



## The Relationship Between School Culture and the School Library Program: Four Case Studies

[Jody K. Howard](#), Associate Professor, Palmer School of Library and Information Science, Long Island University

### Abstract

*This research describes the results of a cross-case analysis of four individual case studies at schools having nationally recognized school library programs. The focus of the study is on the culture of the school as an organization and its effect on establishing an effective school library program. The purpose of the study was to identify cultural themes at each school. The approach to analysis is consistent with the tenets of naturalistic research and reflects the assumptions of qualitative research. Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, Senge's (1990) concepts of the learning organization, and Schein's (1992) theory of organizational culture provide the framework for this research. Common patterns found at each site include the presence of a collaborative culture, the collaborative leadership style of the principal, and high expectations for the students and the staff. Possible future research includes replicating this study using a larger number of schools to determine if the same patterns will surface. Additional research is necessary to further analyze the role of culture in organizations and its effect on establishing an effective school library program.*

### Introduction

In a suburban K–5 school, a librarian just finished explaining to a group of fifth graders how they should keep track of the sources they used while researching the subject of pioneers in the early days of the United States. She and the classroom teacher had been working with these students for two days in the library learning how to find this information and had discussed books and online resources. As the school librarian gave the students time to research, the teacher approached her and the two of them decided the teacher would keep half the students in the classroom the next day and send the students who still needed research time to the school library to work with the librarian.

This example is not an unusual occurrence in schools where the teachers and school librarians work together. In these schools, school librarians and teachers work hand in hand developing and implementing the information literacy and content curriculum so that each student has the opportunity to master the content and develop the critical thinking skills necessary to seek,

evaluate, synthesize, use, and create information and knowledge. However, at some schools equally well trained school librarians find it is next to impossible to establish a collaborative environment. In other words, even if a school librarian is committed to establishing a vibrant, dynamic school library program that supports the national standards, it is not always possible. So why are some school librarians successful in implementing an effective library program and others are not?

During the 2007 and 2008 school years, I worked with two school librarians on developing strategies for professional development in their respective schools. As we were concluding one of our meetings, one of the school librarians indicated that we would need to be aware of her school culture as we continued developing the lessons as the culture would have a direct impact on what she would be able to accomplish through this staff development. This incident is important because it acknowledges that context is a key dimension in school library activities and points specifically to the fact that school librarians are keenly aware of school culture as an important element of that context. This idea of school culture and the relationship to the school library program is a concept that is not often addressed in the professional library and information science (LIS) literature today.

To examine the relationship between school culture and the school library, I conducted four case studies in the spring of 2008 at four schools that have been recognized through a national award as having effective school library programs. The libraries at these schools have implemented programs that align with the national standards as presented by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) in *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (1998). The formula presented in this work describes the school librarian as having four roles: a teacher, an instructional partner, an information specialist, and a program administrator. The purpose of these roles is to provide a blueprint for school librarians, enabling them to establish effective library programs that help increase the achievement level of the students. Since I conducted this research, AASL has published *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for the School Library Media Programs* (2009), which continues to support these roles and identifies leadership as a fifth role.

LIS literature does examine the relationship of the school librarian to the effectiveness in delivering programs and services. A variety of researchers in the library field suggest that the librarian must be a leader in order to establish a quality program (Andronik 2003; Farmer 1995; Hartzell 2001; Lance and Loertscher 2005; Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell 2000; Woolls 2004). Other research indicates that the support of the principal is a key factor in creating an environment favorable to the development of a quality program (Hartzell 1994, 2001, 2003). Although the AASL formula for an effective library program suggests what the school librarian must do, it does not acknowledge or address contextual issues nor explore if and how forces outside the library will affect the implementation of a viable program. AASL's *Empowering Learners* (2009) discusses the need for developing an environment conducive to student achievement, but it does not cover how to implement change that will create this type of environment throughout the school. Nor has the relationship of the school culture and the role of the school librarian been addressed in a holistic way in school library research.

## Recent Research in School Librarianship

Research has been conducted in the LIS field linking the effectiveness of schools, including the increase in student achievement, with school libraries (Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell 2000; Todd and Kuhlthau 2005; Whelan 2004). Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell (2000) demonstrated the positive correlation between the role of the school librarian and the increase in student achievement. By 2005, their research had been replicated in more than a dozen states with five different researchers or research teams (Lance and Callison 2005). Each of these studies demonstrates the importance of school libraries and clarified the relationship between a strong library program, student learning, and an increase of test scores. These studies analyzed how the school libraries affected 2.6 million students in approximately 8,700 schools (Lance and Callison 2005). The studies built on the premise that having a school librarian assume an instructional role increased student achievement. *School Libraries Work* (Scholastic 2008) provides a synopsis of the nineteen states and one province that have produced similar studies with links between effective school libraries and student achievement.

Todd and Kuhlthau (2005) approached their research with a different focus and illustrated how school libraries and librarians have been instrumental in the success of students in 39 school libraries in Ohio affecting 13,000 students. Todd and Kuhlthau began from the vantage point of the students, ascertaining how the school library helped them succeed during high school. These studies focus on the school librarian as an integral part of the school, but they do not examine the culture of the school or the influences the existing school culture may have on implementing an effective school library program.

While school context has not been the direct focus of research in LIS, several studies have suggested its central importance. Kuhlthau (1993, 2004) worked extensively with students in developing an information search process (ISP), using process in conjunction with content. The Library Power Project (Zweizig and Hopkins 1999) worked with school libraries throughout the United States and arrived at conclusions that accounted for the context of the entire school, including the need to restructure the roles of teachers and the school librarian. Hartzell (1994, 2001, 2003) addresses nonlibrary factors affecting the school librarian's role, including the process of school improvement, the management style of the principal, the previous training of faculty members, and the attitudes of the community members.

## Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the culture of participating schools to determine if there were any practices that contribute to establishing an effective school library program.

The concept of culture has a variety of meanings. This study uses Peterson and Deal's (1998) definition. Working in the K–12 arena, Peterson and Deal define culture as “the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges” (28).

This research has one central question: which elements of the school culture make schools fertile ground for the establishment of an effective school library program?

In exploring this question, I collected data that addressed the existence of an organizational culture at each research site related to ongoing support for effective school library programs. In

addition to the above question, I asked myself the following to provide structure and focus for data collection through observations, interviews, and document artifacts:

- What artifacts, values, and assumptions are in place in schools that have successful school libraries?
- Are there artifacts, values, and assumptions found in the school community that can be identified as part of the culture of the school?
- How do the principal and the classroom teachers perceive the role of the school librarian?
- Is there a specific organizational structure in the school that assists the school librarian in setting up an effective program?
- What types of interactions occur between the school librarians and the administrators, the administrators and the teachers, and the school librarian and the classroom teachers?
- What information do these interactions provide concerning the type of culture present in the school?

In addressing these questions, this study identifies the patterns that are present at each site that describe the culture of each school and its relationship to the school library program.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Three different theories provided the foundations for this research: Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, Senge's (1990) concept of learning organizations, and Schein's (1992) process of identifying the different elements of culture in an organization. Giddens combines the concern for social structure and the concern for human agency in structuration theory. This duality of structure—humans and social norms—illustrates his concept of looking at the process of change in society. Humans develop social norms but by virtue of their interactions with each other change those norms. This change is brought about gradually as humans interact, collaborate, and solve problems. The once-established societal norms are altered through the interactions of the people who originally established these norms. Thus change occurs. Senge's work, *The Fifth Discipline*, discusses organizations and how each institution should become a learning organization. He identifies five disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, building a shared vision, team learning, and, most importantly, systems thinking. He likens an organization to a mirror. If the mirror is whole, it is functional and provides an accurate reflection. If the mirror is broken into many parts, then it is not functional and the reflection of the image is inaccurate. Someone observing specific departments in an organization may understand each department. However, it is not until the observer looks at the organization as a whole will he or she understand how the organization functions. Schein provides a way to analyze culture by identifying three different levels. The first level comprises the artifacts of an organization, the traditions and practices that are visible to the observer. The second level includes values that are concepts the group supports strongly and have implemented into their daily routines. Assumptions, the third level, are the deep beliefs that the members of an organization hold; these beliefs influence the actions of the members of the organization. Giddens', Senge's, and Schein's theories provide the conceptual framework for my research.

## Method

The purpose of this study was to conduct case studies at four schools that had been identified as having effective school library programs to determine if the schools shared any common themes

or elements. Yin (2003), Merriam (2001), and Stake (1995) provide guidelines for conducting a multiple-case study. Each entity in the case study must be analyzed as an individual unit, and then a cross-case analysis should be performed to find common themes. This project is designed as a qualitative study, is descriptive in nature, and will not provide statistical significance as to correlation and causality. I selected the four sites for the case studies by identifying the schools whose libraries had most recently been designated as aligning their programs with the AASL standards in *Information Power* (1998), the national standards in 2008 (see **Appendix A** for the demographics of each school). Working with the school librarians at each school, I arranged to visit each site for three days, arriving the night before the first day and staying an additional day to analyze the data I collected. To make certain that the vision of the school was the same as when they were award recipients, I had the school librarians verify that there had not been personnel changes in either the principal's position or the school librarian's position. In a school, the principal is the instructional leader, and the school librarian is an integral reason for the school's national recognition. To determine common themes that describe the culture of the schools, these two positions needed to be the same as when the award was received. During the course of the four case studies, I conducted forty-seven interviews, including two focus groups consisting of eight classroom teachers (see **Appendix B** for interview questions). These two focus groups were originally planned as separate interviews, but while I was at the school, the teachers were following an abbreviated schedule that did not lend itself to individual meetings. All interviews were taped with a digital tape recorder and transcribed at the end of each visit. During my visits, I observed the teachers, students, administrators, and other school personnel interacting with each other during the normal course of the day. I documented these observations through copious field notes that I transcribed and synthesized at the end of each day. To triangulate the data, I collected important documents from each school that illustrated the makeup and foundational structure of the school programs (see **Appendix C** for a list of these documents). At the conclusion of each visit, I analyzed the data using QSR's NVivo 7 and prepared individual case studies. Then I revisited the data from all four schools and prepared a cross-case analysis, identifying themes found at all four schools.

## Site Descriptions

### School A

School A is a suburban elementary school with 445 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Although the district is the wealthiest district in the area, School A is a Title 1 school receiving federal funds and has a 32 percent free and reduced lunch population. School A has 1 administrator, 27 teachers, 28 support staff, 1 full time school librarian, and 1.5 support staff. The school was built in 1966, but the district has consistently remodeled to keep the facility updated.

The interior of the school is very bright, clean, and colorful. Green-and-white-striped awnings are placed outside of each classroom and doorway entrance. In the support of literacy, many signs hang from the ceilings displaying various words, such as "respect," "responsibility," "curiosity," "common sense," "self-control," and "integrity." The expectations for the students' behavior are listed on plaques and placed strategically on the walls. For example, there are specific procedures for the restrooms, and these are posted outside of the restrooms at student eye level. The many bulletin boards display pictures of the students taken during specific events, and many examples of student work also are displayed on the bulletin boards. The screensavers

on all of the computers in the computer lab and in the library loop the phrases “Do the Right Thing” and “Treat People Right.” Baskets of books are placed next to benches and chairs in the hallways available for anyone who wishes to read while they are sitting on the benches. The “Information @ your library” sign surrounded by the various sources where the students can look for information was displayed in the library. The fourth-grade classroom has one board that displays classroom duties as “Responsibility, Organization, and Effort.” Another board is labeled as “Lifelong Guidance: Personal Best, Truth, Trust, Active Listening, and No Put Downs.” These are only a few of the visual cues that the staff provides for the students. The administrator and the staff work hard to provide a comfortable atmosphere for the students to learn as much as they can and to succeed academically and emotionally.

## School B

School B is a private college preparatory school for girls in grades 5–12 and has 625 students from 37 different zip codes. School B was founded in 1865 and began as a seminary institution for young ladies. The school has undergone many changes, and since the 1950s has dedicated its existence to the education of young women. The mission statement of the school found on the school’s website and displayed prominently on the campus is to educate the girls to “think critically, to lead confidently and to live honorably.”

Since School B is an independent school, it is not governed by some of the federal initiatives that affect public schools. There is a sense of accountability that is built into the curriculum, and the faculty provides activities for the students that will prepare them to become lifelong learners. In 2007 there were eighty-one graduates, including eight national merit finalists and eight commended scholars, and the graduates attended forty-four different colleges and universities, earning \$3 million in scholarships. The school’s website states that 100 percent of the graduating class attends college. This fact was verified during my interviews. The students score more than two hundred points above the national average on the SAT and are eligible for enrollment at some of the top universities and colleges in the country. The school sees itself as supporting the education of the whole person and emphasizes leadership abilities, a rigorous academic schedule, a state-recognized athletics program, and a dedication to service learning. The academic curriculum requires the students to complete four years of English; three years of social studies, math, foreign language, and science (including chemistry and physics); one year of fine arts; seven semesters of physical education; one semester of life skills; and four semesters of additional academic credits. With these requirements, 93 percent of the students take four years of both math and science.

School B has a middle school with 264 students in grades 5–8 and an upper school with 361 students in grades 9–12. There are eighty-three faculty members, seventy-five full-time, and the average teaching experience is 16.7 years. Fifty-eight faculty members have their master’s degrees, and ten have doctoral degrees. The school library staff consists of four endorsed librarians and six support staff. The school commits to having the normal class size of fifteen students with an eight-to-one student–teacher ratio.

Because it is an independent school, there is a dedication to working with the alumni to establish fundraising and gift-giving to develop the campus buildings and the curriculum. The library is a good example of this gift-giving. In 2003, one of the school’s alumni provided five million dollars to build a new library facility.

## School C

School C is made up of two small high schools that are serviced by one school library. School C is part of a magnet public school district that had its beginnings in the 1960s as a vocational school district. A magnet school is a school that is dedicated to a specific subject area with enrollment on a first come, first serve basis conducted through an application process. The school enrolls students with an interest in the school's subject area instead of providing services for students in a specific location. This district has evolved and now has four magnet high schools, each dedicated to a different area of study. School C has a science academy and a high school supporting the health professions. School C's reach is actually three entire counties servicing twenty-eight independent school districts and covering an area of 3,643 miles. Since there is open enrollment, the students as freshmen come from as many as seventy different middle schools. As a public school district, the students are provided with free bus service to attend school, but sometimes spend up to two hours travelling to and from school. The district has 49 percent of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

School C has four buildings on the campus: the administration building that houses the superintendent and the other administrators in the district, the library, the medical school, and the science academy. The library is the bridge between the two schools and is situated equal distance from each school. The library facility is 33,370 square feet and includes a 128-seat lecture hall, an e-training lab, video-editing rooms, two small conference rooms, and one classroom. It is available for the teachers, students, and community members to use for various activities. The lead librarian worked with the architect to design the facility and incorporated a circular design. The exterior walls facing the two schools are rounded, and the circulation desk, the patterns on the shelves, and some of the furniture continue with this theme. The lead librarian stated that this design was a conscious decision as learning is never ending and there are no limits on what students can do or learn. The library serves approximately fourteen-hundred students, seven hundred from each high school. The library staff has three professional librarians and five support staff. This staff provides services to both schools and supports and creates opportunities for students from both student bodies to interact.

The two high schools on the campus support different themes. The science academy presents a nationally recognized program focusing on the math and science career fields, including engineering, architecture, and computer science. The school partners with the national program Project Lead the Way, a preengineering program in which students receive college credit through high school beginning in their freshman year. During their senior year, each student must research a real-world problem, create a solution, and present this information to their classmates. The other high school is dedicated to training students for the medical profession. This national-award-winning school has a rigorous high school curriculum and provides hands-on clinical experience in hospitals, nursing homes, and pharmacies as well as doctors' and dentists' offices and veterinary clinics. During the four years of high school, many of the students earn medical certificates as pharmacy technicians, nursing assistants, and dental and x-ray technicians.

Each high school has its own administrative staff, including a principal and assistant principal, its own faculty, and a high school curriculum that meets state requirements. The educational program provides the training that supports the science and medical themes appropriate for each school. The system of having two separate schools with small enrollments allows for a student-teacher ratio of approximately twenty to one.

## School D

School D is a four-year high school in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area. The school district only has two schools, both of which are high schools. There are 3,267 students and 326 faculty members, including 4 librarians and 5 support staff. The average class size is 25 students per class. The student population is 75 percent Caucasian, 9.2 percent Asian, 8 percent black, and 8 percent Hispanic. School D is a Title 1 school with 11 percent free and reduced lunch.

The graduation requirements for the students include 4 credits of English; 2 of math; 3 of social studies; 2 of science; 4 of physical education; 0.5 credits in consumer education, fine arts, and applied arts and technology; and 3.5 credits in electives. To graduate the students must earn a minimum of 20 credits. The graduation rate is 95.4 percent, and the students achieve in the 65th percentile on all of the state tests. In 2007, 91 out of 756 seniors scored above the national average on the SAT. Also in 2007, 265 students took 495 advanced placement tests and 80 percent scored a three, four, or five out of a possible five points. School D is a “typical” high school in that it has an all-encompassing high school program for the students in the area.

## Findings

School libraries have been identified as effective when they align their library program with the national standards published by AASL and AECT in *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (1998). Many school librarians have tried to establish their programs reflecting these qualities. AASL has recently published *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (2009), and school librarians are studying these current guidelines to make certain their programs follow the tenets of this document. School librarians cannot act in a vacuum when they are establishing their programs or evaluating them. The research in this paper has examined schools with identified effective libraries and has examined other factors in the school to determine if there are any patterns or themes present in the school culture that assist school librarians in establishing effective library programs. As stated earlier, this research focused on a central question: which elements of the school culture make schools fertile ground for the establishment of an effective school library program?

As I coded the data from each school, I found a variety of themes. Initially, School A had 36 themes, School B had 37 themes, School C had 36 themes, and School D had 23 themes. With further analysis I was able to combine many of these themes, and I synthesized the data into four major themes at each school (see **Appendix D** for an example of this process). Of these four themes, three were present in the data for all four schools. These common themes were a collaborative culture, the leadership style of the principal, and high expectations for the staff and students. Other patterns were present at some of the schools, but these three concepts permeated the cultures of all four.

## Discussion

The three themes I found in the four case studies are a collaborative culture, the leadership style of the principal, and high expectations for the staff and students. These themes manifested in a variety of ways. To present a clearer picture of these themes, the data from all four schools are summarized below.

## Collaborative Culture

In describing a collaborative culture, it is important to determine what collaboration means. In conversational terms, collaboration indicates working with someone. *Information Power* (1998) encourages the school librarian to work with the classroom teacher. Garmston and Wellman (1999) have developed workshops and training sessions that support collaboration. Their definition is working together to support a common cause. They state that collaboration must be “part of one’s professional identity” (18). Senge (1990) dedicates his third discipline to team learning, which is working together or collaborating. Senge calls this “alignment” (234) and describes it as when a group works together and functions as a whole. He describes collaboration through the example of the functioning of a jazz band. All the members know their own parts but the beauty of the composition occurs when all of the musicians participate as one entity performing a piece.

All four of the schools in the case study had a common focus and worked together as one entity toward that end. This common focus was visible through examining artifacts (Schein 1992) at each school. School A had grade-level teams with common planning periods. During this planning time, the members of the grade level reviewed the lesson plans for the current week and then worked on the lesson plans for the upcoming weeks. In addition to these grade-level teams, School A had implemented DuFours and Eaker’s (1998) professional learning communities (PLCs) for the purpose of evaluating the progress of each student, focusing on academic achievement. School B also had collaborative teams in the middle school for each grade level, which planned with each other weekly. The school librarian joined these sessions when possible, and as a team they determined that there was a lack of cross-curriculum collaborative projects. They developed and implemented a project that would flow across all of the content areas as a collaborative experience for the students and the instructors. The high school faculty supported the collaborative culture with cross-discipline projects, such as an all-grade poetry project. The staff of both the middle school and the high school revised the curriculum to have a project-centered assessment process. This type of assessment allowed the students to work together as a group and participate in collaborative experiences. School C, by virtue of the two high schools supporting either science and engineering or health sciences, developed collaborative communities supporting the members of each of these disciplines. One teacher commented that each school has a strong bond with the other members of that community, showing respect and appreciation for each other. In addition, School C has implemented PLCs comprising members from each school to create formative assessments and to determine if the curriculum and instruction in each school is as effective as possible.

School D is governed by a collaborative model but with a hierarchical flavor. Because of its size, the school is organized into content areas with department heads for each. The department heads work with the principal to make decisions by providing input from each member of their department. While I was visiting the school, I attended a department meeting in which the department head was soliciting information to take back to the department meeting so that they could make the final decision. School D bases their collaborative model on decision-making teams (Garmston and Wellman 1999). In addition, the school has formed PLCs across grade levels to examine the instructional methods being used at the school to make certain they are appropriate for the learning styles of the students. The English department and the school librarians at School D provide the most visible signs of a collaborative culture. One of the school librarians was on the English curriculum revision team, which created a curriculum that embodies inquiry projects as requirements for all of the English levels. The librarians showed me

more than twenty lessons that illustrate the collaboration between the school librarians and the English department. The collaborative culture between these two departments also is evident through the budget arrangements the English department has with the library. Each year the English department gives the library \$30,000 from their budget to assist the library with providing resources that will be used in these collaborative lessons.

Using various methods, each of these schools has established a process of collaboration, and through these activities they have established a collaborative culture that is present throughout the school. Collaboration for these four schools indicates a willingness to work together, either informally with other members of the staff or formally through a school improvement method such as a PLC. I found that each school discussed collaboration, but the term had different meanings and was used with different connotations. The word “collaboration” was used in reference to students completing inquiry projects in which the teachers and librarians worked together to create the lesson. It was used to describe the teachers working together in teams both with members of their grade level and with vertical teams having different teachers representing different grades. It was used to describe the school librarians interacting with the teachers in a variety of ways. Collaborative culture has multiple dimensions that work in combination with one another to ensure success at each of the schools. Some of the specific dimensions observed across these four schools were the following:

- Grade-level teams meeting weekly
- Cooperative curriculum planning and decision-making
- Cross-curriculum collaborative projects that involve the librarian
- Vertical planning to facilitate student skill development
- District departmental in-service days to discuss curriculum planning
- School events to foster interaction
- School reform initiatives that support collaboration
- Scheduling that supports collaborative planning
- Staff development regarding technology and mentoring for new faculty to further a collaborative culture

### **The Leadership Style of the Principal**

The second pattern the data identified at each school was the leadership style of the principal. Each school’s principal had a collaborative style of leadership; the principals worked side-by-side with the teachers, receiving input from them and empowering the faculty members to participate in making decisions. The principal of School A demonstrated this leadership through the revision of the school improvement plan. The principal, the school librarian, and a classroom teacher were the leaders of the school improvement team. When I was visiting this school, the principal had received the draft of their school improvement plan (SIP) after the school district had reviewed this information. The district requested that the school make some minor changes in the wording of the document but not to the essence of the plan. As the principal, school librarian, and the teacher were revising these sections, the principal said he was uncomfortable revising the document, even if it was simple wordsmithing, unless the entire faculty voted on the changes. He called an emergency staff meeting so that the SIP leaders could explain these changes to the document. The staff members were then able to review the changes for a couple of days and resubmit their votes to accept the document. The principal had established his leadership style as collaborative and was not comfortable revising the document unless the staff had reviewed the changes. School B has a head of school (as a superintendent), a principal of the

middle school, and a principal of the high school. These three administrators work closely together, meeting regularly to make certain they are working for the same purpose. The head of school stated that she tries to build a strong team of people around her who will assist her with running both schools. One vivid example of this leadership style occurred when there was some unrest on the faculty because of the lack of technology support. The school was exploring the possibility of having each student have their own laptop and establishing a wireless campus. Some faculty feared that this would cause an upheaval of the school's culture. The head of school talked individually with the teachers, determined that the majority thought establishing a wireless campus was a wise move, and then the head of school stated that this was the plan of action the school would follow. The head of school gathered information from the entire staff prior to making a decision. The middle school principal stated that the head of school is collaborative and there is nothing hierarchal about how she manages the school. The high school principal reiterated this thought but admitted that because she had not worked in this type of environment before, it took her some time to work with the teachers collaboratively.

The Principals of School C evinced their collaborative leadership by listening to the teachers, having discussions with staff members, and collaborating on methods of solving problems that occurred throughout the course of the school day. The superintendent modeled this style of leadership by having weekly visits with the principal of each high school to reflect on the happenings of the week prior. She stated that these visits developed a sense of trust between her and the principals and laid the foundation for mutual respect to work together collaboratively. The superintendent of this two-high-school district supported the idea of interdependence, stating that everyone in the district is dependent on every other member of the district, and through collaboration they could move the district forward for the success of the students. The superintendent and two principals from School C established PLCs to ensure that this collaboration will flourish.

The administrators of School D support a collaborative style that is based on Garmston and Wellman's (1999) concept of shared leadership. The administrators and department heads are expected to facilitate, present, coach, and consult. The principal exhibits his collaborative style through the implementation of these four activities.

In discussing the leadership role of the principal, the word "collaboration" was again stated. Collaboration, in this sense, described the principal making decisions with the input and guidance of the staff. Yet different configurations were described. In some schools the principals worked alongside of the teachers; in others the principal worked with department heads but not with all of the teachers as a group. The use of "collaboration" when discussing the principals' leadership style also included the ability and style of making unpopular decisions if those decisions were for the good of the school. The ability of the principals to make these decisions illustrates a different form of collaboration. Research needs to be conducted to determine exactly what collaboration means to principals, to teachers, and to school librarians. It is different in different situations.

"Leadership," for these four principals, can be defined as creating an atmosphere in which the principal is seen as the person in charge of the school and the one who makes the hard decisions. However, the principals at these schools made the decisions only after seeking input from the stakeholders. They illustrated a willingness to work with the teachers, staff, students, and

parents. Then the collaborative decision would be made while weighing all opinions. The principals did not hesitate to make a hard decision if it was appropriate.

The principals' collaborative leadership was illustrated in a variety of ways:

- Establishment of PLCs to further collaboration between staff members
- Sharing decisions and changes to decisions with the staff members
- Providing training and professional development in team learning through adaptive teams and PLCs
- Forming and changing teams to make them more collaborative
- Organizing the department heads to share and gather information from their department members
- Establishing interview procedures for new employees that gathers input from all stakeholders
- District administrators meeting weekly with other administrators to establish a positive working relationship

### **High Expectations of Students and Staff**

All four of the schools in this study had high expectations for both their staff members and the students. School A expected the students to succeed in academics. School A's staff has as their goal 100 percent of their students improving on the yearly state test. This statement is a part of their school improvement plan, and when the district questioned them about this perfect percentage, they indicated that each student needed to succeed—not just 90 or 95 percent. The principal illustrated this by looking at one third-grade class and asking the faculty to decide which 5 or 10 percent of the students they would choose to not succeed. The faculty embraced the idea of working with all students and therefore set their goal at 100 percent. School B expected 100 percent of the senior class to pass all of their subjects and to attend college in the fall after their senior year. School C had the same expectations for their seniors to attend college, but raised the bar by expecting each of the seniors to graduate from these college programs. They kept in contact with the seniors during their college years to provide the support the students needed to accomplish this goal. School D did not have a stated college policy but illustrated their high expectations for the students through the implementation of assigned inquiry projects. The school librarians and the English department have created inquiry lessons through the use of essential questions. The students at each level are required to attempt and complete these inquiry research projects. The librarians and English staff members have created mini-projects for the students if they need any remedial work or have had difficulties with the regular assigned projects. School D has committed to having each student develop their information literacy skills through these guided inquiry projects.

The collaborative atmosphere of the schools and the leadership style of the principal also speak to the high expectations for the students and staff. In these case studies, the expectations had been established before I visited the schools, and they were part of the culture. The following list illustrates the variety of ways high expectations were present at each school:

- Rigorous curriculum, including many AP classes and tests
- Senior projects requiring the creation of a new invention
- The goal of having 100 percent of the students succeed, attend college, or finish college

- Supporting the concepts of being a great school and not just a good school, as described by Collins (2001)
- Supporting school reforms that address sound instructional methodology
- Requiring a year-long mentoring program for staff to make them aware of the high expectations

## Future Research

These four case studies examined the culture of schools with identified effective school library programs to determine if there were any patterns or themes that permeated each school. Additional research needs to be conducted in the area of the culture of the school as it is critical to determine why some schools provide the environment conducive to establishing an effective library program and some do not. Using different criteria for site selection, further research should be conducted as to the presence of these themes in other schools. While conducting this research, I found that a collaborative culture was present in all four schools. Does this mean that effective school library programs must have a collaborative culture to flourish? I also found that these schools had administrators that believe in a collaborative style of management. Does that mean that there are not effective school libraries in schools with administrators who believe in a hierarchical style of leadership? Another area to explore is the leadership qualities of the staff members. Are there school librarians setting up effective programs but not exhibiting personal leadership skills? What does leadership mean in relation to a school librarian? Does the principal's leadership style have to align with the school librarian's leadership style? How does the role of the interactions between staff members, the principal, and the school librarian affect the establishment of an effective library program? Additional research must be conducted in these areas.

This cross-case analysis illustrates that there is a relationship between school culture, leadership, and effective school library programs. This research provides us with a foundation to use as we continue to examine the role of school culture in establishing an effective school library program contributing to the academic achievement of the students.

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## Appendix A

School Demographics				
	School A	School B	School C	School D
Students	445	625	700 and 700	3267
Teachers	23	75	49 and 49	326
Administrators	1	3	3	5
Free and reduced lunch students	32%	0%	49%	11%
School librarians	1	4	3	4
Library support staff	1.5	6	5	5
Medium income of area	\$61,096	\$69,446	NA	\$73,687

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

#### *Questions for Principals*

1. Background information: Explain your educational background and how you arrived at this position.
  - Length of time in school?
  - Length of time as a principal?
  - Type of management and leadership?
  - School reform issues
2. What are the challenges at your school?
3. How would you describe the culture of your school?
4. What do you look for when hiring a staff member?
5. How would you describe your staff?
6. How would you describe your relationship with your staff members?
7. What is the impact of the school library program on your school?
8. What is your relationship with your school librarian?

#### *Questions for Teachers*

1. Background information: Tell me about your educational career.
2. What do you like about the school?
3. How would you describe the culture of your school?
4. What procedures are in place that enable you to help students learn?
5. What are the barriers that prevent you from helping students learn?
6. How would you describe your relationship with the principal?
7. How would you describe your relationship with the other teachers?
8. How would you describe your relationship with the school librarian?
9. What is the impact of the school library program on your teaching?
10. To what extent do you collaborate with the school librarian?

**Questions for School Librarians**

1. Background information: Tell me about your educational career.
2. Describe the school library program as you found it when you first were hired.
3. Tell me about your program. Why do you think it received the national award?
4. How would you describe your role as a member of the faculty?
5. What situations at your school have helped you with establishing your program?
6. Have you experienced any difficulties in implementing your program?
7. How would you describe your relationship with the teachers?
  - o Do you have the same kinds of relationship with every teacher?
8. Describe your relationship with the administrators. Principals? Assistant principal?
9. What are your strengths as a teacher?
10. Is there anything else that will help me understand the culture of the school?

**Appendix C**

<b>Documents Reviewed</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>School C</b>	<b>School D</b>
Admissions literature and procedures	X	X	X	X
Brochures: laptops, library resources	X	X	X	X
Collaborative lessons	X	X	X	X
Daily bulletins	X	X	X	X
District technology plan	X	X	X	
DVD advertising programs		X	X	X
Handbook and directory	X	X	X	X
Library bill of rights	X	X	X	X
Library strategic plan	X	X	X	X
Literature on special programs	X	X	X	X
Mission statement of the library	X	X	X	X
Newspaper and magazine articles	X	X	X	X
Philanthropy report		X		
Promotional materials	X	X	X	X
Responsible use policy	X	X	X	X
School improvement plan	X		X	X
School mission statement	X	X	X	X
Selection policy	X	X	X	X
Strategic plan	X	X	X	X
Survey: alumni, staff, students	X	X	X	X
White paper on technology use		X		

## Appendix D

The following words and phrases are the initial themes generated from the analysis of interviews, documents, and observations from School A using NVivo 7 indicating the number of sources and the references from those sources.

<b>Example of Coding</b>		
Theme	No. of Sources	No. of References
Background information	1	1
Barriers to student achievement	1	2
Barriers to success	1	1
Building relationships	6	38
Collaboration	9	67
Community	2	4
Culture	4	11
Demographics	6	13
District-level information	2	9
Environment	6	58
Expectations	5	30
Family	5	21
Hiring practices	1	2
Interview procedure	1	1
Leadership style	2	3
Librarian information and background	1	2
Library staffing issues	3	8
National award	2	4
Physical layout	2	16
Previous librarian	2	3
Principal background information	1	2
Principal leadership style	2	18
Relationship with administrator	5	18
Relationship with school librarian	4	13
Relationship with staff	3	7
Relationships	1	1
School librarian's leadership style	2	12
School reform	2	20
Student-centered	4	15

Teaching ability	4	13
Teaching characteristics	1	1
Teaching practice	1	24
Technology background	2	4
Title one school	1	3
Trust	3	12
Vision	6	28

With further analysis, the words and phrases were organized into four major themes. This organization was based on revisiting the original statements and synthesizing further.

1. **Vision**
2. **Collaboration**
  - Culture
  - Building Relationships
  - Environment
  - Family
  - Trust
  - Community
  - Relationships
  - Relationships with Administrator
  - Relationship with School Librarian
  - Relationship with Staff
3. **Expectations**
  - School Reforms
  - Student-centered
4. **Leadership**
  - Leadership style
  - Principal Leadership Style
  - School Librarian's Leadership Style

This process was followed for each of the schools in these four case studies.



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