and charter school enrollment within the sampled Massachusetts urban public schools?

Data and analysis in this chapter are presented in four sections relating separately to each of this study's research questions. The first section presents the calculation of first time out-migration rates for the 2010-2011 school year by using data obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These data comprised of student-level data of those pupils who migrated out from the seven schools in this study's sample in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. The second section describes results from analyzing school

climate as reported by teachers. The third section describes results determined by coding goals included in each school's School Improvement Plan relating to school climate. The final section presents results of analyzing the relationships among factors of school climate as reported by teachers and first time out-migration rates between the groups of schools with higher and lower first time out-migration rates by comparing means through independent sample t-tests. Descriptive statistics were also used to analyze the relationships among factors of school climate contained in School Improvement Plans between between the two groups of schools with higher and lower first time out-migration rates.

**Determining student out-migration rates.**

**Research Question 1: What is the first-time out-migration rate of students from individual schools from the selected Massachusetts urban public school districts through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment?**

This study's first research question required the researcher to calculate first time out-migration rates for the seven schools comprising this study's research sample. To do this, the researcher had to use student-level data from each district participating in this study and determine which school the student would have attended based on the district's school assignment policy. Out-migration data from the 2009-2010 school year were compared to out-migration data for the 2010-2011 school year; duplicates were removed to determine which students chose to enroll into other public school districts or into charter schools for the first time in the 2010-2011 school year. Table 2 indicates the school, number of students out-migrating for the first time through inter-district school choice in the 2010-2011 school year, the number of students out-migrating for the first time through charter school enrollment in 2010-2011, and the total out-migration rate as a percentage of enrollment in the 2010-2011 school year. Enrollments

represent those reported in the end of year enrollment as claimed by each district. Inter-district school choice data are reported from each district's 2010 and 2011 School Choice Claiming Report; charter school data are reported from each district's fourth-quarter charter school reports from the 2010 and 2011 school years.

Table 2

*Out-Migration Rates for Selected Schools in the 2010-2011 School Year*

| | 2010-2011 First Time Student Out-Migration | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| School | Students Out-Migrating Through School Choice (*n*) | Students Out-Migrating Into Charter Schools (*n*) | Choice and Charter Outmigration as % of Enrollment |
| Aubry School | 8 | 4 | 0.99% |
| Doris School | 107 | 8 | 9.68% |
| Jin School | 18 | 0 | 2.45% |
| Santana School | 0 | 2 | 0.17% |
| Olaf School | 1 | 2 | 1.91% |
| Lowe School | 6 | 25 | 2.10% |
| Buford School | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |

Buford School did not lose any students to first time out-migration through inter-district school choice or charter schools in 2011. Aubry School and Santana School saw a less than 1% first time out-migration rate. While Olaf School only experienced three students migrating out for the first time in 2011, the school itself has a small student population thus indicating a relatively high first time out-migration rate. Lowe School experienced a much larger number of students out-migrating into charter schools than participating in school choice. Doris School not only experienced a much higher first time out-migration rate than the other schools in the

sample, it also saw many more students enroll into schools in other districts through school choice instead of enrolling in charter schools. Jin School saw all of its first time out-migration through inter-district school choice.

**Assessing school climate through survey responses.**

**Research Question 2: How do faculty members of selected schools within Massachusetts urban public districts rate specific factors of their individual school's climate?**

This study's second research question required the researcher to survey faculty members within districts participating in this study's sample in order to determine how these teachers rated factors of school climate in the aggregate. Faculty from schools within four participating Massachusetts urban public school districts were asked to rank factors of school climate relating to their individual school by using an online version of the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). The seven schools included in this study's sample represent those schools that had a response rate equal to or above 10% of the school's faculty on the SCAI. Faculty ranked statements signifying a range of low, low-middle, middle, middle-high, and high levels of school climate. These values were ranked on a scale from a value of "1" indicating low school climate to "5" indicating high school climate. Table 3 identifies each school and the mean of rankings for each factor of school climate.

Table 3

*Mean of School Climate Factor Ratings for Individual Schools as Reported by Faculty Members*

| School | Response Rate | Physical Environment | Faculty Relations | Student Interactions | Leadership/ Decisions | Discipline | Learning/ Assessment | Culture | Community | Safety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aubry School | 20% | 3.52 | 3.47 | 3.34 | 2.95 | 3.19 | 3.40 | 3.13 | 3.32 | 3.13 |
| Doris School | 10% | 2.98 | 3.73 | 3.43 | 3.41 | 3.43 | 3.85 | 3.43 | 3.80 | 3.27 |
| Jin School | 60% | 4.30 | 3.54 | 3.92 | 3.32 | 3.70 | 4.14 | 3.97 | 3.73 | 4.06 |
| Santana School | 38% | 2.91 | 3.47 | 3.14 | 3.30 | 3.23 | 3.51 | 3.10 | 3.16 | 3.06 |
| Olaf School | 60% | 4.24 | 4.44 | 4.43 | 4.60 | 4.38 | 4.36 | 4.34 | 4.40 | 4.37 |
| Lowe School | 16% | 3.31 | 3.52 | 3.70 | 3.01 | 3.44 | 3.78 | 3.36 | 3.19 | 3.68 |
| Buford School | 39% | 4.81 | 4.70 | 4.58 | 4.68 | 4.37 | 4.66 | 4.69 | 4.65 | 4.61 |

Only three of the means were calculated below a middle-level ranking of school climate (represented by a rating of three on the five point scale): Santana School Physical Environment (2.91), Aubry School Leadership Decisions (2.95), and Doris School Physical Environment (2.98). None of the means indicated that faculty generally perceived any areas of low school climate. Individual surveys did include low rankings, but these were offset by peers who felt more positive about their school's climate.

**Assessing factors of school climate contained in School Improvement Plans.**

**Research Question 3: What goals relate to school climate are included in the publicly reported School Improvement Plans of selected Massachusetts urban public schools? How detailed and specific are the goals in the School Improvement Plans that relate to school climate?**

The third research question required the researcher to determine which goals relating to school climate were included in the most recent publicly available School Improvement Plan written by the School Council of each school in this study's sample. The School Improvement Plans for each of the seven schools included in this study's sample were reviewed and coded based on the strength of supporting detail and specific, measurable improvement goals relating to school climate. The researcher developed the following rubric to differentiate coded values:

0. Non-Existent – There are no statements within the school improvement plan that relate to the specific factor of school climate.
1. Weak – Statements lack supporting detail and do not indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.
2. Supported – Statements contain some supporting detail yet do not indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.

3. Meaningful – Statements contain little supporting detail yet indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.
4. Strong – Statements contain strong supporting detail and indicate meaningful improvement through specific and measurable goals.

Subsequent sections present the results of this analysis broken down by school, along with findings regarding the content of each School Improvement Plan.

Table 4 lists the coded values for factors of school climate contained within each school's School Improvement Plan.

Table 4

*Results of Coding School Improvement Plans for Factors of School Climate*

| | Phys. | Fac. Rel. | Stud. Int. | Lead. Dec. | Disc. | Learn. Assess. | Culture | Comm. | Safety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aubry School | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Doris School | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Jin School | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Santana School | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Olaf School | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Lowe School | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Buford School | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 |

*Note.* Abbreviations for factors of school climate are: Phys. = Physical Environment, Fac. Rel. = Faculty Relations, Stud. Int. = Student Interactions, Lead. Dec. = Leadership/Decisions, Learn. Assess. = Learning/Assessment, Comm. = Community.

***Aubry School.*** Aubry School's School Improvement Plan consisted of six pages. The names of the members of the school council who worked on the school improvement plan, the school's mission, a list of accomplishments in the three years prior to this plan, school goals aligned to district goals, and strategies were included with the School Improvement Plan. The only plans written into Aubry School's School Improvement Plan with specific and measurable goals related to Learning/Assessment.

***Doris School.*** Doris School's School Improvement Plan consisted of 17 pages. School-level objectives, cause statements, improvement targets, and strategies were included with the School Improvement Plan. The only plans written into Doris School's School Improvement Plan with specific and measurable goals related to Learning/Assessment, Culture, and Community, Safety was not addressed.

***Jin School.*** Jin School's School Improvement Plan consisted of 45 pages. A list of teachers who were part of a school-wide data team, a list of school council members with e-mail addresses, improvement targets broken down by subgroup, school-level objectives, strategies, a list of assessments used throughout the school, and charts representing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data were included with the School Improvement Plan. The only plans written into Jin School's School Improvement Plan with specific and measurable goals related to Faculty Relations and Learning/Assessment. Physical Environment and Culture were not addressed.

***Santana School.*** Santana School's School Improvement Plan consisted of 18 pages. A list of teachers who were part of a school-wide data team, a list of school council members, an executive summary, enrollment data, No Child Left Behind status, historical grade-level Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results, grade-level growth model charts, a review of the prior School Improvement Plan's implementation, school-level goals, data analysis, and strategies were included with the School Improvement Plan. None of the plans written into Santana School's School Improvement Plan contained specific and measurable goals relating to any factor of school climate. Physical Environment, Student Interactions, and Culture were not addressed.

***Olaf School.*** Olaf School's School Improvement Plan consisted of 20 pages. A list of teachers who were part of a school-wide data team, a list of school council members, the

school's mission statement, an executive summary, enrollment data, background, No Child Left Behind status, historical grade-level Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results, grade-level growth model charts, a review of the prior School Improvement Plan's implementation, one school-level goal, data analysis, and strategies were included with the School Improvement Plan. None of the plans written into Santana School's School Improvement Plan contained specific and measurable goals relating to any factor of school climate. Physical Environment, Faculty Relations, Student Interaction, Discipline Environment, and Safety were not addressed.

***Lowe School*** Lowe School's School Improvement Plan consisted of one page. Themes and strategies were included with the School Improvement Plan. None of the plans written into Lowe School's School Improvement Plan contained specific and measurable goals relating to any factor of school climate. Leadership/Decisions and Discipline Environment were not addressed.

***Buford School.*** Buford School's School Improvement Plan consisted of one page. Themes and strategies were included with the School Improvement Plan None of the plans written into Buford School's School Improvement Plan contained specific and measurable goals relating to any factor of school climate. Physical Environment, Faculty Relations, Leadership/Decisions, Discipline Environment, and Safety were not addressed.

**Analysis of relationship among factors of school climate and first time out-migration rates.**

**Research Question 4: Are there relationships among the ranking of specific factors of school climate and the rate of student out-migration through inter-district school choice and charter school enrollment within the sampled Massachusetts urban public schools?**

The fourth research question in this study required the researcher to explore potential relationships among the ranking of specific factors of school climate as independent variables and the dependant variable of the rate of student out-migration through inter-district school choice and charter school enrollment within the sampled Massachusetts urban public schools. The researcher used two methods to analyze the data in response to this question. Independent sample t-tests compared factors of school climate as reported by teachers on the School Climate Assessment Instrument between the group of schools with lower first time out-migration rates and higher first time out-migration rates. A descriptive comparison of means explored the ratings of goals relating to School Improvement Plans between the group of schools with lower first time out-migration rates and the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates.

**Teacher surveys.** The researcher used independent sample t-tests in order to explore relationships among teacher-reported factors of school climate and first time out-migration rates. The first analysis was performed on the means of each factor of school climate as calculated from the individual responses from the administration of the School Climate Assessment Instrument. If a teacher skipped a question, a null response was entered and that question's response was excluded from the mean calculation for that the related factor of school climate.

The schools were separated into two groups, those that had a first time out-migration rate less than 1% and those that had a first time out-migration rate higher than 1%. Table 5 presents a descriptive analysis of the data, indicating the factor of school climate, the grouping identifier for schools with first time out-migration rates less than 1% (value=1) or schools with first time out-migration rates higher than 1% (value=2), number of survey-takers means included in the calculation, and the mean school climate ranking.

Table 5:

*Descriptive Analysis of Factors of School Climate as Determined by Faculty Survey and Grouped by Low and High First Time Out-migration Rates*

| School Climate Factor | Group | *n* | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 61 | 3.44 |
| Physical Environment | 2 | 68 | **3.82** |
| | 1 | 60 | 3.70 |
| Faculty Relations | 2 | 63 | 3.70 |
| | 1 | 58 | 3.48 |
| Student Interactions | 2 | 63 | **3.86** |
| | 1 | 52 | 3.45 |
| Leadership / Decisions | 2 | 61 | 3.45 |
| | 1 | 52 | 3.42 |
| Discipline / Environment | 2 | 60 | **3.69** |
| | 1 | 51 | 3.76 |
| Learning / Assessment | 2 | 60 | **3.97** |
| | 1 | 51 | 3.40 |
| Culture | 2 | 60 | **3.79** |
| | 1 | 50 | 3.47 |
| Community | 2 | 60 | **3.76** |
| | 1 | 59 | 3.41 |
| Safety | 2 | 63 | **3.88** |

*Note:* The higher mean for each factor of school climate between the two groups is indicated in **bold**.

The results of this descriptive analysis indicate that reported means of each factor of school climate among schools in the group with higher first time out-migration rates were higher than, or equal to, the reported means of school climate among schools in the group with lower first time out-migration rates.

Table 6 presents the results of the independent samples t-test, including t-value, degrees of freedom (df), significance (two-tailed), and mean difference. Results are presented by individual factor of school climate. For Student Interactions and Safety, significance for Levine's Test for Equality of Variances was less than.05, therefore equal variances were not

assumed. For all other school climate factors, Levine's Test was not significant and equal variances were assumed.

Table 6

*Independent Sample t-Test Analysis of Factors of School Climate as Determined by Faculty Survey and as Grouped by Low and High First Time Out-migration Rates*

| School Climate Factor | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Environment | -2.629 | 127 | 0.010* | -0.373 |
| Faculty Relations | 0.009 | 121 | 0.993 | 0.001 |
| Student Interactions | -3.327 | 103.286 | 0.001** | -0.381 |
| Leadership / Decisions | 0.007 | 111 | 0.994 | 0.001 |
| Discipline / Environment | -1.977 | 110 | 0.051 | -0.275 |
| Learning / Assessment | -1.671 | 109 | 0.098 | -0.214 |
| Culture | -2.735 | 109 | 0.007** | -0.391 |
| Community | -1.751 | 108 | 0.083 | -0.287 |
| Safety | -3.330 | 102.190 | 0.001** | -0.474 |

*Note.* *p < .05; **p<.01

The negative t-statistic and negative mean differences for Physical Environment, Student Interactions, Discipline/Environment, Learning/Assessment, Culture, Community, and Safety show that the mean faculty responses in the set of schools with higher first time out-migration rates (group two) were higher than the mean faculty responses in the set of schools with lower first time out-migration rates (group one) for these factors of school climate. The higher mean of faculty responses in the group of schools with higher out-migration rates indicate that school climate was generally perceived as better in these areas among those schools with higher first time out-migration rates than those schools with lower first time out-migration rates.

Three of these differences were statistically significant: Physical Environment at the p<.05 level and Student Interactions, Culture, and Safety at the p<.01 level. Lower p-values, (i.e. significance) indicates a lower probability that the effect of the independent variables on the

dependent variable would have been generated by chance instead of as a result of the interaction of this study's variables (Vogt, 2005). This level of significance indicates that the higher means for Culture, Student Interactions, and Safety in the group with higher first time out-migration rates when compared against the group of schools with lower out-migration rates were highly unlikely to have been generated by chance.

Two factors of school climate, Faculty Relations and Leadership/Decisions, demonstrated minute though positive t-statistics and positive mean rankings among faculty from schools with lower first time out-migration rates than those with higher first time out-migration rates. These minute variations were highly statistically insignificant, nearing the threshold for being found purely by chance instead of through the relationship of the independent variables (here, factors of school climate) against the dependent variable (here, first time out-migration rates). These results indicate that there was little difference of faculty rankings of these two factors of school climate between the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates and those with lower first time out-migration rates.

**School Improvement Plans.** The researcher used a means comparison in order to describe relationships among factors of school climate included in School Improvement Plans and first time out-migration rates. The schools were separated into two groups, those that had a first time out-migration rate less than 1% and those that had a first time out-migration rate higher than 1%. Table 7 presents an analysis of the data, indicating the factor of school climate, the grouping identifier for schools with first time out-migration rates less than 1% (value=1) or schools with first time out-migration rates higher than 1% (value=2), number of school improvement plans included in the group, and the mean school climate coding for each group based on reviews of the school improvement plans.

Table 7

*Descriptive Analysis of Factors of School Climate as Determined by Coding of School Improvement Plans and as Grouped by Low and High First Time Out-migration Rates*

| School Climate Factor | Group | *n* | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 3 | 0.33 |
| Physical Environment | 2 | 4 | **1.00** |
| | 1 | 3 | 1.00 |
| Faculty Relations | 2 | 4 | **1.50** |
| | 1 | 3 | 0.67 |
| Student Interactions | 2 | 4 | **1.25** |
| | 1 | 3 | 1.00 |
| Leadership / Decisions | 2 | 4 | 1.00 |
| | 1 | 3 | 1.00 |
| Discipline / Environment | 2 | 4 | 1.00 |
| | 1 | 3 | 2.67 |
| Learning / Assessment | 2 | 4 | **3.00** |
| | 1 | 3 | 1.33 |
| Culture | 2 | 4 | **1.50** |
| | 1 | 3 | **2.00** |
| Community | 2 | 4 | 1.50 |
| | 1 | 3 | 0.67 |
| Safety | 2 | 4 | **0.75** |

*Note:* The higher mean for each factor of school climate between the two groups is indicated in **bold**.

The mean school climate rankings for Physical Environment, Faculty Relations, Student Interactions, Learning/Assessment, Culture, and Safety were coded higher in the schools with higher first time out-migration rates than the ratings in schools with lower first time out-migration rates. Mean rankings for Leadership/Decisions and Discipline/Environment were equal for both groups. Only one factor, Community, had a higher-ranked mean in the schools with lower first time out-migration rates than those with higher first time out-migration.

**Summary.**

This chapter presents the data analysis techniques and results used by the researcher to explore this study's research questions. First time out-migration rates were calculated and

analyzed to determine which schools had higher first time out-migration rates than others. School climate was calculated and analyzed based on the aggregate means of school climate factors from individual schools as well from individual responses. Finally, the relationship among factors of school climate and groups of schools with higher or lower first time out-migration rates was analyzed through independent sample t-tests from faculty surveys and a comparison of coded means from School Improvement Plans.

Chapter Five will present a brief review of this study and summary of the findings and conclusions. Additionally, the researcher will present his conclusions and recommendations to public school administrators based on these findings. Chapter Five concludes with recommendations for future research.

# Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations.

## Background.

This chapter begins with a review of this study followed by a summary of findings broken down by research question. The researcher presents his conclusions and recommendations based on the findings that emerged from data analysis. Finally, the researcher suggests recommendations for further research.

This research study explored the relationship among factors of school climate and first time student out-migration into public schools outside of the student's district of residence through charter school enrollment or inter-district school choice options. Seven Massachusetts urban public schools from four school districts had survey response rates at or above 10% of their entire faculty, which made up the sample population of this study. The researcher calculated first time out-migration rates by comparing school choice and charter school enrollment from the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years and removed duplicates. The researcher determined which school the pupil would have attended if he or she had remained in-district by matching his or her street address to the home district's school attendance zone policy. First time out-migration rates were calculated as a percentage of total student enrollment.

The researcher evaluated school climate in two different ways. Teachers from the schools in this study's sample evaluated school climate factors by taking an online version of the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). Teachers ranked individual statements of school climate ranking from low to high by determining which statement most represents the status of school climate in their school. The researcher tabulated responses and calculated means from questions relating to each factor of school climate. The researcher also evaluated School Improvement Plans to determine the inclusion of supported, specific, and measurable goals

relating to school climate as determined collaboratively through school councils comprised of a variety of stakeholders.

The relationship among factors of school climate were evaluated by combining those schools with less than 1% first time out-migration rates and those schools with a greater than 1% first time out-migration rates into two separate groups and evaluating the means of each factor of school climate as reported by individual faculty members through independent sample t-test analysis. To corroborate findings based on faculty survey, the researcher used the same binary grouping and calculated the mean rankings from the evaluation of School Improvement Plans from schools with low first-time out-migration rates (<1%) and high first time out-migration rates (>1%). Differences among these means were described and explored to determine which group of schools better supported factors of school climate as part of their School Improvement Plans.

**Summary of findings.**

The following sections discuss the findings of data analysis as related to each of this study's research questions.

**Research Question 1: What is the first-time out-migration rate of students from individual schools from the selected Massachusetts urban public school districts through inter-district school choice or charter school enrollment?**

The researcher parsed through student out-migration data for all schools in the districts represented in this study in order to determine the first-time out-migration rates for the seven sampled schools. One school experienced no first-time out-migration in the 2010-2011 school year while one school experienced nearly a nearly 10% first-time out-migration rate. Two schools experienced more out-migration into charter schools while four experienced more out-

migration through inter-district school choice. The researcher also found that some students had already participated in intra-district school choice, attending a school other than their school of residence but staying within their public school district, before then deciding to enroll into a charter school or enroll into a public school in another district through intra-district school choice. There are differences among programmatic offerings and transportation options among charter school and school choice options that may play a role in the family's decision to choose one over the other. The researcher did not consider these differences because they were outside of the scope of this research.

The out-migration data suggest a lack of charter school options for families in some of these urban Massachusetts school districts. For example, a charter school that starts accepting students in fifth grade serves one of the districts included in this study's sample. The district's elementary schools see nearly all of their elementary charter school out-migration in fifth grade without similar opportunity for charter school enrollment in earlier grades.

One other district saw a large number (107) of students migrating out of the district's high school into the high school of the neighboring town's district through inter-district school choice. This school's out-migration was seen throughout all four years of grades nine through twelve. In contrast, only eight students left this public school to enroll in charter schools for the first time in the 2011 school year. This imbalance among inter-district school choice rates and charter school enrollment rates suggests that the charter school option for high school students in this district does not support the type of competitive educational marketplace suggested by supporters of charter schools. The data suggest that there might have been a more balanced out-migration throughout grade levels and between charter and inter-district choice options if a parity of options existed.

**Research Question 2: How do faculty members of selected schools within Massachusetts urban public districts rate specific factors of their individual school's climate?**

Faculty in the sampled schools responded generally positively about the factors of school climate in their schools. Teachers reported rankings for each factor of school climate that hovered around middle or middle-high. Even the three mean-based school climate rankings of school climate that dipped below the middle level (Santana School Physical Environment (2.91), Aubry School Leadership Decisions (2.95), and Doris School Physical Environment (2.98)) only did so slightly.

**Research Question 3: What goals relate to school climate are included in the publicly reported School Improvement Plans of selected Massachusetts urban public schools? How detailed and specific are the goals in the School Improvement Plans that relate to school climate?**

The overarching focus of the School Improvement Plans that were reviewed through this study focused on student achievement and instructional strategies to ensure student success. The level of importance placed on school improvement only in terms of student achievement suggests that school leaders and stakeholders are not considering the variety of factors that affect student achievement outside of direct instruction. One school in this study had just one goal: to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for English language arts and mathematics. None of the plans offered detailed, specific, and measurable goals relating to factors of school climate outside of learning and assessment. Some plans did mention specific factors of school climate; however, the goals seemed administrative in nature and were not often focused on student outcomes. For example, one plan identified a goal to implement a tracking system for reports of bullying. A more detailed and measurable goal would have focused on a change in student behavior and

would have contained a specific and measurable metric such as reducing reported incidents of bullying by 25% in the first year. The statements and goals were generally not detailed, specific, and measurable especially outside of student achievement. The researcher also notes that the focus of direct instruction and student achievement measured by AYP left out other statutory requirements, including those areas of school climate required by law to be part of these plans.

**Research Question 4: Are there relationships among the ranking of specific factors of school climate and the rate of student out-migration through inter-district school choice and charter school enrollment within the sampled Massachusetts urban public schools?**

This study suggests that there are relationships among specific factors of school climate and higher out-migration rates through school choice and charter school enrollment among schools in this study. The results cannot be generalized to other schools and settings because of the limitations and delimitations of this study.

School climate, especially Physical Environment, Student Interaction, Culture, and Safety as measured on the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) , are important factors when considering school choice and charter school out-migration rates. First time out-migration rates were higher in those schools whose faculty identified a more positive school climate when compared to those schools with lower school-climate rates. The means for Faculty Relations and Leadership/Decisions from these surveys were nearly equal, therefore differences between the high and low out-migration rates were negligible. The means for Discipline/Environment, Learning/Assessment, and Community as rated through the surveys were higher in the high out-migration group compared to the low out-migration group but not significantly.

The results from analyzing School Improvement Plans echo the findings found in the means of survey responses. It should be noted that few of the plans and statements in School

Improvement Plans, outside of Learning/Assessment, contained specific and measurable goals. The School Improvement Plans often noted strategies and activities in these areas of school climate instead of fully supported, specific, and measurable goals. All factors of school climate, except Community, Leadership/Decisions, and Discipline Environment, were more strongly supported among schools with higher first time out-migration rates than those in the group with lower first time out-migration rates, even though the goals were generally not specific or measurable.

Leadership/Decisionmaking was the only factor of school climate that seemed to have a negligible direct relationship with first time school choice and charter school out-migration rates in both sets of data analysis. Mean faculty rankings indicated trivial differences in Leadership/Decisions between the group of schools representing higher first time out-migration rates and the group of schools representing lower first time out-migration rates. Reviews of School Improvement Plans found that there was no difference in the support, specificity, and measurability of goals relating to leadership and decision making between the group of schools representing higher first time out-migration rates and the group of schools representing lower first time out-migration rates. This does not mean that leadership was unimportant. As measured by teacher surveys and as contained in School Improvement Plans, leadership and decision making does not seem to be directly related to choice or charter school out-migration rates.

**Conclusions.**

This study reveals that student first time out-migration rates were higher in those schools whose teachers ranked their school climate as more positive than those schools with lower first time out-migration rates. This finding seems to contradict research prior research studies.

Uchitelle and Nault (1977) reported that nearly half of parents mention that the principal's philosophy was an important consideration for school choice, yet faculty surveys and reviews of School Improvement Plans find only minute differences in perceptions and goals relating to leadership and decision-making between the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates and those with lower first time out-migration rates. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (1994) found that safety was the third highest consideration reported by families as being a factor in their decision to take advantage of school choice options, but results from faculty surveys indicate that safety and student interactions were ranked significantly higher in the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates than schools in the group with lower out-migration rates. Hsieh (2000) found that families enrolled their students into school choice and charter school options that encouraged strong and safe student interactions, yet again results from faculty surveys indicate that safety and student interactions were ranked significantly higher in the group of schools with higher first time out-migration rates than schools in the group with lower out-migration rates. These studies based their findings on parent-reported factors and perceptions. This study relied on data drawn from teachers and involved stakeholders, which may demonstrate a difference between perception and practice, supporting Schneider and Buckley's (2002) and Hamilton and Guin's (2005) argument that parents may report different reasons behind their educational decision-making processes than what would truly reflect their reasons behind enrolling their students into school choice options.

There may be many reasons that would explain the higher first time out-migration rates in schools with more positively rated factors of school climate, especially Student Interactions and Culture. For example, students who feel that they do not fit into the stronger culture and climate

of a specific school may leave that school to enroll into another school in which they feel a better fit or less challenged to fit in at all. If climate, specifically positive student interaction and culture, is strongly present and valued by the majority, those who do not fit in or agree with values may feel ostracized and exercise their option to leave the system.

**Recommendations.**

**School and district leadership.** Educational leaders and stakeholders should consider socialization factors inherent to the educational process alongside achievement factors when drafting improvement plans and designing strategies to encourage retention of families considering school choice options. Some families may be making educational decisions with at least an eye on social factors instead of solely asking if their child will score better on standardized assessments in one school over another. School leaders should assess factors of school climate from a variety of sources and design improvement plans that support academic achievement, address school climate, and increase competitiveness in the educational marketplace based on the context and conditions of the individual school and its community. Leaders may be able to improve school climate, retain more students from the school's community, and build a supportive and active place for each student to learn by ensuring that all perspectives are considered.

Educational leaders and school councils should also review statutory requirements for School Improvement Plans. School councils and administrators should write goals in these plans that are supported, specific, and measurable. These plans should include goals relating to school climate written to meet statutory requirements.

**Future research.**

Further research is suggested to explore the relationship of school climate and other socialization factors as they relate to families exploring educational options for their students. This study looked at school climate as reported by those with direct and active ties to the school, such as teachers and school council members. Future research could explore perception of school climate by students and community members and explore the relationship of those findings to school choice out-migration rates. Focus groups and case studies could also explore the relationship among school climate and socialization factors. These forms of qualitative analysis would uncover specific stories and situations that would enrich and explain survey responses, which could add depth and unique points of view to the body of research on factors motivating families to participate in school choice and charter school options.

Further research should also look at schools with a range of high and low school climate rankings. Such research may uncover different relationships among school choice and charter school out-migration rates and those schools with considerable deficiencies in factors of school climate.

School and district leaders could also undertake a simplified and localized version of this research. If educational leaders consider school climate data along with student achievement data in determining the success of their educational provision, they would be able to review longitudinal changes in school climate and out-migration rates to determine local trends. By engaging the community in this research, school and district leadership may uncover local needs, expectations, and perceptions that they could work to meet in improvement planning.

**Summary.**

This chapter concludes this research study. The researcher presented findings, based on this study's research questions as supported by data gathered and analyzed through this study.

Subsequent conclusions were presented, followed by suggestions for the field of practitioners for future research.

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# Appendix A:

# School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI)



## School Climate Quality Analytic Assessment Instrument and School-based Evaluation/Leadership Team Assessment Protocol

» **Assessment Protocol**
(Please read before conducting any assessment process.)

**Use of the SCAI-S-G**

*Users must obtain copyright authorization through a site license from the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC formerly WASSC). For those authorized users the following guidelines are provided as a basic protocol for the evaluation process. Each school's needs will vary. For those using the SCAI as part of a school-wide improvement effort, consulting the ASSC document "Change from the Inside: Examining K-12 School Reform Using the ASSC SCAI" may be helpful.*

**Directions: Rate each item below. For each item there are 3 descriptions. Select the rating that best describes the current state at your school as a whole - Level 3(high), 2 (middle) or 1 (low). If you feel that the practices at your school rates between two of the descriptions provided then select the middle level option. Each item should receive only 1 rating/mark.**

### 1. Physical Appearance

| Level - 3 (high) | | Level - 2 (middle) | | Level - 1 (low) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
| **1. a** O | O | O | O | O |
| Welcoming to outsiders, the school projects its identity to visitors. | | Some signage for visitors as they enter the building, but images compete for attention. | | Little concern for the image of the school. |
| **1. b** O | O | O | O | O |
| Purposeful use of school colors/symbols | | Some use of school colors/symbols but mostly associated with sports. | | Students associate school colors with "losers." |
| **1. c** O | O | O | O | O |
| Staff and students take ownership of physical appearance. | | Staff regularly comments on school appearance, but students do not feel any sense of personal ownership. | | "That is the janitor's job" |
| **1. d** O | O | O | O | O |
| No litter | | Litter cleaned at the end of day | | People have given up the battle over litter |
| **1. e** O | O | O | O | O |
| Current student work is displayed to show pride and ownership by students. | | Few and/or only top performances are displayed | | Decades old trophies and athletic records in dusty cases |
| **1. f** O | O | O | O | O |
| Things work and/or get fixed immediately | | Things get fixed when someone complains enough | | Many essential fixtures, appliances and structural items remain broken. |
| **1. g** O | O | O | O | O |
| Staff and students have respect for custodians. | | Most staff are cordial with custodians. | | Custodians are demeaned |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. h** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Graffiti is rare because students feel some sense of ownership of the school. | | Graffiti occurs occasionally, but is dealt with by the staff. | | Graffiti occurs frequently and projects the hostility of students toward their school. | |

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## 2. Faculty Relations

Level - 3 (high) Level - 2 (middle) Level - 1 (low)

| | high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2. a** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members commonly collaborate on matters of teaching. | | Most faculty members are congenial to one another, and occasionally collaborate. | | Typically faculty members view one another competitively. | |
| **2. b** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members approach problems as a team/collective. | | Faculty members attend to problems as related to their own interests. | | Faculty members expect someone else to solve problems. | |
| **2. c** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members use their planning time constructively and refrain from denigrating students in teacher areas. | | Faculty members use time efficiently but feel the need to consistently vent displaced aggression toward students. | | Faculty members look forward to time away from students so they can share their "real feelings" about them. | |
| **2. d** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members are typically constructive when speaking of each other and/or administrators. | | Faculty members wait for safe opportunities to share complaints about other teachers and/or administrators. | | Faculty members commonly use unflattering names for other faculty and/or administration in private. | |
| **2. e** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members feels a collective sense of dissatisfaction with status quo, and find ways to take action to improve. | | Faculty members give sincere "lip service" to the idea of making things better. | | Faculty members are content with the status quo and often resentful toward change-minded staff. | |
| **2. f** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members exhibit high level of respect for one another. | | Faculty members exhibit respect for a few of their prominent members. | | Faculty members exhibit little respect for self or others. | |
| **2. g** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty meetings are attended by most all, and address relevant content. | | Faculty meetings are an obligation that most attend, but are usually seen as a formality. | | Faculty meetings are seen as a waste of time and avoided when possible. | |
| **2. h** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Staff and all-school events are well attended by faculty. | | There are few regular attendees at school events. | | Faculty and staff do a minimum of investing in school-related matters. | |
| **2. i** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Leadership roles are most likely performed by faculty members with other faculty expressing appreciation. | | Leadership roles are accepted grudgingly by faculty, and other faculty members are often suspicious of motives. | | Leadership is avoided, and those who do take leadership roles are seen as traitors. | |
| **2. j** | O | O | O | O | O |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher leadership is systematic and well-coordinated. | | Teacher leadership develops in response to particular situations. | | Teacher leadership exists informally or not at all. | |
| **2. k** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Faculty members have the time and interest to commune with one another, and feel very little isolation. | | Faculty members congregate in small cordial groups, yet commonly feel a sense that teaching is an isolating profession. | | Faculty members typically see no need to relate outside the walls of their class. | |

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### 3. Student Interactions

Level - 3 (high) Level - 2 (middle) Level - 1 (low)

| | high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3. a** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students feel a sense of community and "school" is defined by the warm regard for the inhabitants of the building. | | Students feel like they have friends and are safe, but the school is just a place to take classes. | | Students feel no sense of affiliation with the school or community. | |
| **3. b** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Various cultures and sub-groups blend, interrelate and feel like valid members of the community. | | Various sub-groups avoid each other and have varying degrees of sense of validity. | | Various sub-groups are hostile to one another. | |
| **3. c** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students readily accept the purpose of zero tolerance for "put downs." | | Students think put downs are just part of their language. | | Put downs lead to violence. | |
| **3. d** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Many students attend school events. | | A few regulars attend school events. | | It is un-cool to attend school events. | |
| **3. e** | O | O | O | O | O |
| "Popular" students feel a an obligation to serve the school, not a sense of entitlement | | "Popular" students treat the other popular students well. | | "Popular" students use their political capital to oppress those less popular. | |
| **3. f** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Most students feel safe from violence. | | Most students don't expect much severe violence but accept minor acts of harassment almost daily. | | Most students do not feel safe from violent acts, large or small. | |
| **3. g** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Leaders are easy to find due to the wide range of gifts that are validated and harnessed. | | Leaders come from a small clique of students. | | Students avoid leadership for fear of being labeled as "goody goodies". | |
| **3. h** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Athletes are valued as quality community members and approach their role with a humble sense of honor. | | It is assumed that some athletes are just "jerks" and jocks are not "real students". | | Athletes band together to oppress the weaker and more academically gifted element in the school. | |
| **3. i** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Most students expect to be given ownership over decisions that effect | | Most students are upset when rights are withdrawn, but typically take little | | Most students assume that they have no rights. | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| them. | | action. | | | |
| **3. j** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Most students expect to engage in "authentic learning" activities and to be taught with methods that make them responsible for their own learning. | | Most students adjust their expectations to each teacher and focus mainly on doing what it takes to get "the grade." | | Most students' expectation of school is that little of value is learned in there and real world learning happens somewhere else. | |

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### 4. Leadership/Decisions

| Level - 3 (high) | | Level - 2 (middle) | | Level - 1 (low) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **high** | **high-middle** | **middle** | **middle-low** | **low** |
| **4. a** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| School has a sense of vision, and a mission that is shared by all staff. | | School has a set of policies, a written mission, but no cohesive vision. | | School has policies that are used inconsistently. | |
| **4. b** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Vision comes from the collective will of the school community. | | Vision comes from leadership. | | Vision is absent. | |
| **4. c** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| School's decisions are conspicuously grounded in the mission. | | Policies and mission exist but are not meaningful toward staff action | | Mission may exist but is essentially ignored. | |
| **4. d** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Vast majority of staff members feel valued and listened to. | | Selected staff members feel occasionally recognized. | | Administration is seen as playing favorites. | |
| **4. e** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| A sense of "shared values" is purposefully cultivated. | | Most share a common value to do what's best for their students. | | Guiding school values are in constant conflict. | |
| **4. f** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Staff understands and uses a clear system for selecting priority needs, and has a highly functioning team for "shared decision-making". | | There is a SDM committee but most real power is in a "loop" of insiders/decision makers. | | Decisions are made autocratically or accidentally. | |
| **4. g** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Most of the staff has a high level of trust and respect in leadership. | | Some staff have respect for leadership. | | Most staff feel at odds with the leadership. | |
| **4. h** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Teacher leadership is systematic and integral to the school's leadership strategy. | | Some teachers take leadership roles when they feel a great enough sense of responsibility. | | Leadership is seen as solely the domain of the administration. | |
| **4. i** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Leadership demonstrates a high level of accountability, and finds ways to "make it happen." | | Leadership is highly political about how resources are allocated and often deflects responsibility. | | Leadership seems disconnected to outcomes and find countless reasons why "it can't happen." | |
| **4. j** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** | **O** |
| Leadership is in tune with students | | Leadership has selected sources of | | Leadership is isolated from the | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| and community. | | info about the community and students. | | students and community. |
| **4. k** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Leadership is in tune with others' experience of the quality of school climate. | | Leadership makes pro forma statements about wanting good school climate. | | Leadership does not see school climate as a necessary interest. |

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## 5. Discipline Environment

Level - 3 (high) Level - 2 (middle) Level - 1 (low)

| | high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5. a** | O | O | O | O | O |
| School-wide discipline policy is consistently applied. | | School-wide discipline policy is used by some staff. | | School-wide discipline policy exists in writing only. | |
| **5. b** | O | O | O | O | O |
| It is evident from student behavior that there are clear expectations and consistency in the discipline policy. | | In many classes there are clear expectations and most teachers are fair and unbiased. | | Students have to determine what each teacher expects and behavioral interventions are defined by a high level of subjectivity. | |
| **5. c** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Most teachers use effective discipline strategies that are defined by logical consequences and refrain from punishments or shaming. | | Most teachers use some form of positive or assertive discipline but accept the notion that punishment and shaming are necessary with some students. | | Most teachers accept the notion that the only thing the students in the school understand is punishment and/or personal challenges. | |
| **5. d** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Classrooms are positive places, and teachers maintain a positive affect, and follow-through with consequences in a calm and non-personal manner. | | Most teachers maintain a positive climate, but some days they just feel the need to complain about the class and/or get fed up with the "bad kids" | | Classrooms are places where teachers get easily angered by students and there is a sense of antagonism between the class and the teacher | |
| **5. e** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Maximum use of student-generated ideas and input. | | Occasional use of student-generated ideas. | | Teachers make the rules and student should follow them. | |
| **5. f** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Most consider teaching and discipline within the lens of basic student needs that must be met for a functional class. | | Most have some sensitivity to student needs, but the primary goal of classroom management is control. | | Most view all student misconduct as disobedience and/or the student's fault. | |
| **5. g** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Teacher-student interactions could be typically described as supportive and respectful. | | Teacher-student interactions could be typically described as fair but teacher-dominated. | | Teacher-student interactions are mostly teacher-dominated and reactive. | |
| **5. h** | O | O | O | O | O |
| When disciplining students teachers typically focus on the problematic behavior not the student as a person. | | When disciplining students teachers are typically assertive yet often reactive, and giving an overall inconsistent message. | | When disciplining students teachers are typically personal and often antagonistic. | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5. i** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Management strategies consistently promote increased student self-direction over time. | | Management strategies promote acceptable levels of classroom control over time, but are mostly teacher-centered. | | Management strategies result in mixed results: some classes seem to improve over time, while others seem to decline. | |
| **5. j** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Teachers successfully create a sense of community in their classes | | Teachers successfully create a working society in their classes | | Teachers create a competitive environment | |

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## 6. Learning/Assessment

Level - 3 (high) Level - 2 (middle) Level - 1 (low)

| | high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6. a** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Assessment targets are clear and attainable for learners. | | Most high achieving students can find a way to meet the teacher's target. | | Students see grades as relating to personal or accidental purposes. | |
| **6. b** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Instruction/Assessment promotes student locus of control, sense of belonging and sense of competence. | | Instruction/Assessment is most often focused on relevant learning, yet mostly rewards the high-achievers. | | Instruction/Assessment is focused on bits of knowledge that can be explained and then tested. | |
| **6. c** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Student-controlled behavior (effort, listening, attitude, etc) is rewarded and even assessed when possible. | | Student controlled behavior is verbally rewarded. | | Only quantifiable academic and athletic outcomes are rewarded. | |
| **6. d** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Teachers have some mode of making sense of, and being responsive to, varying learning styles. | | Teachers are aware of learning styles as a concept, and make some attempt in that area. | | Teachers expect all students to conform to their teaching style. | |
| **6. e** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Instruction is dynamic, involving, learner-centered, and challenging. | | Instruction is mostly based on relevant concepts but often appears to be busy-work | | Instruction is mostly "sit and get" | |
| **6. f** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students learn to work cooperatively and as members of teams. | | Some teachers buy into the idea of cooperative learning. | | Cooperative learning is seen as leading to chaos and cheating. | |
| **6. g** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students are given systematic opportunities to reflect on their learning progress. | | Mostly higher-level students are given occasional opportunities to reflect on their learning in some classes. | | Teaching is seen as providing maximum input and little opportunity for reflection exists. | |
| **6. h** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students are seen as the primary users of assessment information, and assessment is used for the purpose of informing the learning process and is never used to punish or shame. | | Assessment is seen as something that occurs at the end of assignments. Grades are used primarily for student-to-student comparison. | | Assessment is used to compare students to one another and/or to send a message to lazy students. | |
| **6. i** | O | O | O | O | O |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom dialogue is characterized by higher-order thinking (e.g., analysis, application, and synthesis). | | Classroom dialogue is active and engaging but mostly related to obtaining right answers. | | Classroom dialogue is infrequent and/or involves a small proportion of students. | |
| **6. j** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students consistently feel as though they are learning subjects in-depth. | | Students are engaged in quality content, but the focus is mostly on content coverage. | | Students feel the content is only occasionally meaningful and rarely covered in-depth. | |
| **6. k** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Teachers promote the view that intelligence and ability are a function of each students' effort and application, and are not fixed. The major emphasis is placed on the process over the product. | | Teachers promote the view that effort has a lot to do with how much students are able to accomplish. The major emphasis is placed on working to produce good products. | | Teachers promote the view that intelligence and ability are fixed/innate traits and not all students have what it takes. The major emphasis is on the comparison of products/grades. | |
| **6. l** | O | O | O | O | O |
| School-wide rewards often focus on student effort and contribution and sparingly on being the top performer. | | School-wide rewards honor a variety of top performance-based achievements. | | A competitive climate exists for the scarce supply of school-wide rewards given only for performance. | |

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## 7. Attitude and Culture

Level - 3 (high) Level - 2 (middle) Level - 1 (low)

| | high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7. a** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students feel as though they are part of a community. | | Students feel as though they are part of a society. | | Students feel as though they are visitors in a building. | |
| **7. b** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students self-correct peers who use destructive and/or abusive language. | | Students seek adult assistance to stop blatant verbal abuse. | | Students accept verbal abuse as a normal part of their day. | |
| **7. c** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students feel as though they are working toward collective goals. | | Students feel as though they are working toward independent goals. | | Students feel as though they are competing with other students for scarce resources. | |
| **7. d** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students speak about the school in proud, positive terms. | | Students speak of the school in neutral or mixed terms. | | Students denigrate the school when they refer to it. | |
| **7. e** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Most students feel listened to, represented, and that they have a voice. | | Most students see some evidence that some students have a voice. | | Most students feel they have very little voice when at school. | |
| **7. f** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Most students feel a sense of belonging to something larger. | | Most students see some evidence that efforts are made to promote school spirit. | | Most students feel alone, alienated and/or part of a hostile environment. | |
| **7. g** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Teachers share commonly high | | Most teachers have high expectations | | Often teachers openly express doubts | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| expectations for all students. | | for students who show promise. | | about the ability of some students. | |
| **7. h** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students feel as though they owe their school a dept of gratitude upon graduation. | | Graduates feel that they had an acceptable school experience. | | A high number of students graduate feeling cheated. | |
| **7. i** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Students feel welcome and comfortable in talking to adults and/or designated peer counselors. | | Some students have a few staff that they target for advice. | | Students assume adults do not have any interest in their problems. | |
| **7. j** | O | O | O | O | O |
| School maintains traditions that promote school pride and a sense of historical continuity. | | School maintains traditions that some students are aware of but most see as irrelevant to their experience. | | School has given up on maintaining traditions due to apathy. | |

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## 8. Community Relations

Level - 3 (high) Level - 2 (middle) Level - 1 (low)

| | high | high-middle | middle | middle-low | low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8. a** | O | O | O | O | O |
| School is perceived as welcoming to all parents. | | School is perceived as welcoming to certain parents. | | School is suspicious of why parents would want to visit. | |
| **8. b** | O | O | O | O | O |
| School sends out regular communication to community including invitations to attend key events. | | School sends out pro forma communication that may be plentiful but is not created with the consumers' needs in mind. | | School sends out pro forma communication only. | |
| **8. c** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Community members are regularly invited to speak in classes. | | Inconvenience leads to few community members speaking in classes. | | The vast majority of community members have not seen the inside of the school since they went there. | |
| **8. d** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Service learning efforts are regular, promoting student learning and positive community-relations. | | Service learning is performed, but very infrequently due to perceived inconvenience. | | Service learning is seen as just a glorified field trip and therefore not worth the time or expense. | |
| **8. e** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Parents and coaches all work for the best interest of student-athletes. | | Parents support the coaches and teams if things are going well. | | Parents feel free to challenge coaches, coaches mistrust parents. | |
| **8. f** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Volunteer efforts are well coordinated, volunteers are plentiful, and conspicuously appreciated. | | Volunteers are willing, but are often unaware of the events and/or feel a lack of guidance. | | Volunteers are hard to find or unreliable. | |
| **8. g** | O | O | O | O | O |
| Athletic events and Fine Arts performances are well attended due to deliberate efforts toward promotion and crowd appreciation. | | Athletic events and Arts performances are attended by a die-hard following and/or only when things are going well. | | Games and performances are poorly attended and as a result progressively less effort is made by participants. | |

## Appendix B:

## Letter of Approval from Sage Colleges IRB

June 1, 2011

Keith Babuszczak
345 Hancock Road
Pittsfield, MA 01201

**IRB PROPOSAL # 10-11-035R3**
**Reviewer: Susan C. Cloninger, Chair**

Dear Mr. Babuszczak:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and has approved the revisions of your project entitled "Exploring the relationship Among School Climate Factors and School Choice Out-Migration: Implications for Urban School Leaders." Good luck with your research.

When you have completed collecting your data you will need to submit to the IRB Committee a final report indicating any problems you may have encountered regarding the treatment of human subjects

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Cloninger, PhD
Chair, IRB

SCC/nan

Cc. Dr. Robert Bradley

**Appendix C:**

**Letter of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding use of confidential student information.**

**Subject :** **RE: Providing data to be presented at Sage Colleges Research Colloquium**

**Date :** Thu, Sep 15, 2011 05:26 PM EDT

**From :** **"Conaway, Carrie (DOE)" <CConaway@doe.mass.edu>**

**To :** Keith Babuszczak <babusk@sage.edu>, bradlr2@sage.edu

**CC :** "Winner, Kendra (DOE)" <kwinner@doe.mass.edu>

Keith: Thank you for sending your draft for our review, per our requirement. Upon review, this report does not disclose any confidential student information. Please feel free to use these findings in your presentation.

Carrie

--

Carrie Conaway
Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant St., 5th Floor, Malden, MA 02148
cconaway@doe.mass.edu 781-338-3108
http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/

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**From:** Keith Babuszczak [mailto:babusk@sage.edu]
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 13, 2011 1:23 PM
**To:** Conaway, Carrie (DOE); bradlr2@sage.edu
**Subject:** Providing data to be presented at Sage Colleges Research Colloquium

Good afternoon Carrie,

Per the Memorandum of Agreement between the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Sage Colleges/Dr. Robert Bradley, I have attached the first time student out-migration rates and brief statements of themes/recommendations based on these data. We will be presenting these findings at a research colloquium that is scheduled to be held on October 13, 2011. Along with these data analyzed from the data provided by DESE, I will be presenting results from school climate surveys, reviews of School Improvement Plans for factors relating to school climate, as well as briefly discussing relationships among these first time out-migration rates and factors of school climate.

The research colloquium is an annual event held to share the findings of individual Problem of Practice teams comprised of students in the Sage Colleges Ed.D. program. The colloquium and related documents will also be available electronically.

The data provided in the attachment represent the direct analysis made from DESE-provided student level data. All research has been undertaken in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement and policies of the Sage Institutional Review Board. Should you require further information relating to this colloquium presentation, or any other parts of my presentation, please let me know. If we do not hear from you to the contrary, Dr. Bradley and I will assume that we have fulfilled the requirement of the Memorandum to provide DESE information relating to presentation of data analysis prior to presentation.

Once my dissertation has received final approval, I will send you a copy of the executive summary as well as make available a copy of the dissertation itself.

Many thanks,
-Keith

**Appendix D:**

**E-mail from Dr. John Shindler regarding use of the**

**School Climate Assessment Instrument**

From: "Shindler, John" <jshindl@exchange.calstatela.edu> 11/23/10 12:34:49 ...

Subject: RE: Following up on use of SCAI

To: **Keith Babuszczak**

Attachments: Attach0.html 5K

Hi Keith,
Good to hear that the dissertation is moving forward. It sounds like exciting research. I will be really interested to see the results.
Yes, we have the ASSC SCAI online. We use Question Pro as our service.
It is the ONLY service that can process the SCAI item structure.
So you have a few options.
1. Use our subscription, we can give you the links and create the demographic items and send you the data files, but it there would have to be some compensation.
2. You could get a companion subscription for $100.00 a month and we could transfer the instruments and you would be able to play with the data in any way that you liked.
3. You could get your own subsciption to QP and create things from scratch.
4. Use another method?
5. Do your adminstration with paper.

I wish it was less clumsy, but we do find that the online processing is a huge advantage over the days when we did this with paper.

Let me know what you think.

And yes, have a great holiday. There is much to be Thankful for!

take care,
john

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**From:** Keith Babuszczak [mailto:kbabuszczak@pittsfield.net]
**Sent:** Mon 11/22/2010 12:39 PM
**To:** Shindler, John
**Subject:** Following up on use of SCAI

Hello Dr. Shindler,

I just wanted to follow up on our prior conversation regarding my use of the SCAI in my dissertation research. As you may recall, I am going to look at relationships among specific school climate factors and the rates of student out-migration through inter-district school choice or charter enrollment. I will be targeting schools in

Massachusetts urban public school districts.

You had mentioned that the SCAI was available online. Can you tell me more about how I can access the online assessment as well as administrative functions (sharing the URL, security of the data, retrieving results, etc.)?

Thank you for your assistance. I am wrapping up my IRB application and completing basic methodology information. I did read through the resources provided which helped me answer many questions about methodology, reliability, and validity. Any further suggestions would be warmly welcomed.

Finally, if I do not hear from you before the end of the week, I hope you have a very happy Thanksgiving.

Best
-Keith

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Keith E. Babuszczak
Assistant Superintendent for Career/Vocational Technical Education
Pittsfield Public Schools
269 First Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

413.448.9601 : Office
413.448.9605 : Fax
kbabuszczak@pittsfield.net