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SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CLIMATE

December 2007

A Dissertation

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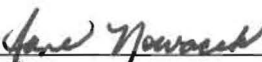
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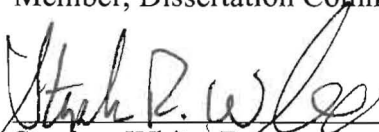
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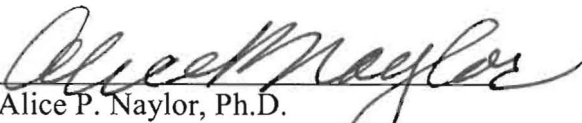
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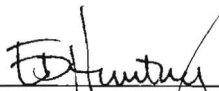
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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CLIMATE. (December, 2007)

Wanda Phillips Hutchinson, B.A. Salem College for Women

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Although recent studies in business have dealt with employee needs for wholeness between and among the various parts of their lives, the topic of spirituality has not been addressed in educational settings in an empirical fashion. Spiritual needs are becoming increasingly important to workers who are sometimes dealing with overwhelming personal circumstances in addition to the demands of work. Spirituality, for the purposes of this study is defined as a sense of purpose greater than the work itself, a sense of connectedness between co-workers and all the facets of oneself, meaning-seeking, and values.

This study utilized a qualitative approach, including semiformal and informal interviews, observation, and document review to examine the concept of workplace spirituality in three public elementary schools (all in the same county and state) and how the principals, as the schools' leaders, impacted the schools' climates.

The schools were chosen by two criteria: (a) nomination by the superintendent; and, (b) recognition in the top 25% of the state in teacher satisfaction as determined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Teacher Working Conditions survey results (2004). Analysis of data revealed three themes – leadership, relationships, and a focus on children – as characteristic of schools with positive climates.

The study indicated that spiritual leaders are able to positively influence school climate through leadership, relationships, and a focus on children.

I also wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Margaret Alwell, Dr. Bryan Brooks, Dr. Stephen White, and most especially my chairperson, Dr. Jane Nowacek. Their encouragement and support were invaluable to me. Dr. Taylor was also a tireless source of encouragement.

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