RELATIONSHIPS IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
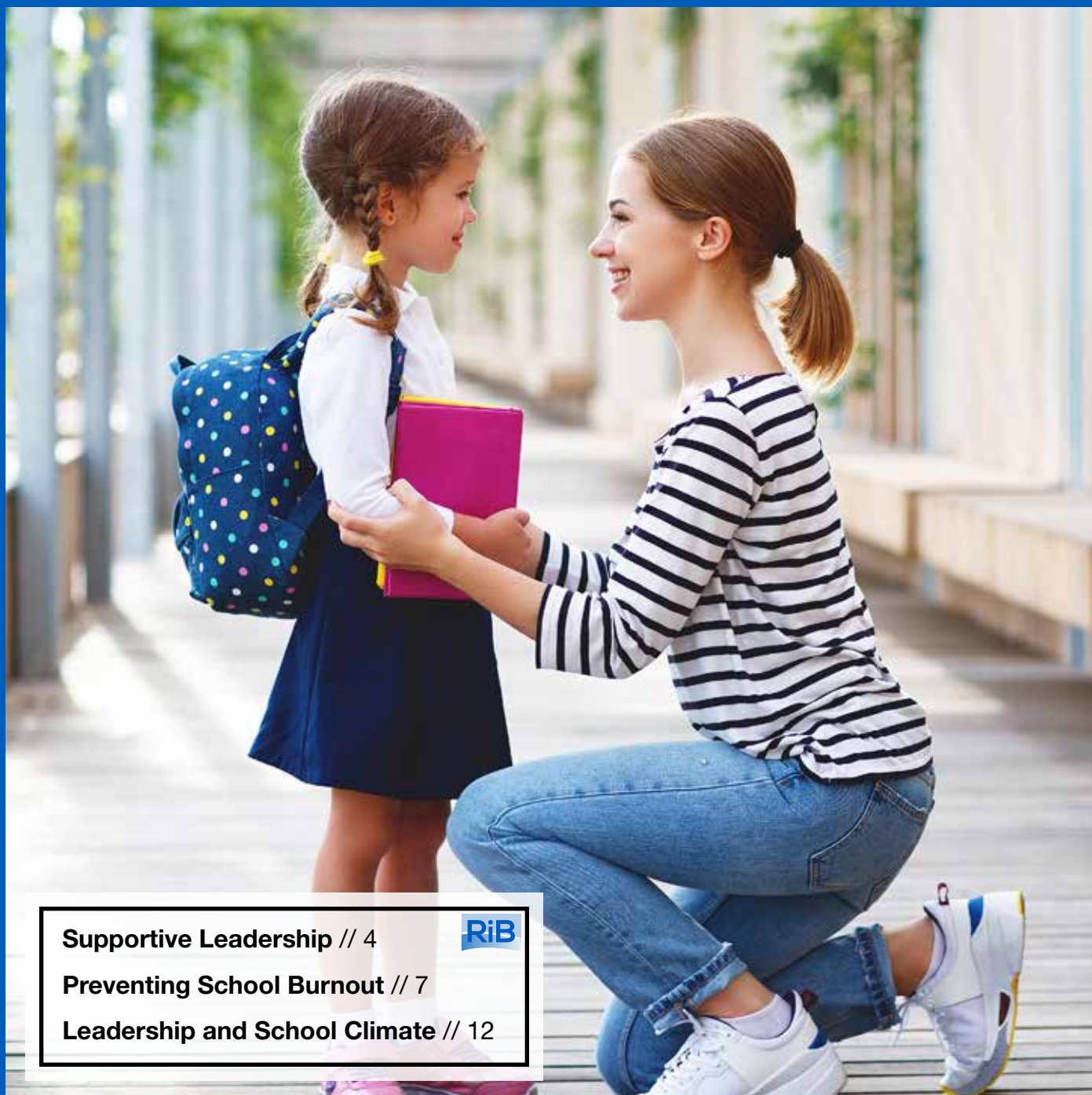
RESEARCH IN BRIEF

ACSI Mission Statement

ACSI exists to strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators worldwide as they prepare students academically and inspire students to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

ACSI Vision Statement

ACSI will become a leading international organization that promotes Christian education and provides training and resources to Christian schools and Christian educators, resulting in:

• schools that contribute to the public good through effective teaching and learning and that are biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant and

• educators who embody a biblical worldview, engage in transformational teaching and discipling, and embrace personal and professional growth.

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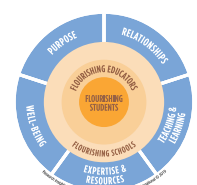
ACSI
STRONGER TOGETHER

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RiB

Letter from the Editor

MATTHEW H. LEE

Relationships, especially with other believers, are some of the most precious things we enjoy in this life. They give us a foretaste of heaven as they are the one thing we get to take from this life into the one to come. As John Fawcett writes in his beloved hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," it is a blessing for believers' hearts to be bound together in Christian love, for "perfect love and friendship reign through all eternity."

We should strive to promote and protect relationships—between and among faculty and staff, students, and families—in our schools. After all, David described brotherly unity as pleasant (Psalm 133:1), and Christ commanded us to seek peace and reconciliation with one another (Matthew 18:15-20). But not much research describes the nature and importance of relationships, particularly in a Christian school context.

Three articles in this latest issue of *Research in Brief* focus on relationships. I'm delighted to share some of my own work using data from the Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI). Focusing on the relationships between teachers and school leaders, I look at teacher perceptions of supportive leadership and find evidence of important benefits of leadership for both teacher well-being and school sustainability. This research is made possible through Christian schools' participation in the FSCI, so I'm grateful for the opportunity to share some of our findings with you.

A second article focuses on the relationships between teachers and school leaders. Dr. Angie Lyons, superintendent of Peoria Christian School, examines teacher perceptions of leaders and how they shape school culture. Dr. Lyons finds that teachers who perceive school principals as exemplifying positive leadership practices and embodying warmth and mutual respect are more likely to report that their school has a culture of collegiality, professionalism, and academic excellence. They are also less likely to describe their school as a vulnerable institution.

A third article examines the relationship between teachers and male students. Dr. Travis Moots and Dr. Philip Alsup, both school leaders and university professors, share some of their recent research. They find that students' perceptions of their teachers' positive regard for them to be a particularly meaningful predictor of student wellness. Their important work has clear and immediate implications for Christian schools.

In this issue, we are also pleased we could share an article focusing on an important part of the ACSI family—our international schools. ACSI Regional Director for International Schools Tim Shuman and I highlight some of the findings from the recent International Tuition & Salary Survey, focusing on salary and benefits. In the next issue of *Research in Brief*, we'll discuss findings related to tuition, revenue, and enrollment in international schools.

We're also bringing back two brand new sections from the last issue: "The Latest in Education Research" and "Insights from Flourishing Schools Research." Together with four research articles, this issue is full of insights into Christian education.

May God continue to bless the tie that binds together these relationships in your schools.

> Blest be the tie that binds
> our hearts in Christian love;
> the fellowship of kindred minds
> is like to that above.

—John Fawcett, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (1782) RiB

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Matthew H. Lee, ACSI's Director of Research, serves as Managing Editor of Research in Brief. *Dr. Lee is co-editor of the book* Religious Liberty and Education *(Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), and author of numerous peer-reviewed research articles, book chapters, technical reports, and op-eds on civics education, education leadership, and religious education.*

The Value of Supportive LEADERSHIP

MATTHEW H. LEE

Education researchers have applied many different strategies to measure the value of school leadership. One strategy is to consider school leaders' contributions to student learning. Education researchers often calculate value-added measures of teacher and principal effectiveness—how much students learn above and beyond their expected outcomes. A systematic review of principal value-added research concludes that replacing an ineffective principal with a more effective principal can add almost three months of student learning in math and reading (Grissom et al. 2021).

Another strategy is to quantify the compensation of school leaders. Erik Ellefsen, senior fellow at the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education (CACE), and I analyzed data from twenty-two highly regarded Christian schools, a purposive sample of non-church-affiliated schools with available GuideStar 990 information who are known by their reputation for institutional quality (for details on sampling methodology, see Ellefsen 2018). We found the median total compensation package in our sample to be around $300,000 (2021a). In all schools analyzed, the head of school was the school's most highly compensated employee. We also found that women were underrepresented among highly compensated employees in our sample of schools (2021b).

A third strategy is to consider the intangibles of school leadership. Rather than examining quantifiable measures such as test scores or salary, Andrew Johnston of the University of California considers the value of supportive leadership. Using an experimental survey design, he calculates teachers' "willingness-to-pay" for certain leadership qualities and finds that teachers value having a supportive principal equal to a 17 percent increase in salary (Johnston 2021).

Using data from the first three years of the Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI), this study investigates the importance of supportive leadership. this study finds evidence that supportive leadership has tremendous benefits for both teacher well-being and school sustainability. This study also finds evidence that supportive leadership has become more meaningful to Christian schools since 2018-19, with stronger associations with teacher wellness, as well as the likelihood that teachers would recommend their school to their friends or family.

Data

For this analysis, this study focuses on a sample of roughly 3,600 teachers who completed the FSCI between 2018-19 and 2020-21. Teachers in this sample represent all levels, including high school (46 percent), middle (41 percent), elementary (37 percent), and early education (10 percent). The five most common subjects taught include Bible (21 percent), mathematics (21 percent), English language arts (20 percent), science (17 percent), and humanities (16 percent), but teachers of all subjects are part of the analysis, including art, physical education, and special education. Most teachers have 15 years of experience or less (60 percent) and five or less years of experience at their current school (52 percent). Roughly half of the sample was born before 1974 (48 percent) and half after 1974 (52 percent). The vast majority of the sample is female (76 percent) and White (80 percent), with some representation of Black (3 percent), Hispanic (4 percent), and Asian (4 percent) teachers (see Table 1).

As part of the FSCI, teacher responses are used to calculate schools' construct scores for *Supportive Leadership* (part of the Relationships domain) and *Stress* (part of the Well-Being domain). Each construct is a validated three-item construct in the Flourishing School Culture Model (Swaner et al. 2019). Respondents indicate how strongly they agree with each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to

Table 1. Respondent Teaching and Demographic Characteristics					
	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Teaching Level					
Early Education	3,334	0.10	0.30	0	1
Elementary	3,681	0.37	0.48	0	1
Middle	3,334	0.41	0.49	0	1
High	3,334	0.46	0.50	0	1
Subject Taught					
Math	3,636	0.21	0.41	0	1
Science	3,636	0.17	0.38	0	1
Humanities	3,636	0.16	0.37	0	1
ELA	3,636	0.20	0.40	0	1
Bible	3,636	0.21	0.40	0	1
Experience					
0-15 years	3,574	0.60	0.49	0	1
0-5 years at current school	3,567	0.52	0.50	0	1
Demographics					
Born before 1974	3,286	0.48	0.50	0	1
Female	3,445	0.76	0.43	0	1
White	3,618	0.80	0.40	0	1
Black	3,618	0.03	0.17	0	1
Hispanic	3,618	0.04	0.20	0	1
Asian	3,618	0.04	0.20	0	1

Strongly Agree. The *Stress* construct is reverse-coded so that a higher score indicates a greater level of well-being and a lower level of stress.

In addition, teachers give three recommendation scores of their school: an *Overall Recommendation* of the school on an 11-point Likert scale (0 = Wouldn't recommend; 10 = Highly recommend); a *School Recommendation* score, representing how likely they would recommend their friends and family enroll their children at the school on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all likely; 5 = Extremely likely); and a *Work Recommendation* score, representing how likely they would recommend their school as a place to work on the same five-point scale. Survey instrumentation is summarized in Table 2.

Analysis

This study estimates the benefits of supportive leadership by regressing a standardized measure of *Stress*, *Overall Recommendation*, *School Recommendation*, and *Work Recommendation* separately on a standardized measure of *Supportive Leadership* and a series of control covariates:

- Model 1 is a simple regression with no controls.
- In model 2, I add indicators for which grade levels a teacher teaches (Early Education to High).
- In model 3, I adjust for the teacher's subject.
- In model 4, I control for teaching experience.
- In model 5, I add covariates representing a teacher's demographic characteristics.

In Figure 1, the number across the horizontal axis indicates the model used to estimate the relationship between *Supportive Leadership* and *Stress*.

Fig. 1—Supportive Leadership and Teacher Well-Being
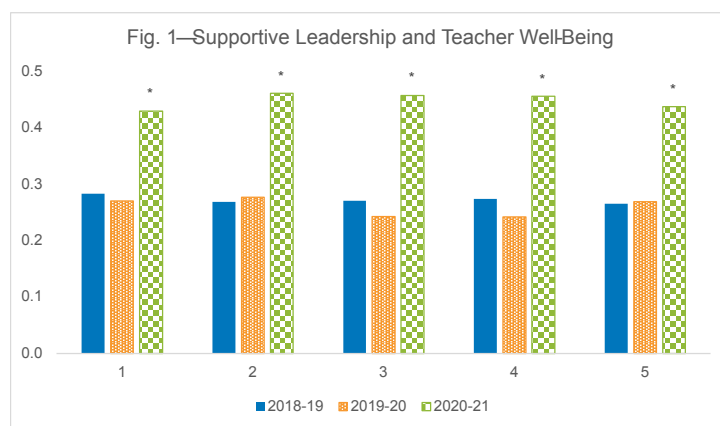
Note. * $p < 0.01$.

The goal of adding in these covariates is to control for relationships between these characteristics and the outcome of interest, which might otherwise bias estimates of the association between *Supportive Leadership* and each outcome. Ideally, a researcher should show the robustness of a finding by demonstrating that the estimated relationship endures, regardless of the combination of controls used. That is indeed the case; *Supportive Leadership* is positively and significantly correlated with each outcome regardless of model specification.

Table 2. Flourishing School Culture Instrument Constructs and Recommendation							
			Average			Range	
Construct	Domain	Items	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Min	Max
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Supportive Leadership	Relationships	3	4.19	4.13	4.34	1 (Strongly Disagree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
Stress	Well-Being	3	3.07	2.96	3.20	1 (Strongly Agree)	5 (Strongly Disagree)
Overall recommendation		1	8.89	8.47	8.94	0 (Wouldn't recommend)	10 (Highly recommend)
School recommendation		1	4.57	4.39	4.61	1 (Not at all likely)	5 (Extremely likely)
Work recommendation		1	4.39	4.25	4.43	1 (Not at all likely)	5 (Extremely likely)
n			1,322	633	1,726		

This study also uses an "interaction term," multiplying an indicator for the year in which the teacher participated in the FSCI with their *Supportive Leadership* construct score. Using an interaction term provides a statistical test to measure if the relationship between *Supportive Leadership* and each outcome changed from 2018-19 to 2020-21. In both Figures 1 and 2, an asterisk above 2019-20 and 2020-21 indicates that the relationship was significantly different than it was in 2018-19 at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$). Again, this proves to be the case. *Supportive Leadership* means more to teacher *Stress* and *Overall Recommendation* in 2020-21 than in 2018-19, and *Supportive Leadership* means more to *School Recommendation* and *Work Recommendation* in both 2019-20 and 2020-21 than in 2018-19.

Fig. 2—Supportive Leadership and Teacher Recommendation
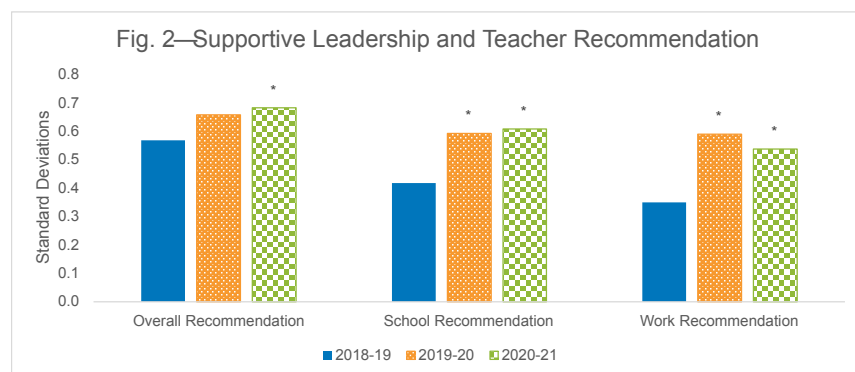
Note. * *p* < 0.01.

Discussion

Before discussing these results, it is important to consider some limitations. First, the FSCI depends on a sample of convenience each year. Participation in the FSCI is voluntary, and therefore teachers who respond to the FSCI may not be representative of Christian teachers writ large in any given year. Second, as is true for any survey-based research, this analysis depends on teachers' stated preferences but cannot provide insights on their revealed preferences. Although the FSCI is anonymous, responses may nonetheless be affected by social desirability bias, the Hawthorne effect, or some other social science phenomenon.

Nonetheless, the relatively large sample size, robustness of findings to the inclusion or exclusion of control covariates, and replication of results across multiple years gives us some confidence in these findings. First, *Supportive Leadership* makes a tremendous difference to teacher wellness. Teachers who were more likely to agree that their leadership was supportive expressed between a 0.24 and 0.46 standard deviations higher level of wellness (reverse-coded *Stress*). This finding was reproduced in pooled analysis, as well as across years and model specifications. In a COVID-19 world with historically high levels of stress among teachers, *Supportive Leadership* may be more important than ever before.

Second, teachers who feel supported are more likely to

recommend their schools. One standard deviation in *Supported Leadership* was associated with a higher *Overall Recommendation* between 0.56 and 0.68 standard deviations, associated with a higher *School Recommendation* between 0.41 and 0.61 standard deviations, and associated with a higher *Work Recommendation* between 0.35 and 0.59 standard deviations.

Finally, there is some evidence of the changing value of *Supportive Leadership*. Six of the eight interaction terms for the four outcomes were statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$). This finding may have something to do with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. What it means to feel supported by school leadership in 2019-20 and 2020-21 means something different than it meant in 2018-19 before the pandemic. A higher overall *Supportive Leadership* score in 2020-21 (4.34) than in 2018-19 (4.19) and 2019-20 (4.13) may even suggest that school leaders have worked tremendously to support their teachers throughout the pandemic (see Table 2, *Supportive Leadership*, columns 4-6).

Applying the Research

How can school leaders use these findings? First, it may be worthwhile to investigate how your teachers feel supported. The "black box" of quantitative research is that while we may know *Supportive Leadership* matters, we don't know *why* it matters. Understanding which leadership practices are most supportive may be key to unlocking effective leadership.

Second, *Supportive Leadership* is key to sustainability. Teachers who feel supported are more likely to recommend their school, not only as a place for students to enroll but also as a place to work. In this sense, *Supportive Leadership* may prove valuable to establishing sustainable pipelines for both enrollment and employment.

Finally, Christian school leaders should be encouraged. Seventy-five percent of all teachers who completed the FSCI on average agreed or strongly agreed with the individual items that compose *Supportive Leadership*, and the average score in the most recent year of administration was an all-time high. This evidence suggests that leaders are already engaging in practices to support teachers to flourish in their roles. RiB

"Seventy-five percent of all teachers who completed the FSCI agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported by their leadership."

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RiB

Preventing SCHOOL BURNOUT Among Young Men in Christian High Schools Through GREATER TEACHER SUPPORT

TRAVIS MOOTS & PHILIP ALSUP

Teaching and engaging high school young men presents a challenge for many teachers. Some teachers consider male students to be more difficult to supervise behaviorally than female students, making the relational aspect of teaching more challenging. Further, behavioral or personal conflicts between teacher and student may unintentionally hinder personal relationships and decrease student motivation. Although teachers are not likely to encounter serious conflicts with all male students, the perception of the teacher nonetheless has an impact on all students, male and female. Therefore, a teacher's ability to influence a student's attitudes and values—and ultimately his or her future—fundamentally pivots on that student's perceptions about the teacher.

Research shows that male and female students perceive teachers differently, and male students are more likely than their female classmates to perceive teachers in a negative light (Katz 2017). When it comes to helping young men succeed academically, the teacher-student relationship emerges as an essential component for improving achievement. Teachers possess a powerful ability to motivate boys and influence attitudes that affect learning. However, whether male students *believe* teachers support them is critical to success. To improve achievement among male students, school leaders have attempted approaches such as gender-pairing students with teachers and arranging single-gender classes (Burusic et al. 2012; Cho 2012). Rather than addressing the issue from a classroom-design approach, greater gains have resulted from specifically addressing the teacher-student relationship.

Teacher support refers to the effort teachers make to show personal concern, build intrinsic motivation, and convey high expectations before students (Zhang et al. 2018). These social-emotional factors lay the groundwork especially for guiding male students as they experience stress from learning demands. School circumstances may eventually cause some to experience *school burnout syndrome,* a problem that develops more often among male students than female students, especially in academically rigorous settings (Gungor 2019). School burnout occurs when students begin to feel

The Latest in Education

For each issue, we'll survey education research articles from scholars and experts across the country an

- **Holistic Teaching:** A new journal article published in *PLoS ONE* by Ying Chen, Christina Hinton, and Tyler J. VanderWeele of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University finds that Christian school attendance (relative to public school attendance) is associated with frequent religious service attendance in adulthood.

- **Partnership:** In a new working paper, Marco Ovidi (Queen Mary University of London) finds that attending the school of choice of a parent increases student achievement relative to attending a similar quality school, but of lower parental preference, suggesting that parents know best the educational needs of their children.

- **Partnership:** A new peer-reviewed article in the *Journal of Research on Christian Education* by Bruce G. Fawcett (Crandall University), Leslie J. Francis (University of Warwick), and Ursula McKenna (Bishop Grosseteste University) finds a significant relationship between parents' religious attendance and students' faith.

- **Integrated Worldview:** In a new working paper for the Center for Economic Studies, Benjamin W. Arold, Ludger Woessmann, and Larissa Zierow (University of Munich) find abolishing compulsory religious education in Germany significantly reduced students' religiosity, personal prayer, church attendance, and church membership in adulthood.
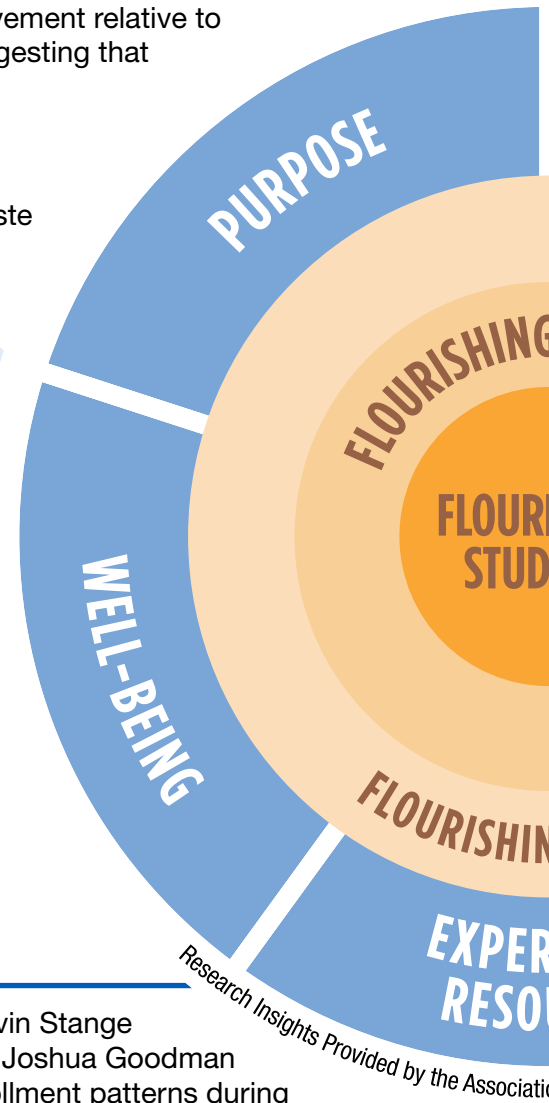
- **Resource Constraints:** Tareena Musaddiq (University of Michigan), Kevin Stange (University of Michigan), Andrew Bacher-Hicks (Boston University), and Joshua Goodman (Boston University) use administrative data from Michigan to study enrollment patterns during the pandemic. They find that private school enrollment increased more where public school instruction was remote, suggesting that private school growth may be partly explained by demand for in-person instruction.

- **Resource Constraints:** A new peer-reviewed journal article published in the *Journal of School Choice* by Benjamin Scafidi (Kennesaw State University), Roger Tutterow (Kennesaw State University), and Damian Kavanagh (MISBO) finds the main driver of private school enrollment growth was whether public school districts "were open for only virtual instruction to start the 2020-21 academic year."

Research (ACSI Research)

- **Mentoring Students:** In a new working paper for the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, Andrew C. Barr (Texas A&M University) and Benjamin L. Castleman (University of Virginia) find that "intensive advising during high school and college leads to large increases in bachelor's degree attainment."
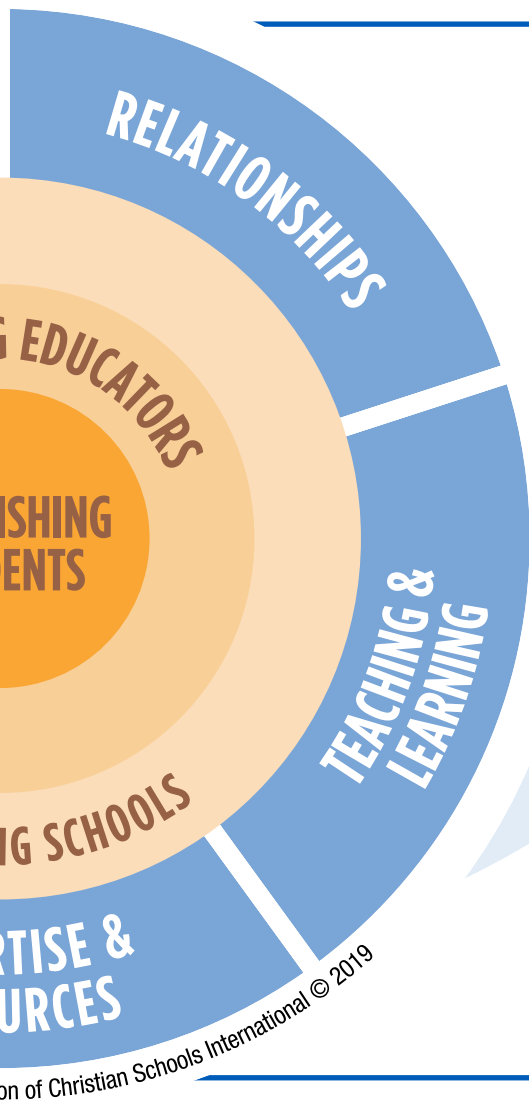
- **Best Practice Orientation:** Elizabeth Setren (Tufts), Kyle Greenburg (West Point), Oliver Moore (U.S. Army), and Michael Yankovich (West Point) find "flipping a classroom" has short-term learning gains in mathematics that fade by the course final and no benefits for other courses, but these short-term gains are experienced mostly by White, male, and high-achieving students, while gaps persist for students of other backgrounds.

- **Feedback:** In a new peer-reviewed article published in *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, Mary Lynne Derrington (University of Tennessee), Toni Jackson (University of Tennessee), and John W. Campbell (Alcoa City Schools) find that "principals and teachers have contradictory beliefs regarding the practice and value of teacher evaluation."

- **Outcomes Focus:** A new peer-reviewed journal article published in the *Economics of Education Review* by NaYoung Hwang, Brian Kisida, and Cory Koedel (University of Missouri) finds that having the same teacher for consecutive years improves student test scores in math and English language arts.

- **Professional Development:** A new journal article published in *Educational Researcher* by Emily C. Hanno (Harvard University) evaluates a coaching professional development approach and finds that "emotional support and classroom organization practices improved immediately after any coaching cycle."

- **Qualified Staff:** In an Annenberg Institute working paper, NaYoung Hwang and Brian Kisida (University of Missouri) find that teacher specialization (rather than generalization) for elementary school teachers leads to overall lower teaching effectiveness.

- **Qualified Staff:** Lauren Sartain (University of North Carolina) and Matthew P. Steinberg (George Mason University) find that a teacher evaluation system that incorporated remediation and dismissal improved teacher quality in subsequent years.

emotional exhaustion from school work and consequently develop feelings of inadequacy and even cynicism about the importance of school (Fiorilli et al. 2017). Challenging academic work and school pressures mount during high school. However, teachers have unique opportunities to mitigate students' feelings of mental and emotional fatigue and thereby reduce the likelihood of school burnout.

Research Problem

Many Christian schools offer rigorous academic programs with challenging standards and high expectations. As a result, these students may feel added pressure to perform due both to teacher demands and tuition-paying parents' expectations. Students with learning challenges may also feel overwhelmed as they attempt to make good grades like their peers. If students fail to properly manage these stressors, a scenario ripe for school burnout may emerge. The well-established, nationwide gender achievement gap also begs the question of whether gender and school burnout might be in some way connected. Additionally, if teacher relationships with students have the potential to mitigate student stress and to build resiliency, practical solutions to the problem of school burnout might be identified. Therefore, we conducted a correlational study to determine if male high school students' perceived teacher support in Christian schools can predict school burnout.

Summary of the Literature

In demanding situations, students who experience school burnout often fail to properly cope with stress rather than remain resilient. Resiliency is not only necessary for high school but is also a life skill students need to develop. Especially in high school, feelings of inadequacy may decrease motivation to engage in school work (Fiorilli et al. 2017). Overall well-being diminishes as a result of poor school climate, and in the worst-case scenario, students become at-risk for dropping out of school (Durmuş et al. 2017). In many cases of school burnout, students become disinterested in future learning opportunities and ambitions. Consequently, some carry feelings of inefficacy into adulthood, thereby hindering ambition to study and learn in the future.

Over time, researchers have identified social supports as effective means of mitigating school burnout and detachment, and this trend especially applies to support provided by teachers (Kim et al. 2018). When teachers engage in positive interactions with students and cultivate relationship-friendly classrooms, male students especially feel supported by teachers. The opposite also holds true: when male students experience poor relationships with teachers, burnout and lower academic motivation are more likely (Virtanen et al. 2018). In sum, preventing school burnout and

maintaining male students' self-efficacy are largely influenced by emotional-relational factors that depend on personal connections between teachers and students (Kim et al. 2018).

In this study, the theoretical framework merged specific facets of social cognitive theory and self-determination theory. Social cognitive theory emphasizes modelling as a powerful factor in shaping children's beliefs about moral judgments and individual abilities, including self-efficacy (Bandura and McDonald 1963). Teachers and other influential people in a student's life can build self-efficacy—the belief in one's ability to perform and achieve. In the classroom, teachers potentially serve as models and influencers for building male students' self-efficacy. High self-efficacy can in turn improve resiliency amid stress and prevent school burnout. Further, self-determination theory suggests self-efficacy can be improved when students' intrinsic motivation increases. For teachers, the key to helping students improve self-efficacy and motivation is to support the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2004). As teachers support male students' emotional needs through personal and classroom experiences, those teachers can reduce the risk of exhaustion, cynicism, and ultimately, school burnout.

Methodology and Participants

In the current study, participants included male students from four private, Christian high schools in Virginia and North Carolina. Each high school implements a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum and program. A total of 126 participants from the four high school grade levels were surveyed. Two surveys were administered—The School Burnout Inventory (SBI), measuring male students' level of school burnout on a six-point scale, and The Teacher Support Scale (TSS), measuring those same students' perceived teacher support on a five-point scale. The School Burnout Inventory contains nine questions and asks students to rank feelings of burnout utilizing questions such as "I feel overwhelmed by my school work," "I feel that I am losing interest in my school work," and "I used to have higher expectations of my schoolwork than I do now." The higher the overall score, the higher a participant's feelings of school burnout.

The TSS uses twenty-one items to measure a participant's feelings of overall teacher support and includes four sub-categories:

1. *Investedness* (eight items): Teacher engagement with the students and efforts made to help them academically.
2. *Positive regard* (five items): Personal teacher connections with the students and on what level the teacher cares for the students.
3. *Expectations* (five items): Teacher beliefs about the students' likelihood to perform well and be successful in the classroom.

4. *Accessibility* (three items): Teacher willingness to help students when requested

Key Findings

To measure the relationship between school burnout and teacher support, including the four subcategories of teacher support, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The analysis determined a statistically significant prediction model between school burnout and teacher support. Essentially, the greater a student's perception of teacher support, the less that student was prone to feeling burned out toward school. The TSS revealed a mean score of 3.78, indicating that many students perceived a moderate level of support from teachers. While most students did not rank themselves as extremely dissatisfied or extremely satisfied with teachers' level of support, all students were nonetheless impacted by teachers.

Among the four subcategories of teacher support, *positive regard* was determined to be the best predictor of school burnout among male high school students. The TSS measured this subcategory with questions such as, "Teachers in my high school enjoy having me in their class," ". . . care about me," ". . . would tell other people good things about me," and ". . . think I am a hard worker." These survey items pertain to teacher opinions about student work ethic, intelligence, and ways teachers verbally describe students. The greatest predictor of school burnout in this study was *positive regard*, affirming the importance of young men believing teachers hold them in high regard.

Teacher Support and Student Burnout
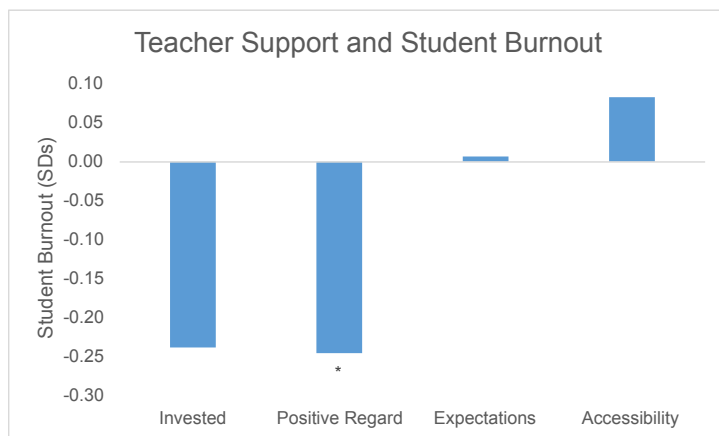
Note. * *p* < 0.05.

Application and Recommendations

Teachers should consider that their influence extends to all students, not just to those who already have little motivation to learn or who are already highly motivated. All male students are developing in their perceptions of themselves and need the affirmation and support of teacher leaders. While the potential benefit of positive teacher-student relationships with young men is incredible, negative interactions between teachers and male students can unfortunately—and often necessarily—be

frequent. Therefore, school leaders must consider relationship-building instruction as an essential topic for professional development. Genuine, high-quality student-teacher relationships must be proactively sought and prioritized if students are to be successful.

The mission of most Christian schools requires the implementation of rigorous academics and high expectations for performance. However, when teachers prioritize personal relationships as much as instructional methods, then learning, enjoyment of school, and future success, especially among young men, can all be enhanced. RiB

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Christian School Teachers' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP Behavior and School Climate

ANGIE LYONS

Principal leadership behavior and school climate are two factors that can substantially influence the well-being of the whole student (Swaner et al. 2019). Moreover, teachers play a significant role in understanding and interpreting the impact of leadership behavior and school climate on student well-being (Hoy et al. 2002). Christian schools should be concerned with more than just academic outcomes; they should be concerned with the flourishing of the whole student (Swaner et al. 2019).

Leadership behavior and school climate are internal factors that are controllable forces and can be managed within a school setting. Leadership behavior and school climate could be categorized as falling under the Flourishing School Culture Model (FSCM) domains of Relationships and Teaching & Learning (Swaner et al. 2019). Principal leadership behaviors affect relationships with faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members associated with the school (Halpin 1957). School climate represents almost every aspect of the school experience, including the quality of the teaching, staff morale, student achievement, morale and experience, and the physical attributes of the building and classrooms, shaping both teaching and learning in a Christian school (Wang and Degol 2016). While external forces such as the economy and homelife are out of the control of Christian school leaders (Kalkan et al. 2020; Pampuch 2019), leadership and school climate are internal forces that lie within a school leader's control. Does principal leadership promote a positive school climate? To answer this important question, I investigate how teachers' perceptions of principal leadership behaviors and school climate relate to one another in the Christian school setting.

Research Purpose and Method

This quantitative study investigates the relationship between principal leadership behavior and school climate perceived by Christian school teachers. In other words, are there certain leadership behaviors demonstrated by principals that correlate positively with certain aspects of the school climate? The study was limited to PK-12 member schools in the ACSI Central Division region. Because the population of teachers was undefined for the ACSI Central Division member schools, the study used the convenience sampling technique by selecting individuals who were available and willing to participate in the study. The participants completed a survey using the instruments of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Halpin 1957) and the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) (Hoy et al. 2002).

For the purposes of this study, the elements investigated for principal leadership behavior from the LBDQ were *Initiating Structure* (IS) and *Consideration* (C). *Initiating Structure* refers to the principal leader's patterns, practices, and protocols, including communication channels and ways of getting the job done (Halpin 1957). *Consideration* refers to the principal leader's warmth, friendship, mutual respect, and the trust between the leader and the faculty members (Halpin 1957). These leadership behaviors coincide with many of the constructs of the FSCM domain of Teaching

& Learning, including *Systems Thinking* (IS), *Data-Driven Improvement* (IS), and *Supportive Leadership* (C) (Swaner et al. 2019). An important note is that the leadership behaviors are not interconnected and do not depend on one another. They are separate variables that stand alone. The study did not consider the behaviors to be simultaneously enacted.

The elements investigated for school climate from the OCI were *Collegial Leadership* (CL), *Professional Teacher Behavior* (PTB), *Achievement Press* (AP), and *Institutional Vulnerability* (IV). *Collegial Leadership* refers to the principal leader's ability to meet the faculty's social needs and achieve the school goals. *Professional Teacher Behavior* refers to the observed behaviors of respect among colleagues, including a commitment to students, individual professional choices, and mutual respect and support for one another. *Achievement Press* is the perceived commitment by all school personnel to set high and achievable academic standards and goals for students. Finally, *Institutional Vulnerability* is the extent to which teachers believe the school is prone to allow a few vocal parents or citizen groups to alter what is happening within the school at large or in more minor aspects (Hoy et al. 2002). The school climate elements share theoretical underpinnings with several constructs in the FSCM domains of Relationships, Teaching & Learning, and Expertise & Resources, including Supportive Leadership (CL), Responsibility (PTB), Best Practice Orientation (PTB), Individualized Instruction (AP), Outcomes Focus (AP), and Parent Relationships (IV).

The survey was comprised of three sections with a total of sixty-eight questions. Section I included eight demographic questions regarding gender, age, ethnicity, enrollment size, number of years teaching, gender of leader, level teaching, and years of teaching experience in Christian education. Section II, identified as the leadership behavior portion, consisted of thirty questions using a five-point Likert-type scale to compute mean scores for the total scale and two subscales ranging from one to five. Section III identified as the school climate portion consisted of thirty questions using a four-point Likert-type scale to compute the mean scores for the total scale and four subscales ranging from one to four.

The data analysis addressed four research questions regarding the relationship between the leadership behavior of *Initiating Structure* and the school climate elements of *Collegial Leadership*, *Professional Teacher Behavior*, *Achievement Press*, and *Institutional Vulnerability,* and four research questions regarding the relationship between the leadership behavior of *Consideration* and the school climate elements of *Collegial Leadership*, *Professional Teacher Behavior*, *Achievement Press*, and *Institutional Vulnerability* for a total of eight research questions. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient *r* was found using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation test. The test was used to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two independent variables of leadership behavior and the four dependent variables

"Principal leadership behaviors affect relationships with faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members associated with the school."

of school climate. It is important to note that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient can demonstrate a relationship but does not infer causation between the variables.

Findings and Discussion

Descriptive statistics for gender revealed that almost 75 percent of the participants were female and 25 percent males. Individuals between 45–54 years of age compromised the highest percentage of participants (33 percent). Individuals in the 18–24 age range compromised the lowest percentage of participants (4 percent). Twenty-six percent were 55–64 years old, 23 percent were 35–44 years old, 10 percent were 25–34 years old, and only 4 percent were 65+ years old.

The participants were predominately White and accounted for 93 percent of the participants. Less than 2 percent were Latino and multiethnic, and less than 1 percent were American Indian / Alaska Native or Asian / Asian American. There were no Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islanders, or Black or African American participants. Approximately 60 percent of the participants had female school leaders, and 40 percent had male school leaders.

Forty-two percent of the participants teach at schools with an enrollment under 200, 34 percent in schools with an enrollment of 200–400, 21 percent in schools with an enrollment of 401–700, and 2.8 percent in schools with an enrollment over 701. Of the 143 participants, a third have taught in Christian education for 1–7 years, 27 percent for 8–15 years, 25 percent for 16–25 years, and 12 percent for more than 26 years. Approximately 4 percent of the participants were in their first year in Christian education. Even though these present limitations for the study, the indicators were not variables of interest for this study but could be of interest for future studies.

The data analysis found a very strong relationship between the leadership behavior of *Consideration* and the school climate element of *Collegial Leadership* ($r = .887$, $p < .05$). A strong relationship was found between the leadership behavior of *Initiating Structure* and the school climate element of *Collegial Leadership* ($r = .548$, $p < .05$), as well as between the leadership behavior of *Consideration* and the school climate element of *Institutional Vulnerability* ($r = -.551$, $p < .05$). The relationship between *Initiating Structure*

> *"Understanding what internal forces directly impact school culture and climate can aid in retention and enrollment for Christian schools as schools reflect from year to year, season to season."*

Consideration and Initiating Structure as predictors of CL, PTB, AP, and IV

and *Collegial Leadership*, as well as between *Consideration* and *Collegial Leadership,* was positive. A positive relationship indicates that when the principal leader demonstrates the leadership behavior of *Initiating Structure* or *Consideration*, teachers are more likely to perceive that their social needs will be met and that the school goals will be achieved. The strong relationship found between the leadership behavior of *Consideration* and the school climate element of *Institutional Vulnerability* was negative, suggesting that as teachers perceive that the principal leader demonstrates warmth, mutual respect, and trust toward them, they are more likely to believe that the institution is not susceptible to outside forces. The strong relationship between the internal force of leadership behavior and school climate is an area of interest because many external forces such as the economy and home life can directly impact school culture and climate and thus impact student retention and enrollment. Understanding what internal forces directly impact school culture and climate can aid in retention and enrollment for Christian schools as schools reflect from year to year, season to season.

The study found a weak to moderate relationship between the leadership behavior of *Initiating Structure* and the school climate elements of *Professional Teacher Behavior* ($r = .404$, $p < .05$), *Achievement Press* ($r = .381$, $p < .05$), and *Institutional Behavior* ($r = −.375$, $p < .05$) and between the leadership behavior of *Consideration* and the school climate elements of *Professional Teacher Behavior* ($r = .336$, $p < .05$) and *Achievement Press* ($r = .237$, $p < .05$). The weak relationship between the leadership behaviors and the school climate element of *Achievement Press* is another area of interest. *Achievement Press* characterizes the school's atmosphere concerning whether or not teachers sense that the school sets high but achievable academic standards and goals for all students. Furthermore, an atmosphere in which teachers observe students' persistence toward growing academically, whether students strive to achieve or just get by, and if high-achieving students are respected by each other and teachers for their academic success (Hoy et al. 2002). It is unknown why there is a weak relationship between the leadership behaviors of *Initiating Structure* and *Consideration* and the school climate element of *Achievement Press*. However, it is something to be examined in future studies.
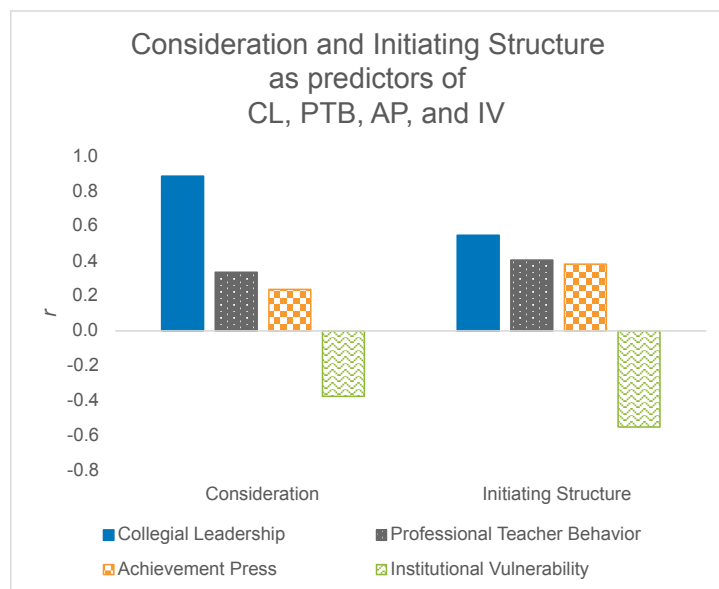
Conclusion

Leadership and school climate are two internal forces that can be managed and developed within a Christian school setting. As Christian schools seek to focus on areas that impact student outcomes and the whole student, principal leadership behavior and school climate are two key areas. It is essential to understand the relationship between the principal school leader and the school climate and teachers' perceptions in understanding and interpreting the relationship regarding the environment for the well-being of the whole student.

Although Christian schools will always be at the mercy of external forces (Kalkan et al. 2020; Pampuch 2019), leadership behavior and school climate are two factors over which school leaders have more direct control. Implications of this study reveal opportunities to examine whether a causation exists between the variables of leadership behavior and school climate and the connection to the student whole. RiB

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SALARY AND BENEFITS
in International Christian Schools

TIM SHUMAN & MATTHEW H. LEE

Between 2018-19 and 2020-21, the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) fielded the Tuition & Salary Survey (TSS), with 1,840 school-by-year participants over three years (ACSI 2019, 2020, 2021). These reports provided key insights on tuition, salary, benefits, and enrollment on ACSI member schools in the United States, helping to inform schools' operating budgets and strategic plans.

With a desire to provide a similar benefit to international schools, between December 2021 and January 2022, ACSI fielded the International Tuition & Salary Survey (ITSS). Altogether, the survey was sent to 156 schools. This analysis is based on a convenience sample of thirty-nine schools, a 25 percent response rate. This first report focuses on ITSS data on salary and benefits in international schools. A follow-up report on tuition, revenues, and enrollment will be available in the fall 2022 issue of *Research in Brief*.

Head of School Salary

We begin by turning to head of school (HOS) salary. In Table 1, we report the average (mean) and median head of school salaries by enrollment, region, and budget. The average is calculated by summing all head of school salaries within a category, then dividing by the number of schools in that category. The median is calculated by sorting schools within each category from low to high salary and selecting the salary of the middle observation (if an odd number of schools) or taking the average of the two middle observations (if an even number of schools). While both are measures of central tendency, the average is more sensitive to outliers (unusually high or low observations). Thus, when the average is substantially higher than the median, we might expect to observe a school with an unusually high HOS salary in the sample (and vice versa).

Table 1. Head of School Salary, By Enrollment, Region, and Budget			
	N	Average	Median
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Overall	17	$52,090.88	$47,000.00
By enrollment			
0-200 students	3	$38,031.33	$48,178.00
201-400 students	10	$55,694.10	$44,000.00
>400 students	4	$57,108.25	$59,816.50
By region			
Europe, Middle East, Central Asia, Africa	3	$45,960.00	$33,800.00
Asia Pacific	11	$52,938.82	$44,633.00
Latin America/North America	3	$59,753.67	$56,083.00
By school budget			
<$2.5M	5	$42,032.80	$48,178.00
$2.5M - $5M	5	$43,397.60	$35,688.00
>$5M	5	$73,846.60	$75,000.00

Unsurprisingly, we observe that schools with larger enrollments and budgets tend to compensate their HOS higher on average. Schools in the top enrollment band have a mean HOS salary of $57,000 and a median of nearly $60,000, while schools in the top budget band have a mean HOS salary of nearly $74,000 and a median of $75,000. These salaries are likely subject to other considerations, including the purpose of the school (to serve missionary kids primarily, or to serve as a general international Christian school, serving both expatriate and local children), cost of living, and regional economic realities.

Perhaps surprisingly, we do not observe much variation in HOS salary by region. The average salary of a HOS serving in Asia Pacific (nearly $53,000) is similar to the salary of a HOS serving in another region of the world (roughly $52,900).

Staffing Characteristics

This study also examines faculty and staffing characteristics, reporting the percentage breakdown of respondent schools

by role, citizenship, certification, educational attainment, and teaching experience. These characteristics are summarized in Table 2. On average, international school leadership and administrative teams tend to make up 10 percent of schools' staffing with 60 percent taken up by faculty positions and 30 percent by general staff. At the median school, 92.5 percent of faculty and staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Table 2. Percent (0-100) Faculty and Staff in Each Category						
	n	Average	Median	SD	Min	Max
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Staffing						
Teachers	26	60.6	62.5	13.0	40.0	90.0
Administrators	26	9.8	7.5	6.5	3.0	28.0
Staff	26	29.6	26.5	14.3	5.0	55.0
Full-Time	26	85.0	92.5	16.4	36.0	100.0
Citizenship						
USA	26	45.3	41.5	26.2	10.0	100.0
Local	25	38.2	40.0	23.0	0.0	74.0
Other	25	18.7	19.0	12.2	2.0	45.0
Teacher Certification						
ACSI	24	30.2	20.5	31.3	0.0	100.0
USA Certified	25	40.2	38.0	26.7	8.0	100.0
International Certified	18	19.1	13.0	17.7	0.0	60.0
Other Certified	18	29.5	19.0	23.7	4.0	80.0
Educational Attainment						
High School	8	1.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	4.0
Trade School	6	0.8	0.0	1.6	0.0	4.0
Associate's	14	4.3	2.0	5.5	0.0	17.0
Bachelor's	25	59.2	62.0	20.9	1.0	88.0
Master's	25	32.3	30.0	15.3	8.0	60.0
Education Specialist	10	9.8	3.5	21.1	0.0	69.0
Doctorate	12	3.4	2.0	2.7	1.0	10.0
Years of Experience						
< 1 year	12	6.9	5.5	8.4	0.0	27.0
1-5 years	24	27.2	23.5	18.2	1.0	64.0
6-10 years	24	28.4	26.0	12.8	11.0	50.0
11-15 years	23	19.1	21.0	10.3	4.0	35.0
16-20 years	22	15.8	13.5	8.9	5.0	36.0
21-30 years	18	8.4	7.0	6.4	0.0	23.0
31-40 years	10	3.5	4.0	3.6	0.0	10.0
> 40 years	8	1.0	0.5	1.2	0.0	3.0

International schools report a high proportion of U.S. citizens on staff, with an average of 45 percent across all schools. Interestingly, schools in this study reported an average of 38.2 percent staff with local citizenship, and another 18.7 percent staff with other citizenship. Local hires sometimes fill faculty positions or important roles in nonteaching areas, for example, as a liaison between school and state.

The U.S. has historically been a major source of expatriate teachers to international schools, but schools in this study hire from several other countries. Canada and the Philippines are now tied at second place as the next major source for expat staff among member international schools. South Korea, the U.K., Australia, and South Africa, in that order, comprise the other top recruiting destinations. International schools can and should continue to place focused attention on the North American market for staffing, while developing strategies to recruit qualified staff from other countries like the Philippines, South Korea, and U.K. Commonwealth countries to fill positions.

We find strong evidence that teachers in international schools are highly qualified in terms of certification, educational attainment, and teaching experience. A substantial portion of international schools' instructional faculty hold ACSI teaching certification (30 percent) or some other U.S. (40 percent) or international (19 percent) certification. International school teachers also demonstrate high levels of educational attainment, with roughly three-fifths holding a bachelor's and another third holding a master's degree as their highest level of attainment. Of schools reporting, many teachers have also attained an education specialist (9.8 percent) or doctoral degree (3.4 percent), exceeding the median ACSI school in all categories (ACSI 2019, 2020, 2021). In our sample of schools, teachers have similar years of experience than counterparts in the median ACSI school (ACSI 2019, 2020, 2021).

The attainment advantage may be explained in part by the fact that many countries have strict qualification requirements for roles filled by expatriate workers. Some Asian countries even have a years of experience requirement before a work visa will be issued.

Teacher Benefits

Data on teacher benefits is presented in Table 3, which reports the number of schools responding to each question in column 1 and the number of schools offering each type of benefit in column 2. The proportion of schools in each category (column 2 divided by column 1) is presented in column 3.

Twenty-three schools in our sample indicated having at least some teachers who are salaried. Among these schools, the most common benefit offered to salaried teachers is a tuition discount, with all 23 respondent schools indicating they offer this benefit. Most schools offer medical insurance or pay for the teachers' residence permit (51.3 percent each). It should be noted that some countries may offer medical care to their citizens or at low cost to foreigners, and some residency permits may be low cost. Less common benefits for salaried teachers include flights reimbursement (43.6 percent), housing (38.5 percent), or professional development stipend (38.5 percent). In addition, 17.9 percent of schools identified some other benefits

Table 3. What Types of Benefits Are Provided to Teachers?			
	Responses	Offer Benefit	% Offering Benefit
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Salaried Teachers			
Housing	23	15	65.2
Flights	23	17	73.9
Medical Insurance	23	20	87.0
Residence Permit	23	20	87.0
Professional Development Stipend	23	15	65.2
Tuition Discount	23	23	100.0
Other*	23	7	30.4
Teachers on Missionary Support			
Housing	6	2	33.3
Flights	6	1	16.7
Medical Insurance	6	2	33.3
Residence Permit	6	4	66.7
Tuition Discount	6	6	100.0
Teachers on Stipend			
Housing	6	2	33.3
Medical Insurance	6	2	33.3
Residence Permit	6	4	66.7
Professional Development Stipend	6	2	33.3
Tuition Discount	6	4	66.7

* "Other" included lunch, retirement, paid vacation/sick leave, furnished homes, settling-in allowance, student loan repayment, and transportation allowance.

Some member schools, often referred to as "MK schools," operate on a missionary support basis, where expatriate teachers and staff work in combination with family, churches, and individuals to secure personal funding to join in the mission of the school that has a special calling to support the work of missionary families in the region. It is generally understood that a staff member serving on missionary support will raise enough funds to cover nearly all expenses and salary needs outside of the school's operating budget. The amount one needs to raise is determined by both the receiving school and the sending agency providing backend support. Six schools in our sample reported having some teachers on missionary support. Of these, the most common benefit was a tuition discount (all schools), followed by residence permit (two-thirds), housing (one-third), medical insurance (one-third), and flight reimbursement (one school).

Stipends take various forms across the international schools that offer them. In some cases, a stipend might be a living wage (covering basic living expenses) or a supplement to missionary support. Schools with a stipend plan tend to provide other benefits similar in proportion to schools that operate on a missionary support basis. These schools will often have a mix of expatriate and local hires on staff, as well as a combination of staff on missionary support and on stipend. Stipends may or may not be distributed consistently across expatriate staff. More research on these various support and compensation mechanisms is needed.

Teacher Salary

Finally, data on entry, average, and highest teacher salary at median by school enrollment, region, and school budget is presented in Table 4. Unsurprisingly, schools with larger budgets offer a higher entry, average, and highest teacher

for salaried teachers, including lunch, retirement benefits, paid vacation and sick leave, and student loan repayment. It is possible that schools offer a distinct benefits package for local hires from the package they offer to expatriate hires.

Table 4. Teacher Salary, by School Characteristics						
	Entry Teacher Salary		Average Teacher Salary		Highest Teacher Salary	
	n	Median	n	Median	n	Median
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Overall	19	$15,000.00	21	$20,400.00	20	$29,968.00
By school enrollment						
0-200	5	$13,838.00	5	$17,550.00	5	$21,263.00
201-400	11	$19,000.00	13	$21,000.00	12	$35,000.00
> 400	3	$14,190.00	3	$19,482.00	3	$30,920.00
By region						
Africa, Asia Central, Middle East, Europe	4	$8,600.00	6	$15,500.00	5	$16,000.00
Asia Pacific	10	$19,500.00	10	$23,569.50	10	$35,000.00
Latin/North America	5	$13,838.00	5	$17,550.00	5	$21,263.00
By school budget						
< $2.5M	9	$10,815.00	10	$15,212.50	9	$19,710.00
$2.5M-$5M	5	$14,190.00	5	$19,482.00	5	$29,016.00
> $5M	3	$28,785.00	4	$38,563.50	4	$44,525.00

salary at the median. Patterns are less clear when examining salary by enrollment and region, especially in light of our findings for HOS salary. Whereas HOS salary was highest in the top enrollment bracket, teacher salaries at the largest schools in our sample were not clearly higher than salaries at schools enrolling 201-400 students. On the other hand, while HOS salaries were similar across regions, teacher salaries were highest in schools in the Asia Pacific region, followed by Latin and North America, then schools in other regions.

Factors considered for the salary schedule are summarized in Table 5, which presents the number of schools responding to each question in column 1 and the number of schools answering in the affirmative in column 2. The proportion of schools considering each characteristic as part of their salary schedule (column 2 divided by column 1) is presented in column 3. Overall, 61.5 percent of schools in our sample have a salary schedule. Among schools with a salary schedule, the most common factors considered include total experience and educational attainment (79.2 percent of schools), followed by teacher certification and experience at school (62.5 percent). Less commonly considered factors include teaching load (41.7 percent), performance reviews (two schools), and subject taught (one school).

Concluding Thoughts

Between December 2021 and January 2022, ACSI fielded the ITSS, inviting 156 international Christian schools to participate. Overall, thirty-nine schools responded, a 25 percent response rate. It is important to note that not all schools answered all questions, limiting our ability to parse the data more finely by school characteristics, including enrollment, region, and budget. Therefore, caution is warranted when interpreting and applying these numbers, especially given the diversity of international schools broadly speaking. More research is needed to capture the nuances and intricacies of the international Christian schooling landscape.

Nonetheless, the ITSS allowed for a valuable first pass at the data, providing some important insights for international schools' salary and benefits characteristics. The next report will focus on tuition, revenue, and enrollment characteristics, and will be available in the fall issue of *Research in Brief*. RiB

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Table 5. Salary Schedule	Responses	Consider in Salary Schedule	Average
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Does your school have a salary schedule?	39	24	61.5
Which factors does your school consider in its salary schedule?			
Teacher Certification	24	15	62.5
Experience at School	24	15	62.5
Total Experience	24	19	79.2
Educational Attainment	24	19	79.2
Teaching Load	24	10	41.7
Performance Reviews	24	2	8.3
Subject Taught	24	1	4.2
Other	24	8	33.3

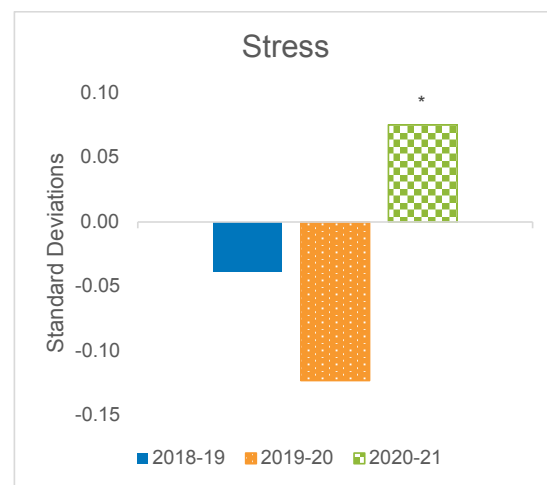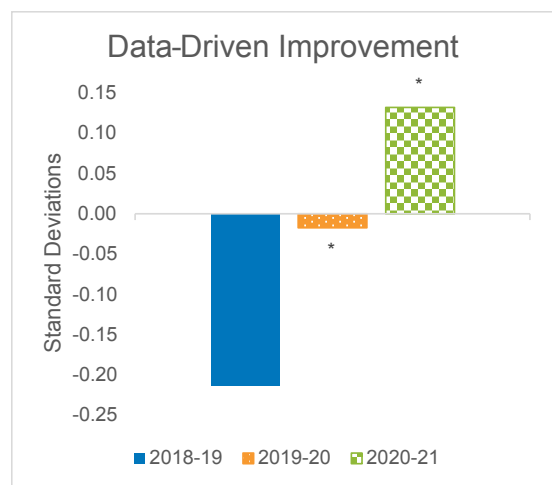# Insights from Flourishing Schools Research

With three years of Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI) data, it's time to look back and see what's changed. Highlighted here are two constructs for which schools have scored significantly higher in recent years compared to the pilot year, one construct for which schools have scored significantly lower, and two constructs that haven't scored significantly higher or lower. Each construct has been standardized across all three years to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Asterisks above bars indicate a statistically significant difference relative to the pilot year (2018-19) at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$). RiB
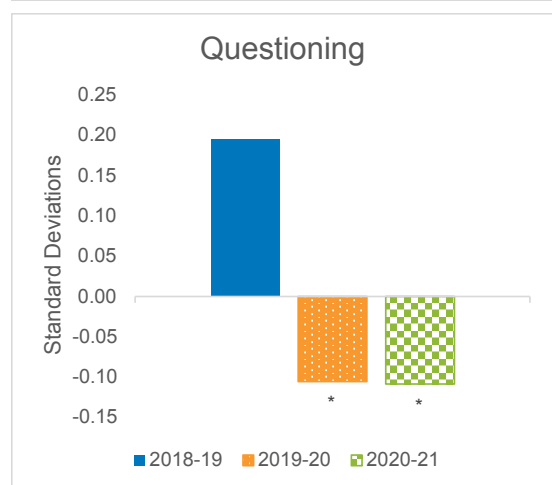

Best Practice Orientation
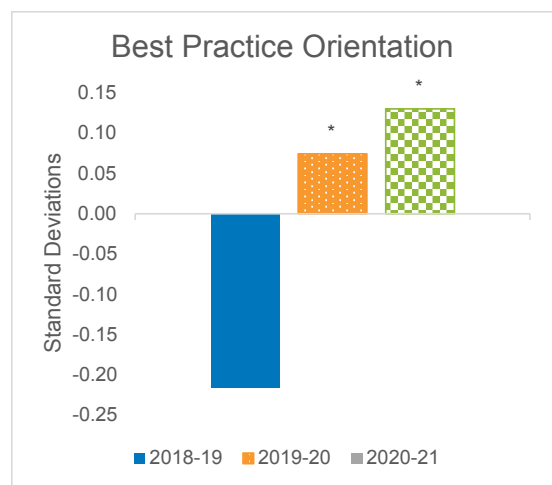
Best Practice Orientation is trending up, with significantly higher scores in 2019-20 and 2020-21. Perhaps teachers feel empowered with schoolwide innovations that took place during the pandemic.
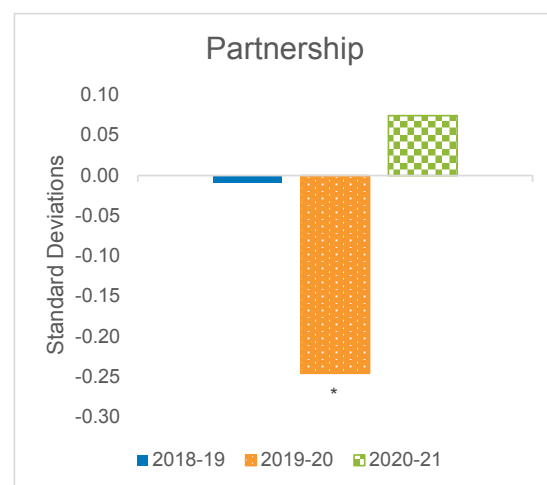

Data-Driven Improvement

Data-Driven Improvement is also trending up, improving by 0.19 standard deviations from 2018-19 to 2019-20, and by 0.15 standard deviations from 2019-20 to 2020-21. School leaders may be feeling better equipped with data from the FSCI to make meaningful improvements to their school community.

Questioning

Questioning is one construct that is trending down. It is a reverse-coded construct, meaning that lower scores indicate a greater level of questioning among students. The construct combines having doubts about faith, lacking time to pray or study the Bible, and feeling Christians are too judgmental together.

Stress

Stress is one construct that bounced back in 2020-21. Like Questioning, Stress is a reverse-coded construct, so a higher score indicates a lower level of stress and a higher level of wellness. After an understandably stressful 2019-20 school year, the Stress construct dropped to a substantial but statistically insignificant 0.12 standard deviations below the mean, bouncing back to a significant 0.08 standard deviations above the mean, the highest score yet, suggesting higher levels of teacher wellness relative to previous years.

Partnership

Finally, **Partnership** also bounced back in 2020-21. Perhaps the challenges of COVID-19 made it difficult for parents to partner with schools in 2019-20, when schools averaged a significant quarter of a standard deviation below the mean. Partnership recovered to 0.07 standard deviations above the mean, statistically indistinguishable from the base pre-COVID-19 year.

ACSI Completes Successful FSCI Pilot in Australia, Launches New Pilot in Canada

In late 2020, seven Australian Christian schools, from diverse locations and states across the country, were recruited by Christian Schools Australia (CSA) to participate in an Australian pilot of the Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI). Six of the schools utilized the traditional (nonautomated) version of the instrument, while one of the schools trialed a new FSCI online platform. Qualitative follow-up surveys enabled Australian school leaders to provide feedback on the usefulness of FSCI insights in real time. For each of the seven schools participating in the Australia pilot, the FSCI identified a set of five top *strength areas* and five major *areas for growth* (based on each school's individual construct scores).

The results were valuable not only for the participating schools themselves but also for the Christian school sector, as it provides a snapshot of the key strengths and areas for improvement for a sample of schools in CSA membership. The qualitative data collected from these schools via a follow-up survey was positive and showed that leaders are already using FSCI results in their school improvement plans and overall strategic planning. The results were shared in CSA professional development and network meetings during 2021.

During fall 2021, ACSI launched a new pilot with over twenty schools across Canada, with results anticipated at the end of spring 2022. Both the Australia and Canada pilots are exciting efforts to broaden the reach of the FSCI in Christian schools worldwide, in addition to FSCI's implementation in a number of international schools across the globe. Taken together, these efforts represent ACSI Research's efforts to serve the global sector of Christian schools through rigorous research that benefits school flourishing and improvement. RiB

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