

**Setting and Size**

**The Impact of Setting and Size on a Schools  
Culture and Climate**

**Cletus R. Bulach, Associate Professor  
Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies  
College of Education  
State University of West Georgia  
Carrollton, GA 30118  
770-836-4435  
770-836-4646 FAX  
cbulach@westga.edu  
www.westga.edu/~cbulach (home page)**

**Ronnie Williams, Assistant Professor  
Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies  
College of Education  
State University of West Georgia  
Carrollton, GA 30118  
770-838-3275  
770-836-4646 FAX  
rwilliam@westga.edu**

**Presentation at the Eastern Educational Research Association at Sarasota, FL on March 1,  
2002.**

## THE IMPACT OF SETTING AND SIZE ON A SCHOOLS CULTURE AND CLIMATE\*

### A B S T R A C T

**This research investigated the impact of school setting and size on the culture and climate of a school. Twenty-five schools and 1163 teachers were involved in the study. There was a significant negative correlation between school size and the schools culture and climate. Other findings were that elementary schools had more positive climates than middle and high schools and urban schools had less positive climates than rural and suburban.**

### Introduction

The issue of class size has been studied extensively (Biddle and Berliner (2002), but the issue of school size has received much less attention. A review of doctoral dissertations found only two studies dealing with school size during the past seven years (Tucker, 1997; McKee, 1996). However, interest in school size could be increasing, as a result of the February issue of *Educational Leadership* which was devoted to school and class size. Eight articles are devoted to school size and five are devoted to class size. It is also interesting to observe that while there is research to document the benefits of class size, there is little research to show the benefits of school size. All the articles mentioned in the aforementioned journal are based on opinion. McKee, at the conclusion of his dissertation stated that there was no main effect between school size and student achievement. At the conclusion of his dissertation, Tucker stated that schools are not significantly different over a range of indicators as a result of size. One area where school size could possibly have an impact is a schools culture or climate. However, in both dissertations and in all of the articles there was no mention made of school culture or climate.

The importance of school climate and to some extent culture for an effective school has been the subject of extensive research. Bulach, Malone, & Castleman (1994), in their research on 20 schools found a significant difference in student achievement between schools with a good school climate and those with a poor school climate. They also cited 17 references in their review of literature in support of this relationship. The relationship between school climate and achievement continues to be researched. Hirase (2000) and E&\$"

< .05). They are group trust (-.434) and group atmosphere (-.425) Three of the climate variables were also significant ( $p < .05$ ). They are teaching (-.545), assessment/time on task (-.510) and expectation (-.592). While only five of the 11 culture and climate factors are significant, all 11 are negative indicating that as school size increases, culture and climate scores tend to decrease.

Table 5

A comparison of the relationship of school size with the four culture variables.

	Culture/ Climate	Group trust	Group openness	Group cooperation
atmosphere				
Group trust	+.754**			
Group openness	+.555**	+.645**		
Group cooperation	+.821**	+.477**	+.325	
Group atmosphere	+.935**	+.730**	+.468*	+.820*
Size	-.425*	-.434*	-.179	-.425*

N = 22 \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

The correlations for the 11 culture and climate factors (see Table 6) with each other tend to be very high with expectations and assessment/time on task being the highest with a correlation of .939 See appendix A to examine the behaviors measured by these two climate factors. Openness and sense of mission are the two factors with the lowest correlations. The low correlations for openness are probably a result of the two dimensions measured by this factor. Openness has a telling and a listening dimension. Faculty can be very open on one dimension and closed on the other and vice versa. For this reason, correlations tend to low for openness with the other factors. Low correlations for sense of mission tend to be caused by the fact that while faculty may have been involved in developing the mission, most faculty cannot tell you what it is because it is not celebrated. Rather it tends to get filed somewhere only to be visited when someone asks about it.