FOSTERING A "CULTURE OF TRUST" WITHIN AND OUTSIDE A SCHOOL SYSTEM

Toronto District School Board

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TITLE: Fostering a "Culture of Trust" Within and Outside a School System
AUTHOR: Erhan Sinay, Amie Presley, Margaret Douglin, and Stefanie De Jesus

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In the office in which I work there are five people of whom I am afraid. Each of these five people is afraid of four people (excluding overlaps), for a total of twenty, and each of these twenty people is afraid of six people, making a total of one hundred and twenty people who are feared by at least one person. Each of these one hundred and twenty people is afraid of the other one hundred and nineteen, and all of these one hundred and forty-five people are afraid of the twelve men at the top who helped found and build the company and now own and direct it.

Joseph Heller, Something Happened, 1974, p.9 (as cited in Tudor, 2003, p.238)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to examine the best practices, models, and innovations and recommend practical solutions for building and repairing a "Culture of Trust" within and outside a school system. In doing so, the literature from both organizational and school effectiveness perspectives was examined. In this study, "Culture of Trust" "outside a school system" was examined as a function of building and fostering "Public Trust".

This study covers the following sections: (1) Background and Rationale; (2) Culture of Trust within Organizations; (3) Fostering a Culture of Trust within a School System; (4) Fostering a Culture of Trust outside a School System; (5) Practical Solutions and Recommendations for Fostering Trust Within and Outside a School System; and, (6) Concluding Remarks.

Trust is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon (see the following Figure). First, there is a temporal dimension to trust. Appraisals of ability and integrity are established immediately, whereas appraisals of benevolence require more time (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Second, trust is also dynamic, and changes according to the work environment, contextual and situational factors, and globalization, among other factors (Jessup, 1997). Third, trust is multidimensional. It is comprised of interrelated cognitive and affective components (Lamsa & Pucetaite, 2006; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007).

Trust in other parties is based on an evaluation and knowledge base of the individual or organization (i.e., past performance and behaviour is a good predictor of future performance and behaviour) and innate emotional states about the trust experience. Fourth, trust involves a directional element, whereby relationships among employees, relationships among employees and leaders, and relationships between employees and the organization are referred to as horizontal, vertical, and institutional, respectively (Katarzyna & Lewicka, 2012).

Dimensions of Trust

Temporal (e.g., appraisals of ability, integrity & benevolence)

Directional (e.g., horizontal, vertical, institutional)

Trust

Dynamic (e.g., contextual and situational factors)

Multidimensional (e.g., cognitive and affective)

Sources: Jessup, 1997; Katarzyna & Lewicka, 2012; Lamsa & Pucetaite, 2006; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007.

Trust in these relationships is not always reciprocal or mutual (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Finally, socio-demographic and cultural factors also affect organizational trust levels as the shared values, beliefs, and behavioural norms reflect the members of the community (Jessup, 1997; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Winograd, 2000). Trust is a valuable social currency and fundamental to creativity, innovation, and risk-taking as well as for the economic performance of organizations. Therefore, significant consideration should be given to the aforementioned dimensions of trust.

Culture of Trust within Organizations

Trust is absolute; it is present or absent, yet it is not possible to have total trust all of the time (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). What's more, trust is similar to a muscle – it is reinforced and strengthened through continuous use or application.

> Trust is reinforced by trusting. […] Being trusted is so psychologically gratifying that people seek to do more things that reinforce your belief in them. It is a virtuous circle. It works the same way with mistrust: the less we trust, the

more we find reasons to reinforce that lack of trust. (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004, p. 123)

Bibb and Kourdi (2004) characterized a culture of trust by the following eight attributes (see the following Figure).

Characteristics of a Culture of Trust

1. Shared values	• Values which are practiced at work but meaningful to employees outside of work.
2. A shared mission or goal	• Employees' commitment to communal goals, and not simply personal/independent goals.
3. Open and authentic leadership	• A propensity of a leader to demonstrate trust, among other values, towards employees.
4. A culture of consensus not force	• Employees willingly contribute to shared missions or goals if there is a culture of trust, otherwise, employees may feel pressured or coerced to do so.
5. A feeling of enjoying work	• A culture of trust is fostered if employees feel relaxed and sense that mistakes and failure are accepted.
6. An atmosphere of fun and enjoyment	• A workplace where employees can have fun, be themselves, and are open to pushing intellectual (i.e. ideas, concepts) boundaries.
7. A desire to learn, not blame	• Fault associated with mistakes and failure does not nurture openness, trust, and ongoing development among employees.
8. Honest and authentic conversations	• A culture of trust is fostered where there is sincere communication and information is not withheld across horizontal and vertical relationships.

Source: Bibb & Kourdi, 2004

Low-trust cultures, on the other hand, are typically plagued by leader scepticism, cynicism, an "irrational desire to trust blindly", fear, and cunning communication styles (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004).

Culture of Trust at the School and District Level

In definitions of trust in the school context, trust involves the willingness to be vulnerable and to take risks (Forsyth, Adams & Hoy, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). It also requires the 'interdependence' between parties where one's interests cannot be achieved without

relying on others (Rousseau et al., 1998 as cited in Forsyth et al., 2011, and Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In schools, there is a high level of interdependence between different parties - teachers, principals, students, parents - who must rely on and cooperate with one another to achieve tasks (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

The following seven facets of trust have been identified in the literature on school settings. They are used to judge the trustworthiness of another party or group.

Facets of Trust in School Settings

1. Benevolence	• Having confidence that another party will act in one's best interests (Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000)
2. Competence	• Depending on a person's knowledge, skills, and competence to do their job (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000)
3. Honesty and Integrity	• The consistency between words and actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Doing what is right and demonstrating a commitment to shared beliefs or values (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
4. Openess and Transparency	• Sharing of information and transparency of one's actions or plans (Forsyth et al., 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
5. Personal Regard	• Caring for others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
6. Reliability or Consistency	• The predictability of behaviour and the confidence that one's needs will be met (Forsyth et al., 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
7. Respect	• Recognizing other people's value and demonstrating this value by listening and considering their views (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

Relationships are the building blocks for trusting interactions among staff and leaders within a school system. If school systems are to become effective agents in supporting student learning, educational leaders need to be aware of the importance of trust. They also need to create structures and processes that promote interaction, dialogue, and collaboration, and engage staff and constituents at all levels of the organization in decision-making. By attending to the dynamics of social relationships and fostering a climate of trust, educational leaders can better support school and school system effectiveness and improvement. The efforts of educational leaders to build trust across a school system can lead to positive results throughout the organization as well as improved public trust in public education as a whole.

Following are recommendations for fostering "Culture of Trust" within and outside a school system emerged from this review.

Recommendations for Fostering a Culture of Trust within and Outside a School System

Organizations must strive to foster a culture with shared values, a shared mission or goal, open and authentic leadership, use of consensus not force, enjoyment of work, a positive atmosphere, a safe learning environment, and honest and authentic conversations. Overall, the following points can help educational leaders in fostering a "Culture of Trust":

- Trust-promoting strategies must be initiated and sustained by leaders, which will be observed, internalized, and emulated by employees.

- Ability, benevolence, and integrity are fundamental dimensions for building trust in vertical relationships with leaders.

- Consistency in the following behaviours should be encouraged among leaders and employees: honesty, openness, reliability/predictability, competency, and caring.

- Following an act of distrust, communication, reparations, penance, structural arrangements, and accountability may help to build and repair trust.

- Transformational leadership is the most favourable leadership practice to earning trust.

- Employees across a school system need to be engaged in collaborative decision-making and shared leadership.

- There needs to be structures in place to foster communication and strengthen relationships and interactions between stakeholders across the system. This includes the relations between central office and school-based staff, as well as between board members and senior educational leadership. See Appendix B for examples of structures that can strengthen communication and relationships among stakeholders within a school system.

- A culture of trust can be promoted through multiple leadership behaviours, practices, and recommendations.

Recommendations for Fostering Public Trust in Public School System

Public trust is not built overnight and demands strong leadership and consistent messaging surrounding the value of the public's perception, the value of the public's participation, and the contribution both make to a healthy district – community relationship. Some fundamental strategies noted in the literature include:

- To foster district and board collaboration, build a collection of policies and procedures that guide school district and board leadership's conduct (i.e., governance documents, code of conduct, communication protocols, professional development opportunities, etc.).

- Encourage public involvement by acknowledging the importance of the public's voice. District and board leaders should engage informally and formally with their communities by setting an annual public consultation plan, attending community meetings outside district offices, and becoming a visible spokesperson for public education and their school district, respectively.

- School districts should provide the public with the means necessary to hold them accountable; this includes accessible, consistent, and timely information about all district related information, access to district and board leadership, and an overall commitment to effective communication and transparency.

- All district employees should be considered as valuable supports to building public trust. School districts should work to ensure all employees are provided with the most recent information that would be potentially communicated to the public. Districts should build an annual communication strategy which includes all stakeholders.

- School districts should work to increase their social capital by actively engaging in community relationship building and maintenance. Districts and boards need to work hard to nourish their relationships with their public counterparts.

SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In 1979, Jimmy Carter addressed the American people in a nationally-televised speech about the country's then energy and economic crisis. He spoke about the widening "crisis of confidence" among the public (Carter, 1979):

> The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation. The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America. (para. 32-33)

Much like the invisible threat that is capable of destroying the social and political fabric of a country described by Carter, Onora O'Neill and others have warned of this trust gap and its repercussions in public and private sectors, such as business, education, and healthcare (O'Neill, 2002). The foundation for trust is rooted in the strength, cohesiveness, and pervasiveness of the organizational culture (Jessup, 1997). It is likened to an organization's DNA and defined as the "social glue" that sustains an organization and its members according to shared values, beliefs, and behavioural norms (Robbins, 1993). While it is known that organizational culture plays a crucial role in the holistic success of employees and the organization, leaders must recognize the fundamental need for and impact of trust.

Recent discussions on "culture of trust" within and outside a school system evolved as an antithesis and solution for a "culture of fear" (Sinay, 2015).

> A *culture of fear*, in which strong power dynamics are at play, is harmful and destructive. It discourages ethical sensitivity, courage, "risk taking", "creativity", "imaginative thinking", and the capacity to learn or adapt. It promotes "resistance to change" and weakens the "human spirit" and "morale". Leaders who support a *culture of fear* ruin an organization's spirit and resort to an abuse of power (Beerel, 2009; as cited in Sinay, 2015, p. 4).

As asserted by Rock (2010) "[t]here is only one way, [to replace a culture of fear and that is] to replace it with a culture of trust. Trust is the opposite of fear in organizational culture" (p. 48). "Trust is essential for the effective functioning of organizations. It is a multi-dimensional construct that changes and evolves within the context of relationships" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; as cited in Sinay, 2015, p. 7).

"Current global and national education reforms call for transforming the 'old bureaucratic' school systems that no longer are deemed fitting for the 21st Century into the 'modern enabling one'" (Schleicher, 2010; Schleicher, 2011; as cited in Sinay, 2015, p. 1). It is, therefore, "essential in the 'new modern enabling educational systems' to have 'flat, collegial' organizational

designs with strong accountability systems to students, peers, and all educational stakeholders who can effectively promote an organizational culture free of fear" (Schleicher, 2011; as cited in Sinay, 2015, p. 1).

The purpose of this study is to examine the best practices, models, and innovations and recommend practical solutions for building and repairing a "Culture of Trust" within and outside a school system. In doing so, we examined the literature from both organizational and school effectiveness perspectives. The approach in this review was interdisciplinary given that the study of trust draws from a wide range of disciplines. To identify literature for this review, we conducted a search related to trust (see Appendix A for a list of search terms).

The review covers the following sections: (1) Background and Rationale; (2) Culture of Trust within Organizations; (3) Fostering a Culture of Trust within a School System; (4) Fostering a Culture of Trust outside a School System; (5) Practical Solutions and Recommendations for Fostering Trust Within and Outside a School System; and (6) Concluding Remarks.

The central hypothesis of this study is that the *quality of social and organizational relationships within, across, and outside the schools and central offices affects the quality of the schooling system, student achievement, and well-being. Therefore, "trust" is vital for school and district effectiveness, and educational leaders need to develop strategies for building trust. Central to the formation of trust are structures, processes, and leadership strategies that support communication, collaboration, and good relationships.*

In this study, culture of trust "outside a school system" was examined as a function of building and fostering "Public Trust". Our framework captures social and organizational interactions within and across schools and central offices including all of the internal educational stakeholders (e.g., students, educators, administrators, etc.). It also captures social and organizational interactions with educational stakeholders out of a school system (e.g., parents, public, etc.). Both research evidence from organizational sector as well as educational sector used in our review. Figure 1 depicts our approach in studying a culture of trust inside and outside a school system.

Figure 1: **A Framework of Studying "Culture of Trust" Within and Outside a School System**
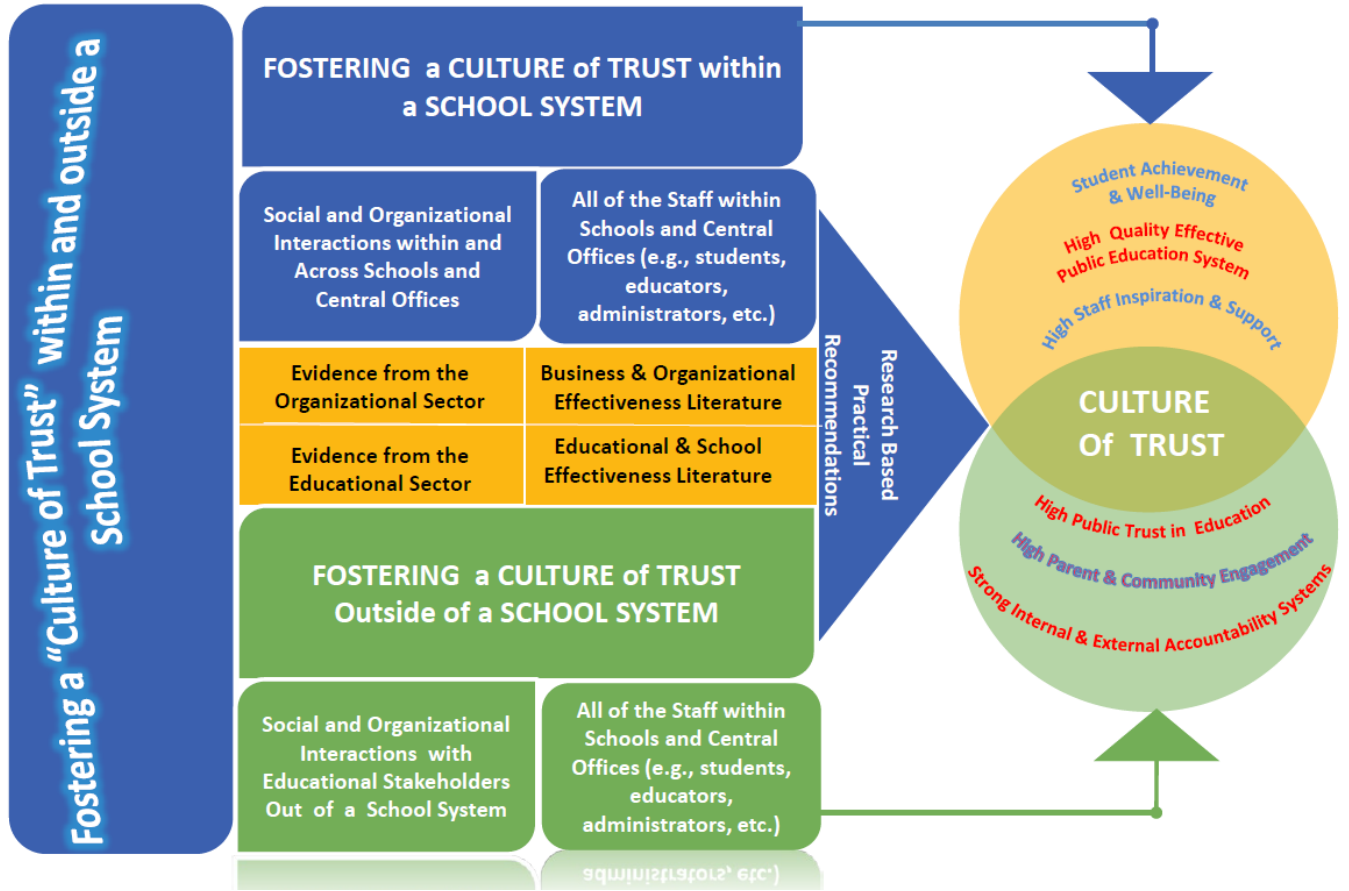
SECTION II: CULTURE OF TRUST WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

This section reviews the meaning, characteristics, drivers, stages of a culture of trust, as well as past and present research trends by mainly using evidence from the business and organizational effectiveness literature.

What is Trust?

Trust has been examined extensively in the literature by scholars from diverse disciplines including business, finance, political science, ethics, psychology, and healthcare (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Mayer, a renowned scholar on trust in organizations, has defined trust as "[…] the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor irrespective to the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). Trust has also been explained as "one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is: competent, open, concerned, and reliable" (Mishra, 1996, p. 256). The following definition illustrates the role of organizational trust in establishing cohesion and foundation for realizing objectives:

> [The] miracle ingredient in organizational life – a lubricant that reduces friction, a bonding agent that glues together disparate parts, a catalyst that facilitates action (Shea, 1984, p. 21).

Another explanation specific to organizations demonstrates the pervasiveness of trust:

Trust is institutionalized in an organization's rules, roles and relations. That means it is embedded in everything an organization does or tries to do. It is explicit and implicit. It is in the climate and culture. It is found in every interpersonal encounter, at every meeting. It is displayed in how outsiders are treated. It permeates organizations. (Carnevale, 1995, p. 21)

Taken together, trust involves a degree of risk (i.e., vulnerability) and reliance on cognitions (i.e., expectations, experiences) in order to invest further in an individual or organization and form a mutually beneficial relationship.

Trust is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon (see Figure 2). First, there is a temporal dimension to trust. Appraisals of ability and integrity are established immediately, whereas appraisals of benevolence require more time (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Second, trust is also dynamic, and changes according to the work environment, contextual and situational factors, and globalization, among other factors (Jessup, 1997). Third, trust is multidimensional. It is comprised of interrelated cognitive and affective components (Lamsa & Pucetaite, 2006; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Trust in other parties is based on an evaluation and knowledge base of the individual or organization (i.e., past performance and behaviour is a good predictor of future performance and behaviour) and innate emotional states

about the trust experience. Fourth, trust involves a directional element, whereby relationships among employees, relationships among employees and leaders, and relationships between employees and the organization are referred to as horizontal, vertical, and institutional, respectively (Katarzyna & Lewicka, 2012).

Figure 2: Dimensions of Trust

Sources: Jessup, 1997; Katarzyna & Lewicka, 2012; Lamsa & Pucetaite, 2006; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007.

Trust in these relationships is not always reciprocal or mutual (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Finally, socio-demographic and cultural factors also affect organizational trust levels as the shared values, beliefs, and behavioural norms reflect the members of the community (Jessup, 1997; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Winograd, 2000). Trust is a valuable social currency and fundamental to creativity, innovation, and risk-taking as well as for the economic performance of organizations. Therefore, significant consideration should be given to the aforementioned dimensions of trust.

What are the Characteristics of a Culture of Trust within Organizations?

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> Trust is reinforced by trusting. […] Being trusted is so psychologically gratifying that people seek to do more things that reinforce your belief in them. It is a virtuous circle. It works the same way with mistrust: the less we trust, the more we find reasons to reinforce that lack of trust. (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004, p. 123)

Bibb and Kourdi (2004) characterized a culture of trust by the following eight attributes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Characteristics of a Culture of Trust

1. Shared values	• Values which are practiced at work but meaningful to employees outside of work.
2. A shared mission or goal	• Employees' commitment to communal goals, and not simply personal/independent goals.
3. Open and authentic leadership	• A propensity of a leader to demonstrate trust, among other values, towards employees.
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Source: Bibb & Kourdi, 2004

Low-trust cultures, on the other hand, are typically plagued by leader scepticism, cynicism, an "irrational desire to trust blindly", fear, and cunning communication styles (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004).

What are the Drivers of Trust within Organizations?

An organizational culture of trust, much like trusting personal relationships, stems from the cumulative historical interaction between two or more parties (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Five basic sources, or

drivers, of trust have been found to be strong and stable predictors of organizational trust among various cultures, languages, industries, and types of organizations (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011).

1. Competence

Competence refers to the ability and efficiency of the organization (i.e., leaders, employees, decisions, etc.), ability to meet challenges and objectives, quality of its outputs (e.g., services, products, etc.), a representation of the capabilities of employees at all levels, and is measured by achieving goals (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011). Trust in competence can be built through purpose, vision, leadership, goals, strategy, structure, and execution (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011). Trust in competence is also fostered when issues are solved efficiently and adequately and there is a continuous commitment to improving and developing competence (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011).

2. Openness and Honesty

With respect to a leader's and organization's communication, the management of issues, disagreements, decision-making, and provision of job reviews should be conducted in an open and honest manner (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011). Furthermore, communication should be bi-directional, timely, and accurate. This "need to share" driver of a culture of trust is cyclical (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011), in that, if employees are trusted by leaders, they will be more open and honest with them, which will encourage leaders to be more open and honest with employees. Openness and honesty reduces uncertainty,

as well as enhances organizational loyalty and job satisfaction (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011).

3. Concern for Employees and Stakeholders

Employees and stakeholders must feel their voices are heard (i.e., leaders listening and willing to respond to their needs, thoughts, and concerns) and that organizational policies, processes, and practices are in their best interest (e.g., safety procedures, health plans and benefits, family leave, vacation, performance evaluation, etc.) (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011). Trust in concern is related to higher job satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, job retention rate, productivity, and loyalty (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011).

4. Reliability

Employees infer how reliable their leaders are from their level of commitment, follow-through, consistent behaviour, and whether they listen and respond to suggestions, problems, and concerns. Building trust in reliability can occur at the individual and organizational levels, but boils down to the congruency between words and actions.

5. Identification

Identification refers to an alignment of core values between employees and the organizational decisions, communication, policies, and actions (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011). In other words, a culture of trust is fostered if employees personally connect with their co-workers, leaders, and organization, and if their personal values are reflected in the workplace (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011). Identification is positively related to job satisfaction, perceived organizational effectiveness,

coping abilities during uncertain times, bonding with co-workers, and loyalty (Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011).

Overall, the five drivers of trust embody dispositional, behavioural, interpersonal, and institutional factors can be depicted as in Figure 4 (Jessup, 1997).

Figure 4: Five Drivers of Trust
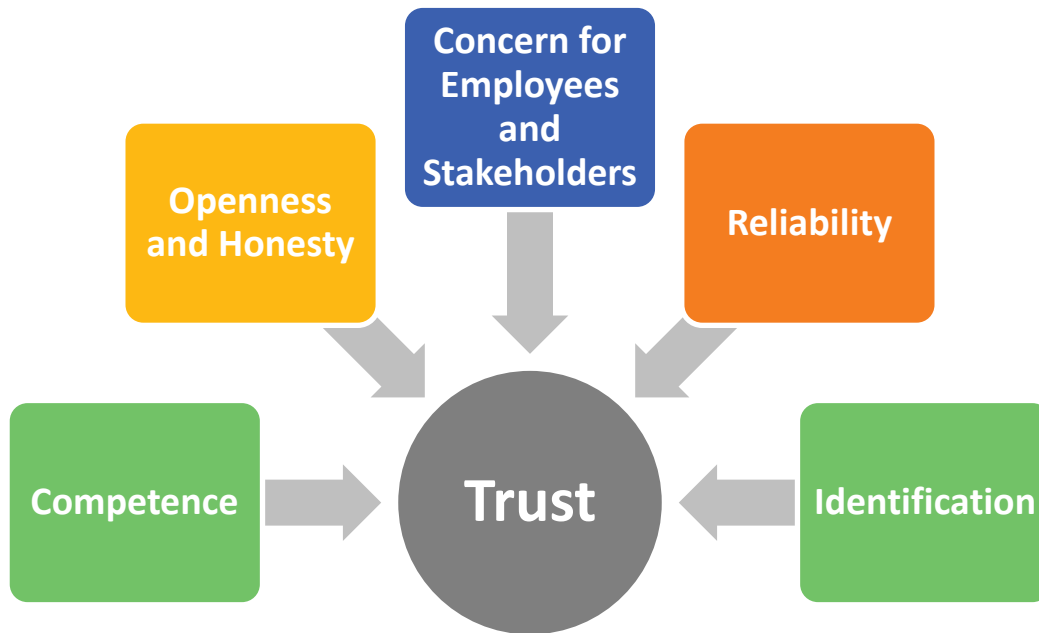
Source: Jessup, 1997

What are the Stages of Trust within Organizations?

Scholars have attempted to conceptualize the stages in which organizational trust develops. The first camp argues that trust is a dynamic and fluid belief lacking definite phases (Tierney, 2006):

> Some will liken defining trust to nailing gelatin to the wall—an impossible task not only because the substance lacks a solid physical property but because the walls (the organization's actors) change as well. (Tierney, 2006, p. 74)

On the other hand, Lewicki and Bunker (1995) used a metaphor for the three Stages of Trust development. Tactical climbing, which symbolizes an incomplete and fragile belief system, requires coordinating actions as employees and leaders increase levels of reciprocal risk. Next, gardening refers to the ongoing growth of trust from expanding knowledge of the other party. The final stage of trust development is called musical harmonizing, where employees collectively identify with the organization through learning and social interactions.

What are the Research Trends in the Organizational Effectiveness Literature?

For decades, researchers have made meaningful contributions to better understanding the culture of trust across various sectors and the relationship to intrapersonal and interpersonal factors, as well as organizational culture and structure.

Intrapersonal

Evidence has revealed how a trusting workplace environment, or lack thereof, affects employees and vice versa. A lack of trust has been related to a reduction in employee motivation to be productive and contribute to goals (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011). It has also been found that destructive behaviours, inability to manage crises effectively, anxiety, and negative affect are more prevalent in low trust organizations (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Shockley-Zalabak, 2011). Interestingly, one paper revealed that organizational tenure, or the duration of employment, was inversely related to trust levels. In other words, the greater the number of years employed with an organization, the lower levels of trust (Jessup, 1997). As one might expect, this leads to greater costs (related to surveillance and compliance) and lower job satisfaction and innovation (Knoll & Gill, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak & Morreale, 2011).

The relationship between culture and trust is mediated by demographic factors. Namely, Caucasian, younger (under 40 years of age), and female individuals tend to be less trusting than other ethnicities, older individuals, and males, respectively (Jessup, 1997).

Interpersonal

Trusting horizontal relationships (i.e., with coworkers) enable employees to feel safe and positive (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Werbel & Henriques, 2009). Greater trust in peers was associated with higher job satisfaction (Cook & Wall, 1980; Lehmann-Willenbrock & Kauffeld, 2010). Ability, benevolence, and integrity were correlated to trust in co-workers (Knoll & Gill, 2011). Overall, a culture of trust is an important factor for successful socialization, collaboration, effective team-work (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995), and grounds for social structure (Hosmer, 1995; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Among vertical relationships (i.e., with leaders), ability, benevolence, and integrity were the most important dimensions that correlated to trust (Katarzyna & Lewicka, 2012; Knoll & Gill, 2011). Earlier research found that leaders reported higher levels of trust in employees than employees in leaders (Jessup, 1997). This could be explained by the power imbalance in vertical relationships, where leaders have greater "dominance and fate control" (Butler, 1991, p. 658). Finally, competence was the most important dimension of trust in leader-employee relations (Katarzyna & Lewicka, 2012).

Organizational Culture and Output

The foundation for trust in the workplace is organizational culture. Nevertheless, organizations with a strong culture don't necessarily have higher levels of overall trust (Jessup, 1997). An alignment between the expected and perceived organizational culture was found to be critical in fostering a culture of trust (Jessup, 1997). Research

has also found that support and achievement cultures were positively related to trust (Jessup, 1997). A power culture was negatively related to trust (Jessup, 1997).

Scholars in the field of workplace trust have described that trust is related to bottom-line economic performance (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011). In particular, a culture of trust has been linked to stronger stock market performance, innovative thinking and contributions, economic growth, and productivity (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011; Stanley, 2005), among other benefits.

SECTION III: FOSTERING A CULTURE OF TRUST WITHIN A SCHOOL SYSTEM

This section reviews the literature on trust from a Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) schooling systems perspective. It covers the following topics: an overview of trust in the educational context; the formation of trust in school organizations; measures of trust in educational research; the characteristics of effective districts and effective schools related to trust; and organizational structures and cultures linked to trust.

What is Trust at the School- and District-Level?

In definitions of trust in the school context, trust involves the willingness to be vulnerable and to take risks (Forsyth, Adams & Hoy, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). It also requires the 'interdependence' between parties where one's interests cannot be achieved without relying on others (Rousseau et al., 1998 as cited in Forsyth et al., 2011, and Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In schools, there is a high level of interdependence between different parties - teachers, principals, students, parents - who must rely on and cooperate with one another to achieve tasks (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Figure 5 shows the seven facets of trust that have been identified in the literature on school settings. They are used to judge the trustworthiness of another party or group.

Figure 5: Facets of Trust in School Settings

Facet	Description
1. Benevolence	• Having confidence that another party will act in one's best interests (Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000)
2. Competence	• Depending on a person's knowledge, skills, and competence to do their job (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000)
3. Honesty and Integrity	• The consistency between words and actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Doing what is right and demonstrating a commitment to shared beliefs or values (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
4. Openess and Transparency	• Sharing of information and transparency of one's actions or plans (Forsyth et al., 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
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7. Respect	• Recognizing other people's value and demonstrating this value by listening and considering their views (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

There is much literature on the facets of trust at the school level, but there is a need to understand which facets come into play in district-school relations (Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, & Chrispeels, 2008).

Trust is dynamic in nature, changing with the ebb and flow of a relationship. Trust is also referred to as a process that comprises a number of phases: 1) initiating trust; 2) sustaining trust; 3) breaking trust; and 4) repairing trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Conceptualizing trust in this way reminds us of the fragile nature of trust and the importance of nurturing and sustaining trust relations within school environments.

How does Trust Form in School Organizations?

In the school trust research, there are various perspectives on the formation of trust in school communities. We describe here two theories of trust development that have been cited in the literature. First, there is the theory of *relational trust* developed by Bryk and Schneider (2002) in their seminal study of Chicago elementary schools undergoing school reform. According to this theory, relational trust emerges from daily social exchanges that take place among various role groups in the school such as teachers, principals, students, and parents. By virtue of their respective roles, people form social relationships within the school context and these relationships create dependencies and vulnerabilities, which are essential for building trust. In these relationships, each party has an understanding of his/her role obligations and has an expectation that the other party will behave in ways that are consistent with his or her role obligations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

To assess the trustworthiness of another party, people look at the party's behaviour to assess the degree to which they meet their role obligations. They also make judgements regarding the other party's intentions. Both of these judgements enter into interpretations of the party's trustworthiness. When a party fails to meet his/her role obligations, there is an undermining of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), there are four criteria for judging trustworthiness: respect, competence, personal regard, and integrity.

Whereas relational trust develops at an interpersonal level, *collective trust* develops in a work group (Forsyth et al., 2011). Collective trust is a shared belief that a group of individuals has in another party, such as the trust that teachers have in the principal. In comparing collective trust with relational trust, Forsyth et al., (2011) note that collective trust "is distinct and complementary to interpersonal trust" (p. 22) and "parallels the formation of personal trust but occurs at the group level." (p. 24). The formation of collective trust emerges through repeated social exchanges among group members who share their experiences and opinions about the behaviours of members of another group or individual. Through these exchanges, the group makes collective comparisons between expected and observed behaviours and comes to a consensus about the trustworthiness of another group or individual (using the criteria of trustworthiness).

The theories of relational and collective trust are based on research in school settings. However, there is not much literature regarding the trust that develops

between staff in district central office and school sites. Nevertheless, research on high-achieving districts has found that system and school leaders developed relational trust through social exchanges and networks. The leaders from different levels of the system had reciprocal interactions and exchanges (Leithwood, 2011).

In addition to relational and collective trust, there is organizational trust and institutional trust. Institutional trust refers to trust in institutions, such as parents' trust in the school system (Cerna, 2014).

Measuring Trust in School Organizations: What are the Research Trends?

In educational research, there have been various lines of research in the study of trust. The majority of studies on trust in schools employ survey methods (trust scales), but some studies use qualitative approaches to data collection or a combination of methods. A few researchers have also studied trust using social network analysis.

Trust Scales

There is a vast literature on measures of trust, spanning more than four decades. Recently, there has been an increasing focus on measuring organizational and collective trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Measures of organizational and collective trust examine how people perceive the characteristics of significant others in the workplace (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In the previous section, collective trust was defined as the trust that develops among a group (Forsyth et al., 2011).

In educational research, numerous trust scales have been designed to measure collective trust (e.g., measures of trust in the faculty or measures of trust in the principal) and how trust relates to various characteristics in the school environment[1]. While most trust scales focus on the school context, there have been some attempts to measure district-school relations (e.g., Burchfield, 2013).

In studies of collective trust, there is some interesting research that examines trust from multiple stakeholder perspectives using a 360-degree feedback process. For example, researchers measured central office administrators' views of self in terms of the facets of trust and also measured central administrators' perceptions of school site administrators. They also measured teachers' and school site administrators' views of self, and their perceptions of central office on the trust facets (Chhuon et al., 2008; Daly & Chrispeels, 2008). This 360-degree perspective provides a fuller picture of trust than a single view of trust would allow and enables organizations to explore the gaps and discrepancies in stakeholders' perceptions (Chhuon et al., 2008). For example, Chhuon et al. (2008) conducted a survey that examined trust from the perspectives of both central office administration and school administrators and found that school administrators did not feel comfortable asking for help, communicating openly or taking risks with central office for "fear of reprisal" (p. 250). However, central office lacked an awareness of these issues. The study illustrates "the power of feeding back

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[1] For more information on measures of collective trust in schools, see Forsyth et al. (2011).

perceptual data that can serve as a mirror reflecting relationships."(p. 268). It also highlights the importance of collecting data on different facets of trust, rather than a general trust measure, and using that information to focus on areas for action.

Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches to Data Collection

In school trust research, researchers also rely on the use of qualitative methods such as interviews, observation methods, and document analysis to explore stakeholders' perceptions of trust. Qualitative methods are sometimes combined with survey methods, enabling a mixed methods approach to the study of trust.

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is another approach that educational researchers have used to measure social relationships in a school district. Social network analysis examines the structure of social networks and ties that exists between groups of actors, and uses graphical imagery to display these ties (Carolan, 2014). Social network analysis has been used to study the networking relationships created by educational leaders in a district (Ripley, Mitchell, & Richman, 2013) and the networks between central office and school site administrators and how these relations impact on trust and district improvement efforts (Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Kochanek & Clifford, 2014). For example, Daly and Finnigan (2012) investigated the social networks between central office and school sites in regards to exchange of best practices from research and noted that networks were centralized and internally focused (central office to central office, site to site) rather than being externally focused (central office to site). There were also few ties between

principals, especially those from low-performing schools. Interestingly, reciprocated exchanges around best practices were linked with higher levels of trust (Daly & Finnigan, 2012).

Social network analysis can help district central office to understand the flow of information and knowledge through a district. This methodology can also highlight gaps and opportunities for linkages and point to networks that can be strengthened (Daly & Finnigan, 2012). In the section on practical recommendations for building trust, strategies for building social networks in school districts are suggested.

The following two sections examine the literature on district and school effectiveness in relation to matters of trust. This literature clearly establishes the importance of relationships and trust as elements that enhance effectiveness both at a district and school level.

What is the Relationship between District Effectiveness and Trust?

Since the 1990s, there has been a renewed interest in the role of school districts in educational improvement and reform. In the accountability systems of recent years, it has become increasingly clear that schools are unable to meet these demands without the support and influence of the district. As a result, researchers have attempted to identify characteristics of effective and high-performing districts in the same way as effective schools research has done to identify characteristics of effective schools (Anderson, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Trujillo, 2013). The literature on district effectiveness characterizes effective districts as having

working relationships with open communication, collaboration, and trust among constituents in the district. As illustrated in the following section, these elements are embedded in the language of effective and improving districts.

Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) described 10 essential components for district improvement based on their study of school districts undergoing reform. We describe three of these components as they reveal the importance of communication, relationships, and trust in district improvement.

- Districts need to have a '*collective moral purpose*' - This means that everyone in the district needs to be responsible for student achievement and have an interest in the success of all schools, not only an individual school. This commitment to a common moral purpose requires trust, whereas competition between schools weakens "interdependence, trust and loyalty" (p. 43).

- There is a need for '*productive conflict*' - As Fullan et al. (2004) explain, the changes that come about through district reform are complex and may lead to disagreement among various parties. As part of this process, district leaders need to be able to distinguish between productive and unhealthy conflict. They also need to allow for different points of view and "work through differences" (p. 45). This component implies the need for communication, collaboration, and respect, which have a bearing on trust.

- There needs to be a '*demanding culture*' – This means that in order to engage

and motivate schools to succeed and work through demanding situations necessary for district reform, there is a need for a culture of trust.

One of the features of strong school districts noted in the literature is the good working relationships with constituents in the district (Leithwood, 2010; Leithwood, 2013). In a paper commissioned by *Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership* and *Council of Ontario Directors of Education*, Leithwood (2013) notes:

> The relationships that matter most and that are the focus of development in strong districts lie within the central office and between the central office and its schools, parents, local community groups and the Ministry of Education. Communication throughout the system and within schools is nurtured by structures which encourage collaborative work. (p. 20)

Collaboration is a key element for district improvement, as noted by many authors (Anderson, 2003; Bjork & Bond, 2006; Leithwood, 2012; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The district-wide emphasis on collaboration and team work in professional learning communities leads districts on a continuous improvement cycle and supports the development of "shared beliefs" and a "commitment to reform" (Anderson, 2003, p. 12). In strong districts, collaboration is an inclusive process that involves many groups of stakeholders across the district, including board members,

principals, teachers, and union leaders (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

To achieve good working relations, stakeholders need to learn to work together in order to improve teaching and learning (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). As Togneri and Anderson (2003) note, in their study of U.S. school districts that made improvements in student achievement:

> Collaboration and trust did not simply happen in the districts; rather, they were the result of deliberate and involved processes. Led by their boards and superintendents, the most collaborative districts in the study worked on working together. They engaged in ongoing dialogue, created cross-role leadership structures to facilitate communication among stakeholders, and intentionally sought tools to facilitate collaboration. (p. 32)

Research indicates that collaborative districts have an easier time introducing innovations, have strong positive interactions, and have educational leaders who bring together stakeholders to address issues and challenges within the district. Studies indicate that these collaborative processes increase trust (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Furthermore, in research on high-performing districts, collaboration seems to give staff the perception of a "flat" organization where they feel "organizationally close to those working in the central office" (Leithwood, 2010, p. 260). In these districts, there is more communication both vertically and horizontally which can lead to greater collaboration and shared values.

A key variable for district improvement is high quality governance characterized by strong working relationships between board members and educational leaders who foster trust, respect, confidence, support, and open communication (Anderson, 1992; Carol et al., 1986; Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman, 1997, as cited in Land, 2002; the International Association of School Boards, 2000, as cited in Agullard & Goughnour, 2006). Quality governance also includes having good relations between the Board Chair and senior educational leadership, as well as between board members (Land, 2002).

Open communication and trust are also noted as key elements for improving districts. According to Agullard and Goughnour (2006), these elements are essential to create a 'cohesive theory of action' for district-wide improvement and for understanding the roles and structures needed to support improvement. To support the district's improvement efforts, it is also important for central office staff to provide opportunities for input from principals, teachers, and staff on the district's continuous improvement efforts (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006). As Agullard and Goughnour (2006) point out:

> Continuous improvement is a dynamic process requiring constant reflection and

questioning. Dialogue among school staff, among central office staff, and between the two provides opportunities to reflect and examine the process and the results of actions. Creating and sustaining a trusting and open relationship between central office and school staff is crucial to establishing open dialogue. (p. 11)

There are two other characteristics noted in the literature on strong districts that should be noted. First, the governing board should have a clearly defined policy-making role and hold the educational leadership responsible for administration of schools. The clearly defined roles of the board create a climate of trust (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 33).

Finally, there is some evidence to indicate that high-performing districts have a distributed or shared approach to instructional leadership. This is illustrated in the case of a principal who shared leadership with central office administrators by asking for their expertise and help with consultation, coaching, and mentoring support in classrooms (Eilers & Camacho, 2007, as cited in Leithwood, 2010). Section V addresses the topic of distributed leadership.

What is the Relationship between School Effectiveness and Trust?

Similar to the district effectiveness literature, trust is a central theme in the literature on school improvement and effectiveness. First, trust is regarded as a *key element for school improvement efforts* (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As Bryk and

Schneider (2002) conclude, in their seminal study of Chicago elementary schools undergoing school reform, "…a broad base of trust across a school community lubricates much of a school's day-to-day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans."(p. 5). Some key findings of this study were that in schools with high-trust environments, there was a shared commitment to advance the interests of children, teachers engaged in risk-taking and innovative practices in their classroom, and they demonstrated a willingness and commitment to go beyond their regular role requirements to improve student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). When teachers are willing to take risks and are open to trying new and innovative ideas, this can lead to changes and initiatives that have numerous impacts on students.

As evidence to further support the importance of trust, research indicates that school improvement initiatives are easier to implement in schools with high levels of trust than in schools with low levels of trust (Louis, 2007). In particular, teachers in high-trust settings were more receptive to the introduction of a district-initiated change, namely, a quality management initiative, than teachers in low-trust settings.

In addition to school improvement efforts, trust is vital for the *reforms* taking place in schools, such as changes in instructional practice and school governance structures (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For example, studies of reform efforts have found that high-trust environments make it easier for experts to have discussions with teachers about instructional reform. These environments also influence teachers' attitudes towards innovation, encouraging

them to seek ideas, and make them feel comfortable collaborating in reform efforts (Sebring et al., 2006, as cited in Kochanek & Clifford, 2014). In order for reform efforts to succeed, there is a need for trust among all parties, including administrators, teachers, students, and parents (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Trust is also considered to be crucial for *effective relationships in schools* (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Indeed, many authors stress that the relationships between various groups within a school community are vital for school improvement (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). As some authors aptly stated, "Trust emerges as the lubricant for strengthening relationships among teachers, students, administrators, and parents."(Forsyth et al., 2011; p. xi)

What is more, research indicates a link between trust and improvements in *student learning*, even after controlling for factors related to student composition, school context, and teacher background (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Interestingly, a survey of working conditions in North Carolina schools revealed a link between trust and mutual respect and student performance, with educators in high-performing schools having a higher percentage of trust than educators in schools with low student performance (Reeves, Emerick, & Hirsch, 2007).

In the examples previously cited, the literature clearly establishes the importance of trust for school improvement. There is also a growing body of evidence in the school effectiveness literature that links trust and effective schools.

First, principal leadership is considered as one of the key aspects of effective schools (Calman, 2010; Marsdale & Billings, 2009). As the school leader, the principal has a vital role in establishing and maintaining trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Marsdale & Billings, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). We will explore this topic further in the section called *Leadership Styles and Behaviours that Build and Repair a Culture of Trust*.

Second, research on school effectiveness highlights that a *positive school environment* is essential for building trust (Calman, 2010; Marsdale & Billings, 2009). A positive school environment is one which fosters a culture of trust and respect among both staff and students (Marsdale & Billings, 2009). In fact, the previously noted survey of working conditions in North Carolina schools revealed that an atmosphere of trust was linked with employee retention. Strong collaborative processes, a shared vision, and supportive school leadership were cited as factors contributing to trust (Reeves et al., 2007).

A third aspect of school effectiveness referred to in the literature is that a trusting relationship between teachers and students helps to build *student connectedness, engagement, and readiness*. Trust relationships have a significant impact on students' academic outcomes in terms of dropping out or staying in school. The development of trusting relationships extend beyond cultural, racial, and ethnic differences (Marsdale & Billings, 2009).

What are the District- and School-Level Characteristics Related to Trust-Building?

In the previous sections of this paper, the importance of relationships and collaboration for district and school effectiveness and improvement was established. In this section, focus is on the organizational structures and cultures that can facilitate or hinder efforts to build collaborative and trusting relationships.

District Culture

The culture of a district refers to the traditions, beliefs, and norms that shape a district (Krajewski & Trevino, 2004). District culture influences the way that a district designs its vision, curriculum, professional development, and measures performance. The culture of a district also has implications for social relations, the participation of staff in instructional matters, and trust (Firestone, 2009).

According to Firestone (2009), there are three types of district cultures. In the loosely coupled culture, there are no shared assumptions about teaching and learning and schools pursue their own goals with little influence from the district office. In the accountability culture, there are shared assumptions about student achievement, but there is a focus on improving test scores and complying with the authority of central office. According to Firestone, the student learning culture is "the most powerful culture for supporting improvement" (p. 197) and there is a high importance placed on trust. In addition, there is a clear vision of student learning, respect for the professionalism of teachers, and teacher participation in decision-making and problem-solving with administrators. In

contrast to the accountability culture where there is a tight control from the top, the organization in the student learning culture is more integrated and flexible. Central office listens to the voices of constituents, provides adequate support for schools, but also allows schools to take leadership. As Firestone (2009) notes, in a student learning culture "the pattern of social relations…relies less on centralized authority than collaboration, shared leadership, and trust."(p. 197)

Organizational Structure

There are some organizational factors that can impede the ability of the district central office to interact and build trust with staff in other levels of the organization. These factors include the size of a district, the separation of staff in different buildings (Firestone, 2009), and silos in the central office that create divisions where work flows vertically rather than horizontally (Kochanek & Clifford, 2014). One way to facilitate open communication, collaboration, and trust-building is by having enabling structures. The concept of an enabling bureaucracy is a useful framework because it considers how certain structures may enable or hinder the building of trust (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Although the concept of enabling bureaucracy is applied to school structures, it can also be applied to school district structures.

According to Hoy and Sweetland (2001), there are two aspects of an enabling bureaucracy: formalization and centralization. Formalization is the degree to which the organization has formal rules and procedures, whereas centralization relates to the hierarchy of authority and the degree to which employees participate in

decision-making. An enabling bureaucracy has flexible guidelines and rules and procedures and helps employees find solutions to problems in their work (enabling formalization). In regards to centralization, an enabling bureaucracy is flexible and collaborative and helps employees in their jobs (enabling centralization). Indeed, the findings from the authors' study revealed a link between an enabling bureaucracy and trust in the principal and trust between colleagues (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

There has been much debate regarding the degree of control school districts should have over schools for effective teaching and learning. Some argue for site-based management, some advocate for the centralization of control, while others stress the need for a balance between central and local leadership. Fullan et al. (2004), suggesting the balanced approach, point out that districts can play a supporting role by helping schools move towards autonomy, enable cross-school learning, and also assist under-achieving schools when the need arises.

SECTION IV: FOSTERING A CULTURE OF TRUST OUTSIDE A SCHOOL SYSTEM

How to Build Public Trust?

The issue of trust is of central importance for schools and school districts. As institutions charged with the responsibility for education, schools are entrusted to protect and look after our children (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). There is also an expectation that schools will uphold a vision of "equality of opportunity for all students" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000., p. 548) and be effective, productive, and well-managed organizations that will improve education (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

In the context of education, the type of public trust has changed over time. Hargreaves et al. (2009) "argue that trust has evolved through four stages across many education systems in OECD countries" (as cited in Cerna (2014), p. 19).

> The first stage of change in the 1970s was characterised by passive trust where parents unconditionally trusted professionals with their children. It was defined by innovation and generous state funding but did not develop parallel systems of professional responsibility, accountability and consistency. In the second stage in the 1980s, a period of active mistrust followed since the public looked to external accountability instruments to guarantee commitment and quality. Educators in other jurisdictions were subjected to growing political control, public

scepticism and market competition. Progress in measured results secured public confidence in the education profession in the third stage in the 1990s. Here, high levels of public confidence in educators were promoted, creativity, complexity, innovation and teamwork was emphasised, and networks and data were used to drive reform through recalcitrant systems and educators. The fourth stage in the 2000s developed active trust between professionals, parents and community members working together. This stage valued data as well as teachers' professional judgement and balanced targeted interventions in children's areas of academic weaknesses along with more mindful approaches to teaching and learning that develop creativity, innovation and soft skills. (Hargreaves et al., 2009, as cited in Cerna (2014), p.1 9)

Although, according to Hargreaves et al. (2009), schools and school districts have reached a stage of active trust between professionals and the public, at times there still exists misgivings. In the current economic and social climate, schools have to cope with public distrust, criticism, and negative media attention and are under increasing pressure to meet accountability requirements (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In these circumstances, there is a need for educational leaders in school districts to focus their attention on matters of trust.

In the United States, Carr (2006a) notes that the perception out there is "anything that is government-run is seen as big, inefficient, many times ineffective, and not as well run as the private sector" (p. 29). Although the United States and Canada differ in their education systems, in some cases the same perception exists. While all members of schools and district boards work within the same mandate to provide the best education possible for all students, negative messages about public education sometimes offset the positive work of educators, ultimately affecting public trust. Carr and Cook (2012) believe

> That's because we've let others tell our story and define the agenda for public education. As a result, simply doing a good job is no longer good enough. We have to do a good job, and tell parents and the public about it — on a daily basis. Does your community understand how your board's

decisions set the stage for gains in student achievement? Do your business leaders care about the impact that your decisions have on their bottom lines? Are you showing your mayor and your county and state [and provincial] leaders how your local leadership is leading to dramatic improvements in your public schools? The reality is that public education today is an incredibly complex human enterprise, one that simply defies many of our most coveted business maxims. (p. 1)

How can school systems move away from this perception of dysfunction and work to restore and further build public trust? This section explores strategies within four themes that emerged from the literature in relation to public trust and public education (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Key Themes Related to Public Trust on Public Education
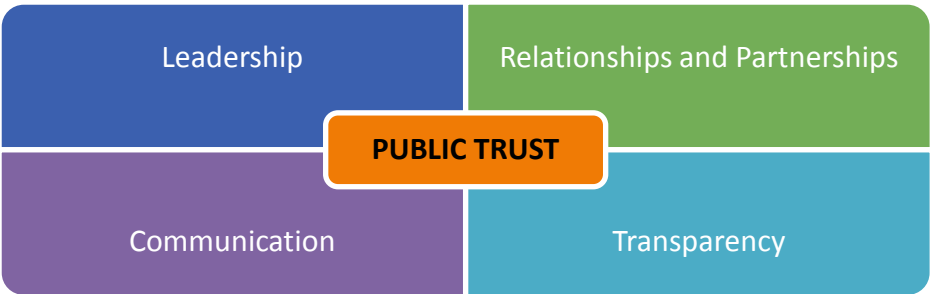
Leadership and School District and Board Cooperation

The image of the school board is intertwined with the image of the school district. Because of this connection, it is important for the two entities to work together to reduce public perception of discord or disorganization – ultimately, proving the two are worthy of public trust (Council of the Great City Schools, 2009). The Council believes "The district should establish, communicate and enforce a disciplined process for board agendas. Board members should agree to hold each other accountable for his or her protocol, and to express positive recognition of district operations and high performance achievement as it is warranted" (2009, p. 2). Further research encourages the use of policies and procedures to foster collaboration. Wickersham (2009) encourages the use of compliance programs, a compliance committee, a code of conduct for board members and school district staff, and access to a hotline or other means of communication for employees to report issues of concern.

Beyond policies and procedures, Krajewski and Trevino (2004) explain how school districts and boards should work to build a collaborative relationship. A board retreat can be used as a venue for strengthening board-senior educational leader relations. "The agenda focuses on team building, and we spend a lot of time discussing how roles and responsibilities play into building the leadership team" (Krajewski & Trevino, 2004, p. 33). The two further explain that establishing boundaries is essential to productive board-senior educational leader relationships; senior educational leadership maintains an open relationship with the board while assuming full responsibility for his or her position. The school board and senior educational leadership should work together to align and assign work and responsibility with a view to clarifying what is in the senior educational leadership's portfolio, what falls to the school board and, most importantly, what initiatives will be shared work (ASBA, 2013).

The board-senior educational leaders' relationship is a key component of healthy school board governance. In light of the 2015 proclamation of a new Education Act in Alberta, the Alberta School Board Association (ASBA) found that little attention was being paid to school governance. "If school boards want to make sure Alberta's students get the best possible education, school boards must elevate their leadership role" (ASBA, 2013, p. 5.). Multiple recommendations came about from the ASBA report on school governance. In relation to school board cooperation and building public trust, the report explains that a school board should only have one spokesperson – and that should be the Chair of the Board. He or she should have specific training to support this role. Moreover, there should be professional learning for all trustees – a voluntary trustee certification program. "The more educated a trustee, the more empowered he/she becomes in that role" (ASBA, p. 6). The Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) has made available a professional development program - *Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program. "*Modules focus on leadership skills and building collective capacity and reflect leading practices in the field of governance" (OPSBA, 2015, para. 1).

Public Involvement

The leadership team and the school board need to encourage public collaboration and invite the public to participate in their community's school by supporting public consultation, school councils, and parent involvement committees. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) believes "a culture of positive engagement will sustain confidence in schools and the system. Efforts to build public confidence must be woven into all aspects of school and board administration, student learning, and parent/community interaction" (CODE, 2012, p. 2). Along with ensuring every student within the district has the opportunity to succeed, districts should also make community consultation a priority (ASAB, 2013). "Each school board should establish an annual consultation plan setting out how and with whom it will consult as it makes decisions for students, schools and communities" (ASBA, 2013, p. 4).

Jamie Vollmer, author of *Schools Cannot Do it Alone* (2010) further emphasizes the importance of public involvement in building public trust. He suggests a formal and an informal track; the former, focusing on established community groups, and the latter taking place through everyday interactions. He goes on to suggest that school districts and board leaders should attend community meetings instead of inviting community members to their respective board offices or schools – showing that educators care enough to reach out (as cited in CODE, 2012).

Similar to Vollmer, Carr (2006a) stresses the importance of district and board leaders removing themselves from their administrative roles to work on the public perception of their respective school district.

> Having a highly visible spokesperson promoting public education is very important on multiple levels. A powerful, well-known leader can make a brand believable and keep everyone on course. […]. Giving speeches, publishing opinion pieces, connecting with community groups, and developing close, working relationships with reporters can help make school leaders—and the brand they represent—respected household names. Public relations, whether by word of mouth or in print, provides critical third-party endorsements that help build credibility. (p. 31)

Transparency

Transparency is at the heart of public trust – ensuring the public can easily access school district information, policies and procedures, business practices, and decision-making processes and rationale is vital to building and maintaining public trust (Carr, 2006b; CODE, 2012). Online communities and technology can support transparency by increasing access and participation; however, a commitment to transparency goes beyond web postings and emails (Carr, 2006b). It includes everyday participation in district decision-making processes and operations (Carr, 2006b). According to the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), open, honest, accurate information backed by 'consistent and dependable actions', and direct access to leaders helps increase trust and satisfaction (Shockley-

Zalabak, Morreale, & Hackman, 2009). The ASBA suggests that districts give communities the tools to hold school boards accountable. Boards should make a public promise to their communities about their mandates; and further, "invite citizens to assess and evaluate if you reach your goal. Transparency will be important in this work" (ASBA, 2013, p. 3).

Communication

Research shows that school districts and boards that communicate openly and frequently have higher levels of public confidence (CODE, 2012). However, this communication cannot simply include ad hoc messages to the public. The information must be relevant, current, and distributed in a timely and consistent manner (CODE, 2012). Effective communication should "inform the public on data, policies, decisions, and the current state of schools' achievement, successes, strengths, and weaknesses" (p. 4).

In addition to the public, CODE explains that "leaders understand that all board employees have an important role in building public confidence and trust, and ensure that staff members are provided with the most recent information" (p. 4). The Council of the Great City Schools (2009) notes that all levels of staff should be kept informed so that they can disseminate information to their employees, teachers, and the public. The Council further notes, to support trust building activities, there should be a district communication strategy in place. This strategy should start inside the district. "School district employees are the front-line individuals in the community, in word-of-mouth communication, and should be informed, influenced and

motivated through an ongoing internal communications operation" (p. 2).

Included in this communication strategy should be policies and/or procedures related to courteous interpersonal communications among employees at all levels of administration and in schools. "Any disputes should be handled and resolved quickly, so as not to fester and spill over into the community at large or in the press. A friendly and productive district wide environment creates a cohesive climate and culture that contributes to a positive image of the organization within and outside the school district" (Council of the Great City Schools, 2009, p. 2).

To support the implementation of said communication strategy, the Council of the Great City Schools (2009) spends time explaining in their report the importance of an experienced and valued district communication team. "The chief communications officer should be a part of the Superintendent's cabinet, allowing the senior communications professional to have a sense of the district's 'big picture' and know how the district is moving to meet its goals, mission and vision" (p. 3). They further note the importance of:

- "having an experienced professional communicator lead the district's internal and external communications operation;
- establishing a communications department that can develop communications channels to various audiences, craft messages linked to the district's goals, mission and vision, and convey information to the various publics; and

- employing professional communicators who can work directly on or contribute to internal communications". (Council of the Great City Schools, 2009, p. 3)

Communicating internally and externally is a strategic operation that should not be taken lightly. See Appendix C for an additional list of communication strategies to boost public trust and confidence.

Relationships and Partnerships

The relationships within a school district are diverse and complex in nature; however, all are important to its operations. "Meaningful relationships are essential and are founded on active listening, sharing information, building partnerships, and finding common ground" (CODE, 2012, p. 3). Two significant public relationships within a school district are the respective families and the larger community. "Parents who are engaged and actively involved in their child's learning make Ontario's great

schools even stronger. Most importantly, students are more likely to succeed when their parents are engaged in their learning, and with more students succeeding, public confidence in the education system can be enhanced" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, para. 3). School districts must work hard to nourish relationships with their public counterparts as a way of building and maintaining public trust. According to the IABS Research Foundation, they are "called social capital in corporate circles, the ability to form trusting relationships with diverse people is a strong predictor of an organization's effectiveness" (Carr, 2006b, p. 69).

Finally, family and community involvement is an indicator of school effectiveness that is also linked to trust. By communicating effectively with parents, schools help to build trust with families, supporting the involvement of families, and the community in the school (Marsdale & Billings, 2009).

SECTION V: PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOSTERING TRUST WITHIN AND OUTSIDE A SCHOOL SYSTEM

In this section practical solutions for building and repairing a Culture of Trust will be studied from organizational and leadership perspectives.

Organizational Conditions and Structures that Build and Repair a Culture of Trust

As described earlier, organizational trust is conditional – it is developed over time and is transient, is subject to the social and cultural contexts of the organization, and it cannot be forced or commanded (Tierney, 2006). A culture of distrust is rarely diagnosed because trust is "an invisible quality" (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). In the workplace, disrespectful actions; poor communication; unmet expectations; ineffective leadership; attribution bias (i.e., taking responsibility); inadequate performance and competence; misalignment of values, mission, practices; and structural issues (i.e., systems, procedures, structure) can violate trust (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). These characteristics of distrust cannot be addressed in isolation or at surface level as they are interrelated (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004).

Some scholars argue that a culture of *distrust* can never fully be transformed into one of trust; trust is difficult to restore once it has been tampered with (Smith, 2005). Given the numerous benefits of a trustworthy workplace environment, characteristic-based, process-based, and organizational-based (Creed & Miles, 1996)

strategies or mechanisms to build and repair trust are proposed below.

Characteristic-based Mechanisms

It is challenging to develop trust at an organizational level if it is missing at the departmental or individual level (Tierney, 2006). Turning to the micro-level, individual characteristics or attributes can serve to foster or hinder a broader culture of trust at the workplace. Human resources can recruit individuals to work at their organization who firmly believe in and practice honesty, openness, and trust (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). For current leaders and employees, trust can be developed with consistent behaviour over time (Smith, 2005). These behaviours include honesty (showing integrity and truthfulness), openness (communicating with transparency), consistency (reliable, predictable, commitment), competency (job-relevant knowledge), and caring (empathy and compassion). Philosopher Onora O'Neill (2002) argued that complete openness and transparency are not needed to trust others. Take family members, for instance, you trust these individuals without knowledge of their finances and intimate relationships. O'Neill (2002) contended that to restore trust, respect is necessary and deception, or intentionally misleading others, must be avoided. Verbal accounts can be encouraged to build and repair trust. Providing an adequate explanation and a sincere, timely, and accountable apology regarding the distrustful act may be enough to repair trust (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010).

Second, reparations and penance are critical to recognizing that distrust has occurred and moving past the situation through forgiveness (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Ultimately, trust is a belief system that is difficult to gain and easy to lose as actions are more potent than words.

Process-based Mechanisms

Establishing a culture of trust must be intentional and integrated into multiple organizational processes. Changing structural arrangements can also build a culture of trust. Leaders can implement more team-work, which demands a greater level of interaction and interdependence among individuals at work (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). This approach makes employees vulnerable to one another, which builds trust. Experts in the field have touted that the return on communications is high (Beslin & Reddin, 2004). Leaders could utilize diverse, informal, and formal forums to communicate with staff (e.g., town hall meetings, satellite-television broadcasts, lunch/coffee breaks, annual surveys, regular self-assessment, interviews, and focus groups) (Beslin & Reddin, 2004). Location visits and direct email communication by leaders provide opportunities to receive feedback from employees and contributes to a culture of trust (Beslin & Reddin, 2004). Rewards (i.e., pay raises, promotions) have not been found to restore trust (Shockley-Zalabak, 2011). Other structural solutions may include "rules, contracts, regulation processes, monitoring systems" (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010), strategic alliances, effective virtual teams, and effective crisis management (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Winograd, 2000).

Organizational-based Mechanisms

Trust building efforts at the organizational scale must take place in light of the organization's socio-cultural, economic, and strategic context. For example, an organization's culture of trust may be compromised during uncertain times or situations (such as a merger, leadership turnover, etc.). An organization with a "reservoir of trust" that has been built and maintained over a period of time can support an organization's culture of trust during trying times (Beslin & Reddin, 2004). In her book, O'Neill (2002) advocated for the need for "intelligent accountability" among public and private organizations, as traditional approaches to accountability damage (create a culture of suspicion) than repair trust. She called for good governance over total control and an organization's obligation to tell the truth (O'Neill, 2002).

Take the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as a case in point to building a culture of trust (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). The Director General has been described as being authentic and values conversation with employees. The management team has a shared mission and common values which drive their actions. Employees view the management team as trustworthy, reliable, accountable, non-controlling, relaxed, and prioritize building relationships. At WWF, a network-based and flat structure builds a culture of trust. Furthermore, the very mission of WWF innately attracts individuals with high values. On the topic of developing organizational trust, the WWF Director of Human Resources stated, "If you trust people they will prove themselves to be trustworthy" (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004, p. 123). Ultimately, in order to build or repair trust, it is important to recognize how trust was

damaged and that it "cannot be demanded, but must be earned and developed over time" (Jessup, 1997, p. 14).

Leadership Styles and Behaviours that Build and Repair a Culture of Trust

The primary factor for establishing a culture of trust is a leader who prioritizes it (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). However, a leader's power, status, and autonomy can complicate trust-related expectations as well as inconsistent leadership behaviour (Jessup, 1997; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Multiple leadership behaviours, practices, and recommendations surfaced from the literature review as promoting a culture of trust.

To nurture and manage vertical relationships, five behaviours have been found to increase trust in leaders: consistency, integrity, sharing and delegation of control, communication, and benevolence (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Winograd, 2000). Knoll and Gill (2011) revealed that integrity and benevolence were significantly more important than ability when trusting a leader. Furthermore, such leadership behaviours must be perceived as being sincere in order to make an impact on employees (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Winograd, 2000). Leaders in the public sector in the United Kingdom must adhere to the 'Nolan' principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership (O'Neill, 2002). Leaders of successful and well-respected organizations are recognized for their excellent communication skills and transparency, which create a culture of trust that leads to

job satisfaction, productivity, and relationship building among employees (Beslin & Reddin, 2004).

Building trust involves substantial personal and intentional effort on behalf of organizational leaders. Trust in leadership can be enhanced through various management practices, such as ensuring fair procedures, outcomes, and interactions among employees; involving employees in decision-making; offering organizational support; and fulfilling expectations and promises (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Other published recommendations for leaders to develop a culture of trust include professing the truth; promoting upward communication; rewarding innovators and those who challenge assumptions; acquiring experience having uncomfortable conversations; diversifying one's sources of knowledge so that the leader's understanding is unbiased and multifaceted; taking ownership for one's mistakes; building organizational support for transparency (e.g., norms, policies, etc.); and sharing, not hiding, information (O'Toole & Bennis, 2009).

Transformational Leadership

In developing reciprocal trust, leaders are vulnerable to employees (i.e., take on risk) as they depend on them to complete work (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Werbel & Henriques, 2009), which in turn affects the leader's reputation and performance (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 1996). From the various leadership practices and styles (e.g., transactional, consultative, corrective, passive, avoidant, etc.), transformational leadership seems to be the most predictive of trust (Gillespie, & Mann, 2004). Transformational leaders provoke their

employees to perform beyond expectations by enhancing their awareness of the importance and value of goals, prompting them to go beyond self-interest for the good of the organisation, and appealing to their higher order needs (Bass, 1985). Five additional transformational leadership practices which foster trust include (Gillespie & Mann, 2004):

- Idealized influence: imparting important values and a communal purpose

- Inspirational motivation: conveying vision and goals in a captivating and stimulating manner

- Individualized consideration: considering employees as individuals and assisting with their development

- Intellectual stimulation: challenging intellectual (i.e., ideas, concepts) boundaries and promoting diverse perspectives

- Attributed charisma: employees' "attributions of pride, respect, and confidence in the leader"

Gillespie and Mann (2004) discovered that the strongest predictors of employees' trust in their leader were "consultative leadership, common values, and idealised influence" (p. 601). They also proposed two mechanisms through which the aforementioned predictors may build a culture of trust with leadership. First, collective values, goals, and employee participation in decision-making minimize uncertainty about the leader's prospective behaviour and suggest that the leader is unlikely to violate trust (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Second, these transformational leadership practices demonstrate and evoke

a reciprocation of trust as the leader is vulnerable to but also demonstrates trust in employees (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). As a result, employees will reciprocate by trusting the leader.

As expressed by O'Toole and Bennis (2009) in the Harvard Business Review, "Trust is a symbiotic relationship: Leaders first must trust others before others will trust them" (p. 58). With these behaviours, practices, and recommendations in place, a leader should expect to cultivate a culture of trust and accompanying benefits. That is to say, trust in horizontal and vertical relationships (proxy measures for organizational trust climate) has been found to relate to job satisfaction, attitude, behaviour, and performance outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Knoll & Gill, 2011).

Interestingly, transformational leadership is regarded as an ideal practice in the school context (Hallinger, 2003, as cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The strong support for the transformational leadership style is not surprising given the evidence showing that transformational leadership practices have positive outcomes such as improving trust in the principal, improving teacher performance (Forsyth et al., 2011) and student achievement and engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Distributed Leadership
Distributed leadership is gaining attention in educational reform as a transformative leadership practice. With distributed leadership, leadership is shared or distributed among members of a group who interact and take on leadership tasks at different points in time. Distributed leadership is deliberate, planned, and

purposeful and depends on the involvement of the principal (or educational leader) for it to be successful. Success also depends on how leadership is distributed and the patterns of influence. Although this practice is primarily endorsed at the school level, it can also be applied at the district and system levels (Harris, 2012; Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007). The *Ontario Leadership Framework* strongly supports the practice of distributed leadership (Leithwood, 2012).

Distributed leadership is one of the characteristics of effective districts. In fact, there are examples in research where school districts have used distributed leadership as a strategy for district improvement. For example, it has been found that many groups of stakeholders were involved in district instructional reform - Board members, superintendents, central office staff, union leaders, principals, and teacher leaders - and members of each stakeholder group took on "roles they were best suited to lead" (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 32). By sharing leadership, stakeholders develop collaborative partnerships, thus allowing them to build trusting relationships (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Leadership Behaviours at the System-Level

The *Ontario Leadership Framework* (OLF) describes successful leadership practices for both system and school leaders. There is a strong emphasis in this document on promoting leadership practices that foster collaboration, trust, and relationship-building across the school system. For system leaders, there are three particular domains of practices in the OLF which are reviewed here as they relate most to the

topics in this paper[1]. The first domain of practice involves "Creating and Aligning Supporting Conditions." To enact this practice, leaders need to create structures that allow system and school leaders to have "reciprocal" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 41) interactions regarding district improvement progress. It is expected that these structures will lead to "deeply interconnected networks of school and system leaders working together on achieving the system's directions" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 41). The second domain of practice noted in the OLF involves "Building Productive Relationships". This domain includes the development of system-schools relationships. In supporting this practice, leaders are encouraged to develop reciprocal, interactive, and collaborative relationships between system and school leaders. They are also encouraged to have "high levels of interaction among school leaders" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 41).

The OLF is based on a large body of evidence regarding successful leadership practices. There is also some evidence in other research literature that educational leaders attempt to build trust by demonstrating behaviours such as openness, honesty, reliability, competence, mutual respect, and by looking out for the interests of employees and students (Ripley et al., 2013). As leaders in positions of authority, educational leaders also need to be sensitive to the inherent power differential embedded in their roles. This

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[1] Many leadership practices in the OLF depend on productive relationships between staff within the district, but the practices listed here are considered most relevant for this paper.

can be achieved by helping the other party feel less vulnerable (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

The Chair of the Board also has a key role in creating a climate of trust at Board meetings. This includes providing an understanding of the district and roles and responsibilities and by demonstrating authentic communication, listening, and respect (Krajewski & Trevino, 2004).

Leadership Behaviours at the School-Level

The OLF describes successful leadership practices for school leaders. Like the leadership practices for system leaders, there are several domains of practices that support the building of relationships and trust between various constituents. One of these domains of practice involves "Building Relationships and Developing People", and this includes "*Building trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents*" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 19). Another domain of practice involves "Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices" which includes "Building Collaborative Cultures and Distributing Leadership" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 21) and "Structuring the Organization to Facilitate Collaboration" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 22). The recommended practices demonstrate the importance of trust, collaboration, and distributed leadership for school improvement.

In the previous section on school effectiveness, it was noted that principals play a central role in establishing and building trust within the school community. Given their role, it is not surprising that many studies have focused on trust in the principal (e.g., Handford & Leithwood,

2013; Noonan, Walker, & Kutsyuruba, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) and the characteristics and behaviours that principals can demonstrate to foster trust. The following examples point to some of the behaviours and characteristics that inspire trust in the principal[2].

To enhance trust, principals need to demonstrate care, concern, and empathy for others (Brewster, & Railsback, 2003; Noonan et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) and to show respect and consistent support for teachers (Reeves et al., 2007). They also need to demonstrate integrity (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 2002), which includes being both honest and authentic (Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Research also points out that open communication and information sharing on the part of the principal contribute to a positive climate of trust (Noonan et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and that transparency in decision-making enhances teacher trust (Noonan et al., 2008). Principals also need to demonstrate competence in their role (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

Furthermore, several studies indicate a link between collaboration and trust. In the school system, there is widespread support that the involvement of teachers in decision-making increases trust in the principal (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Reeves et al., 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Interestingly, there appears

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[2] Due to the scope of research on the topic, this review of the literature focuses only on how principals can foster teacher trust.

to be a reciprocal link between trust and collaboration as Tschannen-Moran (2001) found in her study of collaboration and trust. Specifically, the more that a principal collaborated with teachers, the more likely that teachers had trust in the principal. The inverse was also true. In schools with high-levels of trust, teachers were likely to collaborate with the principal on classroom-level decisions. One strategy to involve teachers in decision-making is to create structures to support shared leadership in the school, such as a School Improvement Team (Reeves et al., 2007). In addition, the authors stress that teachers need to feel that they have a real and meaningful influence in the decision-making process (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Reeves et al., 2007).

In addition to fostering collaboration, schools with high levels of trust have principals who support the professional development of teachers and look out for the welfare of students and teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Another interesting finding is that teachers with high levels of trust in the principal engage in the development of professional learning communities (Noonan et al., 2008). Other trust-building strategies for principals include supporting teachers to experiment and take risks, valuing different points of view, replacing ineffective teachers, and providing teachers with basic resources (Brewster & Railsback, 2003).

Lastly, it is worth noting that the principal needs to be present and visible, provide many opportunities to interact with staff, and make trust-building practices visible and concrete. This is necessary because teachers base their trust judgments on the principal's behaviour (Forsyth et al., 2011, p. 167; Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

SECTION VI: RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section recommendations for fostering a culture of trust within a school system as well as fostering public trust in school system are highlighted.

Fostering a Culture of Trust within the School System

Organizations must strive to foster a culture with shared values, a shared mission or goal, open and authentic leadership, use of consensus not force, enjoyment of work, a positive atmosphere, a safe learning environment, and honest and authentic conversations. Overall, the following points can help educational leaders in fostering a Culture of Trust:

- Trust-promoting strategies must be initiated and sustained by leaders, which will be observed, internalized, and emulated by employees.

- Ability, benevolence, and integrity are fundamental dimensions for building trust in vertical relationships with leaders.

- Consistency in the following behaviours should be encouraged among leaders and employees: honesty, openness, reliability/ predictability, competency, and caring.

- Following an act of distrust, communication, reparations, penance, structural arrangements, and accountability may help to build and repair trust.

- Transformational leadership is the most favourable leadership practice to earning trust.

- Employees across a school system need to be engaged in collaborative decision-making and shared leadership.

- There needs to be structures to foster communication and strengthen relationships and interactions between stakeholders across the system. This includes the relations between central office staff and school-based staff as well as between board members and senior educational leadership. See Appendix B for examples of structures to strengthen communication and relationships among stakeholders within a school system.

- A culture of trust can be promoted through multiple leadership behaviours, practices, and recommendations.

Fostering Public Trust in School Systems

The research surrounding public trust in education offers practical advice to school districts and boards on how to build and maintain such trust. There is a significant role for district and board leaders, as well as central and school based staff, to cultivate a relationship with the public. Public trust is not built overnight and demands strong leadership and consistent messaging surrounding the value of the public's perception, the value of the public's participation, and the contribution both make to a healthy district – community relationship. Some fundamental strategies noted in the literature include:

- To foster district and board collaboration, build a collection of policies and procedures that guide

school district and board leadership's conduct (i.e., governance document, code of conduct, communication protocols, professional development opportunities, etc.).

- Encourage public involvement by acknowledging the importance of the public's voice. District and board leaders should engage informally and formally with their communities by setting an annual public consultation plan, attending community meetings outside district offices, and becoming a visible spokesperson for public education and their school district respectively.

- School districts should provide the public with the means necessary to hold them accountable; this includes accessible, consistent, and timely information about all district related

information, access to district and board leadership, and an overall commitment to effective communication and transparency.

- All district employees should be considered as valuable supports to building public trust. School districts should work to ensure all employees are provided with the most recent information that would be potentially communicated to the public. Districts should build an annual communication strategy which includes all stakeholders.

- School districts should work to increase their social capital by actively engaging in community relationship building and maintenance. Districts and boards need to work hard to nourish their relationships with their public counterparts.

SECTION VII: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Organizational culture has three functions which include providing employees with a sense of meaning and identity, influence behaviour, and increase stability and effectiveness of the organization (Tierney, 2006). Trust is both a precursor and product of these functions. "Trust has been described as 'nurturant sun' which reflects warmth and acceptance aspects of trust, and as 'necessary rain,' emphasizing vulnerability and risk" (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975, pp. 134-135).

Relationships are the building blocks for trusting interactions among staff and leaders within a school system. If school systems are to become effective agents in supporting student learning, educational leaders need to be aware of the importance of trust. They also need to create structures and processes that promote interaction, dialogue and collaboration, and engage staff and constituents at all levels of the organization in decision-making. By attending to the dynamics of social relationships and fostering a climate of trust, educational leaders can better support school and school system effectiveness and improvement. The efforts of educational leaders to build trust across a school district can lead to positive results throughout the organization as well as improved public trust in public education as a whole.

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APPENDICES

SEARCH STRATEGY FOR LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature search on trust in the organizational and educational sectors used the following key terms:

Culture of trust
Distributed leadership
District culture
Organizational structure and schools
Organizational structure and school districts
Organizational trust
Principal leadership
Public education and trust
Public school system and trust
School leadership
Transformational leadership
Trust and central office
Trust and district effectiveness
Trust and district improvement
Trust and effective districts
Trust and effective schools
Trust and schools
Trust and school boards
Trust and school districts
Trust and school effectiveness
Trust and school improvement

STRUCTURES TO FOSTER COMMUNICATION, STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS, AND RECIPROCAL INTERACTIONS WITHIN A SCHOOL SYSTEM

- Strengthen Board-Superintendent relations and provide opportunities for team-building (Krajewski & Trevino, 2004; Ripley et al., 2013).

- Create structures to strengthen exchanges between central office and school sites (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003, as cited in Daly & Finnigan, 2012)

- Create structures to facilitate communication and face-face interaction between principals and between principals and central office staff (e.g., regular principal meetings with central office leaders) (Leithwood, 2011).

- Create structures at the school level to facilitate problem-solving among teams and groups (Leithwood, 2012)

- Create learning partnerships (Copland & Knapp, 2006, as cited in Daly & Finnigan, 2012).

- Strengthen the connections between stakeholder groups through attendance at meetings and events (Ripley et al., 2013)

- Create structures that allow school leaders to request help from central office and for central office to visit schools on a regular basis (Leithwood, 2012)

15 Things School Board Members Can Do To Boost Public Confidence in Public Schools

- Show the public what good governance looks like.

- Model the behavior you want students and staff to emulate, especially during times of conflict.

- Know your facts, and be proactive in sharing them.

- Develop your elevator speech about your school system, why you serve, and why others should care about your local public schools.

- Tell 10 success stories for every criticism you hear or share.

- Bring someone new with you every time you visit a school, attend a school program, or district event.

- Recruit new families for public schools, and stay in touch with current and prospective parents.

- Reach out to Realtors, grandparents, human resource officers, and others who influence where people live and where families send their children to school.

- Hit the breakfast, lunch, and dinner speaking circuit in your community, and remind people that public schools are the only game in town that serves all children.

- Build relationships with opinion leaders in your community, and have them on speed dial and in your e-mail distribution list.

- Add to your district's database of key audience members every time you meet someone new by sharing copies of the business cards you collect with the public information or superintendent's office.

- Make sure your district is represented on other key community boards, groups, commissions, and committees. Require at least annual reports to back to the entire school board about news, information, tasks, and activities.

- Contact your local, state, and federal representatives regularly about the importance of public schools, to share good news, or invite them to school and district events and activities.

- Work with your local economic development teams to make sure public schools are represented fairly and on par with private school or charter options when new businesses are recruited, or new executives come to town.

- Don't guess. If you don't know something, or haven't heard about something, don't express shock and dismay, or assume the worst is true. Carry blank note cards and a pen with you at all times so you can take down the information or concern, and promise to have someone get back to them quickly. Then share the information with the superintendent or appropriate staff member. Reserve judgment until you have all the facts.

Source: Carr and Cook, 2012, p. 25