EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SYSTEM LEADERSHIP, TEACHER MORALE AND TEACHER ATTENDANCE IN THE CAPITAL REGION OF NEW YORK STATE

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ABSTRACT

In the 2012-2013 school year, public school districts in New York State simultaneously implemented two critical policies that had a significant influence on teacher practice in the classroom; the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Annual Professional Performance Review of teachers (APPR). After three years of implementation the researcher felt it was both timely and important to examine what if any impact these recent policy changes have had on teachers with regard to their perceptions' of system level leadership, morale, and motivation to attend work. This quantitative study examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance rates in the Capital Region area of New York State.

The researcher designed a survey instrument to collect teachers' self-reported absence information; teachers' perceived feelings of morale and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the system leader. In total, 960 respondents were included in the sample; a 16.05% response rate.

The results of this study indicate teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant relationship with teacher attendance, however there is not a practical significance that should be examined by education policy makers and individual school districts. The results of this research highlight the frequency of days some teachers in the population were absent from school for reasons other than school business. The New York State Education Department and individual school districts should examine this information carefully and work to implement policies and procedures that keep teachers in the classroom. The results of this study also indicate there is a statistically significant, but not practically significant relationship between

teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business. Finally, the data collected indicates teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant and practically significant relationship with teachers' perceived sense of morale. The results of this research suggest that system leaders would benefit from examining their own practices and the practices within the school district in order to improve or keep teacher morale high.

Suggested Keywords: Teacher Attendance, Teacher Morale, Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Behaviors

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Teacher attendance has recently become a scrutinized topic with reports focusing on the rates in which teachers are absent from work (Frontline Research & Learning Institute, 2016; Joseph, Waymack & Zielaski, 2014). Previous dated research indicates that teachers in New York State on average were absent from work 9 days or 5% of the 1986-87 school year (Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Rees & Ehrenberg, 1991). More recent national statistics indicate that public school teachers are absent on average 9-10 days per year (Miller, 2008). The National Council on Teacher Quality 2014 report titled *Roll call: The importance of teacher attendance*, reported the average public school teacher in the nation was absent 6% of the year; missing 11 days on average during the 2012-2013 school year (Joseph, Waymack & Zielaski, 2014).

Absent teachers are replaced with per diem substitutes and per diem substitute teachers often do not have the knowledge or skill set to provide the same level of instruction as the classroom teacher (Bruno, 2002). The impact of the average yearly teacher absences equates to students being taught by a substitute teacher for the equivalent of two-thirds of a school year over the course of their education, kindergarten to 12th grade (Miller, 2008). Students not receiving the same level of instruction for the entire length of the school year could suffer academically (Miller, Murnane & Willett, 2008).

While national reports are beginning to examine teacher attendance rates, currently a full data set publicizing teacher attendance rates in New York State does not exist. However, in June of 2015, the New York State Board of Regents adopted a

regulation to collect all teacher attendance data from school districts in New York State (NYSED HE/P12, 2015). Previously, individual teacher attendance data was only collected from low performing schools in the state (NYSED HE/P12, 2015). The purpose of the New York State Board of Regents regulation is to help school districts across the state in identifying the causes of teacher absenteeism and assist districts in developing strategies to confront teacher absenteeism (NYSED HE/P12, 2015). Examining why teachers are absent from school is timely considering the recent substitute shortage school districts nationwide have been experiencing (Smith, 2014).

The Substitute Teaching Institute at Utah State University also known as STEDI, conducted a study and found school districts began to experience a shortage of substitute teachers in the fall of 2013. Of the districts who participated in the STEDI.ORG study, 48% of the districts nationwide said they had a severe or somewhat severe shortage of substitute teachers (Smith, 2014). A national analysis completed by Frontline Technologies found that in January of 2016, 11% of all teacher absences were left unfilled by a substitute in the teacher's absence, leaving the individual school districts to find other means to cover an absent teacher's class (Frontline Research & Learning Institute, 2016).

According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, "investing in a system that keeps effective teachers in the classroom should be a priority for school leaders and policymakers. A key part of that effort is creating a school climate in which consistent teacher attendance is the norm." (p. 2). According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC), "an educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting professionally-normed communities for

teachers and other professional staff." (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014). Within the functions of this standard, a system leader creates a positive climate and culture for staff by forming trusting, collaborative relationships with staff and sharing accountability of the system's shared vision and goals (Council of Chief State School Officers, ISLLC, Standard 6). Understanding why teachers are absent from work is imperative for system level leaders who seek to build and maintain a positive school climate where consistent teacher attendance is the norm.

The 2012 Gallup survey of the United States workforce found that less than one-third of all employees are actively engaged in their work, 52% reported they were not engaged and 18% reported that they were actively disengaged (O'Boyle & Harter, 2013). Gallup asked individuals, including more than 100,000 educators about what makes them engaged at work. The Gallup survey found that teachers were actively engaged at the same level as other professional employees, with 13% of teachers reporting being actively disengaged and 56% reporting they are not engaged (O'Boyle & Harter, 2013). In addition to low engagement levels among teachers, the *MetLife Survey of The American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership* found that teacher satisfaction has significantly declined in the last 25 years. A majority of the teachers surveyed reported feeling considerable amounts of stress multiple times in a week (Macia, Markow & Lee, 2013).

Black (2001) explained, "discouraged teachers are a drain on a school system, but more important, teachers with unhealthy attitudes often are a symptom of an unhealthy school organization" (Black, 2001, p.40). Recent research is neglecting to identify why teacher morale may be low and what the current indicators are when we discuss teacher

morale and job satisfaction. However, research does support that the relationship between a school leader and a teacher and specifically how a teacher perceives that relationship has an impact on teacher satisfaction (Blase & Blase, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

In the 2012-2013 school year, New York State simultaneously implemented the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Annual Professional Performance Review of teachers (APPR). These large-scale changes could potentially impact how a teacher feels about their work, their school environment and the leaders who were ultimately responsible for implementing the change (Fullan, 2007). Given the recent implementations of the CCSS and APPR, this is an opportune time to look at the impact recent changes may have had on the workforce of teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance rates in the Capital Region area of New York State. The gap in the literature pertaining to why teachers may be absent from work for reasons other than school business is an area for further examination. The gap in the literature also exists regarding the triangular relationship between system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance. This gap in the literature teamed with the researcher's quest to understand if teachers who perceive effective system leadership in their schools have a higher sense of morale and if teachers with a higher sense of morale are less likely to be absent from their job duties for reasons other than school business are the basis for this research.

Research Questions/Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that teachers who perceive effective system leadership in their schools have a higher sense of morale and teachers with a higher sense of morale are less likely to be absent from their job duties for reasons other than school business. This study was guided by three research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the teachers' perceived sense of morale?
3. What is the relationship between perceived teacher moral and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

Significance of the Study

"In a change effort, culture comes last, not first." (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 174) Public schools in New York State have undergone two major change initiatives, CCSS and APPR simultaneously. How the system leaders planned for and implemented these changes could impact the culture of the school building and teacher morale (Fullan, 2007). Kotter and Cohen (2002) stated "a culture truly changes only when a new way of operating has been shown to succeed over some minimum period of time" (p. 174). Spillane (2013) advocates that successful system leaders lead school staff versus leading the general organization in order to have a positive impact on instruction and learning during a change process.

According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards, also known as the ISLLC Standards, "an educational leader promotes the academic success and personal well-being of every student by promoting professionally-normed communities for teachers and other professional staff." (ISLLC Standard 6). Within the functions of this standard, a system leader creates a positive climate and culture for staff by forming trusting, collaborative relationships with staff and sharing accountability of the system's shared vision and goals (ISLLC, Standard 6). Examining the relationship between system level leadership practices and the impact those practices have on teacher morale may provide school districts in the Capital Region of New York State with a set of identified strategies to improve teacher attendance.

Scope of the Study

The researcher self-designed the survey instrument for the purpose of this study. The survey asked participants demographic questions regarding gender, age, and years of experience as a teacher in order to create a profile of the sample. Participants were asked to self-report the number of days they were absent in the 2013-2014 and then the 2014-2015 school years for reasons other than school business. Participants were also asked questions regarding their morale and their perceptions of the district leaders influence on teacher morale. Finally, participants were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the system level leader. The researcher designed 46 survey questions reflecting the ISLLC Standards in an attempt to determine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of district leadership.

The population of this study was all teachers who use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or Washington Saratoga Warren Hamilton Essex (WSWHE) BOCES in New York State. The researcher chose the Capital Region of New York State for its diversity among school districts including rural, suburban, and urban school districts and the various different student populations they serve. The population was asked to complete an electronic survey.

A total of 1,281 teachers responded to the survey and a total of 321 respondents did not meet the constraints of the sample and were omitted: 150 respondents did not work in the same school district during the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years, 62 worked in a position shared between two or more school districts and 109 had an absence greater than 10 consecutive days for any reasons other than school business in either school year. These 321 respondents who were omitted from the sample were thanked for their time and were not asked any further questions. The final sample (n= 960); a 16.05% response rate was all participants who met the survey conditions and responded to the survey.

Assumptions

Participants were asked to self-identify the number of days they were absent from work for reasons other than school business in the 2013-14 & 2014-15 school years. It is assumed that on average participants would self- report approximately the same number of days absent as previous nationwide research has indicated teachers are absent from school. Additionally, it is assumed that participants understood the 46 questions relative

to their perceptions of leadership to be answered regarding the Superintendent and the Superintendent only.

Limitations

Participants were asked to self-identify the number of days they were absent from work for reasons other than school business in the 2013-14 & 2014-15 school years. Participants who under reported or over reported their days absent would be a limitation of this study. Furthermore, participants were asked 46 questions relative to the leadership actions of their superintendent. There are often Superintendent changes in individual districts surrounding the Capital Region of New York State. Participants who have experienced a recent Superintendent turn over may not have felt knowledgeable enough regarding the leadership actions of the new Superintendent to accurately answer all questions.

Delimitations

All Pre-K- 12 teachers who use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES in New York State were chosen to be the population for this study because as an employee of one of the BOCES support services unit, the researcher had an interest in examining their perceptions of teachers in this geographic region.

Definition of Terms

BOCES: "BOCES stands for Board of Cooperative Educational Services. It is a public organization that was created by the New York State Legislature in 1948 to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts." (Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 2015).

Capital Region of New York State: Encompasses the eight counties proximate to Albany, NY and includes Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington counties (Empire State Development, 2015).

Morale: For the purposes of this study is identified as a teachers' attitude towards working conditions, organizational policies and relationships with colleagues and administration. "Morale is a function of the interaction of an individual's needs and an organization's practices" Reyes & Imber (1992, p. 293).

School Business: Any professional or work related duty such as conference/workshop, Individual Education Program meetings, assessment scoring, field trips, etc., that would require a teacher to be out of his/her classroom (New York State Education Department, Higher Education Committee & P-12 Education Committee, 2015).

Teacher Absenteeism: "A teacher is absent if he or she is not in attendance on a day in the regular school year when a teacher would otherwise be expected to be teaching students in an assigned class. This includes both days taken for sick leave and days taken for personal leave. Personal leave includes voluntary absences for reasons other than sick leave. Teacher absenteeism does not include administratively approved leave for professional development, field trips, or other

off-campus activities with students" (New York State Education Department, Higher Education Committee & P-12 Education Committee, 2015).

Organization of the Study

Chapter One provides a summary detailing the purpose of this research including the research questions that guided the work of this study. Chapter Two will review the pertinent research relative to teacher attendance, the relationship between leadership and teacher attendance, teacher morale, and the impact of leadership on teacher morale and teachers' perceptions of effective leadership. Chapter Three will review the methodology the researcher used to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance in the Capital Region area of New York State. Chapter Four will provide a detailed statistical analysis of the data collected relative to each research question. Chapter Five will provide a summary of the study, its findings and make suggestions relative to outcomes for system level leaders and will also suggest future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the 2012-2013 school year, New York State simultaneously implemented the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Annual Professional Performance Review of teachers (APPR). These large-scale changes could potentially impact how a teacher feels about their work, their school environment and the leaders who were ultimately responsible for implementing the change (Fullan, 2007). Given the recent implementations of the CCSS and APPR, this is an opportune time to look at the impact recent changes may have had on the workforce of teachers.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance in the Capital Region area of New York State. Chapter Two will review the pertinent research relative to teacher attendance, the relationship between leadership and teacher attendance, teacher morale, and the impact of leadership on teacher morale and teachers' perceptions of effective leadership

Teacher Attendance

Research indicates that teachers in New York State on average were absent from work 9 days or 5% of the 1986-87 school year (Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Rees & Ehrenberg, 1991). More recent statistics indicate that public school teachers are absent on average 9-10 days per year (Miller, 2008). Miller (2008) expanded these findings and equates the impact of the average yearly teacher absences to students being taught by a

substitute teacher for the equivalent of two-thirds of a school year over the course of their education, kindergarten to 12th grade. Per diem substitute teachers often do not have the knowledge or skill set to provide the same level of instruction as the classroom teacher (Bruno, 2002). Furthermore, a national analysis completed by Frontline Technologies found that in January of 2016, 11% of all teacher absences were left unfilled by a substitute in the teacher's absence, leaving the individual school districts to find other means to cover an absent teacher's class (Frontline Research & Learning Institute, 2016).

The New York State Education Department defines teacher absenteeism as:

> A teacher is absent if he or she is not in attendance on a day in the regular school year when a teacher would otherwise be expected to be teaching students in an assigned class. This includes both days taken for sick leave and days taken for personal leave. Personal leave includes voluntary absences for reasons other than sick leave. Teacher absenteeism does not include administratively approved leave for professional development, field trips, or other off-campus activities with students. (New York State Education Department, Higher Education Committee & P-12 Education Committee, 2015).

Teacher absenteeism has also been described in terms of discretionary absences (Miller, 2008). Discretionary absences are "those due to personal days or short-term illness" (Miller, p. 1). In recent years teacher attendance has become a scrutinized topic with reports focusing on the rates in which teachers are absent from work (Frontline Research & Learning Institute, 2016; Joseph, Waymack & Zielaski, 2014).

In 2012 the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights released teacher attendance information collected from the first national survey that

included teacher absence information (Miller, 2012). The United States Department of Education reported through the Office of Civil Rights report that 36% of teachers across the United States were absent more than 10 days during the 2009-2010 school year (Miller, 2012). Miller (2008) found that female teachers are absent more frequently then male teachers. However, all teachers are absent at higher rates on Fridays and Mondays compared to the rest of the days of the week (Miller 2008; Frontline Research & Learning Institute, 2016). The National Council on Teacher Quality 2014 report titled *Roll call: The importance of teacher attendance,* reported the average public school teacher in the nation was absent 6% of the year; missing an average of 11 days during the 2012-2013 school year (Joseph, Waymack & Zielaski, 2014).

While national reports are examining teacher attendance rates there is not currently a full data set publicizing teacher attendance rates in New York State. However, in June of 2015 the New York State Board of Regents adopted a regulation to collect all teacher attendance data from all school districts in New York State (NYSED HE/P12, 2015). Previously, individual teacher attendance data was only collected from low performing schools in the state (NYSED HE/P12, 2015).

The purpose of the New York State Board of Regents regulation is to help school districts across the state in identifying the causes of teacher absenteeism and assist districts in developing strategies to confront teacher absenteeism (NYSED HE/P12, 2015). Teacher absenteeism is a topic of importance considering teachers are absent 3% more on average compared to workers in other professions (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor 2009).

Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor (2009) maintain three important reasons why evaluating teacher absences is an important topic. First, the financial costs of hiring a substitute teacher in addition to paying a daily substitute wage are a hefty monetary investment. Approximately $4 billion is spent annually on substitute teachers in the United States (Miller, 2008). Miller (2008) and Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor (2009) both note that 5.3 percent of teachers are absent on any given day. Miller (2008) points out the discrepancy between teachers in the United States and those teachers in the United Kingdom and Australia whose average daily absence rate is 3.2% and 3.1% respectively. Second, Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor (2009) found that teachers who work in low-income districts are absent more frequently than their colleagues who work in higher income districts. Finally, and arguably the most important finding is that student achievement on state tests is lower for students whose teachers miss a higher number of days.

Miller's (2008) research supports the impact teacher attendance has on student achievement. His work found that for every ten teacher absences students' mathematic achievement scores were reduced to an equivalent score of a student being taught by a first or second year teacher, when in actuality the student was taught by a third year teacher or higher. Miller, Murnane & Willet (2008) studied one large urban school district and concluded that 10 days of teacher absence reduced student achievement on fourth grade mathematics by a standard deviation of 3.2%.

Tingle, Schoeneberger, Schools, Wang, Algozzine, & Kerr (2012) studied the relationship between teacher absences and student achievement in a large urban school district in the southeastern part of the United States. Tingle et al. (2012) found a negative relationship between teacher absences and student achievement, where as a teachers'

absences increased, their student's scores on standardized assessments decreased. Woods & Montagno (1997) studied the impact teacher absences had on elementary reading scores and found like Tingle et al. (2012) that there is a negative relationship between teacher absences and student reading achievement scores.

Conversely, Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Rees and Ehrenberg's (1991) findings based on data from the mid- 1980's contrast the research that shows teacher attendance has an impact on student achievement. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) collected data relative to teacher and student absenteeism, student achievement and teacher leave provisions from all New York State school districts. They found that teacher absenteeism did not influence student achievement on any of the elementary or secondary standardized tests taken by New York State students during the 1986-87 school year.

While Ehrenberg et al. (1991) did not find a relationship between teacher absenteeism and student achievement, the researchers made several important findings relative to teacher leave provisions and the number of days teachers reported discretionary absences. New York State public school teachers generally work under a teacher collective bargaining agreement (CBA). As part of the CBA, teachers are allotted a specific number of days that allow them to be absent from work for reasons other than school business without penalty. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) found that districts that had a higher allotment number of annual leave days contracted through a teacher collective bargaining agreement had a higher number of teachers absent annually.

Ehrenberg et al. (1991) also found that districts that sponsor a sick leave bank provision average approximately one additional absent day per year, per teacher versus districts who do not offer a sick leave bank. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) final finding is that

districts that offer a buy back or cash-in type of incentive to teachers upon retirement for their cumulated unused sick or personal leave days have a lower number of teachers absent annually.

Further compounding the issue of teacher attendance Podgursky (2003) concludes that teachers on average work 180-190 days each year; compared to the 240 days an average professional in a field outside of education works. Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor (2009) speculate the possibility that policies specific to public education have contributed to the higher rate of absenteeism in teachers. Podgursky (2003) illustrates this issue by using an example of a sick child. Podgursky (2003) points out that taking a day off for a sick child in many professions is extremely difficult. However, in the realm of the education profession, the collective bargaining agreements that teachers work under make provisions for teachers to take days off from work with full benefits; a substitute teacher is called in to work as the teacher (Podgursky, 2003).

Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor (2009) note that leave provisions for North Carolina teachers are complicated, but provide teachers with abundant sick and personal leave. The more generous the teacher leave policies are, the higher numbers of days on average teachers are absent from school (Keller, 2008a). Teachers are absent more frequently when they work under contracts that provide more paid days for personal illness or personal leave and are absent less when they work under contracts that provide monetary incentives for exceptional attendance (Miller, 2008).

Keller (2008a) contends that school districts should consider incentive plans that reward teachers for perfect or near perfect attendance. Keller (2008b) discussed the notion of school districts reducing the number of leave days the teachers' collective

bargaining agreements provide. However, Keller (2008b) also described the likely push back district administrators would face from the collective bargaining units. The research supports that leave provisions allotted in teacher collective bargaining agreements have a relationship with the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business. However, teacher leave provisions are not the only avenues to be explored when looking at why teachers are absent from school for reasons other than school business.

Rob Weil, a deputy director for the American Federation of Teachers stated to Keller (2008b) that instead of taking away the legitimate rights of teachers, the solution to the issue of excessive teacher absenteeism might present itself if the reasons behind teacher absenteeism were actually researched. Some school districts across the nation have turned to incentives or rewards for teachers with exceptional attendance as Keller (2008b) discussed. The superintendent of a suburban Dallas, Texas school district devised a plan to provide teacher incentives for excellent attendance in an attempt to boost student learning and save the district $200,000 annually on substitute expenditures (Keller 2008b). The plan was successful and the outcome for the district was decreased teacher absenteeism and an increase in student achievement (Keller 2008b).

Freeman & Grant (1987) reported how they improved teacher attendance in the DeKalb County, Georgia school district. The system level leadership team implemented a staff attendance recognition program for all district employees. The recognition program has several layers of recognition, from individual recognition and incentives to school building recognition. Under the new program, the school district was able to reduce staff absenteeism by roughly 7.6 days per staff member and a total of 3,916 fewer

teacher absences, reducing their substitute costs by $156,000 in one school year Freeman & Grant (1987). Incentive initiatives may be a potential solution to improve teacher attendance, but there is limited research that explains the potential causes of teachers being absent from school for reasons other than school business. While it obvious that teachers may be too ill to report to work at some point, the frequency with which teachers are absent from work may indicate that there are other root causes that should be examined.

A few dated research studies suggest a relationship between teacher stress levels and days a teacher is absent from work. Mazer & Griffin (1980) reported a negative correlation between teacher stress levels and the number of days a teacher is absent from work. Green, Blasik & Varela-Russo (1999) explored why teachers were absent in a particular school district, however their research focused on the actual reasons and percentages of how the absent teacher reported their absence. Miller (2008) maintains that teachers are absent more frequently when they work at a school that fosters the culture of absence, where teachers are supportive of other teachers being absent.

The gap in the literature pertaining to why teachers may be absent from work for reasons other than school business is an area for further examination. Understanding the factors contributing to teacher attendance is critical for system level leaders. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, "investing in a system that keeps effective teachers in the classroom should be a priority for school leaders and policymakers. A key part of that effort is creating a school climate in which consistent teacher attendance is the norm." (p. 2).

Leadership and Teacher Attendance

There is a very limited amount of research on the relationships between system leadership and teacher attendance. Batiste (2014) conducted a study to identify the relationship between teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors and teacher absenteeism and student achievement, however the research did not find a significant correlation between the average ratings of a principal and the number of days a teacher was absent from work.

It has been determined however, that teachers who are required to report their absences to a principal via a personal phone call are absent less often than teachers who use an automated reporting system (Farrell 1988, Miller 2008). As previously mentioned teacher collective bargaining agreements provide teachers with an allotment of days to be absent from work and still receive full benefit. This may be a potential reason why there is limited research relative to leadership examining why teachers may be absent from work.

In a singular case study, system level leaders in an unidentified school district were concerned with the level of job satisfaction among teachers based on the teachers' high rate of absenteeism (Pellicer, 1984). The administrators sought to identify the root causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction among teachers in their districts. The intent of their project was to increase job satisfaction among teachers and hoped in by doing that they would decrease teacher absenteeism (Pellicer, 1984). The administrators sought input from the teachers throughout the project through the use of subcommittees. The teacher subcommittees identified priority concerns among teachers and worked to

address those concerns in an effort to increase teacher job satisfaction (Pellicer, 1984). The administrators involved in this project concluded that while they were able to address some concerns that related to teachers' job satisfaction there was no change in the attendance rates of the teachers (Pellicer, 1984).

Ladd (2009) proposes that working conditions in general have an impact on teacher retention rates with leadership associated with the teachers' working conditions playing the biggest role in a teachers' satisfaction with their working conditions. As such, exploring the topic of teacher morale and the relationship leadership has with teacher morale is an important component of this research.

Teacher Morale

Morale as a term has been defined multiple ways. Reyes & Imber (1992) defined morale as the attitudes employees hold towards working conditions. In contrast, Bhella (1982), described morale as the extent to which an employee's needs are being met and the extent of their overall work satisfaction. Based on these definitions, the concept of teacher morale is more than whether teachers are happy or in a good mood and there are many other elements that are often associated with morale.

Many researchers have used the terms engagement, job satisfaction and even motivation when looking at the concept of teacher morale. Klassen, Aldhafri, Mansfield, Purwanto, Siu, Wong, & Woods-McConney (2012) studied the relationships between the level of work engagement among teachers and teachers' perceived job satisfaction on an international level. Klassen et.al (2012) found that teachers who report feeling engaged at work are more satisfied with their positions as teachers and are less likely to

contemplate leaving their career in education. Leithwood & McAdie (2007) contend that while many stakeholders play a part in student achievement, the impact of the teacher far outweighs the other groups. The authors found that how teachers operate depends a great deal on their own intrinsic motivation, individual capacities and the conditions of their work environment (Leithwood & McAdie 2007). Leithwood & McAdie (2007) point out that district working conditions including the frequent demand for change placed on teachers has a direct influence over teachers' job satisfaction, level of engagement, stress, and sense of morale.

Black (2001) succinctly describes the issue of low teacher morale and why system leaders should be actively engaged in the process of monitoring teacher morale.

> Where teacher morale is high, students typically show high achievement…when teacher morale sinks, achievement drops and other problems come to the surface. Low teacher morale usually leads to indifference toward others; cynical attitudes toward students; little initiative when it comes to preparing lessons and other classroom activities; preoccupation with leaving teaching for a better job; increased use of sick leave; and bouts of depression. Discouraged teachers are a drain on a school system, but more important, teachers with unhealthy attitudes often are a symptom of an unhealthy school organization. (Black, 2001, p.40)

Morale as a concept then is very broad and there are multiple factors that precipitate a teachers' sense of morale. As Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran (2014) described, when morale is low among teachers that is a signal that one or more of the human universal needs are not being met. Evans (1997) reported the importance of morale and job satisfaction among teachers in the United Kingdom. Evans (1997)

conducted a case study over the course of 4 years to determine factors that influenced teacher morale and teacher job satisfaction. Through her research, Evans (1997) found that school leadership and teachers' perceptions of the equity of their workload compared to all teachers were the biggest influencers on morale and job satisfaction. However, as part of her findings, Evans (1997) discovered that the individuality of responses among all teachers was very diverse and concluded that individual responses did not necessarily represent the group as a whole.

It should be noted that the body of research related to teacher morale, teacher job satisfaction and even teacher stress levels is dated considering the extensive changes educators have faced over the last five years. Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, (2009) sought to discover if the accountability policies in South Carolina had caused unintended consequences in elementary school teachers. They found that teachers reported a multitude of negative consequences, including emotional exhaustion and a low sense of self efficacy they perceived were a result of the current accountability practices (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009).

Outside of a recent survey that questioned teachers on stress levels, there is limited recent research relative to teacher morale and teacher job satisfaction. *The MetLife Survey of The American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership* conducted in 2012, found that teacher satisfaction has significantly declined in the last 25 years. A majority of the teachers surveyed reported feeling considerable amounts of stress multiple times in a week (Macia, Markow & Lee, 2013). This represents a significant increase from 1985 when teacher stress level was last measured (Macia, Markow & Lee, 2013). The survey also found that teacher satisfaction has declined 23 percent since

2008, from 62% to 39% and is at the lowest level in 25 years (Macia, Markow & Lee, 2013). The survey concluded that teachers with lower job satisfaction are more than twice as likely to feel under great stress several days a week as teachers who report they are very satisfied with their job (Macia, Markow & Lee, 2013).

Reyes & Imber (1992) surveyed 550 high school teachers using the Faculty Morale Scale (FMS) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Reyes & Imber (1992) concluded that teachers who perceive their workload as fair have a higher sense of commitment, morale and job satisfaction. In more recent research, Johnson, Kraft and Pappay (2012) analyzed survey data from Massachusetts's teachers relative to school working conditions, compared to demographic and student achievement data. The researchers determined that teachers who reported working in more favorable work environments were more satisfied with their career as a teacher than their peers who reported working in less than favorable conditions (Johnson, Kraft and Pappay, 2012). Recent research, however, is neglecting to identify why teacher morale may be low and what the current indicators are when we discuss teacher morale and job satisfaction. Examining the relationship between teacher morale and system leadership is an additional component of this investigation to be examined that may help to determine potential indicators or causes of low teacher morale.

Leadership and Teacher Morale

While the previous research explains the dynamics of teacher morale and the factors that contribute to teacher moral, examining the relationship between leadership and teacher morale is also important. As previously noted, the research on this subject is

dated. Laird & Luetkemeyer (1976) surveyed vocational teachers in the state of Maryland and found that teacher morale was significantly impacted by the teachers' perceived effectiveness of the leader. Garland (1980) explained being an educational leader should also mean having an understanding for human behavior. All human beings, including educators want to be shown respect and an understanding of our human emotions (Garland, 1980). Conversely, Bhella (1982) found teachers' perceptions of leadership were uniquely different based on the teachers' personal beliefs and concluded that teachers' satisfaction with their employment was not related to the principal's leadership style.

Thomas (1997) completed a comprehensive literature review on the topic of educational leadership, specifically focusing a sizable portion of his research on the impact the leadership of a principal has on teacher morale and teacher performance. Thomas (1997) concluded that the principal's leadership style is related to the performance and morale of the teachers. Thomas (1997) also found that leaders who practice a collaborative model of leadership and provide teachers with ownership and increased responsibility have the greatest positive impact on teacher morale.

In a more recent study, Drago-Severson (2006) sought to determine how well school leaders understand the practices they have in place that support teacher learning in their schools. The researchers found that the principals in their study actively engaged in practices meant to reduce teacher isolation in order to build a collegiate and collaborative team. In adapting these practices, principals offered a positive climate for teachers to work collaboratively with each other as well as with the principal (Drago-Severson 2006). Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon (2010) researched the direct effects various

leadership styles have on teacher morale and teacher enthusiasm. The researchers determined that direct effects of a various leadership styles had little or no impact on teacher morale and teacher enthusiasm, however they determined that the indirect effects of all leadership styles does have a positive relationship with teacher morale and teacher enthusiasm (Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010).

Kelly (2005) studied the relationships between teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership and the climate of the school building. The researchers concluded that teachers' perceptions of their principal's effectiveness are positively related to the teachers' perception of the overall school climate (Kelly, 2005). Teachers who perceived their principal to be fair and consistent in regards to how the principal treated teachers rated the school climate to be higher than teachers who perceived their principal to be inconsistent in the treatment of teachers (Kelly, 2005). While school climate is not the same as morale, this is still an important piece of research as Miller (1981) points out; school climate is directly related to teacher morale.

It's worth noting that the limited research on the topic of leadership and teacher morale focused on the principal as the leader, and not the superintendent. However, the characteristics of a successful leader would be present in both a principal and a superintendent and therefore research pertaining to the relationship between principal's leadership behaviors and teacher morale is valid within this examination.

School District Change and Teacher Morale

The recent implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) in New York State has presented a

change in the way school systems operate and a challenge to the leadership of school districts to implement these changes. A system leader's ability to move their organization through the complex changes of recent years while accounting for the human emotions, including teacher morale associated with change is an added dimension to be examined that may have a relationship with teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership.

The pace of change in a school setting is always increasing or relentless as Fullan (2014) describes. While implementing any level of change in a school system can be challenging, implementing a second order change as Marzano, Walters & McNulty (2005) coined in a school system requires a system leader to assess the impact the change process will have on the various stakeholders in the school district in order to successfully implement the change. The body of work dedicated to helping school leaders improve their leadership skills by focusing on the behavior of human beings and how to utilize human behavior to have a successful change implementation and impact will be examined next.

As Shein (2010) describes, change creates learning anxiety. Leading people to leave what they know for something they don't know is not as simple as just giving the directive. A successful leader must understand the feelings of people and operate accordingly. Shein (2010) explains that change agents must draw on survival anxiety, the anxiety people experience when they think about what will happen if we don't do anything. According to Shein (2010), a successful change leader will make sure that the survival anxiety of the group is greater than the learning anxiety.

Much like Kotter & Cohen (2012) explain in *The Heart of Change*, in order to create a sense of urgency for the particular change effort, a system leader must show people something, which makes them feel something in order to create the urgency for the change. Similar to Kotter & Cohen (2012) & Shein (2010) Bridges (2009) describes change as situational, but transition as psychological. Bridges (2009) contends that in order to lead people gradually to accept the details of the new situation and the changes that come with it, a leader will bring them through a 3-phase transition process. The 3-phase transition process includes helping people to let go and recognize an ending before they can begin to accept the new idea. During the first phase of the transition process a leader will acknowledge the emotions that people are going through to limit resistance throughout the change process and listen empathetically and communicate openly about the change (Bridges, 2009).

Dufour & Marzano (2011) explained school improvement means people improvement and how the work of collaborative teams in the format of professional learning communities can impact student achievement. To successfully implement collaborative teams according to Dufour & Marzano (2011), leaders must provide the vision and the purpose as well as define the priorities, time and support vital to successful teams. A system leader should be tight about the work that must be done by teams, but loose in certain areas in order to allow teams to collaboratively define some of their structures.

The extent to which teachers felt part of the collaborative team that assisted in the roll out of recent educational changes in New York State is an important item to consider as transitions can be challenging (Bridges, 2009). The research supports that

implementing any large-scale change requires those implementing the change to tune into the human interactions and emotional states of the various stakeholders. Teacher morale is one area that system leaders should consider during any change implementation. Teachers who have struggled in the new daily order may also offer insight into how effective system leaders manage the human emotions and morale that naturally arise from their faculties. As such examining the viewpoint of the teachers in relation to how they perceive the effectiveness of their system leader is the final component of research to be examined.

Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Leadership

A superintendent leads and oversees all aspects of his/her school district in New York State. The superintendent ultimately makes the final decisions in conjunction with the districts' board of education and those decisions can have a sweeping impact across a school district. The superintendent plays many roles or wears many hats within a school district as Björk, Kowalski & Browne-Ferrigno (2014) and Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2008) describe. At any given time a superintendent may act as an organizational manager, a political leader, a communicator, a teacher or an applied social scientist (Björk et.al, 2014).

As an applied social scientist a superintendent is functioning in a way that school relationships along with school climate and culture are of primary focus (Björk et al. 2014). Like Bjork et al. (2014), Leithwood et al (2008) claim that understanding people and their motivations is a primary responsibility of a successful leader. Public education revolves around human interaction and how a superintendent navigates his/her many job

responsibilities while accounting for the impact his/her decisions may have on the stakeholders of the district is timely research.

Superintendents could perceive themselves as an effective leader, but what then does the research tell us about how the teachers perceive the effectiveness of the leader? It should be noted that the majority of the research on the topic of teachers' perceptions of effective leadership focused on the principal as the leader, and not the superintendent. However, the characteristics of a successful leader would be present in both a principal and a superintendent and therefore research pertaining to teachers' perceptions of principal leadership is pertinent to teachers' perceptions of system leadership. Additionally, superintendents have the responsibility to oversee principals and their day to day tasks. An important role of the superintendent is to ensure he/she enhances the leadership of the principals in order to improve school district practices (Bottoms & Fry, 2009). Theoretically, the superintendent will establish the parameters and tone for how a principal will interact within their individual buildings, which may have an impact on teachers' perceptions of the leader.

Research supports that the relationship between a principal and a teacher and specifically how a teacher perceives that relationship has an impact on teacher satisfaction (Blase & Blase, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi (2003) assert that teachers' perceptions of effective leaders are based upon how the teachers perceive the leader's ability to motivate staff, and also hold school district stakeholders accountable for positive and negative outcomes.

Goff, Goldrin & Bickman (2013) designed a study to determine to what extent a principal's perceptions of their own leadership corresponded with his/her faculty's

perceptions of the leadership. The researchers studied 76 principals and over 2,100 teachers, who all completed a parallel survey relative to Learning-Centered leadership (Goff et al., 2013). Goff et al. (2013) found large discrepancies in how a principal and his/her faculty perceived the effectiveness of the principal. Goff et al. (2013) concluded that such a distinct gap between principals' perceptions and teachers' perceptions suggest that teachers have information to share on school leadership that is very different than the perspective of a principal. The authors suggest principals should seek or have a method in place to receive structured feedback from teachers pertaining to the effectiveness of the principal (Goff et al., 2013).

Examining teachers' perceptions of an effective leader from a different angle than Goff et al. (2103), Blase & Blase (1999) used an open-ended survey to elicit responses from teachers relative to the teachers' perceptions of the traits of an effective principal. The researchers found that when a teacher viewed a principal as effective, it was because their interactions with the principal were focused on collaborative work around instruction and facilitated reflection on the part of the teacher and opportunities for professional growth (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Similarly, Lee & Nie, (2014) found that the quality of the interaction between the leader and the teacher had the largest impact on the teachers' perceptions of the leader. The focus of Lee & Nie's, (2014) research was the sense of empowerment a teacher felt and the impact the principals' leadership behaviors had on the teachers' sense of empowerment. The researchers found a positive correlation (r= .64) between teacher's perceptions of their leader's behavior and the teachers' sense of empowerment (Lee & Nie 2014). Lee & Nie (2014) stated that their research suggests the need for leaders to

keep a pulse on how teachers are feeling. Related to Lee & Nie (2014), Blase & Blase (1997) found that a teachers' sense of empowerment was heightened when a principal exhibited trust in teachers, practiced collaborative decision-making, listened to individual teacher feedback and provided support for teachers.

Summary

A review of the literature supports that leadership in a broad sense has been shown to have an impact on teacher morale and the level of job satisfaction teachers' experience. Additionally, Black (2001) determined that teacher attendance rates are higher among teachers with a higher sense of morale. However, there is very limited timely literature pertaining to job satisfaction and teacher morale and the impact morale has on teacher attendance when looking at teacher discretionary absences.

The gap in the literature also exists regarding the triangular relationship between system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance. This gap in the literature teamed with the researcher's quest to understand if teachers who perceive effective system leadership in their schools have a higher sense of morale and if teachers with a higher sense of morale are less likely to be absent from their job duties for reasons other than school business are the basis for this research. Chapter Three will describe the methodology of this research study, including the procedures used to collect and analyze the data relative to the study's three research questions.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance in the Capital Region area of New York State. For this study an absence is defined as the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business. School business is defined as any professional or work related duty such as conference/workshop, Individual Education Program meetings, assessment scoring, field trips, etc., that would require a teacher to be out of his/her classroom.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the teachers' perceived sense of morale?
3. What is the relationship between perceived teacher moral and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

The hypothesis of this study was that teachers who perceive effective system leadership in their schools have a higher sense of morale and teachers with a higher sense of morale are less likely to be absent from their job duties for reasons other than school business.

Research Design

This quantitative study was in part a correlational design to explore the relationships between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance. "In correlational research designs, investigators use the correlation statistical test to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores "(Creswell (2012, p.338). The research was approved by the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning.

A survey instrument designed by the researcher was sent electronically to individual teachers in the Capital Region of New York State (Appendix A). "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" Creswell (2012, p.155). The researcher designed 46 survey questions reflecting the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC) in an attempt to determine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of district leadership (Table 1). The primary goal of the ISLLC Standards "is to articulate what effective leadership looks like in a transformed public education system" Council of Chief State School Officers (2014, p. 6).

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions of System Leadership Actions Based on the ISLLC Standards

ISLLC Standard	Survey Questions Based on Standard
Standard 1: Vision and Mission An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a child- centered vision of quality schooling that is shared by all members of the school community.	The superintendent is goal orientated. (Q 18a) The superintendent promotes a shared vision and mission. (Q 18b) The superintendent regularly communicates a shared vision and mission. (Q 18c) The superintendent reinforces a shared vision and mission. (Q 18d) The superintendent uses data to assess organizational effectiveness. (Q 18e) The superintendent uses data to identify goals for the district. (Q 18f)
Standard 2: Instructional Capacity An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by enhancing instructional capacity.	The superintendent ensures resources (can include physical resources, monetary resources and human resources (people)) are available. (Q 19a) The superintendent ensures that teachers are trained to utilize the resources effectively and efficiently. (Q 19b) The superintendent limits the amount of distractions that impact instructional time. (Q 19c) The superintendent uses valid and research based systems to evaluate staff. (Q 19d) The superintendent provides emotional support to staff. (Q19e)
Standard 3: Instruction An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting instruction that maximizes student learning.	The superintendent has established a culture of achievement in the school district. (Q 20a) The superintendent is regularly involved with instruction. (Q 20b) The superintendent provides me with specific instructional feedback. (Q 20c) The superintendent is an effective instructional leader. (Q 20d)
Standard 4: Curriculum and Assessment An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting robust and meaningful curricula and assessment programs.	The superintendent maximizes opportunity for students to learn. (Q 21a) The superintendent promotes and ensures students are given authentic learning experiences. (Q 21b) The superintendent ensures an instructional program of rigor. (Q 21c) The superintendent promotes the use of teaching and learning experiences that enhance the enjoyment of learning. (Q 21d)
Standard 5: Community of Care for Students An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting the development of an inclusive school climate characterized by supportive relationships and a personalized culture of care.	The superintendent promotes and ensures all students are valued, respected and in a secure, healthy environment. (Q 22a) The superintendent is interested and responsive to the needs of all students. (Q 22b) The superintendent ensures that each student is known, valued and respected (Q 22c) The superintendent ensures that each student has the appropriate support systems in place. (Q 22d)

Standard 6: Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting professionally normed communities for teachers and other professional staff.	The superintendent offers regular and meaningful professional development opportunities. (Q 23a) The superintendent is open to input from teachers. (Q 23b) The superintendent sustains a professional community where I feel supported. (Q 23c) The superintendent sustains a professional community of shared goals. (Q 23d) I trust the superintendent. (Q 23e)
Standard 7: Communities of Engagement for Families An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting communities of engagement for families and other stakeholders.	The superintendent is an advocate for the school and the students to the various stakeholders in the community. (Q 24a) The superintendent exhibits a sense of approachability and maintains positive relationships with families and caregivers. (Q 24b) The superintendent advocates for policies and resources for the community. (Q 24c)
Standard 8: Operations and Management An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring effective and efficient management of the school or district to promote student social and academic learning.	The superintendent is an effective communicator. (Q 25a) The superintendent has an established set of procedures to allow for the flow of work to be standardized. (Q 25b) The superintendent is knowledgeable of what is going on in the school, feelings, and emotions, in day-to-day activities. (Q 25c) The superintendent has strong operational skills, such as managing facilities, schedules, and budgets. (Q 25d)
Standard 9: Ethical Principles and Professional Norms An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by adhering to ethical principles and professional norms.	The superintendent is visible and available throughout the school. (Q 26a) The superintendent acts in a transparent manner. (Q 26b) The superintendent works to create productive relationships with all school community members. (Q 26c) The superintendent works to ensure students are placed at the heart of all district practices. (Q 26d)
Standard 10: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school.	The superintendent promotes understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. (Q 27a) The superintendent ensures equity for all stakeholders. (Q 27b) The superintendent promotes a culturally responsive organization. (Q 27c) The superintendent is an advocate for all families in the school community. (Q 27d)
Standard 11: Continuous School Improvement An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of a culture of continuous school improvement.	The superintendent promotes a culture of continuous school improvement. (Q 28a) The superintendent uses a systematic approach to change. (Q 28b) The superintendent displays positive, inspirational emotion especially when confronted with meaningful change. (Q 28c)

Population and Sampling Procedures

Geographically, The Capital Region of New York State encompasses the eight counties proximate to Albany, NY and includes Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington counties (Empire State Development, 2015). Two BOCES, the Capital Region BOCES, and WSWHE BOCES serve the majority of the school districts in the Capital Region. The researcher chose the Capital Region of New York State for its diversity among school districts including rural, suburban, and urban school districts and the various different student populations they serve.

The population for this study was all Pre-K- 12 teachers who use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES in New York State and met the following constraints:

1. The teacher must have worked in the same school district during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school to ensure all respondents had at least two years of service in the same school district.
2. The teacher must not be assigned to two or more school districts regardless if he/she was employed by them in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.
3. The teacher must not have been absent greater than 10 consecutive days for any reasons other than school business in either 2013-2014 or 2014-2015.

In sum, as this study examines the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of system leadership, teacher morale and attendance, a teacher in a position that is shared between two or more school districts was omitted from the population as

he/she may have different perceptions of the leadership in two different systems. In turn, respondents with a consecutive absence of greater than 10 days for any reason other than school business indicates that some type of additional personal condition or constraint (medical, jury duty, caring for an ill family member, etc.) may have prevented the teacher from being at work beyond any perception of leadership or morale, and thus was also omitted from the population.

Operationally, the researcher requested a list of all teacher e-mails from the administrator of the two substitute teacher registry services operated by Capital Region BOCES and WSWHE BOCES respectively, as teacher e-mail addresses are public domain. The Capital Region and WSWHE BOCES Teacher Registry services provided lists of 2,930 & 3,263 teacher e-mail addresses respectively. A total of 6,193 teachers in the Capital Region of New York State were e-mailed an electronic survey through the researcher's Survey Monkey account; 211 e-mail addresses bounced back via Survey Monkey, thus a total of 5, 982 were included in the final sample.

A total of 1,281 teachers responded to the survey and a total of 321 respondents did not meet the constraints of the sample and were omitted: 150 respondents did not work in the same school district during the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years, 62 worked in a position shared between two or more school districts and 109 had an absence greater than 10 consecutive days for any reasons other than school business in either school year. These 321 respondents who were omitted from the sample were thanked for their time and were not asked any further questions. The final sample (n= 960); a 16.05% response rate was all participants who met the survey conditions and responded to the survey.

Instrumentation

The researcher self-designed the survey instrument for the purpose of this study (Appendix A). A survey instrument can identify opinions and/or perceptions of individuals (Creswell, 2012). The survey was approved by the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to being used. The survey asked participants demographic questions regarding gender, age, and years of experience as a teacher in order to create a profile of the sample. Participants were asked to self-report the number of days they were absent in the 2013-2014 and then the 2014-2015 school years for reasons other than school business.

Participants were also asked questions regarding their morale and their perceptions of the district leaders influence on teacher morale. Morale for the purposes of this study is identified as a teachers' attitude towards working conditions, organizational policies and relationships with colleagues and administration. "Morale is a function of the interaction of an individual's needs and an organization's practices" Reyes & Imber (1992, p. 293).

Finally, participants were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the system level leader. The researcher designed 46 survey questions reflecting the ISLLC Standards in an attempt to determine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of district leadership (Table 1). The survey questions regarding system leadership were answered on a four-point Likert Scale: 4 (Strongly Agree), 3 (Agree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). A Likert Scale was used as the intervals are notionally equal (Creswell, 2012).

The survey invitation (Appendix B) introduced the study to the participants and informed them of the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. The survey invitation informed participants the survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Participants had the ability to exit the survey at any point should they choose to no longer participate.

The survey instrument did not ask participants to self- identify the school district where they work to ensure anonymity. Survey Monkey settings were fixed to not collect IP addresses of respondents to further ensure anonymity. The same survey instrument was e-mailed to all participants to ensure reliability of responses. In an effort to ensure that the survey questions were constructed in a way that was clear and responses were reliable, the survey was pre-tested on teachers who work in local school districts outside of the Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES region. Survey responses were kept anonymous through Survey Monkey and then transferred confidentially by the researcher to the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences ® (SPSS) V. 23 software.

Data Collection

An electronic survey was e-mailed directly to the population identified through Survey Monkey on February 5, 2016. The survey design began with logic questions to omit respondents who did not work in the same school district during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, or who work in a position shared between two or more school districts or who have had an absence greater than 10 consecutive days for any reasons other than school business in either school year. The participants were asked two questions to self-report work absences for reasons other than school business, seven

demographic questions, and four questions regarding their morale and the relationship between their morale and their self-reported absences. Finally the participants were asked 46 questions regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the system level leader.

The researcher e-mailed the identified participants through the researcher's Survey Monkey account. The e-mail introduced the study and provided the link to Survey Monkey for survey completion. The e-mails were sent once on February 5, 2016 and then again February 22, 2016, February 29, 2016, March 7, 2016 and March 14, 2016 to participants who had not completed the survey (Appendix C). Data collection ended on March 24, 2016. The researcher's account in Survey Monkey was password protected and only accessible by the researcher. The results of the survey were kept on the researcher's personal password protected laptop. No individually identifiable data was collected, as respondent's results were anonymous and kept confidential. All responses collected were destroyed at the completion of this research study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey participants was exported from Survey Monkey to the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences ® (SPSS) V. 23 software for statistical analysis. The data was first analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand the parameters of the data set. Descriptive statistics procedures include organizing, charting and summarizing the data (Vogt, 2011). Frequency distributions were performed for each of the demographic questions and the questions regarding teacher attendance and perceived morale. The data was then analyzed using Spearman's rho to

determine the relationships between variables with regard to statistical and substantive significance as related to each of the three research questions. Spearman's rho was used to answer each research question as the variables were reported as ordinal data (Elliott & Woodward, 2007).

Researcher Bias

A bias is any element during the research progression that yields an error in the research findings and hence should be planned for and avoided in all aspects of the research (Vogt, 2011). The researcher is currently an employee of one of the BOCES support services unit. That being said, the researcher remained neutral and without bias throughout data collection and analysis so that any perceptions the researcher may have regarding why teachers are absent from work for reasons other than school business did not impede this research. The researcher remained neutral by designing the survey instrument without bias, specifically utilizing the ISSLC standards to serve as the focus of obtaining teachers' perceptions of effective system leaders.

Reliability and Validity

The survey instrument was designed on the research based ISLLC Standards to ensure validity of responses. "Validity requires, first, that the questions measure the dimension or construct of interest and, second that respondents interpret the questions as intended." (Blair, Czaja & Blair, 2013, p. 257). In an effort to ensure that the survey questions are constructed in a way that is clear and responses are reliable, the survey was pilot tested on teachers who work in local school districts outside of the Capital Region

area of New York. Pilot participants (n=21) indicated that the questions were clear, understandable and did not need revision for proper interpretation. As indicated in Table 2, the survey questions demonstrated internal consistency in measuring each of the ISLLC standards by achieving Cronbach Alpha Coefficients ranging from .871 to .932, well above the generally accepted level of .70. A Cronbach's Alpha rating between .70 and .95 indicates a strong level of reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Survey Question Sets Based on the ISLLC Standards

ISLLC Standard	Number of Survey Questions	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Standard 1: Vision and Mission	6	.913
Standard 2: Instructional Capacity	5	.875
Standard 3: Instruction	4	.884
Standard 4: Curriculum and Assessment	4	.926
Standard 5: Community of Care for Students	4	.924
Standard 6: Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff	5	.927
Standard 7: Communities of Engagement for Families	3	.882
Standard 8: Operations and Management	4	.871
Standard 9: Ethical Principles and Professional Norms	4	.892
Standard 10: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	4	.932
Standard 11: Continuous School Improvement	3	.884

The same survey instrument was e-mailed to all participants to ensure reliability of responses. The survey instrument did not ask participants to self- identify the school district where they work to maintain anonymity. Demographic type questions were limited in an effort to keep participant concerns of being easily identifiable by the

researcher to a minimum. Survey responses were kept confidential through Survey Monkey and then transferred confidentially by the researcher to the SPSS software.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology the researcher used to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance in the Capital Region area of New York State. This quantitative study surveyed teachers in the Capital Region of New York State. The researcher designed a survey instrument to collect teachers' self-reported absence information; teachers' perceived feelings of morale and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the system leader. Statistical analyses was completed to examine the relationships between system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance. Chapter four will provide a detailed statistical analysis and the findings relative to each research question.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

Introduction

In the 2012-2013 school year, public school districts in New York State simultaneously implemented two critical policies that had a significant influence on teacher practice in the classroom; the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Annual Professional Performance Review of teachers (APPR). As a result, these large-scale changes may or may not have had an impact on how teachers feel about their work, their school environment, and the leaders who were ultimately responsible for implementing these policy changes (Fullan, 2007). After three years of implementation it is both timely and important to examine what, if any, impact these recent policy changes have had on teachers with regard to their perceptions of system level leadership, morale, and motivation to attend work.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale, and teacher attendance in the Capital Region area of New York State.

An electronic survey instrument designed by the researcher was sent electronically to individual teachers who use a substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or Washington–Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex (WSWHE) BOCES. The survey asked participants' demographic questions regarding gender, age, and years of experience as a teacher in order to create a profile of the sample. Participants were asked to self-report the number of days they were absent in the 2013-2014 and then the 2014-2015 school years for reasons other than school business. Participants were also asked questions regarding their morale and perceptions of a system leader's impact on teacher morale. Finally, participants were asked 46 questions in an

attempt to determine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their system leader, the superintendent of the school district.

Chapter Four analyzes the collected survey data and addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and teachers' perceived sense of morale?
3. What is the relationship between perceived teacher moral and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

Hypothesis:

The null hypotheses are:

1. $H_{O:}$ There is no significant relationship ($p <. 05$) between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and teacher absences for reasons other than school business.
2. $H_{O:}$ There is no significant relationship ($p <. 05$) between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the teachers' perceived sense of morale.
3. $H_{O:}$ There is no significant relationship ($p < .05$) between perceived teacher morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business.

Descriptive Analysis of the Sample

The population of this study was all teachers who use a substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex (WSWHE) BOCES in New York State. A total of 5,982 eligible respondents received an invitation to participate in this study, of which 1,281 completed the survey instrument. After accounting for respondent errors that violated survey parameters in determining eligibility for inclusion in the sample, 960 respondents were ultimately included in the sample; a 16.05% response rate. Not all respondents answered every question and 272 (21.2% of the response rate) respondents did not fully complete the instrument. Therefore, the number of respondents varies with regard to the analysis for each research question.

Table 3 shows the reported demographic information of the individual respondent's gender. As indicated in the table, nearly three out of four respondents were female 71% (n=604) and 29% (n=247) were male. The researcher is unable to identify the similarities or differences between the overall population and the respondents relative to gender as there currently is not a data set that identifies the gender of public school teachers who use a substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region or WSWHE BOCES.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Gender

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Gender	851		
Male		247	29%
Female		604	71%

Table 4 shows the reported age range of respondents (n = 851). The largest age group (21%) represented in the sample of respondents was 46-50 years old. The age distribution of respondents has a slight negative skew as two-thirds (67.9%) of respondents (n=851) were age 41 or older, while 25.2% (n= 214) were age 31-40 and 6.9% (n= 59) of the respondents were 30 or younger.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Age

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Age	851		
23-30		59	6.9%
31-35		89	10.5%
36-40		125	14.7%
41-45		161	18.9%
46-50		177	20.8%
51-55		141	16.6%
56+		99	11.6

Table 5 shows the respondents' reported average number of years of teaching experience. The majority (58.6%) of the respondents (n= 498) have 16 or more years of teaching experience; while 22.6% (n= 192) have 11-15 years of experience, 13.3% (n= 113) have 6-10 years of experience and 5.5% (n= 47) have 0-5 years of teaching experience. Given the composition shown in Table 4 with respect to respondents' average age it is congruent with the fact that respondents reported having 16 or more years of teaching experience.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Years of Teaching Experience

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Years of teaching experience	850		
0-5		47	5.5%
6-10		113	13.3%
11-15		192	22.6%
16-20		204	24%
21-25		124	14.6%
25+		170	20%

Table 6 shows the instructional level (elementary, middle school, high school) where respondents reported they primarily teach. The majority (41.1%) of the respondents (n=348) work at the high school level, while 35.1% (n= 297) work at the elementary school level and 23.8% (n=202) work at the middle school level. Respondents are equally divided across school level buildings and represent a fair cross-section of the K-12 population of teachers.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Where Respondent's Teach

Variable	N	Frequency	%
School Level	847		
Elementary School		297	35.1%
Middle School		202	23.8%
High School		348	41.1%

Table 7 shows the geographic location of the school district where respondents reported they teach. Nearly half (47.7%) of the respondents (n=406) classified the school district where they work as suburban, while 40.3% (n= 343) reported working in a rural school district and 12% (n=103) reported working in an urban school district. The school districts that use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES are classified as 10% urban, 39% suburban and 50% rural. Given the complexion of the school districts that use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES in New York State the sample is representative of the population.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's School Location Demographics

Variable	N	Frequency	%
School Location	852		
Urban		103	12%
Suburban		406	47.7%
Rural		343	40.3%

Table 8 (n=836) shows the reported student enrollment numbers for the school districts where respondents teach. Many (61.5%, n= 514) of the respondents reported that student enrollment in the school district where they work is between 0-2,500 students, while about a quarter of respondents (26%, n= 218) reported student enrollment between 2,501- 5,000 students. Fewer respondents (12.5%, n=104) reported working in larger school districts where student enrollment is 5,000 or more students. The school districts that use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES have student enrollment numbers of 67% between 0-2,500 students, 26% between 2,501-5,000 students and 7% of 5,000 or more students (New York State Education Department, 2016). Again, given the complexion of the school districts that use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES, the sample is representative of the population.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's School District Student Enrollment Demographics

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Enrollment	836		
0-1,000		248	29.7%
1,001-2,500		266	31.8%
2,501-3,500		124	14.8%
3,501-5,000		94	11.2%
5,001-7,500		59	7.1%
7,500+		45	5.4%

Table 9 shows the reported percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch in the school district where respondents teach. A quarter of the respondents (26.4%, n=211) reported 50% or more of the students in their school district were receiving free or reduced lunch. Less than 10% of the respondents (n= 75) reported a 0-10% free or reduced lunch student population. Approximately 40% of all students in the school districts who use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES received free or reduced lunch in the 2014-2015 school year, but individual district percentages ranged from 11% to 50% + (New York State Education Department, 2016). Therefore, the sample again is representative of the population.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's School District Percentage of Students on Free/Reduced Lunch

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Free/Reduced Lunch Student %'s	800		
0-10%		75	9.4%
11-20%		160	20%
21-30%		153	19.1%
31-40%		107	13.4%
41-50%		94	11.8
50%+		211	26.4

Table 10 shows the reported percentage of students with disabilities in the school district where respondents teach. Many of the respondents (59.9%, n=460) reported between 6-15% of the students in their school district were classified as students with

disabilities. While the smallest number of respondents (4.9%, n= 38) reported a 0-5% classification rate. On average approximately 14% of all students in the school districts who use the substitute teacher registry service through Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES were classified as students with disabilities in the 2014-2015 school year. (New York State Education Department, 2016). The respondents self-reported this information and respondents may not be cognizant of the percentage population of students with disabilities in the school district.

Table 10

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's School District Percentage of Students with Disabilities

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Students with Disabilities %'s	768		
0-5%		38	4.9%
6-10%		229	29.8%
11-15%		231	30.1
15-20%		162	21.1%
20%+		108	14.1%

Respondents were asked to self-report the number of days they were absent in the 2013-2014 (Table 11) and then the 2014-2015 (Table 12) school years for reasons other than school business. School Business is considered any professional or work related duty such as conference/workshop, Individual Education Program meetings, assessment scoring, field trips, etc., that would require a teacher to be out of his/her classroom (New

York State Education Department, Higher Education Committee & P-12 Education Committee, 2015).

In the 2013-2014 school year, respondents (n= 888) reported that they were absent from work for reasons other than school business for a cumulative total of 3,782.5 days. The mean number of days respondents (n= 888) reported being absent from work for reasons other than school business was 4.36 days and the median number of days was 4. The mode number of days respondents reported being absent from work for reason other than school business was 5. At both tails of the distribution (6.75%, n = 61) of respondents reported being absent 10 or more days for reasons other than school business. While 13.1 % (n= 116) of respondents reported being absent one or less days for reasons other than school business.

Table 11

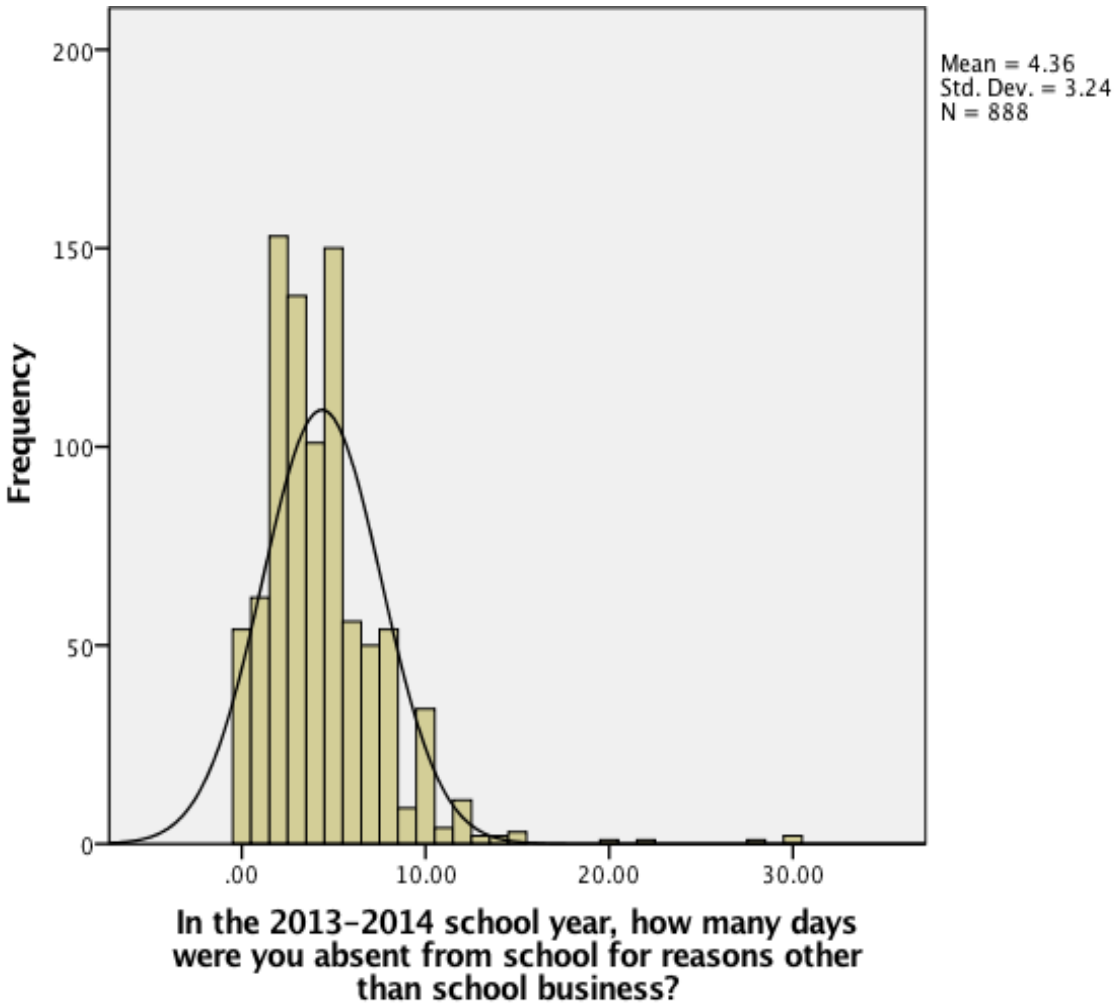
Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Self-Reported Attendance in the 2013-2014 school year

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Number of Days Absent	888		
0		54	6.1%
.5		1	.1%
1		61	6.9%
1.5		3	.3%
2		150	16.9%
2.5		2	.2%
3		136	15.3%
3.5		1	.1%
4		100	11.3%
4.5		4	.5%
5		146	16.4%
5.5		1	.1%
6		55	6.2%
7		50	5.6%
7.5		1	.1%
8		53	6%
9		9	1%
10		34	3.8%
11		4	.5%
11.5		1	.1%
12		10	1.1%
12.5		1	.1%
13		1	.1%
14		2	.2%
15		3	.3%
20		1	.1%
22		1	.1%
28		1	.1%
30		2	.2%

Figure 1 shows the range of days (between 0-30) respondents were absent from work for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 school year. Figure 1 also shows the slight positive skewness (2.336) and the positive kurtosis (12.708) of the distribution. This further illustrates that many respondents reported they were absent from work 5 days or less for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 school year. 43.8% of respondents (n=389) fell within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

Figure 1

Histogram of Respondent's Self-Reported Attendance in the 2013-2014 school year



In the 2014-2015 school year, respondents (n= 888) reported that they were absent from work for reasons other than school business for a cumulative of 4,188 days. The mean number of days respondents reported they were absent for reasons other than school business was 4.7 days and the median number of days was 4. The mode number of days respondents reported being absent for reasons other than school business was 5. At both tails of the distribution (9.3%, n =84) respondents reported being absent 10 or more days for reasons other than school business. While 12.3 % (n= 109) of respondents reported being absent 1 or less days for reasons other than school business.

Table 12

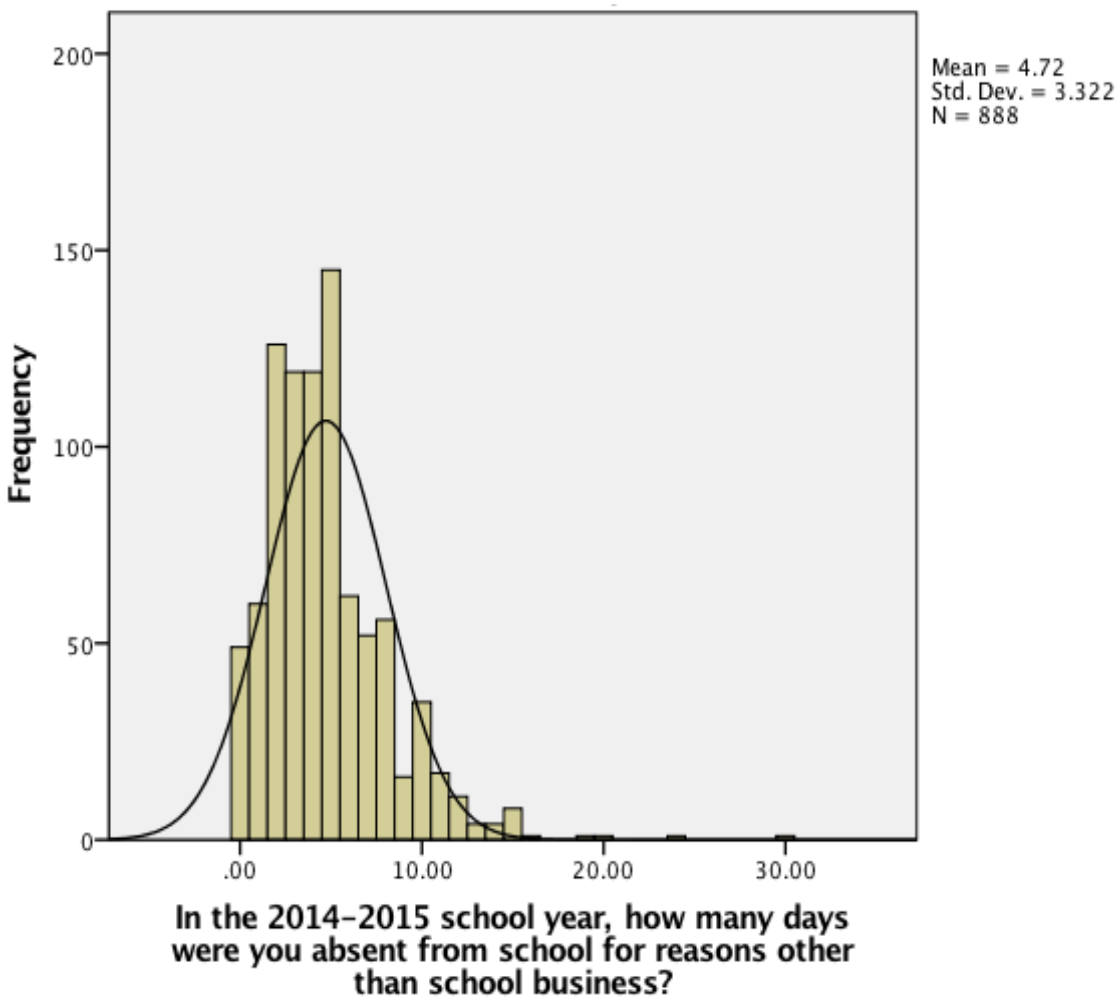
Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Self-Reported Attendance in the 2014-2015 school year

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Number of Days Absent	888		
0		49	5.5%
1		60	6.8%
1.5		7	.8%
2		119	13.4%
2.5		3	.3%
3		116	13.1%
3.5		4	.5%
4		115	13%
4.5		3	.3%
5		142	16%
5.5		1	.1%
6		61	6.9%
6.5		6	.7%
7		46	5.2%
7.5		1	.1%
8		55	6.2%
8.5		3	.3%
9		13	1.5%
10		35	3.9%
10.5		2	.2%
11		15	1.7%
12		11	1.2%
12.5		2	.2%
13		2	.2%
14		4	.5%
15		8	.9%
16		1	.1%
19		1	.1%
20		1	.1%
24		1	.1%
30		1	.1%

Figure 2 shows the range of days (between 0-30) respondents were absent from work for reasons other than school business in the 2014-2015 school year. Figure 2 also shows the slight positive skewness (1.575) and the positive kurtosis (5.713) of the distribution. Again, this further illustrates that many respondents reported they were absent from work 5 days or less for reasons other than school business in the 2014-2015 school year. 40.3% of respondents (n=357) fell within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

Figure 2

Histogram of Respondent's Self-Reported Attendance in the 2014-2015 school year



Comparing respondents reported days absent from work for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 school year and 2014-2015 school year, respondents reported an increase of 405.5 days in the 2014-2015 school year. From 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, an increase of 2.55% of respondents reported being absent 10 or more days for reasons other than school business.

A Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the number of days teachers reported being absent for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. According to Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs (2003) if r =. 70 to .90 (-.70 to -.90) a high positive (negative) correlation exists. As shown in Table 13, there is a high positive correlation between the number of days teachers reported being absent for reasons other than school business in the 2013- 2014 and 2014-2015 school years, r= .694. This relationship suggests that respondents self-reported being absent from work for reasons other than school business approximately the same number of days in both the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years.

Table 13

Analysis of the Relationship between Teachers' Self-Reported Attendance Information for Reasons other than School Business in the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015

		In the 2014-2015 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?
In the 2013-2014 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?	Pearson Correlation	.694**
	N	888

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to determine respondent's current sense of morale, respondents were asked questions regarding their overall sense of morale, their perceptions of teacher morale district wide and their perceptions on whether or not a superintendent has an impact on their personal sense of morale and the teacher's morale district wide. Table 14 shows respondents perceptions regarding the overall morale of all teachers in their district. The majority of respondents (48.1%, n= 405) reported teacher morale in their district as average, while 34.9% (n= 293) reported the overall morale of all teachers as low or very low and 17% (n= 143) reported the overall morale as high or very high.

Table 14

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Perceptions of the Overall Morale of all Teachers in the District

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Morale of all teachers	841		
Very High		15	1.8%
High		128	15.2%
Average		405	48.1%
Low		231	27.5%
Very Low		62	7.4%

Table 15 shows respondents' self-reported sense of morale. The majority of respondents 39.7% (n= 334) reported his/her morale as high or very high, while (39.3%, n= 331) reported his/her morale as average, and 21% (n= 178) reported his/her morale as low or very low. Comparatively, 34.9% (n= 293) of respondents indicated they believed overall teacher morale in the district was low or very low. While 21% (n = 178) self-

reported his/her morale as low or very low. Similarly, 39.7% of respondents reported his/her personal sense of morale as high or very high, while 17% (n=143) of respondents reported they believed overall teacher morale in the district was high or very high.

Table 15

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Self-Reported Morale

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Personal Sense of Morale	843		
Very High		73	8.7%
High		261	31%
Average		331	39.3%
Low		141	16.7%
Very Low		37	4.3%

Almost all of the respondents (91.9%, n= 771) indicated they believed the superintendent has an impact on the overall morale of all teachers in the district. Only 8.1% (n= 68) of respondents indicated they do not believe the superintendent has an impact on the overall morale of all teachers in the district. However, when asked to indicate if they believed the superintendent has an impact on his/her own personal sense of morale, 77.2% (n= 648) responded yes, while 22.8% (n= 191) indicated the superintendent does not have an impact on their personal sense of morale. The information shown in Table 14 and Table 15 indicate that the majority of the respondents perceive the morale of all teachers in the district to be average, yet respondents are equally divided between Very High/High and Average when reporting their own personal sense of morale.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

The researcher designed 46 survey questions reflecting the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC) in an attempt to determine teachers' perceptions of district leadership (Table 1). The primary goal of the ISLLC Standards "is to articulate what effective leadership looks like in a transformed public education system" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014, p. 6). The questions on the survey instrument relative to the ISLLC standards were designed in attempt to understand if teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership in their schools have a relationship with teacher attendance and teacher morale.

In order to measure teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership as related to research questions one and two, the researcher created a Leadership Index. The Leadership Index was created in the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences ® (SPSS) V. 23 software and represents the average response of the variables associated within each ISLLC standard as previously shown in Table 1. The Leadership index created 11 new variables in SPSS with each new variable representing teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership per ISLLC standard. This allowed the researcher to represent each ISLLC standard as a single variable against another variable, in this instance teacher attendance.

A Spearman's Correlation Coefficient (Rho) was used to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system leadership relative to each ISLLC standard and teachers self-reported absence information. The researcher further used a

Spearman's Correlation Coefficient (Rho) to answer research questions two and three. According to Laerd Statistics (2013) a Spearman's Correlation Coefficient is used to measure the strength of the relationship between two variables when one variable is continuous and the other variable is ordinal. Teachers' perceptions of system level leadership was reported through a Likert Scale and therefore is an ordinal variable; while teachers self-reported their absence information numerically, presenting a continuous variable to measure.

Spearman's Correlation Coefficients (Rho) were reported relative to each of the three research questions. According to Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs (2003)

- If r = 90 to 1.00 (-.90 to –1.00) a very high positive (negative) correlation exists.
- If r =. 70 to .90 (-.70 to -.90) a high positive (negative) correlation exists.
- If r = .50 to .70 (-.50 to -.70) a moderate positive (negative) correlation exists.
- If r = .30 to .50 (-.30 to -.50) a low positive (negative) correlation exists.
- If r = .00 to .30 (.00 to -.30) little if any correlation exists.

Table 16 illustrates the Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership via each ISLLC standard and their self-reported absence numbers in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

Table 16

Analysis of the Relationship between Teachers' Perceptions of System Level Leadership and Days a Teacher is Absent for Reasons other than School Business

		ISLLC 1	ISLLC 2	ISLLC 3	ISLLC 4	ISLLC 5	ISLLC 6	ISLLC 7	ISLLC 8	ISLLC 9	ISLLC 10	ISLLC 11
In the 2013-2014 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?	Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient	.087*	.114**	.130**	.124**	.125**	.128**	.115**	.107**	.115**	.123**	.083*
	N	797	762	757	721	698	696	687	684	682	661	655
In the 2014-2015 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?	Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient	.075*	.100**	.097**	.103**	.105**	.119**	.105**	.104**	.106**	.122**	.091*
	N	797	762	757	721	698	696	687	684	682	661	655

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The null hypothesis for research question one is that there is no significant relationship (p<. 05) between teacher perceptions of district level leadership and teacher absences from school for reasons other than school business. Teachers' perceptions of

effective system leadership were measured per ISLLC standard. The purpose of each ISLLC standard related to district leader behavior is shown in Table 17 below.

Table 17

Key Practices of Effective System Leaders per ISLLC Standard

Standard 1: Vision and Mission
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a child- centered vision of quality schooling that is shared by all members of the school community.
Standard 2: Instructional Capacity
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by enhancing instructional capacity.
Standard 3: Instruction
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting instruction that maximizes student learning.
Standard 4: Curriculum and Assessment
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting robust and meaningful curricula and assessment programs.
Standard 5: Community of Care for Students
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting the development of an inclusive school climate characterized by supportive relationships and a personalized culture of care.
Standard 6: Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting professionally normed communities for teachers and other professional staff.
Standard 7: Communities of Engagement for Families
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting communities of engagement for families and other stakeholders.
Standard 8: Operations and Management
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring effective and efficient management of the school or district to promote student social and academic learning.
Standard 9: Ethical Principles and Professional Norms
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by adhering to ethical principles and professional norms.
Standard 10: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school.
Standard 11: Continuous School Improvement
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of a culture of continuous school improvement.

As seen in Table 16, teachers' perceptions of effective district leadership has a statistically significant relationship in each of the 11 ISLLC standards with the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business in both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The Rho correlation coefficient ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$) per ISLLC standard varies and there is also variation within each standard between the two school years. The Rho Correlation coefficients range from .083 to .130 in the 2013-2014 school year and .75 to .122 in the 2014-2015 school year.

In the 2013-2014 school year the highest Rho Correlation coefficient was found pertaining to ISLLC standard 3 regarding Instruction, $r = .130$. While in 2014-2015, the highest Rho Correlation coefficient was found in ISLLC standard 10 regarding Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, $r = .119$. With a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of effective district leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business in both the 2013-2014 and 2014- 2015 school years, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis for research question one.

While a statistically significant relationship exists between teacher perceptions' of district level leadership and teacher absences from school for reasons other than school business, a statistically significant relationship does not also indicate a relationship of practical significance. According to Matheson (2008) practical significance looks at whether the relationship found is of importance in a practical sense. Where statistical significance is about the accuracy of the measurement (Ellis, 2010); practical significance suggests that the results of the research will be of use to those in the field of study in terms of future policy and practice (Matheson, 2008).

With r = .130 or less across the 11 ISLLC standards in both the 201-2014 & 2014-2015 school years, the practical significance of the relationship is weak between each ISLLC standard and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business. As seen previously, Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs (2003) state that if r = .00 to .30 little if any correlation exists. Without a practically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis for research question one from a practical significance view. There is not a practically significant relationship between teacher perceptions of district level leadership and teacher absences from school for reasons other than school business.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the teachers' perceived sense of morale?

A Spearman's Correlation Coefficient (Rho) was used to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district leadership relative to each ISLLC standard and teachers' perceived sense of morale as seen in Table 18. Again, in order to measure teachers' perceptions of effective district leadership, the researcher created a leadership index that averaged the responses from the questions designed to measure each ISLLC standard into one variable. This allowed the researcher to measure questions pertaining to each ISLLC standard as one variable against another variable, in this instance teachers' perceived sense of morale.

Table 18

Analysis of the Relationship between Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership and Teachers' Perceived Sense of Morale

		ISLLC 1	ISLLC 2	ISLLC 3	ISLLC 4	ISLLC 5	ISLLC 6	ISLLC 7	ISLLC 8	ISLLC 9	ISLLC 10	ISLLC 11
How would you rate your personal sense of morale?	Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient	.087*	.299**	.402**	.400**	.389**	.460**	.361**	.400**	.394**	.391**	.405**
	N	796	761	756	720	697	695	686	683	681	660	654

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The null hypothesis for research question two is that there is no significant relationship ($p < .05$) between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the

teachers' perceived sense of morale. As seen in Table 18, teachers' perceptions of effective district leadership has a statistically significant relationship ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$) in each of the 11 ISLLC standards with teachers' perceived sense of morale. The statistically significant relationship at r= .400 or higher is found in 5 of the 11 ISLLC standards, while r= .361 or higher in 4 other ISLLC standards. The practical significance seen in individual ISLLC standards varies. Specifically Standard 6 regarding the Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff has a higher correlation with r =. 460 compared to ISLLC standard 1 regarding Vision and Mission with an r= .087. With a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of district leadership in each of the 11 ISLLC standards and teachers' perceived sense of morale, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis for research question two.

The correlation coefficients across the 11 ISLLC standards shown in Table 18 show a wider range and in some cases stronger association than those compared to Table 16. In Table 18 the correlation coefficients related to teachers' perceived sense of morale are mainly in the low positive correlation range. While in Table 16, the correlation coefficients related to the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business are mainly in the little to no correlation range as described by Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs (2003).

With r = .361 or higher across the 9 of the 11 ISLLC standards, the practical significance of the relationships between those 9 ISLLC standards and teachers' perceived sense of morale is weak, but practically significant. As seen previously, Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs (2003) state that if r = .00 to .30 little if any correlation exists and if r = .30 to .50, a low positive correlation exists. With a practically significant

relationship between teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership and teachers' perceived sense of morale, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis for research question two from a practical significance view. With the exception of Standards 1 & 2, there is a practically significant relationship between teacher perceptions of district level leadership and teachers' perceived sense of morale. The greatest practically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of district leadership and teachers' perceived sense of morale exists in Standard 6 regarding the Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff with r =.460.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between perceived teacher moral and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

A Spearman's Correlation Coefficient (Rho) was used to determine the relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and teachers self-reported absence information. Table 19 shows the Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

Table 19

Analysis of the Relationship between Teachers' Perceived Sense of Morale and Days a Teacher is Absent for Reasons other than School Business

		In the 2013-2014 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?	In the 2014-2015 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?
How would you rate your personal sense of morale?	Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient	.153*	.159**
	N	843	843

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The null hypothesis for research question three is that there is no significant relationship ($p < .05$) between perceived teacher morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business. As seen in Table 19, there is a statistically significant relationship ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$) between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other

than school business in both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, with r= .153 and r=.159, respectively. With a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis for research question three.

With r = .153 in 2013-2014 and r= .159 in 2014-2015, the practical significance of the relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business is weak. As seen previously, Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs (2003) state that if r = .00 to .30 little if any correlation exists. Without a practically significant relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis for research question three from a practical significance view. There is not a practically significant relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business.

Summary:

Teachers who use the substitute teacher registry service in Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES were invited to complete an electronic survey instrument designed by the researcher. The survey asked participants demographic questions and questions regarding their morale and perceptions of a district leader's impact on teacher morale. Participants were asked to self-report the number of days they were absent in the 2013-2014 and then the 2014-2015 school years for reasons other than school business.

Participants were also were asked 46 questions in an attempt to determine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their district leader. The data collected indicates that although there is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of a district leader and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business, the relationship does not appear to be of practical significance. The data also indicates there is a statistically significant, but not practically significant relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business. Finally, the data collected indicates there is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of a district leader and teachers' perceived sense of morale, with the relationship between 9 of the 11 ISLLC standards determined to have meaning from a practical perspective. Chapter five will provide a summary of findings from each research question. Recommendations for future educational policy and practice as well as recommendations for future study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In the 2012-2013 school year, public school districts in New York State simultaneously implemented two critical policies that had a significant influence on teacher practice in the classroom; the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Annual Professional Performance Review of teachers (APPR). After three years of implementation it was both timely and important to examine what if any impact these recent policy changes have had on teachers with regard to their perceptions' of system level leadership, morale, and motivation to attend work. This chapter summarizes the findings, discusses conclusions and makes recommendations for future policy and practice relative to this research study.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system level leadership, teacher morale, and teacher attendance in the Capital Region area of New York State. This study was guided by three research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the teachers' perceived sense of morale?
3. What is the relationship between perceived teacher moral and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

This quantitative study surveyed teachers who use a substitute teacher registry service through either Capital Region BOCES or the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton- Essex (WSWHE) BOCES. The researcher designed a survey instrument to collect teachers' self-reported absence information, teachers' perceived feelings of morale, and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the system leader. Statistical analyses were completed to examine the relationships between system level leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

Finding # 1: Teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant relationship with teacher attendance.

Respondents reported their perceptions of the effectiveness of their superintendent based on leadership actions or characteristics as described in the 2014 version of the ISLLC standards. Respondents' also self-reported the number of days they were absent for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant relationship with teacher attendance across the 11 ISLLC standards in each school year studied ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$).

However the relationship is not of practical significance across the 11 ISLLC standards. Meaning, while there is a statistically significant relationship between the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business and how a teacher feels about their superintendent, the correlation is very low across all 11 ISLLC standards. The Rho Correlation coefficients found range from .083 to .130 in the 2013-2014 school year and .75 to .122 in the 2014-2015 school year. In the 2013-2014 school year the highest Rho Correlation coefficient was found pertaining to ISLLC standard 3 regarding Instruction, r =.130. While in 2014-2015, the highest Rho Correlation coefficient was found in ISLLC standard 10 regarding Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, r =.119. The practical significance of whether teachers' perceptions of their superintendent have a relationship with the number of days they are absent for reasons other than school business was not found in this study.

Based on the low correlation found in this study it appears that teachers' perceptions of their superintendent has little to no impact on the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business. The gap in the literature pertaining to why teachers may be absent from work for reasons other than school business was a driving force of this research study. Batiste (2014) did not find a significant correlation between the average ratings of a principal and the number of days a teacher was absent from work.

Similarly, this quantitative study contributes to the limited research relative to why teachers are absent from work for reasons other than school business. This study found teachers' perceptions of their superintendent has little to no impact on the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business. Research in

the area of why teachers are absent for reasons other than school business is sparse. Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor (2009) speculate the possibility that policies specific to public education have contributed to the higher rate of absenteeism in teachers. In the realm of the education profession, the collective bargaining agreements that teachers work under make provisions for teachers to take days off from work with full benefits; a substitute teacher is called in to work as the teacher (Podgursky, 2003).

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of district level leadership and the teachers' perceived sense of morale?

Finding #2: Teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' perceived sense of morale.

Respondents self-reported their perceived sense of morale. For the purposes of this study, morale was identified as a teachers' attitude towards working conditions, organizational policies and relationships with colleagues and administration. "Morale is a function of the interaction of an individual's needs and an organization's practices" Reyes & Imber (1992, p. 293).

Teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' perceived sense of morale ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$). With the exception of ISLLC standards 1& 2, a practically significant relationship was found. The practical significance of whether teachers' perceptions of their superintendent have a relationship with teachers' perceived sense of morale was found in this study in 9 of the 11 ISLLC standards 9 $r = .361$ or higher). While the correlations found were low,

it appears that teachers' perceptions of their superintendent has some impact on teachers' perceived sense of morale with the exception of ISLLC standards 1& 2.

Within ISLLC Standard 6 regarding the Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff, the greatest practically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of district leadership and teachers' perceived sense of morale was found. Within standard 6 an "educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting professionally normed communities for teachers and other professional staff" (Council of Chief State School Officers 2014, p. 18). A Spearman's Correlation Coefficient of r=. 460 was found between teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their superintendent and their perceived sense of morale. A moderate correlation between these two variables indicates this finding is of the greatest practical significance to educational leaders. The findings of this study suggest that the actions and behavior characteristics of a superintendent have some impact on teachers' perceived sense of morale.

There is a gap in the literature identifying why teacher morale may be low and what the current indicators are when we discuss teacher morale and job satisfaction. This gap in the literature was a driving force of this research study. However, the researcher reviewed multiple studies that examined the relationship between teacher morale and leadership (Laird & Luetkemeyer, 1976; Garland, 1980; Bhella, 1982; Thomas, 1997; Drago-Severson, 2006; Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010). This quantitative study contributes to this body of research as this research suggests how a teacher perceives their superintendent has an impact on a teachers' perceived sense of morale. This is an

important finding educational leaders can reference when examining the morale of their teaching staff.

Specifically, educational leaders should foster a professional relationship with teachers where trust is established and continually at the forefront of the working relationship between school leaders and teachers. Additionally, school leaders should promote and sustain a professional community where teachers feel supported, are consulted for regular input and are offered regular and meaningful professional development opportunities. Adopting these practices is supported by Thomas (1997) who found that leaders who practice a collaborative model of leadership and provide teachers with ownership and increased responsibility have the greatest positive impact on teacher morale.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between perceived teacher moral and the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business?

Finding #3: There is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business.

Respondents' self-reported the number of days they were absent for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Respondents' self-reported being absent from work for reasons other than school business approximately the same number of days year to year. Respondents of this study reported being absent from school for reasons other than school business on average 4 days per school year. This is significant difference from previous dated research that indicates that teachers in

New York State on average were absent from work 9 days or 5% of the 1986-87 school year (Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Rees & Ehrenberg, 1991).

More recent national statistics indicate that public school teachers are absent on average 9-10 days per year (Miller, 2008). The National Council on Teacher Quality 2014 report titled *Roll call: The importance of teacher attendance*, reported the average public school teacher in the nation was absent 6% of the year; missing 11 days on average during the 2012-2013 school year (Joseph, Waymack & Zielaski, 2014). However, these studies did not look at separating the reasons why teachers are absent. It is plausible that that in addition to the average of 4 days for reasons other than school business that teachers are also absent from their classrooms for school business reasons an additional 7 days each school year.

The researcher found that there is a statistically significant relationship ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$) between teachers' perceived sense of morale and the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business, but not a practically significant relationship. Based on the very low correlations found ($r = .153$ and $r = .159$), this research suggests that teachers' perceived sense of morale has little to any impact on the number of days teachers reported being absent for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years.

These findings are contradictory to Black (2001), who determined that teacher attendance rates are higher among teachers with a higher sense of morale. However, the findings of this study are of importance to educational leaders. While this study did not find a practically significant relationship between teachers' perceived morale and teacher attendance, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality, "investing in a system

that keeps effective teachers in the classroom should be a priority for school leaders and policymakers. A key part of that effort is creating a school climate in which consistent teacher attendance is the norm." (p. 2).

Conclusions

Conclusion #1: How a teacher perceives the effectiveness of their superintendent and their own sense of morale does not appear to have a relationship with the number of days a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business. There are multiple reasons why a teacher may be absent including their own personal illness, and/or the illness of a family member. However, the impact of the average yearly teacher absences equates to students being taught by a substitute teacher for the equivalent of two-thirds of a school year over the course of their education, kindergarten to 12th grade (Miller, 2008). Students not receiving the same level of instruction for the entire length of the school year could suffer academically (Miller, Murnane & Willett, 2008). Reducing the time a teacher is out of the classroom should be a priority for school district leaders not only for instructional purposes, but also fiscal benefits to reduce the amount of money spent each year on substitute teachers.

Conclusion #2: While teachers' perceived sense of morale does not have a practically significant relationship with teacher attendance, teacher morale is still an extremely important aspect of an education system. As Black (2001) succinctly describes:

> Where teacher morale is high, students typically show high achievement…when teacher morale sinks, achievement drops and other problems come to the surface.

> Low teacher morale usually leads to indifference toward others; cynical attitudes toward students; little initiative when it comes to preparing lessons and other classroom activities; preoccupation with leaving teaching for a better job; increased use of sick leave; and bouts of depression. Discouraged teachers are a drain on a school system, but more important, teachers with unhealthy attitudes often are a symptom of an unhealthy school organization. (Black, 2001, p.40)

How teachers' perceive the effectiveness of their superintendent does have somewhat of an impact on teachers' perceived sense of morale. Therefore, system leaders should be actively engaged in the process of monitoring teacher morale. To improve morale, educational leaders must first have a baseline of how teachers perceive their own morale and should include teachers in the process of improving morale. To improve morale, school leaders should focus on building a school climate where teachers feel supported, respected and part of a collaborative professional community.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Teacher Attendance Recommendations

While a teachers' perception of their system leader may only be a small contributing factor to why a teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business, the self-reported attendance information from some respondents in this study indicate that teacher attendance is an issue that New York State policy makers and school district leaders should be closely examining. Given that some respondents reported being absent more than 10 days in each school year for reasons other than school business.

The New York State Education Department has charged public school districts with the task of reporting teacher attendance data for the 2015-2016 school year and will continue to collect this data each school year moving forward. This complete data set will show teacher absences for reasons other than school business across every school district in the state. The data set will be public and will be reported per individual teacher. The purpose of the regulation to collect teacher attendance data is to help school districts across the state in identifying the causes of teacher absenteeism and assist districts in developing strategies to confront teacher absenteeism (NYSED HE/P12, 2015).

It is important that the New York State Education department closely examine the data collected and begin reporting this data to school districts as soon as possible. With this data set, education stakeholders will soon know the average number of days teachers are absent for reasons other than school business across public schools in New York State. The New York State Education Department should make recommendations to the public school districts regarding a reasonable number of days per year a teacher could be absent for reasons other than school business.

Teachers, like all other professionals could potentially have days each school year where they are personally ill or have an ill child or family member that would prevent them from coming to work. The results of this study indicate on average teachers were absent 4 days for reasons other than school business in the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years. The New York State Education Department should consider setting a baseline number for the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school

business and then provide New York State public school districts with recommendations to assist teachers who are routinely absent more than the baseline.

Research indicates that teachers are absent more frequently when they work under contracts that provide more paid days for personal illness or personal leave and are absent less when they work under contracts that provide monetary incentives for exceptional attendance (Miller, 2008). School districts would benefit from reviewing teacher attendance information for reasons other than school business to determine if potential contract changes could have an impact on reducing the number of days teachers are absent for reasons other than school business.

Making changes in contracts relative to the allotment of days teachers are allowed to miss work with full benefits may require districts to provide a contractual benefit in a different form, for example an increase in contractual salaries to decrease the allotment of days the contract provides. Looking at the financial costs associated with paying a substitute teacher when a teacher is out of the classroom versus an additional salary benefit may be a beneficial consideration for school district leaders. Moreover, school district leaders should also consider more than just the financial costs of teacher absenteeism. The loss of instructional time for each day a teacher is absent from their classroom is an additional cost that impacts students first and foremost, but could also be a cost to the school district in general.

Students not receiving the same level of instruction for the entire length of the school year could suffer academically (Miller, Murnane & Willett, 2008). The cost to the students is the loss of instruction from year to year as students' progress through the school system. The cumulative impact of loss of instruction could add additional costs to

the district in terms of providing additional instructional supports for those students who may be struggling or have fell behind. School district leaders should examine all costs associated with the allotment of days teachers are allowed to miss work with full benefits when examining potential contract changes.

District leaders could also examine contract stipulations relative to monetary incentives for exceptional attendance. Each day a teacher is absent from their classroom, a substitute teacher is called in and paid a per diem daily rate. As an example, if substitute teachers are paid on average $100 per day and a school district employs 100 teachers and on average each teacher is absent from work for reasons other than school business for 4 days, the school district is spending approximately $40,000 per year on substitute expenditures. Districts should examine if adding the additional cost of providing monetary attendance enhancements to teachers with exceptional attendance would offset the expenditures associated with substitute teachers. As an example a teacher attendance recognition program, in a DeKalb County, Georgia school district was able to reduce staff absenteeism by roughly 7.6 days per staff member and a total of 3,916 fewer teacher absences, reducing their substitute costs by $156,000 in one school year Freeman & Grant (1987).

Teacher Morale Recommendations

Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their system leader has somewhat of an impact on teachers' perceived sense of morale and previous research has established the importance of examining teacher morale. The results of this research as well as

previous research (Laird & Luetkemeyer, 1976; Thomas, 1997; Kelly, 2005; Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010) suggest that system leaders would benefit from examining their own practices and the practices within the school district in order to improve or keep teacher morale high.

Specifically within ISLLC Standard 6: Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff, superintendents should offer regular and meaningful professional development opportunities; be open to input from teachers, sustain a professional community where teachers feel supported; sustain a professional community of shared goals and work to build trusting relationships with teachers.

Public school district leaders in New York State should consider examining the morale of their teaching staff and begin to take steps to improve teacher morale. To improve morale, educational leaders must first have a baseline of how teachers perceive their own morale and should include teachers in the process of improving morale. School leaders should focus on building a school climate where teachers feel supported and respected. Teachers who are struggling in the new era of change should be heard and their educational leaders should acknowledge their thoughts or opinions in order to build a climate of open communication. Teachers are arguably the single greatest resource of an educational setting. School district leaders should recognize the work that teachers do daily and support the needs of teachers.

In order to improve teacher morale, school district leaders should focus on the strengths of their schools, programs, teachers and students. Keeping the highlights of the excellent work that all stakeholders are doing at the forefront builds a school climate where teachers feel acknowledged and respected in their work. School district leaders

should work to inspire teachers not only to maintain the work they have been doing, but seamlessly prepare them to take on the next challenge in a school improvement initiative in order to improve or keep teacher morale high.

Recommendations for Future Research

The primary focus of this study was to look at the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the superintendent's leadership and teacher attendance and teacher morale. Several suggestions for future research stem from this study. First, the same quantitative study could be completed to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership and teacher attendance and teacher morale. Arguably, teachers have more direct daily contact with their principal than they do with the superintendent. By changing the focus of the study to examine principal leadership as opposed to superintendent leadership, a future researcher may be able to add to the current findings with regard to teachers' perceptions of leadership, teacher morale, and motivation to attend work.

Second, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, the New York State Education Department will have a complete data set relative to teacher absences for reasons other than school business across every school district in the state. The data set will be public and will be reported per individual teacher. There are many possibilities for future research once this new data set is available. The researcher would be very interested to look specifically at the data set from the school districts that utilize a substitute teacher registry service through either Capital Region BOCES or WSWHE BOCES to compare all teacher absences in the 2015-2016 school year to the self-reported

teacher absences in the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years collected from the anonymous participants of this study.

Third, a longitudinal study could be conducted to look at the trends in teacher absences from the start of the NYSED data collection over a three or five year period. The number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business is typically information shared only between the individual teacher and the employing school district. Now that the information will be public knowledge, a study to examine if the reporting of this information for public viewing has any impact on the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business could be completed. Potentially, this new searchable data set available on the NYSED website will impact the number of days a teacher is absent for reasons other than school business as teachers may be subjected to public scrutiny based on the number of days they are absent from work.

Once the full NYS data set is established, a fourth suggestion for a study would be to complete a follow up study of Ehrenberg et al. (1991). Ehrenberg et al. (1991) found that districts that had a higher allotment number of annual leave days contracted through a teacher collective bargaining agreement had a higher number of teachers absent annually. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) also found that districts that sponsor a sick leave bank provision average approximately one additional absent day per year, per teacher versus districts who do not offer a sick leave bank. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) final finding is that districts that offer a buy back or cash-in type of incentive to teachers upon retirement for their cumulated unused sick or personal leave days have a lower number of teachers absent annually.

Teacher collective bargaining agreements in New York State are also public documents available to view on a public website domain. For the fourth suggestion to complete follow up study to Ehrenberg et al. (1991), a researcher could collect the information relative to number of allotted days per contract, whether or not the district offers an incentive or buy back for unused days and if the district offers a sick leave bank. This district information could be examined against the teacher attendance data available for the 2015-2016 school year to see if there is any difference from the Ehrenberg et. al (1991) findings.

Summary

In the 2012-2013 school year, public school districts in New York State simultaneously implemented two critical policies that had a significant influence on teacher practice in the classroom; the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Annual Professional Performance Review of teachers (APPR). After three years of implementation the researcher felt it was both timely and important to examine what if any impact these recent policy changes have had on teachers with regard to their perceptions' of system level leadership, morale, and motivation to attend work.

The results of this study indicate teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant relationship with teacher attendance, however there is not a practical significance that could be examined by education policy makers and individual school districts. The results of this research did highlight the frequency of days some teachers in the population were absent from school for reasons other than school business. The New York State Education Department and individual school

districts should examine this information carefully and work to implement policies and procedures that keep teachers in the classroom.

Teachers' perceptions of effective system leadership have a statistically significant and practical significant relationship with teachers' perceived sense of morale. The results of this research suggest that system leaders would benefit from examining their own practices and the practices within the school district in order to improve or keep teacher morale high.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Examining the relationship between teachers' perceptions of system leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance in the Greater Capital Region of New York State.

* 1. Have you been employed in the same school district during both the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 school years?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

* 2. During the 2013-2014 or 2014-2015 school years did you travel between 2 or more school districts as part of your employment?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

For this study, an absence for **school business** is defined as any professional or work related duty such as conference/workshop, Individual Education Program meetings, assessment scoring, field trips, etc., that would require a teacher to be out of his/her classroom.

* 3. During the 2013-2014 or 2014-2015 school years were you absent from school for 10 or more consecutive days for any reasons other than school business?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

* 4. In the 2013-2014 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?

[ ]

* 5. In the 2014-2015 school year, how many days were you absent from school for reasons other than school business?

[ ]

6. Are you Male or Female?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

7. How old are you?

- ○ 0-22
- ○ 23-30
- ○ 31-35
- ○ 36-40
- ○ 41-45
- ○ 46-50
- ○ 51-55
- ○ 56+

8. How many years of total teaching experience do you have?

- ○ 0-5
- ○ 6-10
- ○ 11-15
- ○ 16-20
- ○ 21-25
- ○ 25+

9. Please indicate the school level where you primarily teach.

- ○ Elementary School
- ○ Middle School
- ○ High School

10. Do you consider your school district to be urban, suburban or rural?

- ○ Urban
- ○ Suburban
- ○ Rural

11. Please indicate approximately how many students are enrolled in your school district?

- ○ 0-1,000
- ○ 1,001-2,500
- ○ 2,501-3,500
- ○ 3,501-5,000
- ○ 5,001-7,500
- ○ 7,500+

12. Please indicate approximately what percentage of the student population in your district receives free or reduced lunch.

- ○ 0-10%
- ○ 11-20%
- ○ 21-30%
- ○ 31-40%
- ○ 41-50%
- ○ 50%+

13. Please indicate approximately what percentage of the student population in your district is classified as Students with Disabilities.

- ○ 0-5%
- ○ 6-10%
- ○ 11-15%
- ○ 15-20%
- ○ 20%+

For the purposes of this study, Morale is defined as a teacher's attitude towards working conditions, organizational policies and relationships with colleagues and administration. Morale is a function of the intersection of an individual's needs and an organization's practices.

14. How would you rate the overall morale of all teachers in your school district?

- ○ Very High
- ○ High
- ○ Average
- ○ Low
- ○ Very Low

15. How would you rate your personal sense of morale?

- ○ Very High
- ○ High
- ○ Average
- ○ Low
- ○ Very Low

16. Please indicate if you believe the superintendent has an impact on the overall morale of all teachers in the district?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

17. Please indicate if you believe the superintendent has an impact on your personal sense of morale?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

18. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent is goal orientated.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent promotes a shared vision and mission.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent regularly communicates a shared vision and mission.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent reinforces a shared vision and mission.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent uses data to assess organizational effectiveness.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent uses data to identify goals for the district.	○	○	○	○

19. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent ensures resources (can include physical resources, monetary resources, and human resources (people)) are available.				
The superintendent ensures that teachers are trained to utilize the resources effectively and efficiently.				
The superintendent limits the amount of distractions that impact instructional time.				
The superintendent uses valid and research based systems to evaluate staff.				
The superintendent provides emotional support to staff.				

20. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent has established a culture of achievement in the school district.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent is regularly involved with instruction.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent provides me with specific instructional feedback.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent is an effective instructional leader.	○	○	○	○

21. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent maximizes opportunity for students to learn.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent promotes and ensures students are given authentic learning experiences.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent ensures an instructional program of rigor.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent promotes the use of teaching and learning experiences that enhance the enjoyment of learning.	○	○	○	○

22. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent promotes and ensures all students are valued, respected and in a secure, healthy environment.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent is interested and responsive to the needs of all students.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent ensures that each student is known, valued and respected.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent ensures that each student has the appropriate support systems in place.	○	○	○	○

23. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent offers regular and meaningful professional development opportunities.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent is open to input from teachers.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent sustains a professional community where I feel supported.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent sustains a professional community of shared goals.	○	○	○	○
I trust the superintendent.	○	○	○	○

24. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent is an advocate for the school and the students to the various stakeholders in the community.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent exhibits a sense of approachability and maintains positive relationships with families and caregivers.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent advocates for policies and resources for the community.	○	○	○	○

25. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent is an effective communicator.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent has an established set of procedures to allow for the flow of work to be standardized.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent is knowledgeable of what is going on in the school, feelings, and emotions, in day-to-day activities.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent has strong operational skills, such as managing facilities, schedules, and budgets.	○	○	○	○

26. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent is visible and available throughout the school.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent acts in a transparent manner.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent works to create productive relationships with all school community members.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent works to ensure students are placed at the heart of all district practices.	○	○	○	○

27. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent promotes understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent ensures equity for all stakeholders.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent promotes a culturally responsive organization.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent is an advocate for all families in the school community.	○	○	○	○

28. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The superintendent promotes a culture of continuous school improvement.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent uses a systematic approach to change.	○	○	○	○
The superintendent displays positive, inspirational emotion especially when confronted with meaningful change.	○	○	○	○

Appendix B

Email to participants

To: [Email]

From: xxxxxx@sage.edu via surveymonkey.com

Subject: I'm conducting a survey and your input would be appreciated.

Dear Educator:

My name is Hillary Brewer and I am enrolled as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program through the Sage Colleges in Albany, New York. I am completing a quantitative research study to examine the relationships between teachers' perceptions of system leadership, teacher moral and teacher attendance in the Greater Capital Region of New York State and would like to invite you to complete an anonymous survey. The link to the survey through SurveyMonkey is at the end of this e-mail. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

SurveyMonkey will not collect IP addresses of survey respondents and as the researcher I will not have the ability to connect your survey responses to an e-mail address, therefore all responses will be collected anonymously. It is important for teachers to have the ability to share their perceptions of system leadership and the relationships leadership has with teacher morale and teacher attendance. Your participation will provide valuable information that will inform system leaders and other educators in the region. Data from this study will be analyzed and reported in aggregate form in my dissertation without identifying individual respondents.

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. When taking the survey, participants may skip questions, or can withdraw from participating in the survey at any time. Please click on the link below to begin the survey. Your completion of this survey indicates your consent that your anonymous responses may be used for the purposes of this research study.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please feel free to contact me via email: breweh@sage.edu

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Hillary Brewer

Begin Survey

Appendix C

Follow Up Email to Participants

To: [Email]

From: xxxxxx@sage.edu via surveymonkey.com

Subject: Reminder: Hillary Brewer is conducting a survey and your input would be appreciated.

Dear Educator:

My name is Hillary Brewer and I am enrolled as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program through the Sage Colleges in Albany, New York. I am completing a quantitative research study to examine the relationships between teachers' perceptions of system leadership, teacher morale and teacher attendance in the Greater Capital Region of New York State and would like to invite you to complete an anonymous survey. The link to the survey through SurveyMonkey is at the end of this e-mail. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

SurveyMonkey will not collect IP addresses of survey respondents and as the researcher I will not have the ability to connect your survey responses to an e-mail address, therefore all responses will be collected anonymously. It is important for teachers to have the ability to share their perceptions of system leadership and the relationships leadership has with teacher morale and teacher attendance. Your participation will provide valuable information that will inform system leaders and other educators in the region. Data from this study will be analyzed and reported in aggregate form in my dissertation without identifying individual respondents.

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If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please feel free to contact me via email: breweh@sage.edu

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Hillary Brewer

Begin Survey