THE RELATIONSHIP FACTOR:

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Tracy Davis Sands

Liberty University

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain the process by which relationships evolve between teachers and students in a suburban East Tennessee middle school. Based on the assumption that "knowledge is created through action and interaction" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 2), this study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between middle school teachers and their students. A grounded theory approach (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was used to collect and analyze data, with the purpose of generating a theory that explains the phenomena. Because the study was driven by teachers' and students' voices, whose perspectives were examined in conjunction with actual behaviors, the constant comparative method of gathering and analyzing data from teacher and student observations and interviews provided the framework for developing grounded theory. Data was first collected from a sample of teachers (n =12) and students (n = 234) via an open-ended prompt, followed by a purposeful sampling of teachers (n = 11) and students (n = 30) selected for individual open-ended standardized interviews, and finally through informal classroom observations. Initial data was divided into general categories, and through the constant comparative method, categories were synthesized based on causal conditions. This study captured the voices of teachers and students and examined teacher-student relationships from their respective points of view. Finally, this study generated an original theoretical model explaining the manifestation of teacher-student relationships in middle school and the relational levels of engagement between teacher and student. Insight gained from this study informs practitioners on how to meet the needs of adolescents within the classroom to promote healthful social and cognitive development.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to Jesus, my Lord and Savior, master teacher and relationship-builder, who continues to teach me that perseverance is an ongoing process, not a final destination. As written in James 1:2-4:

> Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials on many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything.

He showed me that suffering has a purpose, and that purpose is to develop perseverance. Without suffering, we cannot persevere. Perseverance is the vehicle by which we follow the path to meet character and hope. Character is not built by easy successes but is developed by overcoming challenges, refusing defeat. With his help, we can overcome any challenge, as He has said in Jeremiah 32:27, "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" As it is written in Romans 5:3-5:

> We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Once we are able to overcome challenges, hope rises from the darkness of suffering, guided by perseverance and developed through character. Hope is connected to today, tomorrow, and eternity because hope comes directly from Him.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, I would like to show my sincere gratitude for the professors of Liberty University who have insisted on the intentional application and integration of Christian Worldview into every product of my study with an unwavering dedication to academic excellence.

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List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI)

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

Education Reform Act (ERA)

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Learner-Centered Psychological Principles (LCCP)

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

National Middle School Association (NMSA)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since Confucius' time, educators have examined and exercised the role of relationships between teachers and students to impact student learning (Bennings, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Freire, 1970; Gutek, 2005; Holmes, 1912; Jones, 1996; Legge, 2002; Payne, 1996; Smoot, 2010). Students embody the desire to develop worthwhile relationships with adults, and these relationships influence students' social and cognitive development. In 1969, Paulo Freire (1973) wrote that traditional curriculum was disconnected from life, "centered on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent" (p. 37). However, comprehensive reform efforts often omit relationships from applied practices. As defined by Bill Daggett of the International Center for Leadership in Education (2008), twenty-first century best practices include three primary components: rigor, relevance, and relationships. For centuries, educational thinkers have questioned the current curriculum and quested for reform. Studies of historical and modern teaching methods show that teacher-student relationships enhance student development and performance, across varying ages and in diverse populations.

Guidelines for creating positive teacher-student relationships have been formulated from the research, including input from students. In elementary schools, teachers play a nurturing role, fostering children's development from one stage to the other, and in high school, teachers lead students to independence as they approach adulthood. In middle school, the role of teacher and student is unique to the setting where young adolescents exist amidst a confusing developmental balance between

dependence and autonomy, and teachers endure relationships with students nestled somewhere between control and empowerment.

The consideration of teacher-student relationships is not necessarily novel. Ancient educational philosophers, including Confucius (500 B.C.), believed that great leaders, as referred to in *The Great Learning,* create kingdoms of happy people by starting with knowledge, leading to sincere thoughts, cultivating their people, regulating their families, then ordering their states (Legge, 2002). As a teacher, leader, and philosopher, Confucius valued relationships with learners and often worked with individuals, setting goals based on individual needs (Gutek, 2005).

Overview

This study assumes, affirms, and recognizes the significant role interaction plays in children's cognitive and social development (Davis, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Pianta, 1992; Wentzel, 1997). Additionally, this study presumes that students' social and developmental adjustment impacts academic success at school, and teacher-student relationships subsist within the classroom setting (Pianta, 1992; Wentzel, 1997). This study seeks to explore and examine relationships between middle school teachers and students. In most situations, teachers control the relationship between teacher and learner, and teachers are viewed as leaders who extend their knowledge and nurture their students.

Lifelong educational impact on adolescent development emerges from the intersections that comprise the student's entire world (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008), and every educator plays a role that has the capacity to make a much larger contribution. Even today, the best schools provide a safe and civil environment, consider students

stakeholders, and promote respectful behavior in all circumstances to develop a caring community (Armstrong, 2006; Bennings et al., 2006; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Marzano, 2003). Similar to Confucius' metaphor for leaders and followers (see Legge, 2002), modern day school leaders—the keepers of the vision, are at the root, while stakeholders—achieving students, are on the branches. Qualities of visionary leadership, including classroom leadership, have been noted across secular and religious literature. Leaders carry the burden of ethical responsibility to keep the vision and provide hope for their people, and "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, Life). A compelling vision has the capacity to align the dreams of leaders and followers and bring vitality to an organization (Bredfeldt, 2006; Covey, 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Rourke, 2006; Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007).

In the same manner, leaders with a vision for the common good for their people build reciprocal trusting relationships (Covey, 2008; Reeves, 2006). Vision signifies hope for the future and faith in the people within the organization. In turn, the established relationship between leader and follower empowers stakeholders to invest in the common goal and yield higher productivity and job satisfaction (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Liu, 2007; Taylor et al., 2007). Effective leaders guide others by developing trust through interpersonal relationships and exhibit keen emotional intelligence to gauge the needs of their followers (Covey, 2008; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Goleman, 2007; Reeves, 2006). Relationships between teachers and students mirror those of leaders and followers; visionaries who are invested

in the personal lives of their followers earn the benefit of hard work, trust, and ownership of the process and the final product.

Generally, creating relationships with students has a moral implication and requires an indefinite, softer skill. Instead of serving as a transmitter of content from one person to another, the teacher-student interaction must become relational. In fact, Smoot (2010) stipulated that the process of learning requires the learner to change, and to allow oneself to be taught and to be changed, the learner must trust his teacher, similar to Covey's (2008) claim that trust is essential to any successful leader-follower relationship. As discussed by Garner (2007) and reiterated by Glazer and Talbert (2005), the essence of teaching and learning transcends structural and managerial issues and is influenced by a set of personal beliefs about spiritual matters, which influence students' cognitive development. According to Burbules (2004)

> These considerations are even more salient when we reflect on the intrinsically *moral* character of teaching—not simply as a matter of professional ethics, but as a deeper choice about a way of being in the world, a way of being with others. (p. 2)

Concomitantly, Garner (2007) defines the soul as an intangible entity that determines all behavior and is credited with thinking and willing. Spirituality has been defined by Harris (2007) as the living out of the story of one's life, as all humans possess a spiritual core. Scott (2003) referenced Haye and Nye (1998) who defined spirituality as something uniquely and biologically human, with a holistic awareness of reality. Based on Smoot's (2010) two-year study of Teacher of the Year finalists across America, "Teaching is viewed as not just a job but as a calling, a combination of serious purpose

and a sacred commitment to that purpose" (p. xii). Relational spirituality, as posed by Ambrose (2005), occurs when communities of learners connect with one another, and "our own spirituality is influenced by significant relationships through experiences" (p. 93). Capper (2005) also noted that our theories of knowledge as educators are intricately woven into our spiritualities. Based on Garner's (2007) descriptions, the soul consists of a cognitive, attentive, reflective mind; a conscious, judgmental, motivated, attitudinal will; and emotions consisting of feelings, personality and intuition. As a complement, the body supports physical and neurochemical activity. In short, the interconnected responsibilities of leading learners, teaching students, interacting with young people, and fostering social and cognitive development, require more of teachers than simply exchanging content from one person to another.

Problem

As delineated by Creswell (2007), setting up the problem establishes the need or the study and frames it within the literature. The focus of inquiry for this study is expressed through an explanation of the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006) and evolves around the process by which teachers and students develop relationships in middle school. Contemporary studies of teacher-student interactions reference the importance of healthy teacher-student relationships (see Bergin, C. & Bergin, D., 2009; Davis, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Mizell, 2002; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007), but minimal research has been conducted with a focus on explaining how teacher-student relationships actually develop. In addition, several recent studies on teacher-student relationships reflect the impact of teacher-student relationships on student life satisfaction, self-efficacy, social competence, and general life satisfaction (see

Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Danielson, 2009; Levykh, 2008; Suldo et al., 2009). Furthermore, professional literature is heaving with studies on the benefits of teacher-student relationships in schools (see Bergin, C. & Bergin, D., 2009; Davis, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Mizell, 2002; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007), but insufficient research has been conducted on how relationships are developed or their roles in the classroom.

The problem, or requisite for this study, resulted from the lack of research defining the teacher-student relationship in middle school. While the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, 2009) focus on reforming school programs, interactions between teachers and students have been overlooked. Admittedly, Daggett and Nussbaum (2007) note that student engagement, the category comprising teacher-student relationships, is often overlooked in school reform efforts. In addition, Pianta and Walsh (1996) stated, "School failure is at its core caused by an inability or an unwillingness to communicate – a relationship problem"(p. 24).

The common goal of a middle school is to ensure the success of every student with a focus on teacher-student engagement, to include organizing relationships for learning and hiring and retaining teachers who care about and understand young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Rourke, 2006). Since inception, middle schools were designed with the intent of developing and sustaining mentor relationships between teachers and students throughout the middle school years (Armstrong, 2006; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Rourke, 2006).

Although relationships between teachers and students are often mentioned in professional literature, a dearth of research prevents a clear definition or description of how teacher-student relationships are manifested. Several studies suggest that healthy relationships are necessary, but fail to identify the components of such a relationship (see Boynton, M., & Boynton, C., 2005; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). Literature focusing on interactions between teachers and students in middle school is highly uncommon, and theory related to the development of relationships within the classroom remains undefined.

Purpose

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain process by which relationships between teachers and students evolve in a suburban East Tennessee middle school. Adolescent relationships with non-parental adults, including teachers, have lasting impact on student success because youth who form strong relationships with non-parental adults develop a sense of autonomy through supportive relationships (Rishel, et al., 2007).

Three questions guided this grounded theory study: (a) What is the process by which relationships between teachers and students evolve in middle school? (b) What are the sources that comprise teacher-student relationships in middle school? (c) What role do relationships between teachers and students play in middle school settings? Through the constant comparative method of collecting and analyzing data, additional theoretical questions were generated until theoretical saturation was achieved, at which point a theory was constructed to explain the interactions between teachers and students in the middle school.

Significance of the Study

Commonly, middle schools are the least popular teaching positions in the K-12 framework because teachers are typically trained either as elementary or secondary teachers, not as middle grades teachers (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007; Rourke, 2006). Placing elementary or high school teachers in middle school classrooms with minimal preparation establishes a climate for failure for both teachers and students. Placing non-specialized teachers in middle schools often occurs due to lack of qualified, middle-level certified candidates and overall teacher shortages (Lloyd, Ramsey, & Bell, 1998; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007; Rourke, 2006), and "expecting teachers educated to teach five-year-olds to teach young adolescents makes no more sense than expecting history teachers to teach algebra" (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 104).

Elementary teachers tend to be nurturing generalists, and high school teachers are more apt to be content area specialists because elementary education programs focus on developmentally appropriate practice, and secondary education programs focus on subject content. Although accountability standards vary from state to state, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (Cronin, Dahlin, Xiang, & McCahon, 2009) reported a record number of middle schools missing target scores for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2008-09:

> Fewer middle schools would make AYP no matter what state they were located in. Twenty-one of the twenty-six states examined would have two or fewer schools make AYP. The reported highlighted Chaucer Middle School—the highest performing middle school in the sample—which would

have failed to make AYP mainly due to the performance of its subgroups in twenty-one of twenty-six states. (p. 1)

At the same time, middle schools generally have higher incidents of bullying (Frey & Fisher, 2008; Milsom & Gallo, 2006), and have higher teacher attrition rates than elementary and high schools, and up to 30% leave the profession within five years (Jackson & Davis, 2000) when the overall attrition rate for all teachers within the first 1-5 years is nearly 40% (Boe et al., 2008). Most middle grades teachers do not receive adequate pre-service training prior to entering the classroom, and they often receive limited support after their hire (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007; Rourke, 2006). According to Rourke (2006) on behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the time-honored tradition that assigns the most challenging teaching responsibilities to the least experienced middle school teachers contributes to the short-lived careers of many capable new teachers. Otherwise, beginning teachers often receive very little support during their first three years of teaching which lends itself to a crude sink-or-swim method resulting in high teacher turnover (Lloyd, Ramsey, & Bell, 1998). However, Haun and Martin's (2004) research suggests that middle grades teachers who are placed in collaborative teams appear to have a higher commitment and satisfaction level.

Frequently, novice teachers accept less than favorable teaching positions in middle schools hoping to transfer into elementary or high school positions in the near future because their original preparation program focused on elementary education or secondary education, rather than middle grades education (Jackson & Davis, 2000). In many states, middle school endorsements are voluntary and support K-6 or 7-12 licensure

models without focus on specific needs of middle grades expertise. Teachers with a wide range of professional backgrounds often teach adolescents because of the lack of enrollment in middle grades programs (Jackson & Davis, 2000). More importantly, the needs of middle school students are unique, differing vastly from their elementary and high school counterparts. For this reason, the challenges of synthesizing developmental needs and rigorous content can be overwhelming for educators and frustrating for their usually disoriented students. Understanding the process by which effective teacher-student relationships evolve could impact teaching and learning, inform teacher satisfaction and retention, assist with healthy development of adolescents, and build positive cultures across school buildings.

Consequently, developing a theory of the process driving meaningful relationships in middle schools may unveil opportunities to create optimal learning environments and thriving school cultures. Several studies (see Bergin, C. & Bergin, D., 2009; Davis, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Mizell, 2002; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007) demonstrate the importance of teacher-student relationships, and adolescent development literature affirms the importance of significant adults in the lives of students, but there is no clear conception of how these relationships are established or how they manifests in middle school classroom settings. Further, relationships within classrooms can be reflective of the general school climate and culture. Maslow (1987) indicated that "respect is a dispensable luxury when more urgent needs are not being met" (p. 99) and prioritized meeting basic needs first. Teachers and students as individuals must have their basic needs met before they can contribute to relationships inside the classroom. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) described the school

climate as the collective personality of a school distinguished by informal and formal interactions between people within the school setting. Students and teachers flourish in healthy school climates, and the differences in school climate impact obvious differences in achievement between those schools (Malti & Noam, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005).

Correspondingly, relationships are at the center of optimal school cultures, and administrators act as the catalyst for the morale of the campus, demonstrating an awareness of the personal lives of their stakeholders (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Marzano et al., 2005). Administrators must value stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers, community members, and other staff) as individual people and nurture them. According to the Accelerated Schools (1986) reform model, working together binds the principles of "unity of purpose, school wide empowerment and responsibility, and a commitment to building on strengths" (Hopfenberg et al., 1993, p. xiv) and leads to sustaining relationships within the school and outward into the community. People who feel nurtured and valued will take greater risks for the common good. When relationships are established, a common vision can be shared between all stakeholders, and people unite to do what is best for children (Hopfenberg et al., 1993). Moreover, cooperative, collaborative, caring relationships among stakeholders within a school provide a necessary bond between people to encourage buy-in and sustain change. Thus, the responsibility of relationships is essential to the development of a purposeful community within the school (Marzano et al., 2005).

Type

This qualitative inquiry focused on the development and nature of relationships between middle school teachers and their students. Teaching methods are best observed

qualitatively because each classroom environment has its own unique culture, students have their own collective and individual personalities, and teachers tend to alter their routines based on the students with whom they work (Caine, R. & Caine, G., 1997; Curwin, Mendler A., & Mendler, B., 2008; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Smoot, 2010; Tomlinson & Doubet, 2005). Teachers, who are unique human beings themselves, must adapt to unique differences in cognition, emotion, personality, and physical attributes and interact with external influences to promote healthy development (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008). Education can be described as a fundamentally human relationship, an educational triad involving the teacher, the student, and what is exchanged between them (Smoot, 2010). Educational methods are not independent of the context in which they are practiced or from the people working within the classroom setting. Accordingly, qualitative research values the specific, unique, individual study that evolves from considering the human circumstance, condition, and perspective, without limiting itself to quantify a predicted result: "Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparison to quantitative research" (Creswell, 2007, p. 11).

As this study moved beyond description, it served to identify an abstract analytical schema of interactions between people (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) grounded in data collected from participants who have experienced the process (Creswell, 2007) and analyzed by contemplating relationships between middle school teachers and students. In relation to teacher-student relationships in the middle school, this grounded theory study examined changing experiences over time and articulate multi-faceted experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). As a result, this study aims to yield better understanding,

heightened awareness, and genuine appreciation for the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships in the middle school and their contribution to student development.

Design

For the purposes of this study, grounded theory was defined as theory generated from data systematically obtained and analyzed through the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Grounded theory was chosen for this study because of a current absence in theory on the phenomenon of middle school teacher-student relationships. I collected crucial data during the cyclical process of interviewing teachers and students. In addition, I utilized convenience sampling (i.e., small group of teacher volunteers), theoretical sampling (i.e., purposeful sampling from theoretical responses) and stratified, purposeful sampling (i.e., purposeful sampling to illustrate subgroups) to maximize similarities and differences of information (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009).

During the phase of constant comparison, I compared each event in the data with other events for similarities and differences, representing a range of experiences that change over time until causes, conditions, and consequences arise related to the process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Ultimately, I generated a theory of a process or interaction grounded in the views of the research participants.

The central question to this study (i.e., "What is the process by which relationships are established between middle school teachers and students?") led to additional questions and the eventual development of a theory grounded in the data.

Creswell's (2007) recommended questions guided the generation of theory explaining this study's central phenomenon:

1. What are the general categories that emerge from an open coding first review?
2. What is the phenomenon of interest?
3. What caused the phenomenon of interest?
4. What contextual and intervening conditions influenced it?
5. What strategies or outcomes resulted from it?
6. What were the consequences of those strategies?

Through the constant comparative approach of collecting and analyzing data until theoretical saturation, the final objective of this grounded theory study was to generate theory to explain the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships in middle school. A hypothesis and visual diagram represented actions, interactions, or processes through interconnected categories of information based on data (Creswell, 2007), grounded in the perspectives of middle school teachers and students as interpreted by the researcher.

As Glaser and Strauss (2009) explicated, the grounded theory researcher's interpretation of data builds theory rather than the study following the strict framework of an existing theory, thus theory based on data cannot usually "be completely refuted by more data or replaced by another theory" (p. 4) because it is closely linked to data and certain to endure the test of time. The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of teacher student relationships in middle schools and how they are manifested inside and outside the classroom. Seeking to perform a thorough survey of literature to determine the scope of research on teacher student

relationships, this study inquired as to how those relationships are connected to adolescent development.

Conceptual Framework

According to Creswell (2007), good research explicitly articulates philosophical assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks in the writing of a study. As a foundation for determining my choice of research methodology, the five philosophical assumptions, which include ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical, and methodological suppositions, provide a configuration to guide inquiry and establish my position within the study.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions represent a researcher's "stance toward the nature of reality, how the researcher knows what he or she knows, the role of values in the research, the language of the research, and the methods used in the process" (Creswell, 2007, p. 16). Philosophical assumptions provide the infrastructure, the social-scientific underpinning, and the professional protocol for conducting and reporting from within the study. My philosophy of education is rooted in my experiences as a mother, student, teacher, and school administrator. I support the ideal that learning takes places within a social context, and interactions between people are essential to learning. In addition, I believe that the classroom functions as an interactive learning community where teachers and students work together, reciprocating respect and trust, in order to support social, developmental, emotional, and cognitive development of adolescents.

Ontological. The ontological assumption for this study infers that multiple realities exist within the school setting. Parents, students, teachers, administrators, and

other school community members contribute to each other's perceptions of relationships. I observed participants' verbal and nonverbal behaviors to understand individual perspectives. Interviews, observations, and open-responses provided primary sources of data to interpret the realities of the participants. As I learned from teachers and students through interviews and observations, my own philosophy of education impacted my interpretation of their perceived, shared, and observed realities.

Epistemological. I conducted this study in the school district where I work full time, and from an epistemological perspective, I was able to lessen the distance between the voluntary participants and myself. I work in the same school district, and to some degree, I have already been accepted as an insider to the school. In some cases; however, I was considered an outsider because of my administrative position. As a non-evaluative but informed outsider, the individual interview and observation protocol served as a natural extension of established relationships with students and teachers in the school community.

Axiological. Aligned with the axiological assumption that my values were brought into the study, it was essential to discuss the subjectivity of the study. Because my role as principal includes guiding instruction, evaluating teachers, advocating for students, and resolving conflicts between all stakeholders, my insight provided depth and subjectivity to the study. Positioned within the study, my personal and professional values were shared and how they influence my work as a principal and researcher have been discussed. The interpretive biography clearly documents my presence and perspective.

Rhetorical. This study took place from an insider's perspective and was narrated

from a first person point of view; consequently, my voice permeated the entire study. Efforts were made to communicate credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability throughout the narrative to align rhetorical language with the method employed. Through the grounded theory approach, the study was empowered to guide inquiry as theory was derived from the data. Because use of jargon or complex terms may "detract from grounded theory and attempt to gain power in their use" (Creswell, 2007, p. 66), preliminary definitions of terms were not be announced prior to the study but developed throughout the study. Terms related to the phenomena were not predetermined by language or method in order to enter the study with an open mind and honor the discovery of emerging categories and codes. The qualitative study does not present a priori hypothesis to prove; rather, it posed a phenomenon to be studied from inside the natural setting, resulting in the development of a hypothesis and the generation of theory.

Methodological. The grounded theory study took place from inside the school, among the participants, and involved observing the teacher-student relationships within the natural environment. Details were analyzed to produce generalizations, which were described in context and revised throughout the process. As is the nature of qualitative research approaches, the methodological design evolved through study rather than have proceeded with a specific target or task in mind. Explicit, exhaustive data guided the study, details produced generalizations, and theory materialized in relation to the process.

Paradigms

Paradigms of research represent the beliefs researchers bring to qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), serve as an analytic strategy to bring structure to the process

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and claim a specific understanding of knowledge. Modern qualitative research, particularly grounded study, is often built on a combination of founding ideals. This study engaged constructivism, pragmatism, and interactionism in a contemporary context, rooted in my own personal experiences as a student, parent, teacher, and school administrator.

Constructivist. This study fit into a systematic constructivist paradigm because it "seeks to systematically develop a theory that explains a process, action, or interaction" (Creswell, 2007, p. 64). As a novice researcher, I was easily influenced by the contemporary constructivist approach, compatible with interpretive techniques and flexible guidelines (Creswell, 2007). Since theory is built from data and the end result is not predetermined, constructivism seemed to be a natural fit for grounded theory. My study of relationships within the middle school was aligned with constructivist grounded theory because it reflected the researcher's view and focus on theory, learning about the experience within many layers of networks, situations, and relationships (Creswell, 2007), exposing unpredicted issues and challenges within those relationships.

Interactionist and pragmatist. Corbin and Strauss (2008) quote Dewey and Mead (1936), in relation to interactionism and pragmatism, which provided the foundation of this topic because of the focus on interactions between teachers and students and "the interest in the act itself and the relationship of thought to the act itself" (p. 404). The pragmatist philosophy of knowledge rests on the nature of knowledge and knowing created through action and interaction of self-reflecting human beings. In addition, Corbin and Strauss (2008) described the symbolic interaction of learning as one that occurs between persons as they define each other's actions "instead of reacting to

each other's actions" (p.2). Demonstrating the fluidity of qualitative perspectives, Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated:

> Some researchers . . . have tried to hold on to what is good about the past while updating it and bringing it more in line with the present . . . I have chosen parts of both past and present and rejected others from this smorgasbord of ideas, based on who and what I am. (p. 9)

Similarly, I conducted this grounded theory study from a hybrid paradigm of constructivist, pragmatist, and interactionist perspectives.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review provides the rationale for the problem and places the study among professional literature about the topic (Creswell, 2007). Beginning with a thorough review of related research, this chapter examines research studies, professional articles, and primary resources from Confucius' time to the present, demonstrated through components of effective teaching methods. From the survey of literature, a better understanding of the contributors to teacher-student relationships is developed. According to Lee (2007), "Far too little attention has been given to understanding trust relationships in classrooms and schools" (p. 210), which is a significant problem because trust relationships help adolescents develop psychological and emotional perceptions of themselves. This chapter includes a discussion of professional and practical literature from the past and present that emphasizes teacher-student relationships.

In addition, educational theories are surveyed for the purpose of establishing a theoretical foundation for teaching and learning. Constructivism, based on the premise that learners construct their own knowledge based on social, interactive experiences (Brooks, J., & Brooks, M., 2001), provides a theoretical basis for this study. Founding theories that influence constructivism include social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978), discovery learning theory (Bruner, 1996), and motivational theory (Maslow, 1987; Rogers, 1980), which were pioneered by early educators, psychologists and philosophers. Contributions of historical educators and their methodologies have been studied to develop a pedagogical understanding of teaching and learning in middle school. The social component of learning, as established by educational theorists, has

been synthesized with practical applications of historically known educators to provide the setting for the study.

Further, modern crucial issues such as accountability and standardized testing, including students with special needs, teacher development and efficacy, school reform and best practices, and the unique needs of adolescents in middle school are surveyed to provide a critical perspective on concerns impacting teacher-student interactions in middle school. Primary research related to adolescent academic, developmental, and socio-emotional needs, classroom relationships, and the impact of teacher-student relationships on learning provide specific insight on the role of classroom interactions in middle school.

Contributions of Informed Experts

Quality of instruction has been studied since the inception of teaching and learning. Decades ago, experts concurred that instruction should be based on the needs of students. Summarizing John Carroll (1963), Ysseldyke and Tardew (2007) noted that effective instruction is determined by what students learn, which "is a function of the ratio of the time they spend learning to the amount of time they need to learn a skill" (p. 3). Decidedly, culminating factors from a longitudinal study (i.e., the National Association of Secondary School Principals) determined that middle school teachers need guidance in addition to formal knowledge, which includes the ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others (Rourke, 2006). In addition, an essentially human relationship personifies an authentic presence in teaching and learning, filled with multi-layered depth, complexity, richness, and challenge (Smoot, 2010; Towne, 2009). Generally speaking, successful middle school classrooms establish learning communities,

foster respect for one another, and insist on high expectations; thus, teacher-student relationships are the nucleus of the community.

Historical Educators

Although instructional methods and curriculum content in classrooms have changed dramatically over the decades, the impact of teacher-student relationships on student success remains constant. True educators embrace students through meaningful relationships and promote "the optimal and natural development of children and adolescents as our most sacred duty as educators and our ultimate legacy to humanity" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 5). Table 1 depicts the educational shift since the early days of teaching and learning. As early as 3000 B.C., priests taught religion, writing, and the study of sciences, then the study of Greek history through literature emerged following the writing of Homer's (850 B.C.) *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. As education evolved in the Far East thousands of years before Christ through Classical Greece, the Western world did not invest in an educational movement until the eighteenth century.

Table 1

Timeline of Educational Contributions

Date	Educator/Philosopher	Origin	Contribution
3000 BC	Temple Schools	Egypt	Taught religion, writing, sciences
2000 BC	Formal Schools	China	Developed formal schools
1500 BC	Priests Teach	India	Taught religion, writing, philosophy, sciences
850 BC	Homer's Iliad & Odyssey	Greece	Educated about Greek history, most free men have access
550 BC	Confucius	China	Taught basic morality, emphasis on goodness & kindness
400 BC	Sophists	Greece	Taught oratory and debate skills using logic
387 BC	Plato	Greece/Athens	Created the "Academy" focused on truth
355 BC	Aristotle	Greece/Athens	Wrote The Republic outlines a perfect society
100 BC	Cicero & Quintilian	Rome	Organized education curriculum of arts & sciences
0	Jesus	Jerusalem	Taught through parables and simple stories
1499	Desiderius Erasmus	Europe/Holland	Researched ancient documents, emphasized literature
1659	Johann Amos Comenius	N. Europe/Czech	Encouraged setting up classrooms to children's interests
1690	John Locke	England	Believed mind is a blank slate, early childhood education
1762	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	France	Published Emile (On Education)
1799	Johann Pestalozzi	Switzerland	Developed modern elementary school with object lessons
1837	Freidrich Froebel	Germany	Opened first kindergarten where children can learn/grow
1852	Horace Mann	United States/MA	Fought for first all-free education
1920	Maria Montessori	Italy	Focused on early childhood learning based on senses
1955	Jean Piaget	Switzerland	Studied & theorized about child cognitive development

Note: Information gathered for the above listed table was received from the following referenced sources: Gutek, 2005; Harbin, 2005; Kliebard, 2004; Olsen, 2004; Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007; Worldwide, 2011.

Confucius (© 500 B.C.)

Confucius, ancient teacher and philosopher, envisioned the teaching-learning relationship as one of love and understanding where virtue was demonstrated through

love of all men and wisdom originated through understanding of mankind. His philosophy evolved from politics and teaching and has sustained the test of time. As early as 500 B.C., Confucius recognized the importance of active engagement in learning: "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand" (© 500 B.C./Smoot, 2010, p. xiv).

Confucius (© 500 B.C./Gutek, 2005), like Socrates (© 400 B.C./Gutek, 2005), served his position in the world as teacher-philosopher. Each practiced an interactive question-answer method between teacher and learner that promoted critical thinking. Confucius focused on the learner's strengths and weaknesses and individualized instruction for the good of each pupil. According to Confucius, relationships between people are selfless, and those who are wise must be generous and helpful to those who are learning: "The truly virtuous man, desiring to establish himself, seeks to establish others; desiring success for himself, he strives to help others succeed" (Legge, 2002, p. 1).

Education in Antiquity

The history of Greek educational tradition can be traced back to Homer's (850 B.C.) creation of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, a culmination of an inherited tradition of legend and poetry, and to Graeco-Latin philosophers and teachers. Irrefutably, contributions from Socrates (© 400 B.C.), Plato (387 B.C.), and Aristotle (355 B.C.) established the original structure for school curriculum and educational theory (Gutek, 2005; Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). From origins in antiquity, education became a "collective technique in which society employs to instruct its youth in the values and accomplishments of the civilization" (Marrou, 1956, p. xiii). The purpose, similar to

Confucius' ideal, was to educate youth of the community to be responsible, contributing citizens (American Bible Society, 2011; Gutek, 2005; Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). However, a civilization must be established in order to educate members of the community. Thus, ancient educational models transition from a warrior culture to a servant-scribe culture, obviously leading to a tradition of education through reading and writing (Marrou, 1956).

Although Socrates, who relied on divine inspiration, utilized methods of repetitive questioning that lead to critical thinking contributed greatly to educational methods, the Sophists (© 400 B.C.), active around the second half of the fifth century, were the first educators to be considered teachers, rather than scientists, philosophers or thinkers. The Sophists, or wandering tutors, traveled from town to town searching for pupils, providing samples of their public lectures (Marrou, 1956). Focused on the art of speaking and mastery of debate, Sophists such as Protagoras (420 B.C.) and Gorgias (380 B.C.) taught students how to be right in all circumstances.

According to H. Marrou (1956) and H. Kliebard (2004), the work of two great teachers, Plato (387 B.C.) and Isocrates (338 B.C.) sought to bring Greek education to maturity, utilizing best practices from their predecessors and perfecting those strategies. Their discovery of advanced culture led them to the main principles of American education and including the education of the child within a social order, impacted the ideas of John Dewey (1897) in the late nineteenth century (Kliebard, 2004). Plato, as heir of Socrates practiced from a more philosophical, rational, scientific perspective, and Isocrates, successor to the Sophists, focused more on oratory, decision-making skills, and practical effectiveness (Marrou, 1956).

One cannot seriously consider Classical or Hellenistic Education without noting the distinguishing mark of pederasty, which included the privileges of establishing the nobility of civilized man (Marrou, 1956; Bloch, 2001; Armstrong Perry, 2005). This inverted relationship between teacher and student, seemingly spiritual, sought to "perpetuate oneself in a being like oneself" (Marrou, 1956, p. 30) and was justified as teaching with a fatherly attitude. Mentors developed intimate relationships with chosen pupils and developed them into apprentices.

According to Marrou (1956), Bloch (2001) and Armstrong Perry (2005), young males worthy of education were removed from their parents and fathered and educated by such tutors in a union far closer than the bond between parents and children. The relationship was considered a personal union between a young man and an elder who was once his model, his guide and his initiator. Regardless of the contemporary moral implications of the historical practice of pederasty in antiquity, the role of the teacher in the life of the student and the manifestation of their relationship must be considered in the study of teacher-student relationships.

Jesus as Educator

Once Christianity grew from a minority religion to an organization of educated believers, classical and biblical learning confronted one another. In R. Herzman's (1997) discussion of St. Augustine's *Confessions* (397), Turtullian (© 200), a North-African Christian Bishop aggressively discredits corrupt pagan beliefs. Alternatively, Origen (254/Herzman, 1997), philosopher and biblical scholar argued that the tools of classical learning were essential for scriptural comprehension, and in fact, consistent with the truths of classical culture.

Burbules (2004) introduced Jesus as an exemplar teacher of the Western world without regard to his historical or religious connection, but simply as a master teacher. Jesus taught through discussion of oral parables with modest, non-threatening morals, provoking thought in a less than threatening format. Jesus' teachings were relevant and were initiated by natural events and human conduct (Burbules, 2004). Jesus' teachings, based on simple stories easily visualized by the student provided relevance and real-life application activated critical thought and change in the lives of his pupils. In addition, based on the historical context of the Gospels, Jones (1996) analyzed Jesus as a teacher and leader of people who has incredible team building and interpersonal skills. Jesus nurtured his people and established a model for future leaders. He encouraged his people and cared for them, and he told them, "You are divine. Every day can be a feast for you when you know that you are loved" (Jones, 1996, p. 244).

Luxton (2011) presages that Biblical pedagogy, aligned with learner-centered education, is a best practice model for life application. Within the Bible, the teaching environment, "ensures cohesion and the knowledge of facts, (contains) understanding and life application, is strong on formative assessment and is community centered" (Luxton, 2011, p. 2). Jesus' teaching methods are documented in the Holy Bible and are communicated through the philosophy of Christianity, portending that relationships between teacher and learner originated with creation. Based on scripture, education was originally an open, individualized relationship between God and man. In Genesis 2:16, almost immediately after creating Adam, God spoke directly to Adam and instructed him, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Life, 2005). Here, God indicates that Adam must gain

knowledge directly from God, not by searching or attempting to know everything without His divine instruction.

Adam was assigned as the caretaker of the garden, but God clearly remained the caregiver of Man. Man's sin changed God's educational model: Sin separated man from the natural, intimate relationship between Teacher and learner. Because of man's sin nature, education must begin with the understanding that all fall short of God's glory and need a Savior. The coming Savior was the ultimate key to restoring the relationship between God and man, Teacher and learner.

In John 1:47-49 and John 2, Jesus taught by developing relationships and establishing trust. Based on Jesus' methodology, education is designed with equity in mind. In Romans 10:12-13, John 8:15, and John 12:47, Jesus showed unconditional love for his followers, without passing judgment. In John 13:12-17, through his life and death, Jesus modeled the role of servant-leader. Through his acts of servitude, Jesus demonstrated a genuine relationship between teacher and learner. Jesus was a master at developing relationships with people and leading his people with an attitude of ministry.

Forerunners to Child-Centered Education

Impacted by the literary styles of Cicero and Quintilian (100 B.C.), Desiderius Erasmus (1499) translated the New Testament in Latin and Greek and inspired resurgence in the study of human society. As a major contributor to humanism, Erasmus attempted to shift the Church's focus from a focus on rituals and toward ideal, practical Christian living (Gutek, 2005; Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007).

Emphasizing the value of education for all children, including females, Johann Comenius (1659) created an atmosphere of love and kindness within his school. As an

early advocate for teacher education, Comenius believed that there was a science to education that must be delivered in proper learning stages and be comprised of practical lessons and sensory experiences where conceptions may be tested (Gutek, 2005; Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). John Locke (1690) speculated that the learner interacts with a sensory environment, classifying objects and confirming impressions by association with other objects (Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). Locke's epistemology maintains that there are no inborn understandings; instead, all knowledge is gained through sensory experiences and the mind is a blank slate at birth.

In *Emile*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007) advocated for emotional, intellectual, and educational freedom for children. His ideas provide a basis for the student-centered, kinesthetic, discovery-based classroom. Rousseau believed that all students should have the same opportunities pass through natural stages of development, learning from experiences. Consumed with concern for the education and well-being of all children, Wollstonecraft (1787/1979) wrote, "I am anxiously solicitous for their future welfare, and mortified beyond measure, when counteracted in my endeavors to improve them" (p. 148). Writing *On the Education of Daughters*, Wollstonecraft (1787/1974) encouraged children to adhere to the truth, "to combine their ideas . . . to learn to compare things that are similar in some respects and different in others . . . to think" (p. 22) and reflect on what they had learned because "for when they do not arise from experience, they are mostly absurd" (p. 23).

Shaped by some of Rousseau's ideas, Johann Pestalozzi (1799) observed children carefully and led schools based on students' needs. He developed a home-like environment of cooperation and believed education to be a mutual effort, a relationship

between teacher and student. Pulliam and VanPatten (2007) quote Pestalozzi as one who educates the "head and the heart," defining the union between the mind's moral, physical, and intellectual aptitudes. As a follower of Pestalozzi, Friedrich Frobel (1837) respected children's individuality and found a divine, spiritual connection between young children and God's will (Gutek, 2005, Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). Focused on early childhood education, Froebel established the first Kindergarten, a place where young children could learn and grow, free to develop relationships with others.

The relationship between teachers and students and students with one another can influence academic success. Maria Montessori (1912), pioneer early childhood educator, based her curricula on individual student development and one-on-one interactions between student and teacher. Believing that from birth, children embody a psychic power, an inner self-teacher (Gutek, 2005), Montessori developed her method of early childhood educational practice based on the idea that optimal learning is achieved through sensory experiences. Montessori valued relationships among adults and young children, speaking of relationships between teachers and learners where teachers observed children closely and learned from them.

Paulo Freire (1969) believed that through positive, reciprocal teacher-student relationships, teachers and students could learn from one another during ongoing dialogue and interaction with the environment (Gutek, 2005). Freire (1969) wrote in *Education of Critical Consciousness*, "To be human is to engage in relationships with others and the world" (p. 1) and to consciously deal with problems by changing in the act of responding. He saw the process of living and learning as a continuum of responses to choices made in conjunction with the environment, humanizing reality. Freire (1973)

believed that humans reflect in learning because they are with the world, and animals react because they are in the world. As awesome, intelligent creatures, humans posses critical perception defined by the incredible "ability to reach into yesterday, recognize today, and come upon tomorrow" (Freire, 1973, p. 1).

Historically, best practices have involved providing students with context that fosters cognitive development in an interactive learning environment. The classroom atmosphere, as cultivated by the classroom teacher, impacts socio-emotional and intellectual development of students. Similar to current researchers in the field of education, pioneers of educational philosophy and methodological best practices sought to identify contextual factors that contribute to students reaching their ultimate potential. In the past and presently, research acknowledges the value of active, engaging classrooms, appreciative of individual needs and learning styles replicate democratic society and enable students to function as citizens in a learning community.

Federal Government and American Education Reform

In response to the 1957 Soviet flight of Sputnik to the moon, the United States began to doubt their role as global front-runners in education. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson, a former classroom teacher, determined that education was the route to winning the war on poverty. President Johnson assembled the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare and created the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the first federal intervention on improvement of education (US Senate Committee on Labor & Public Welfare, 1965).

In 1981, the United States once again became concerned for the quality of American education. Secretary of Education, T.H. Bell was assigned the responsibility of

examining the quality of education in the United States and reporting the results to the nation (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984). In response to this assignment, the Secretary of Education tasked the National Commission on Excellence in Education to analyze the performance of American schools. The result of the 18-month evaluation confirmed the Secretary's concern about "the widespread public perception that something is seriously amiss in our educational system" (National Commission, 1984, p. 1). Thus, the Commission was appointed to provide leadership, constructive criticism, and assistance to schools and universities (National Commission, 1984).

The results of the National Commission's study (1984) indicated that the United States no longer ranked among other high performing civilized nations (e.g., Japan, Germany, Korea), and the once "unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation" (p. 5) had been surpassed by global competition. According to the National Commission (1984), the United States' eroding educational foundations and widespread complacency had caused our nation to be at-risk. The National Commission presented its findings and recommendations, launching a national campaign for school reform aiming to increase credit requirements for high school graduation, focus on science, math, English, and social studies, adopt rigorous and measurable standards, provide more time in school and more instruction in the basics, develop higher standards for prospective teachers and provide incentives based on performance, and to offer federal and local assistance to schools (National Commission, 1984). Consequently, many school reform programs, where at-risk communities received federal funding, were established to assist with accomplishing the goals to become globally competitive.

Following the National Commission's (1984) recommendations, the gap between global high performers and underachievers continued to expand, and the United States once again failed to be identified as one of the elite. In 1991, W.R. Daggett established the International Center for Leadership in Education to address the ever changing educational needs of global society. Daggett's plans addressed many of the issues outlined by the National Commission, serving to implement "organizational changes that translate into world-class curriculum, instruction, and assessment systems" (International, 2008, p. 1) and answering the call for technological literacy, global competitiveness, and an increase in rigor and critical thinking. On the verge of a new millennium, America received a call to meet the needs of children born into the age of technology, and the International Center for Leadership in Education, represented by Daggett (2008), created a framework of essential components to high quality instruction.

Introduced as the New Three Rs: Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships (Daggett, 2008), contemporary basic skills were marketed as absolutely necessary to prepare students for the competitive worldwide marketplace. Rigor implies the purposeful induction of challenge into curriculum, focusing on critical thinking and inquiry-based problem solving. Relevance connects lessons from the real world to students' background knowledge. With newly attained concepts, students apply those concepts to different, less-predictable situations. Relationships between teachers and students establish a climate for risk-taking and trust where students are actively engaged and willingly participate in a productive learning community.

Correspondingly, Klem and Connell (2004), from the Institute of Research and Reform in Education, stated in their research that commonly known factors contributing

towards student success included high standards for learning and behavior, professional learning communities for faculties, meaningful and engaging instruction, and personalized learning. Their research indicated that teacher support and involvement with students promotes autonomy.

Indisputably, the modern educational dilemma has caused uproar in the United States' educational system; however, most reform efforts anxiously advocate for the application of programs rather than taking a serious look at the interactions between students and teachers in classrooms (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). More recently, in 2009, the ARRA (2009) brought a new sense of urgency to public education, supporting "investments in innovative strategies… most likely to lead to improved results for students…" (p. 2) but remained silent on issues relating to the impact of teacher-student engagement in the classroom.

Since the nation was labeled "at-risk" in 1984, the term has been attached to any possible population of students who are unmatched to the majority, mainstream population. Millions of dollars have been spent to rearrange external features within the learning environment as an attempt to repair a much larger societal problem. Contrary to the belief that rigor is the key factor influencing our nation's failure at schooling, Pianta and Walsh (1996) stated, "School failure is at its core caused by an inability or an unwillingness to communicate – a relationship problem" (p. 24).

While reform efforts initiated as early as 1965 attempted to add rigor to instruction and simultaneously close the achievement gap between students of poverty and those of affluence, research has begun to examine the role of teacher-student relationships. In 1991, Henry Levin began a project to unify school communities and

build on the strengths of the people within the school (Hopfenberg et al., 1993). The goal of this study was to seek out and understand how relationships between teachers and learners manifested inside contemporary United States classrooms in the wake of high stakes accountability, 21st century demands on curriculum and instruction, and the ever-competitive global marketplace.

Contemporary Best Practices

According to Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005), the term *best practice* has origins in the medical profession and was defined as solid, reputable, state-of-the art work in a field, and a professional who adheres to best practice standards is "aware of current research and consistently offers clients the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures" (p. vi). Prior the American school reform movement (initiated in 1984 by *A Nation At-Risk*), many teachers simply taught what they had always taught, which was likely to be similar to what they were taught themselves as children (Beegle & Coffee, 1991; Parsons, 2003; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2010; Tomlinson, 2001).

Teachers, however, deserve to be treated as professionals who use data to drive planning and instruction, assess students for mastery of objectives, and provide rigorous, innovative learning opportunities for all students. In the field of education, "Best Practice, represents serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the art teaching" (Zemelman et al., 2005, p. vi), and describes the work effective teachers do on a daily basis. Teachers are responsible for assuring excellent student performance on standardized tests, managing behavior, meeting socio-emotional needs, fostering development, establishing healthy learning climates, promoting citizenship, reducing

drop out rates, and closing achievement gaps. In many school districts across the United States, teachers have been inundated with professional development on best practice, professional learning communities, character education and anti-bullying, differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences, specialized content area training, test-taking strategies, critical thinking skills, and classroom management. In summary, informed, state of the art teaching requires teachers to be masters of multi-tasking.

Best Practice: Today's Standards

The work of Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) has resulted in a commonly accepted definition of best practice. Not unlike other historical or contemporary standards designed to foster individual needs of students, best practice also establishes optimal social learning settings, encourages critical thinking, and empowers students to construct new learnings. According to Zemelman et al.'s model, best practice is holistic in nature, designed to meet cognitive and social needs of students within an experiential setting. Figure 1 illustrates the interconnectedness of student-centered, cognitive, and social aspects of best practice, *Principles of Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools* (3rd ed.) by Zemelman et al (2005).

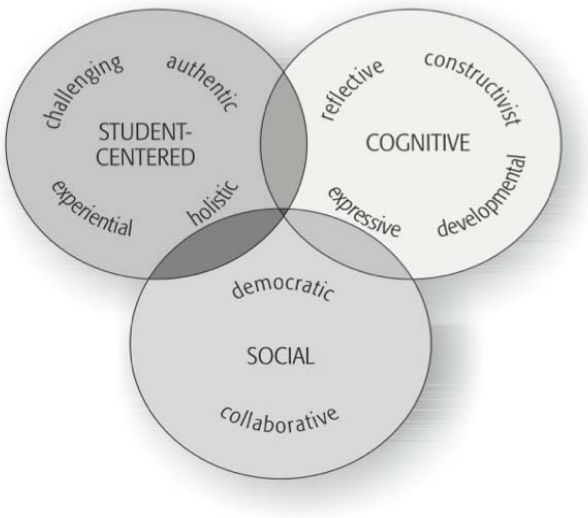

Figure 1. Principles of Best Practice indicate the overlapping concepts of cognitive, student-centered, and social domains. Figure obtained from page 12 of *Best Practice*: *Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools,* 3rd Edition by Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde. Copyright 2005

The three domains overlap and contribute to one another. In addition, each domain contains specific descriptors to describe state-of-the art methodology.

In 1997, the Task Force on Psychology in Education of the American Psychological Association developed Learner-Centered Psychological Principles (LCPPs) based on classroom studies that determined that learning is a whole-person process (APA, 1997). Comparably, Davis (2003) and McCombs (2003) described optimal classrooms as holistic learning environments where students are viewed as individuals with unique minds and needs. Student-centered classrooms, filled with cognitive engagement and social interaction can be noisy, active, fun, intriguing, messy, colorful, busy, exciting, outdoors, and many other things. However, student centered, cognitively engaged, and socially interactive classrooms are rarely still, quiet, passive, seated, isolated, and boring.

Powerful Learning

Recent school reform efforts such as The Accelerated Schools Project (1986-present) focus on building school community and implementing Powerful Learning opportunities for all students (Southwest Center, 2009). Levin's (1986) vision for the Accelerated Schools' Project defined effective instruction as "Powerful Learning" (Hopfenberg et al., 1993, p. 161) and required a foundation of shared vision, unity of purpose and building on individual strengths within the school community.

Similar to constructivist teaching philosophy, within the Accelerated Schools' reform model, Powerful Learning must include "authentic, interactive, learner-centered, inclusive, and continuous" (Southwest Center, 2009, p. 2) instructional interactions between teachers and learners. Within the constructivist composition of Powerful Learning, the learner constructs his or her own learning via deeper conceptual understanding, which involves student engagement, interaction, reflection, and construction (Brooks, J., & Brooks, M., 2001; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Jensen, 1998; McCombs, 2003).

Rigor Relevance Framework

The Model Schools Program and the International Center for Leadership in Education classify best practice based on research-based applications of rigor, relevance, and relationships. Teachers are advised to implement methods "to enhance learning through rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction based on sound relationships and active student engagement" (Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008, p.1). Much research has been conducted that supports rigorous and relevant classrooms; however, in many instances, the relationship factor has been dropped as an essential ingredient for the New

Three Rs. The probability that students will be motivated to learn and engaged in learning has "increased to the extent that teachers, family, and friends, as well as others who shape the instructional process, effectively support their purposeful involvement in learning" (National, 2004, p. 7).

An example of how teachers' methods are assessed is demonstrated in the Rigor and Relevance framework (see Figure 2). Based on the framework, as the teacher increases the amount of relevance, levels of critical understanding and critical challenge rise respectively.

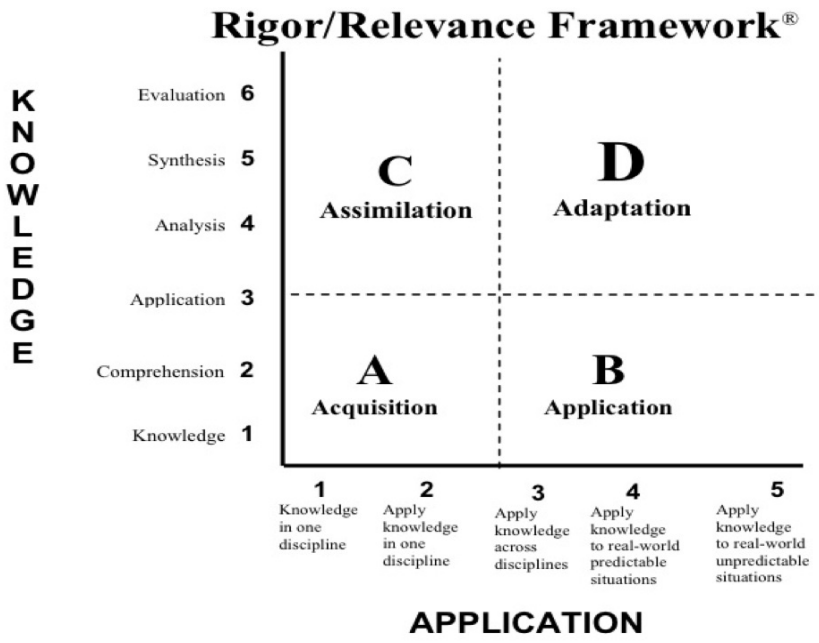

Figure 2. The Rigor Relevance Framework demonstrates the progression of critical thinking through increasing levels of knowledge and real world relevance. Adapted from "Committed to rigor and relevance for all students," by W. R. Daggett, 2008, International Center for Leadership in Education Copyright 2008 by the International Center for Leadership in Education. Used with permission.

The desire is to reach highest levels of adaptation with each lesson, approaching Bloom's (1956) level of synthesis and evaluation. To achieve the level of adaptation, at the same time, learners should apply what they have learned to new, unpredictable real-world situations (Daggett, 2008). The original model was written with Three Rs: Rigor, relevance, and relationships. Then, what happened to the third R?

Relationships and Learning

While concerns for rigor have been at the forefront since the initiation of American school reform in 1965, findings from a recent meta-analysis illustrate that classroom climate, reciprocal trust, and "certain attitudinal qualities which exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and learner yield significant learnings"

(Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 114). Over 125 studies from 1951 to 2002 were compared in classical and learner-centered models through Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis, and the results of multiple studies proposed that the most effective classrooms were learner-centered and self-regulated. From a parental perspective, crisis in their children's schools was directly correlated with the human relationships within the school.

Consequently, positive teacher behaviors such as "nondirectivity, empathy, warmth, and encouraging thinking and learning" (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 134) ranked above average in correlation over other educational innovations. Together, positive learner-centered classrooms and teacher-student relationships created more successful classrooms confirming positive relationships between teachers and students as more influential on student success than innovational methodologies.

Inclusive Classrooms

As an attempt to increase accountability and rigor for all children in public schools, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) induced action on inclusive practices that place students with special needs in the least restrictive environment, and Response to Intervention (RTI) efforts (see Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA], 2004) aim at providing tiers of instructional intervention within the general education classroom. Inclusion emphasizes the placement of children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, with preference in the general education setting.

Markedly, inclusion maintains the principle that students with disabilities receive greater benefit by being included in the general education classroom with their general education peers rather than in self-contained settings (Burris & Garrity, 2008). The results of an action project in England and Wales on inclusive teaching, hosted by Trinity

College in Carmarthen, demonstrated that teacher engagement led to student engagement and established a step towards creating a richer pupil-teacher relationship, and it was determined in the study that the success of an inclusion program required an ongoing dialogue between teachers and students (Moore, 2008).

Founded on the ideal that each child, "to the maximum extent appropriate, should be educated in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend" (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2006, p. 1), inclusive practices have emerged in public schools. IDEA 2004 mandates equal access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), and access to curriculum is often present; however, equal access to curriculum through inclusion is not consistently commonplace. Based on IDEA (2004), children with disabilities must be educated and provided support services due to them in the least restrictive environment, with first consideration being the general education classroom with proper supports in place, whenever the student can benefit from the placement. As students move from the elementary self-contained classroom to middle school content specific, sometimes leveled courses, students can be included in the general education setting based on students' strengths and areas of need.

Middle School Concept

The middle school movement of the 1960s changed schools' focus to the human development of individuals transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Instead of placing students in a "junior" position below high school students, the middle school became a haven for continuous transition through establishment of mentor relationships between teachers and students, small learning communities, and implementation of a flexible, interactive, interdisciplinary curriculum (Armstrong, 2006; Jackson & Davis, 2000;

Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Rourke, 2006). Middle schools are places where older children transition from elementary school to the middle, and young adolescents transition from the middle school to high school. Interestingly, research suggests that the social cognitive developmental gains of early adolescence impact how individual identity emerges in secondary school (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Stone, Barber, & Eccles, 2008).

Rising sixth graders experience metamorphosis from fifth grade and eighth graders are constant subjects of academic and social pruning in preparation for survival of freshman year at the high school campus. Seventh graders, as mere 13 year olds, are in the middle of the middle, somewhere between the risen sixth grader and the soon-to-rise eighth grader. As a result, classroom teachers in the middle school confront the daily challenges of unpredictable adolescent behaviors. Students' emotional, hormonal, and physiological challenges compound the difficulties of increased rigor and expectation in middle school and added emphasis on accountability.

Middle Schools versus Junior High Schools

Middle schools must be places where student learning is personalized, and students interact with others and direct their own learning with teachers who oversee, coach, and motivate strategies of a student-centered curriculum (Armstrong, 2006; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Rourke, 2006). Some middle schools actually operate on a junior high concept, even though they are referenced as middle schools. To function as a middle school within the structure of small learning communities, the common goal is to ensure success for every student by teaching a curriculum grounded in high standards, organizing relationships for learning, involving all stakeholders through democratic governance, staffing teachers who care about and understand young adolescents,

accessing appropriate training for teachers, and providing a safe and healthy climate (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Rourke, 2006).

Primarily, junior high schools operate as smaller versions of high schools where pupils become part of a larger grade-level group of students, teachers work within departments rather than grade level teams, and instruction is delivered without consideration of young adolescent developmental needs. The general absence of role models, lack of personal adult relationships, emotionally flat learning experiences, short of respect for student opinion, and a focus on academic learning rather than social and emotional development are common but fundamental errors made by non-middle schools (Armstrong, 2006; Curwin et al., 2008; Erwin, 2004; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Malti & Noam, 2008; Rourke, 2006).

Mentor Relationships

One primary characteristic of the middle school movement involves the assignment of mentors to small groups of students (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Rourke, 2006). Originally, advisory programs consisted of small groups of students who met with their mentor teacher once per week for one class period. During that class period, teachers and students would develop mutually supportive relationships. A curriculum was provided to the teacher and consisted of lessons on personal responsibility and character education. Other mentors allowed students to begin conversations on topics of interest, and then some mentors who did not participate in the class allowed students to do homework.

Likewise, mentoring, through the advisory program, was initiated during the middle school movement to establish a healthy attachment between adolescents, who

perhaps do not have a history of secure attachment, with adults in their lives. Educational mentoring combines the model of one-to-one mentoring of a student by a teacher and seeks "educating to care – for oneself, or others, and for the world around us" (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008, p. 98). Singularly in their study, C. Bergin and D. Bergin (2009) indicated that attachment influences school success by parental relationships with children, and directly through attachments to teachers and schools.

The mentor program aspired to increase dialogue between teachers and students in order to lower risk factors for young adolescents. Dialogue requires listening, thinking, and speaking on both sides of the conversation and results in learning (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Strauss, 1964). Education takes place from the mere interaction between teacher and student: It "is the conception of each in relation to the other as completest and freest interaction" (Dewey, 2008, p. 4). When teachers become more willing to take risks and relate to their students, students reciprocate the effort, and dialogue begins, thus the opportunity for a relationship is initiated. Further, dialogue between teachers and students diminishes the need for teacher directed, lecture formatted instruction (Freire, 1973; Price, 2008). Teachers who partake in dialogue with students motivate them, and students who are more motivated to achieve, perform better.

In brief, the goal of the mentor program was to peak student interest and facilitate conversations to establish close, personal relationships among teachers and students. The importance of one nonfamilial relationships in the lives of young people has been highlighted in modern research on adolescent development (Nakkkula & Toshalis, 2008; Pianta, 1992; Rishel et al., 2007). Teachers and other caring adults can be natural mentors who contribute to long term, substantial beneftis for young people, including

higher self-esteem, capacity for self-regulation, and positive outlook on the future (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Rishel et al., 2007; Rourke, 2006).

Academic Teaming

Unlike high schools where classrooms are grouped by department, middle schools have attempted to create subgroups of students to provide a more close-knit community for their students and teachers. Creating smaller schools within middle schools involves giving a group (team, pod, house) of students the same four core teachers. With the unique needs of young adolescents in mind, middle schools have been designed to create small communities of learners, guided by mentors who specialize in working with adolescents (Armstrong, 2006; Wentzel, 1997). The team concept allows teachers to work together to meet the needs of students while providing a smaller school environment to the students.

Teaming is an effective strategy employed to foster supportive relationships between teachers and students (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Rourke, 2006). The physical space shared by the core teachers and common group of students provides opportunities for informal interaction during the day, and provides "a psychological home within the school that helps reduce the stress of isolation and anonymity" (Jackson & Davis, 2000 p. 125). In optimal settings, team teachers have common planning and meeting times throughout the week to provide opportunities to interact, plan integrated or thematic lessons, and discuss issues involving their shared students. Furthermore, the team concept fosters an easier transition from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. Hence both socially and academically, middle school teachers have an enormous responsibility for guiding their students toward the next level.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

By design, middle schools were created to ensure developmentally appropriate practice where genuine relationships with teachers are customary. Adolescent children need the security of a supervisory adult who is comfortable with students' developing desire to question issues and exercise autonomy. Self-efficacy and self-regulation are essential to student academic success and are facilitated by cultivation of students' integration of will and skill (Klem & Connell, 2004; Strahan & Layell, 2009).

For the middle school student, developmentally appropriate practice revolves around their need to be social, active, trusted, and unconditionally loved. Inevitably, however, conflict between adults and students will arise from time to time. Adolescents are struggling between childhood and adulthood, with not much control over their brains, bodies, or hormones. During this stage of identity development, even trusting adults can become victim to emotional outbursts (Erikson, 1986; Gutman & Eccles, 2007). In order to understand conflict between teachers and students, awareness of student developmental needs and the realities faced by the classroom teacher must subsist. As indicated in Table 2, developmental needs of middle school students may be met if parents, teachers, administrators, and schools provide the proper support to assist adolescents through the chrysalis into adulthood. Lastly, instructional practices for adolescents cannot be separated from their social, emotional, developmental needs, and learning opportunities must be provided based on the whole student (Arievitch & Hanen, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Zemelman et al., 2005).

Table 2

Developmental Needs of Adolescents

Adolescents Need			
Schools that	Teachers & Administrators who	Parents who	Opportunities that
Provide an environment to help them feel safe	Listen	Listen	Promote active learning and socialization
Incorporate developmentally appropriate practices	Respect students and their opinions	Model respect	Encourage creative ideas, positive projects, and student choice
Promote proactive contributions to society	Care about students as people and are interested in their lives	Make themselves available to their children	
Develop social and emotional as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence	Understand and remember what it is like to be an adolescent	Understand and remember what it is like to be an adolescent	
	Are mentors and role models, not just instructors		
	Are authentic human beings who have vital lives of their own		

Note: Information gathered for the above listed table was received from the following referenced sources: Corzine & Anglin, 2006; Curwin et al., 2008; Cushman & Rogers, 2008; Lapointe, 2003; Strahan, 2008; Striebe 2008.

Middle School Reform

In recent years, programs to reinvent schools have been piloted across the United States. Since 1973, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) has advocated for

educational programs that meet the specific needs of adolescents from ages 10 to 15 years (NMSA, 2010). In 1982, the National Middle School Association (NMSA, 2010) first published a position statement on middle grades education entitled *This We Believe*. Consistent with the position statement of NMSA, *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* (Rourke), published in 2006 by the NASSP, acknowledged that middle schools have been established as separate buildings from the elementary and high schools, but the strategies they use are not designed to be "academically excellent, developmentally responsive, or socially equitable" (p. 2) as established by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. The fourth edition of the NMSA position statement, published in 2010, issued a call to action and campaigned for a recommitment to middle grades education:

> The special importance of middle grades education as we enter the second decade of the 21st century carries an urgency to establish programs that incorporate the ideas and ideals advanced in this document. The Call to Action requires a commitment—or recommitment—to the philosophy of middle level education followed by specific actions individuals can take appropriate to their role in middle level education. (p. 3)

Further, essential attributes of educational programs designed for the middle grades must be developmentally appropriate, building the foundation of the school, such as organization, policies, curriculum, instruction, and assessment, on the specific developmental needs of young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2010; NMSA, 2010; Rourke, 2006).

Controversy still exists over which grades should be included in the middle school, but most decisions regarding configurations of middle schools are made based on

budgetary and transportation issues rather than what is best for young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Forum, 2010; Rourke, 2006). Studies suggest that transition from elementary to middle school can be detrimental to academic motivation and performance, possibly caused by the mismatch between adolescents' needs and the structure of middle school (Davis, 2003; Wentzel, 1997). Advocates of middle school reform suggest that school improvement is never finished, and principals should assume the attitude of continuous improvement as an ongoing process (see Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Forum, 2010; NMSA, 2010; Rourke, 2006). When school systems are labeled at-risk by the federal government, they are eligible for grant funding to assist with reform projects. However, most funding for reform grants is exhausted after three years, if not before (Hopfenberg et al., 1993). Reform can begin from within the school, and building community and establishing a common vision are large-scale models of interpersonal learning relationships within successful classrooms (NMSA, 2010).

Similar to Daggett's (2008) original New Three Rs contemporary reform model, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation created a scenario in Alaskan schools that included models of rigor, relevance and relationships. The first step was to identify, with the community, goals and action steps toward those goals. Not only did the project focus on relationships within the school, but it also extended relational efforts into the community. After the project was complete, DeLorenzo, the local superintendent shared that the most important component in mobilizing the community involved developing relationships with people, which takes time and focus on a shared goal (Weeks, 2003). Relationships within the school community are not limited to individuals in classrooms, and the involvement of all stakeholders is a vital element of community-based programs

(Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Malti, Schwartz, Liu & Noam, 2007; Weeks, 2003). Established relationships between teachers and students present a model for relationships among stakeholders beyond the physical building.

Comparable to the practical approach developed by Montessori (1912), Waldorf Education relates human life to every practical content area. Founder, Rudolph Steiner, indicated that the methods and practices he employed gave insight into the connectedness of the human soul, spirit, and body (Bamford & Utne, 2003). Based on understanding of child development and teacher–student relationships, Waldorf schools apply content areas as they relate to human life, a pinnacle of relevance for all learners. Well-rounded in curriculum, students learn from play and are engaged in music, movement, and world languages from the first grade (Bamford & Utne, 2003).

Critical components to successful middle school programs include a developmentally responsive culture, challenging and relevant curriculum, opportunities to be creative and positively contribute to their community, and equitable learning environments that preserve all students' rights to learn (National Forum, 2010; NMSA, 2010; Norton, 2000). Supportive school communities work together to understand and appreciate the unique needs of middle grades students and empower young adolescents to utilize their skills to impact their world.

Related Research

Research related to teacher-student relationships in middle schools has focused on (a) adolescent development, including brain development, socio-emotional development, and identity development, (b) effective schools that foster support for classroom instruction, classroom culture and environment, and classroom management, (c) effectual

teachers associated with teacher motivation, personal style, teacher care and concern, and teacher development, (d) interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, and (e) external factors influencing relationships between teachers and students including accountability measures, at-risk environments, and family and culture.

Adolescent Development

Students move from a life of simple fantasy play as children to a world of adolescent theoretical thought, influenced by hormones that impact the development of the brain and cause great emotional turbulence (Jensen, 1998; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Siegel, 1999). To say the least, "tremendous diversity exists among adolescent learners in middle schools" (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006, p. 90). During this period, adolescents begin testing the realities of the world through trial and error, constructing their own definitions of reality based on interpersonal experiences (Cushman & Rogers, 2006; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008, Siegel, 1999; Striebe, 2008). This awkward milieu in life leads young people's bodies to undergo illogical changes, rapid physical growth, and surges of unexpected hormones, wide-ranging emotions and mental confusion. The onsets of physical, hormonal, and cognitive changes abruptly intersect during the transition from elementary to middle school.

Somewhere nestled between childhood and adulthood, an area of development exists that cannot identify itself as completely child or adult. Older children enter middle school as immature people, and over a period of three years emerge into their own identity, understanding themselves better, and making more sense of the hormonal, physical, and emotional chaos of adolescence. Middle school students are unique individuals because puberty fundamentally disturbs development and has an

overwhelming influence upon the cognitive, social, and emotional lives of teens and is crucial to educational practices that focus on social, emotional, and metacognitive learning, leading to developmentally appropriate practices at the middle school level (Armstrong, 2006; Davis, 2006; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008).

Adolescents, like all other humans, grow through interaction with their worlds, influenced by culture (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978; Walters, 2008). Adolescents test their independence and yearn for meaningful relationships with adults (San Antonio, 2006). Several recent studies on teacher-student relationships reflect the impact of teacher-student relationships on student life satisfaction, self-efficacy, social competence, and general life satisfaction (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Brandt, 1998; Danielson, 2009; Levykh, 2008; Suldo, et al., 2009). The internal forces that motivate adolescents to act appropriately or inappropriately depend on the level of connection they feel with the adults in the school, their feelings of competence as influenced by adults, and the amount of control they have over their own learning (Curwin et al., 2008; Jensen, 1998).

Brain development. Neurological research indicates that the brain is whole and interconnected: "Thought and emotions, physical health, the nature of our interactions with others, even time and environment in which we learn are not separated by the brain" (Caine, R. & Caine, G., 1997, p.6). Likewise, Jenson (1998) asserted that emotion impacts cognitive functioning. Neuropsychological research, focusing on whole-child findings on brain health, indicates that relationships with adults are essential for student brain development and critical measures of success in schools (Erwin, 2004; Daggett & Nussbaum, 2007; Siegel, 1999). Unfortunately, Daggett and Nussbaum (2007) note that

student engagement, the category containing relationships with adults, is often overlooked in school improvement efforts.

In addition, positive learning experiences outweigh rewards from external motivation, and relationships establish a culture for the learning process rather than the extrinsic reward (Cornelius-White, 2007; Jensen, 1998). Sensory processes that take place during attachment and bonding phases of life influence a child's ability to learn and cope with future events. Siegel (1999) posited that "patterns of relationships and emotional communication directly impact the development of the brain" (p. 4), and further explained that in addition to cognitive implications, human connections are vital to self-regulation capacity and how children develop interpersonal relationships. Neurotransmitters are involved in natural, intrinsic motivation, and healthy teacher-student relationships solicit intrinsic motivation (Jensen, 1998; Siegel, 1999). Thus, brain development, interconnected with thought and emotion, impacts emotional and physical development.

Social and emotional development. Socio-emotional development impacts critical functions of the adolescent's brain, influencing behavior and capacity for learning. Levykh (2008) noted that Vygotsky's zone of proximal development represents the social origins of the entire process of children's development, and emotions are an essential part of human learning and development. Thus, relationships foster emotional learning (Walters, 2008). According to Jensen (1998), "Emotions affect student behavior because they create distinct, mind-body states" (p. 75) and are critical to learning. In particular, R. Caine and N. Caine (1997) suggested that emotions impact the learning process as individuals interact with one another and the environment. Repressed

emotions may cause serious problems for learning and in the daily lives of adolescents. In addition to stressors of high stakes testing, parent concerns, and other common accountability issues, middle school teachers face erratic and unbalanced states of cognitive, social, and physical growth in young people (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006).

Teacher-student relationships established on genuine care, concern, respect and trust have a lasting impact on student socio-emotional and cognitive development. Davis (2003) claimed that teacher-child relationships shape social and cognitive outcomes from preschool years through adolescence. Wentzel (1997) speculated that the transition from elementary to middle school often results in mistrust between teachers and students because students feel less nurtured and cared for by teachers. Teachers exhibit the qualities of positive relationships for their students beyond delivering content by modeling respect, care, collaboration and other life skills to establish lifelong skills for success (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Matsumura, Slater & Crosson, 2008; Suldo et al., 2009). Students' overall contentment in life appears to be associated with school success, and the levels of support provided by the school make an impression on student life satisfaction. Analysis of adolescent needs suggests that schools must stress the importance of addressing adolescents' needs and providing support to increase life satisfaction (Curwin et al., 2008; Danielson, 2009; Erwin, 2004).

Similar to the beliefs and practices of Freire (1973), Montessori (1912), and Rogers (1969), Nakkula and Toshalis (2008) revealed that relational teaching facilitates learning through reciprocal caring and support of others. Relational teaching, initiated by building on the student-teacher relationship is "mentoring in the fullest sense of the word;

and it is teaching that reflects a particular professional ethic" (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008, p. 99). Respectively, Danielson's (2009) study contended that teacher support clearly has a stronger affect on students' school satisfaction than peer and parental support. As depicted in Figure 3, results indicated that teacher support influenced school satisfaction in the adolescents surveyed, and the strong effects and implications of teacher support of students social needs (Danielson, 2009). Brewster and Bowen (2004) defined teacher support as behavior demonstrated by the degree to which teachers listen to, encourage, and respect students. Adolescents' subjective well-being (SWB) studies by Suldo et al. (2009), defined positive teacher relationships as the degree to which students feel supported, respected, and valued by their teachers.

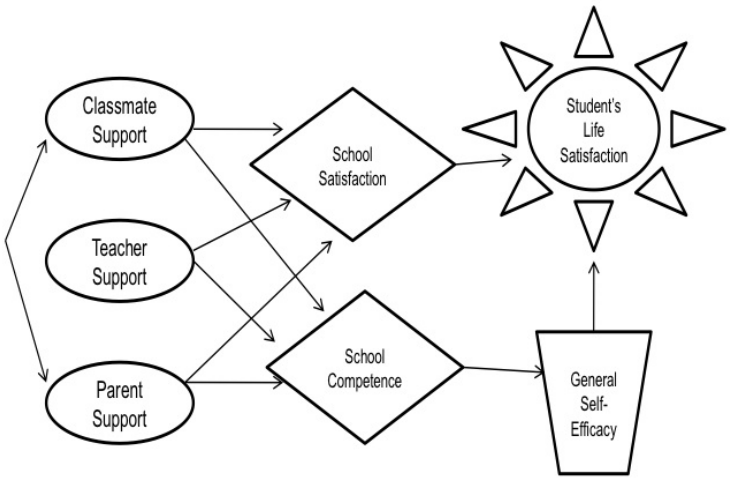

Figure 3. The Path Model demonstrates the role of classmate, teacher and parent support in students' general self-efficacy and overall life satisfaction. Adapted from "School related Social Support and Students' Perceived Life Satisfaction," by A. G. Danielson, 2009, *The Journal of Educational Research, 102*(4), 303-318. Copyright 2009 by the Journal of Education Research.

Concisely, teacher support, particularly with minority populations, impacts student engagement, academic achievement, and overall positive affect towards school (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Collins, 2005; Davis, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004; Suldo et al., 2009; Umana-Taylor, 2009; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005; Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009).

Identity Development. Erickson (1993) promoted trusting relationships between teachers and learners, suggesting that trust in one's caregiver initiates trust in oneself. In a study based on adolescent identity formation, Hamman and Hendricks (2005) enlisted support for students based on teacher adult relationships that are based on the developmental needs of adolescents. Schools provide the context by which adolescents develop identity (Lannegrand-Willems & Bosna, 2006). Through the identify formation process, adolescents are in search of a new sense of continuity and sameness must refight

many of the battles from prior years and unfortunately sacrifice well-meaning adults to battle (Erikson, 1986). Through the process of identity exploration and commitment, also known as identity vs. identity confusion, adolescents develop individual identities through experience (Lannegrand-Willems & Bosna, 2006). Adults who care unconditionally provide a safe place for adolescents during the identity confusion and formation phases of life.

Hence, Hamman and Hendricks (2005) referenced Erikson's (1968) work encouraging students to experiment with identity through active, genuine learning experiences while being supported and directed by a caring adult role model. Not only should the adult engage the student in search of his or her own talents, he or she must encourage new experiences and give direction during times of weakness. The creation of an "identity safe-zone" provides students with freedom to be unique and belong in a stable, trusting environment.

Effective Schools

Effective schools provide the framework for best practices to occur within the classroom (Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2006). Schools connect the internal institution to the external community, and principals are the keepers of the vision, whose organizational and interpersonal communication skills are crucial to developing a unified purpose (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Hopfenberg et al., 1993). The principal is personally responsible for maintaining the momentum, motivation, and morale of the stakeholders, defined as students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). In addition, it is the principal's responsibility to harness the strengths of stakeholders and prioritize resources

to lead the school towards a unified vision. Relationships are at the center of optimal school cultures, and administrators act as the catalyst for the morale of the campus, demonstrating an awareness of the personal lives of their staff members (Marzano et al., 2005).

Classroom culture and environment. According to Carol A. Tomlinson (2005), the best settings for reaching students are environments where teachers and students have developed relationships and have discovered each other's talents. Otherwise, secondary students have no desire to learn those things that do not have an immediate, direct impact on their lives. To develop a healthy learning environment, students should feel welcomed and contribute to the shared community of learners given opportunities to interact socially, share stories, think critically, and write in a relevant format (Hopfenberg et al.; 1993, Tomlinson, 2001).

Classroom management. R. Marzano and J. Marzano (2003) provide many helpful definitions and applications for creating a well-managed classroom and highlight the importance of an effective teacher student relationship. When teachers have well-established relationships with students, they are more accepting of rules, procedures, and consequences. Classroom rules must be developed to maintain a well-planned and orderly learning environment to effectively mandate what to do and how to do it, and why we do things (Curwin et al., 2008; Weber, Martin, & Patterson, 2001; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008). The consistency of the teacher-student relationship can determine what role rules play in the classroom, depending on the value system in place. Conversely, the absence of consistent behavioral expectations and practices in the classroom propagates chaos.

Established rules institute guidelines for appropriate, respectful interactions with one another and the environment. Classroom procedures relate to coming to class prepared, on time, and directly correlate with smooth classroom operations. Teachers who communicate genuine interest and concern for their students have solid practices and procedures in place can firmly establish a few rules and be successful (Curwin et al., 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Marzano, R., & Marzano, J., 2003). Behavioral instruction, through the framework of a positive management plan, is a natural component within a well-cultivated teacher-student relationship. Positive classroom interactions provide students with opportunities for role-play and to test theories they were taught as a child.

Likewise, frequent informal interaction provides students with a secure environment for risk taking and meets student needs for belonging (Boynton, M., & Boynton, C., 2005; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Curwin et al., 2008; Price, 2008). Relating to teacher-student interactions, Marzano (2003) addressed the balance between moderate dominance and moderate cooperation, establishing learning goals, and creating relationships with students. The most powerful classroom management tool available to teachers is to create a favorable learning climate (Boynton, M., & Boynton, C., 2005; Marzano, 2003). Relationships between teachers and learners are central to a thriving classroom; thus, a well-managed classroom consists of a positive classroom culture, established procedures, and consistent enforcement of rules.

Effectual teachers. R. Marzano (2003) compared teacher-level factors to determine definitions of effective teachers across various settings. Instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design were factors used to

determine effective teachers' impact on student achievement; however, these three factors cannot be isolated to determine their individual impact. Teachers who work with adolescents operate from a developmental perspective. Planning, instructing, and assessing students in the classroom are driven by students' developmental needs (Bowman, 2004; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001). As teachers find their own identity, they develop an authentic version of themselves that engages and invites others into relationships (Bowman, 2004; Cushman & Rogers, 2008; Curwin et al., 2008; Matsumura et al., 2008; Smoot, 2010; Towne, 2009). According to Smoot's (2010) series of interviews with National Teacher of the Year candidates from 2007 to 2009, "Teaching is more than what they do, it is who they are, and it defines their place in the world" (p. xii). Master teachers, who are transparent, assured and confident human beings, establish connections and develop lasting relationships with learners.

Concurrently, effective teachers model a love for learning and communicate clear, consistent expectations for behavior, fairly establishing rules and assigning consequences (Jensen, 1998; Marzano, R. & Marzano, J., 2003). Further, research conducted by William Sanders (1994, 1997) revealed that individual teachers can have a profound impact on student achievement, and least effective teachers cause a negative cumulative effect (Saunders & Horn, 1998). In fact, significant threats from a previous teacher can be reactivated years later by a current teacher's voice or tone, causing what Jensen (1998) described as a "catastrophic downfall" (p. 64) in the classroom.

In addition, fairness must also extend into equitable instructional practices and progress assessment. For the purpose of creating a culture of success, teachers must teach to the individual while working with the group (Cushman, 2003; Davis, 2003;

Tomlinson, 2001; Towne, 2009). When teaching difficult material, outstanding teachers reach students by motivating students to learn, making lessons relevant, and going beyond the four walls of their classroom. Teachers facilitate a community of learners, differentiating instruction, while addressing the individual needs and interests of students.

Coupled with the ability to engage learners through instruction, effectual teachers connect with students and create a warm, positive classroom climate (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Boynton, M., & Boynton, C., 2005; Danielson, 2009; Suldo et al., 2009). Matsumura, Slater, and Crosson (2008) defined classroom climate as the degree of support and connection students feel with their teachers. Teacher behaviors that promote healthy teacher-student relationships include sensitive, warm interactions, high expectations, and a balance between autonomy and support. The classroom climate must promote prosocial behavior with non-coercive discipline, and interventions should be relationship specific. As shown in Figure 4, in combination with school efforts, secure teacher-child relationships are established, lending themselves to school bonding and academic achievement (Armstrong, 2006; Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Towne, 2009).

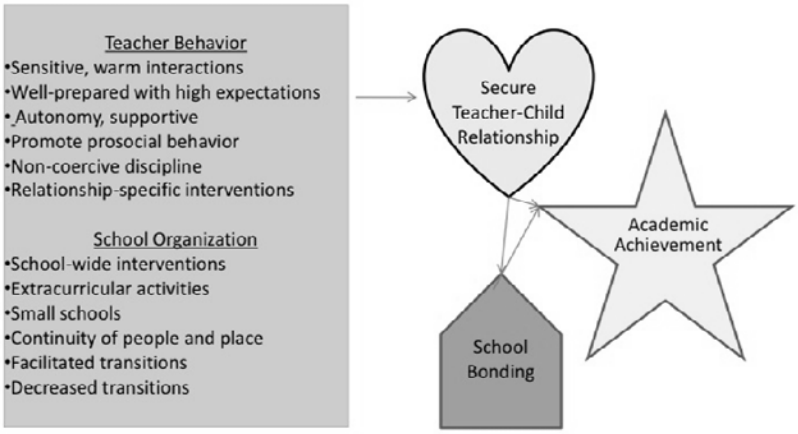

Figure 4. Demonstrates the impact of teacher behavior and the influence of secure teacher-child relationships on overall student academic achievement. Facilitating Healthy Teacher-Student Relationships was adapted from "Attachment in the Classroom" by C. Bergin & D. Bergin in 2009 from *Educational Psychology Review 21,* 141-170. Copyright 2009 by *Educational Psychology Review.*

Further, teachers who are proficient with teaching emotional intelligence utilize their personal relationships with students and can help students develop life-long intrapersonal intelligence (Goleman, 2007; Hoerr, 2000). Hence, students respond to teachers who are authentic, passionate, and confident. Within the teacher-student relationship, teachers are urged to communicate that each child is smart, lovable, and capable through genuine feedback and encouragement (Armstrong, 2006; Curwin et al., 2008; Erwin, 2004; Knestrict, 2005; Towne, 2009; Winograd, 2003).

Notably, exceptional teachers also serve as trusted adults for students and understand that genuine concern for students weighs more heavily than tangible rewards (Cornelius-White, 2007; Robinson & Curry, 2006). Adolescents who feel connected to teachers and a part of a learning community are more involved and interested in content. In classrooms where teachers create relationships with students and allow them to make decisions about their learning, students are more interested, motivated, and engaged

(Armstrong, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Erwin, 2004; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Towne, 2009; Weber et al., 2001). Further, adolescents crave caring, supportive relationships with teachers who hold them accountable and prefer teachers who set a steady example of fairness and respect, and respond positively, regardless if they like the teacher personally (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Curwin et al., 2008; Cushman, 2003). Adolescents desire trusting, supportive relationships with an adult figure, and to foster independence and autonomy, caring adults must be available to support them.

Teacher development. Affective and academic dimensions of instructional practice reinforce each other and contribute to optimal student success (Matsumura et al., 2008; Weber et al., 2001). Teachers are in need of pre-service training, in-service training, and professional development to focus on adolescent development, increasing the academic demand, social processes and routines that support academic rigor, and the creation of positive, emotionally safe environments for students (Armstrong, 2006; Curwin et al., 2008; Jackson & Davis 2000; Matsumura et al., 2008; Rourke, 2006).

Pre-service training is an essential component for equipping teachers with strategies to survive the first years of teaching as well as meeting the needs of students in at-risk environments. Newly licensed teachers receive pre-service training in content, pedagogy, and classroom management but have not had the opportunity to merge these separate concepts into one best practice. Simultaneously, the operational components of teaching that include administrative tasks, planning based on standards, collaborating within teams or departments, and other miscellaneous duties are completely foreign to new teachers. Recommendations for pre-service and novice teachers charge school

systems with designing mentor programs for new teachers, encompassed by best practices (Foster, Lewis, & Onafowora, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005; Rourke, 2006).

Additionally, teachers attend a plethora of trainings each year on classroom management, methods, content, communication strategies, differentiated instruction, multicultural education, and the new and improved programs to close the achievement gap and increase test scores. New teachers are overwhelmed with the responsibilities of teaching in their first classroom, and the lack of focus in staff development often causes confusion and frustration. More often than not, training does not carry over into practice because teachers are inundated with new information during training sessions, without the opportunity for follow up (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Schlechty, 2002).

Alternatively, mentors provide a one-on-one relationship with novice teachers and are essential to the survival of a teacher's first few years (Foster et al., 2005; Rourke, 2006). Through careful observation, mentors may develop a relationship with a teacher to reinforce strengths and improve in areas of inexperience. Teachers set goals based on their own needs and grow incrementally. In an optimal situation, new teachers work with teacher mentors, and experienced teachers work with administrators to polish good skills and incorporate new ideas into their methods. As shown in Table 3, resources for providing instructional support from the context of the teacher include self and other perceptions in instructional and affective domains, instructional design, as well as classroom climate. Teacher self-perceptions and perceptions of others impact how they teach and the classroom climate delivered in relation to those perceptions.

Table 3

The Context of the Teacher

Resources for Providing Instructional Improvement		Resources for Providing Affective Support	
Self-Other Perceptions	Instructional Design	Self-Other Perceptions	Classroom Climate
Teaching efficacy	Subject matter knowledge & beliefs	Nonverbal communication skills	Academic press
Interest & expertise	Pedagogical knowledge & beliefs	Beliefs about students	Affective discourse
Expectations of students	Repertoire of content	Expectations of students	Autonomy support
Academic competence	Pedagogical peer-learning & assessment methods	Social competence	Beliefs & strategies for classroom management

Note: The Context of the Teacher outlines resources for providing instructional support such as self-other perceptions and instructional design and resources for providing affective support. Table 3 was adapted from The Context of the Teacher in "Classroom Climate, Rigorous Instruction and Curriculum, and Students' Interactions in Urban Middle Schools by L. Matsumura, L.C. Slater, & A. Crosson, published in 2008 by the *Elementary School Journal, 108*(4), 293-312.

Interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Relationships within the classroom are unavoidable, and "regardless of how their relationship goes, teachers and students never forget each other" (Curwin et al., 2008, p. 10). Consequently, studies suggest that students may be more inclined to learn from someone they know and trust (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Curwin et al., 2008; Davis, 2003; Smoot, 2010). C. Bergin and D. Bergin (2009) define attachment as a deep and enduring affectionate bond that connects people, derived through strong adult-child relationships. Since learning is considered a cooperative, social process, interpersonal variables affect teaching (Coldren & Hively, 2009).

In a study on conducted by Ohio State University and the University of Kentucky, students were more found to be more willing to discuss their own experiences with the familiar teachers and valued the course content at a higher level. According to the author, "The most important thing is getting the teacher to make a connection" (Streibe, 2008, p. 2). Similarly, den Brok and Levy (2006) conducted a study spanning the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, and parts of Asia regarding students' perceptions of their teachers' interpersonal behavior and general attitudes towards students within multicultural classrooms. According to den Brok and Levy (2006), past research implies a convincing connection between students' perceptions of their teachers' interpersonal behavior and their own achievement. Findings from this study revealed that there is much work to do regarding teacher and student perceptions of one another, particularly in diverse classrooms.

Students' requests from Cushman's (2003) *Fires in the Bathroom* suggest that teachers should embody strong interpersonal skills, be confident with their content, and be creative. In an effort to communicate effectively with students, the teacher should get to know students well by listening to their conversations and considering aspects of their lives outside of school. As effective communicators, great teachers should also demonstrate respect and trust for their students. Sense of humor and the ability to laugh at oneself are especially effective for bonding with middle schoolers (Winograd, 2003; Wormeli, 2006). When things go wrong, teachers should be confident enough to show that being imperfect is human, but imperfection is not an obstacle to perseverance (Cushman, 2003).

External Factors Influencing Classroom Relationships

In addition to the challenges of content, pedagogy, and adolescent development, other external, non-instructional issues impact teaching. Historical educators provided the foundations of best practice in their work and writing. Modern American school reform has placed a "double standard" on teachers by requiring best practice through student-centered instruction, not unlike the great educational thinkers of the past, but has chosen to measure achievement through a once per year standardized assessment (Zemelman et al., 2005, p. vii).

Best practice vs. standardized testing. The Education Reform Act (1965) preceded reform efforts that were revived by A Nation At-Risk (1984), and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI, 2006) accentuated inclusive teaching and rigor in American classrooms. An emphasis on reform and rigor sparked Response to Intervention (RTI) on teaching and learning and further complicated instruction from middle school classroom teacher perspectives as it relates to differentiating instruction through content, process, and product (Buffam, Mattos & Weber, 2009; Rourke, 2006; Zhao, 2009). Although an increase in standardized test performance has been associated with best practice, differentiated, student-centered instruction implies developmentally appropriate practice but does not advertise an increase in standardized test scores (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001).

In 1984 Secretary Bell's report promoted instructional interventions for all students and caused educators to analyze data regarding student need and to differentiate instruction as a regular, general education best practice (National Commission, 1984;

Buffam et al., 2009). Middle school teachers were already combating challenges of adolescence, and differentiation of instruction and application of best practice did not promise to yield higher test scores (Rourke, 2006; Tomlinson & Doubet, 2005; Zemelman et al., 2005). Consequently, the measure of student success, teacher success, and school success is based on standardized test scores in math and English (National Commission, 1984; Rourke, 2006; Zemelman et al., 2005; Zhao, 2009).

Based on Lloyd and Ramsey's (1998) follow up publication, *Reclaiming Our Nation At-Risk*, after 14 years of school reform, the United States showed no overall improvement in student achievement. In reality, students had begun to learn facts and information without comprehension or application of meaning. While educators and students were drowning the in the waves of public education reform, the rest of the world continued to excel. In 1983, America was labeled as a nation at-risk, and as a result, state academic standards and graduation requirements were raised, and Effective Schools (1979-1986) encouraged bottom up individualized learning to improve classroom practices. In 1994, National Education Goals were adopted and state achievement standards were aligned with national standards, and beginning in 1996, state and district charters were able to create demand for public school choice to add competition into the mix for public schools (Lloyd & Ramsey, 1998). Soon to follow, IDEA (2004) was revamped, and new regulations were established for students with learning differences. Currently, teachers, students, and school districts are treading water amidst the waves of American reform. While classroom practices are geared towards developmentally appropriate practice, local, state, and federal demands on academic performance translate into classroom practices to build test-taking skills (Armstrong, 2006; Brimijoin, 2005;

Jackson & Davis, 2000; Zemelman et al., 2005). Consequently, studies suggest that transition from elementary to middle school can be detrimental to academic motivation and performance, possibly caused by the mismatch between adolescents' needs and the structure of middle school (Davis, 2003).

Usually, professional development focuses on best instructional practices, and simultaneously, political pressures to make AYP emphasize standardized test performance. While classroom practices are geared towards developmentally appropriate practice, local, state, and federal demands on academic performance translate into classroom practices to build test-taking skills (Armstrong, 2006; Brimijoin, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Zemelman et al., 2005).

In addition, individual education plans (IEPs) set specific goals for children with specific learning disabilities to measure the individual child's success based on the customized goals for that child. While there are some provisions for students with severe cognitive disabilities to participate in alternative assessments, many children with mild to moderate disabilities must be assessed by the one size-fits all accountability across American public schools (Brimijoin, 2005). Houston (2007) asserted that NCLB (2001) committed seven deadly sins that include "assuming that schools are broken, conflating testing with education, harming poor children and ignoring the realities of poverty, relying on fear and coercion, lacking clarity, leaving out the experts, and undermining our international competitiveness (p. 745). Educators battle AYP issues instated by NCLB while being challenged to differentiate instruction and implement developmentally appropriate practice in middle schools as required by IDEA (2004). In 2009, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute conducted a 36-state study on AYP performance. Findings of the

study indicated that individual states have unique standards of accountability, and a school might meet AYP in one state but fail in another. Based on this analysis, variation in AYP across the country is evident (Cronin, et al., 2009).

> In reference to AYP and standardized testing, Nakkula and Toshalis (2008) posed: Students become bored with repetitive learning exercises designed at best to promote . . . the attainment of predetermined standards of competence. The ordinariness implied by common standards . . . and related high stakes testing legislation run the risk of leaving creativity out of the curriculum and losing students in the process. (p. 57)

Middle level educators are pawns in a game of constant push-and-pull between AYP and best practice. They are forced to decide between providing equitable, inclusive, differentiated content as a modeled by best practice or to strictly teaching standards and enforcing test taking skills that will yield higher test scores and acceptable improvement based on AYP standards.

According to Zhao (2009), elevated scores on standardized tests do not necessarily translate into high performance or ability, and Chinese education confronts the issue of high scores and low ability. Furthermore, the United States presents a well-rounded image of education and life in general that is still emulated around the world. The diverse talents and interests of students in the United States confront the fact that math, science, and reading scores are not the most important thing in life, and it is no surprise that the United States does not earn the highest test scores in math and science (Zhao, 2009). Achievement tests have become the sole measure of success in the United States and force teachers to move from a culture of learning and turn their attention to test

taking skills (Armstrong, 2005; Brimijoin, 2005). The United States must make a choice between "a diversity of talents, of individuals who are passionate, curious, self-confident, and risk-taking; or a nation of excellent test takers" (Zhao, 2009, p. 59). Unfortunately, the government has already made the choice for schools in the United States (see NCLB, 2001).

At-risk environments. At-risk students are less likely to succeed in schools because they bring a different set of skills, resources, and experiences, than those who are generally successful in traditional schools (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Frequently, literature addressing at-risk children focuses on middle school and high school children whose life situations place them at a higher risk for dropping out of school. Modern authors have clarified that children themselves are not at-risk, but are children *in* at-risk situations (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Pianta & Walsh, 1996).

Deficiency in skills, resources, and experiences necessary to be successful in school are related to income. Within the most affluent nation in the world (i.e., the United States), 3.7 million African-American children, 4.1 million Latino children, and 4.2 million Caucasian children live in poverty (Fass & Cauthen, 2006). In 1995, 18.9 million children in the United States lived with only one parent, and 4 million children lived with their grandparents (US Department of Commerce, 1997). Furthermore, parents who spend 30% or more of their income on rent generally have difficulty purchasing food for their families, lack health insurance, and are rarely able to provide academic support in the home.

Experts in the area of minority education (Collins, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005; Payne, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005) state that disparities exist between low income and

minority families and how these children should be taught. Teachers often instruct students from very different backgrounds and must find a common bond with their students, thus creating a genuine relationship. Effective teachers confront differences honestly and understand the relationship between race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and pedagogy of authentic engagement (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Kunjufu, 2005; Monroe, C., 2006; Payne, 1996; Ryan, 2006; Woolley et al., 2009; Yeo et al., 2008). Humanistic principles, high expectations, and tough but loving relationships with students create environments for success (Collins, 2005; Payne, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005). Understanding and sympathy must go along with expecting and demanding the best from all students, and a balance must exist between nurturing and stringency (Monroe, L., 1997; Collins, 2005; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005). Experts on urban and minority education concur that the single most important factor to creating a healthy learning environment for minority students is getting to know children as people and providing a caring, supportive context for risk taking (Goddard et al., 2001; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Monroe, 1997; Payne; 1996; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005; Woolley et al., 2009).

Family and culture. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (Fass & Cauthen, 2006), more than 28 million children (30% of the nation's children), are members of low-income families. In many households, both parents must work in order to support themselves and their children. In 1998, T.H. Bell indicated in *Reclaiming Our Nation at Risk* that 60% of all children live in a one-parent household some time in their school lives, and many single parent families are unable to prepare children physically, emotionally, morally, and intellectually for today's challenges

(Lloyd, Ramsey, & Bell, 1998). Perhaps most significantly, when parents are absent much of the time, teachers frequently spend more time with their students than their students spend with their own parents. Purported by Armstrong (2006) and illustrated in Figure 5, adolescents spend the majority of their time alone or with friends, and a very small amount of time is actually spent with their fathers, if the father is present in their lives. On the other hand, adolescents spend around six hours per day with their teachers, in some cases, 72 times the amount of time spent with their parents.

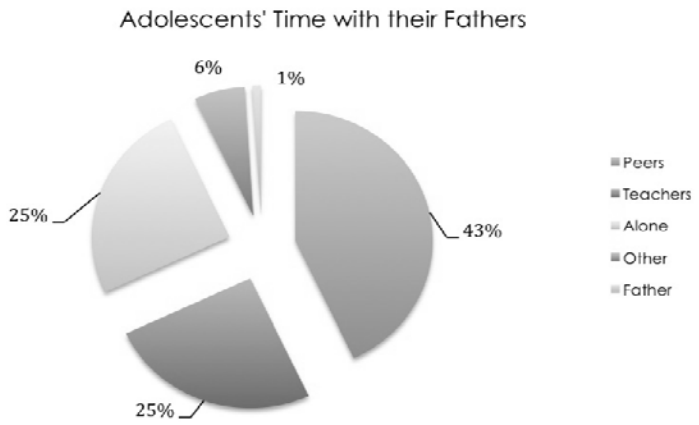

Figure 5. The typical American adolescent spends only five minutes per day with his or her father, while spending nearly 25% of the day alone, and 43% with classmates or friends. Data for Figure 5 was provided by *The Best Schools*, by Thomas Armstrong, 2006, p. 124. Copyright 2006 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

While the United States continues to adapt to 21st century challenges and economic demands placed on families in a time of hardship, classrooms must remain places of refuge for students who may have challenges at home. Effectual teachers must develop interpersonal skills necessary to interact with students and their families, exercising awareness, sincerity, and respect (Christianson, 2006; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008).

Theoretical Traditions

Historically, educational philosophers and practitioners focused on the methodology of learning, the scientific process of knowledge acquisition, and the ethical responsibility of providing optimal learning environments to students. This study will reexamine historical educational theory in light on current educational research. Years before Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) developed the contemporary definition for best practice in education, founders of educational thought developed their own views of

how we know what we know. Likewise, this study adheres to the modern best practice framework that complements the historical belief that learning is social and interactive, and requires experience within the environment. Maintaining that the teacher-student relationship is a social process by which teaching and learning occur, it is important to understand the foundations of education as a social practice.

Social Cognitive Theory

Established by a combination of educational principles and influenced by Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Albert Bandura (1986), social cognitive theory (SCT, formerly termed social learning theory) indicates that learning is manifested socially; students are first exposed to learning through social experiences before they are internalized (Arievitch & Hanen, 2005; Levykh, 2008; Bandura, 2001; Walters, 2008). Further, SCT celebrates that human beings learn within a culture of interaction, rather than isolated from the world. SCT provides the foundation for experiential, inquiry based learning in which one interacts with the environment through experience and discovery. In *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky (1988) argued that directed thought is social and is progressively influenced by the laws of experience.

Rather than providing direct instruction through lecture and serving as the single expert in the classroom, teachers serve as role models and facilitators for students to learn through social experiences in an interactive environment. The teaching-learning interaction fosters a relationship between teacher and learner and is mutually beneficial (Bandura, 2001). According to Vygotsky (1988), adults are perceived as part of the social context for learning, but child psychologist, Jean Piaget (1977) viewed adults as external, alien, coercive forces in the lives of children. Moreover, Vygotsky emphasized

the value of mutual cooperation between individuals that leads to discipline and a foundation of reasoning.

Discovery Learning Theory

Bruner, a pre-constructivist advocate for discovery learning, promoted optimal learning as interactive and problem-based. As a cognitive theorist, Bruner (1996) was discouraged by the way education focused on performance and standards and overlooked the "means by which teachers teach and how students learn" (p. 86). In contrast to Piaget and influenced by Vygotsky, Bruner (1977) believed that environment and experience induce cognitive growth and that children are natural problem solvers. Further, Bruner (1977) affirmed that teachers should be intuitive and sensitive to the reasons why students arrived at wrong answers and should be able to provide simultaneous approval and correction.

Motivational Theory

Relational humanism, founded on the ideal that genuine relationships are vital to helping through counseling and therapy, perceives the "self" as a social construction (Hansen, 2007). Motivational theory, with origins in humanism, applies to the relational interactions between teachers and learners, and motivation is manifested in relation to the situation and to other people. Abraham Maslow (1987) described motivation in learners as anthropocentric rather than animal centric, which implies that human beings are inseparable from their social environment, from their culture, and are unique. Maslow (1999) viewed a child, in the context of safety and security, as an outward manifestation of his or her "own inner being, [who] reaches out to the environment in wonder and interest" (p. 65).

Hence, learner-centered instruction, influenced by Maslow (1987) and Carl Rogers' (1980) work, acknowledges interrelationships between teacher and learner in a mutually supportive environment to meet students affective and cognitive needs (Hansen, 2007; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Walters, 2008). Rogers (1980) focused on trust in learners as an instructional method to provide self-regulation that led to highly significant and relevant personal learnings. Through his experiences with individuals, Rogers found that he could trust people to explore, understand, and resolve their own problems, and his role was to provide a warm, caring, understanding environment. During the process of altering his method of therapy, Rogers discovered a distinctly different philosophy of living and relationships that impacted the rest of his personal and professional life. A newly discovered person-centered approach, illuminated by experience and interaction with others was transferred into teaching and learning.

Constructivism

The work of Bruner (1977), Vygotsky (1978), Rogers (1980), Bandura (1986) and Maslow (1987) later influenced constructivism, where the learner is viewed as a constructor of his or her own learning, founded on inquiry based experiences within the social setting. According to Levykh (2008), Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) (i.e., the distance between the actual independent level of problem solving and the level of potential development under adult guidance or in collaboration of peers), extends into the affective dimension, and emotions are a fundamental ingredient in human learning and development. The ideas of mutual cooperation and reciprocal benefit within the social learning environment provide the foundation for modern philosophy of facilitative learning communities built on individual strengths and unity of

purpose in education and in business (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

In agreement with Nakkula and Toshalis (2008), this study acknowledges that adolescence has been defined as a social construction and embraces the constructivist ideals, with origins in humanism and SCT, and does not separate learning from its social setting. As conceived by McCombs (2003), a research-validated learner-centered principle defines learners holistically, where students are viewed as individuals with "minds, emotions, and personal developmental, social, cultural and individual differences" (p. 94). This study values the individual learner as a whole person, whose basic needs must be met to establish optimal individual learning potential.

Summary of Literature Review

Naturally, relationships between students and teachers have been encouraged as an essential part of a positive classroom culture. However, much work has been left undone on actually understanding how teacher-student relationships manifest themselves in middle schools. Aligned with the review of related research, needs of adolescent learners were identified in this study, and components that link directly to their developmental needs, including the role of the teacher was be examined. The impact of teacher-student relationships on adolescent development were investigated and synthesized to provide a foundation for the generation of a grounded theory to explain the process of student-teacher relationships in middle schools.

It is evident that students need relationships with their teachers and desire mutual and respectful relationships with adults in their lives (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Cushman, 2003; Davis, 2006; Mizell, 2002; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Pianta & Walsh,

1996). Based on comments from a student interviewed by Cushman (2003), students need to see their teachers as human:

> He made himself human – talked about his accident, talked about his dreams of walking. Told us about his life in a way that made us understand him a little better. He didn't give up on the students. We ended up learning. (p. 173)

In order to be effective, teachers must connect with and care for children with warmth, respect, and trust. When students see their teachers as fellow human beings with emotions, flaws, and life experiences shaping who they are, trust is reciprocated. Middle school students can see through their teachers' life stories that people do survive the adolescent years.

Early adolescence, the embodiment of the middle school student who struggles to control his or her body, mind, or emotions, may be the most misunderstood stage of human development. High school students are able to interact socially and "get" teachers' jokes, while elementary students respond to positive reinforcements such as stickers and extra recess. Rick Wormeli (2006), a former middle school teacher, provided a candid, common sense approach to teaching middle school students that shows these students in a positive light. His suggestions include teaching the development of the whole child and developing positive adult-child relationships. Further, Wormeli (2006) effectively characterized the challenge of working with middle school students as "a challenging river to navigate, but worth the journey" (p. 19).

The human component of teacher-student relationships may be avoided by educators who prefer to remain experts in their field, separate from the interpersonal connection between teachers and students. Perhaps the concept of relationships is

omitted from studies because relationships are not easily measured using quantitative instruments and therefore it is difficult to determine their statistical significance on test scores. Quite simply, some educators may not realize connection between creating relationships with students and increased learning opportunities for both parties.

Research from a variety of reliable resources (e.g., educational researchers, scientists, educational consultants, administrators) suggests a link between relationships between teachers and students and meaningful learning. Rather than focusing on reasons why relationships have been omitted from the best practice recipe, the focus of this study will serve to increase awareness of worthwhile human relationships in teaching and learning and determine the value of the relationship factor in educational practice.

It must be noted, however, that literature supporting the significance of relationships in the classroom is sparse. Most studies include relationship issues as an add-on element leading to another more definitive component (see Cornelius-White, 2007: Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008; Klem & Connell, 2004). Hence, this study seeks to identify examples of teacher-student interactions that provide a framework for building sustaining reciprocal relationships between students and teachers to establish trusting environments conducive to risk-taking.

The literature is replete with research supporting healthy teacher-student relationships as a compliment to other best practices; however, research for the specific purpose of understanding and explaining the processes related to components of this relationship has only recently risen to the forefront. Successful models are examined in detail with input from students, but more primary research must be conducted to create a definitive determination of relationships' impact on teaching and learning. Most research

conducted focuses on closing the achievement gap, working with diverse populations, and solving other difficulties in the classroom, while neglecting to fully examine the role of relationships as a component to optimal learning environments, as first suggested in Daggett's "Three Rs" (Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008). Instead, relationships have been included as ingredients of best practice without specific commentary on what strategies or attitudes are necessary for creating a mutually beneficial teacher student relationship.

Perhaps the lack of definition arises because teacher-student dialogue has become an interpersonal communication issue rather than a methodological or curricular issue. Nonetheless, this review of the literature has led to some insight on the role of relationships in the classroom. Pertinent information concerning the impact of relationships between teachers and students comes from informal, narrative assessments and surveys, and value must be placed on the authentic voice of the students (Cushman, 2003).

Traditionally, great educators have related to their students' needs, and researchers have recently included teacher-student relationships as one of the primary components to best practices (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008; McCombs, 2003; Mizell, 2002; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Difficult to quantify but easy to identify, relationships between students have a precise human element. Teachers allow students to see them as people who make mistakes and move forward. Teachers see students as people who are growing and learning, seeking identity, and possibly making mistakes along the way.

In order to develop such relationships, teachers must move away from the tangible standards of their curriculum, from behind their podiums, from the safety of their

textbooks, and from the shadows of their projectors and allow themselves to become vulnerable to their students. Teachers must manage a balance between dominance and cooperation since quality teacher-student relationships are essential to a successfully run classroom (Marzano, 2003; Monroe, L., 1997). Teachers must find the skills to nurture and develop relationships with students. They must guide without dictating; include without relenting; advise without patronizing; empower without becoming weak; and care unconditionally without lacking judgment.

All in all, students are critical resources for defining models of teacher-student interactions and relationship building. Research strongly suggests that children's socio-emotional well-being is linked to achievement, and basic needs of belonging and security begin for children at birth and endure throughout their lives (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Erwin, 2004; Payne, 1996; Price, 2008). Social competence, as modeled by teachers and learned by students, is foundational to academic achievement because school by its very nature is a social venture (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Vygotsky, 1988). As termed by Brewster and Bowen (2004), social capital consists of resources in human relationships to promote positive outcomes in people. Teachers who demonstrate social competence and develop classroom climates rich in social capital create optimal settings for adolescent development and learning.

Because Jesus freely shared his thoughts and fears with his people, called them brothers and sisters, and believed in them, he initiated trusting relationships with his followers. As students become aware that the teacher genuinely cares for them, they become engaged and empowered. Jones (1996) referenced Jesus' approach and suggested to teachers and learners:

> Perhaps we just need someone to show us who we really are inside. Perhaps that is what we are all so desperately searching for—someone to acknowledge the goodness that we each sense about ourselves but are so hesitant to share. (p. 198)

The process of teaching and learning is not solely defined by content or method, but it is acquired by interaction between human beings growing and learning in reciprocally fulfilling relationships. The study of teacher-student relationships introduces opportunities to engage one another in the discovery of the various relationships across educational settings and their impact on academic achievement and overall school success. The concept of teacher-student relationships, modeled by exceptional historical educators and embodied in contemporary social cognitive and constructivist pedagogy, suggest a connection between best practice teaching and learning and teacher-student relationships.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Essential research questions for this study focused on the nature and development of relationships between middle school teachers and their students. The role teacher-student relationships play in middle school settings were of particular interest. Three research questions guided this grounded theory study: (a) What is the process by which relationships between teachers and students evolve in middle schools? (b) What are the sources that comprise teacher-student relationships in middle schools? (c) What role do relationships between teachers and students play in middle school settings?

Design

This grounded theory study searched to understand and explain teacher and student perspectives on relationships that subsist between the middle school teacher and student. Through the process of inquiry, experiences with the data generated insights, hypotheses, and questions that were further studied by gathering additional data (Ary et al., 2006). The repeated cycle of interviewing and observing teachers and students allowed for the retrieval of authentic insight from the outlooks of teachers and students.

During the phase of constant comparison, I compared each event in the data with other events for similarities and differences, representing a range of experiences that change over time until causes, conditions, and consequences arise related to the process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Ultimately, I generated a theory of a process or interaction grounded in the views of the research participants.

Qualitative Inquiry

Studies involving human interaction tend to be complicated and unpredictable. A qualitative approach is most suitable for the study of relationships because "events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore, any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 8). Further, because there is limited research on the nature of teacher-student relationships, it would be premature to identify priori variables, as required for a quantitative study. A process of qualitative research seeks to present a structure in which people can respond in a manner that precisely and scrupulously represents their points of view (Patton, 2002), the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships in middle school is best examined using this approach which seeks to explore and understand rather than test and confirm.

Additionally, teaching methods are best observed qualitatively because each classroom setting is reflective of teachers' and students' distinctive personalities that make up the collective classroom community (Curwin et al., 2008). Educational methods are not separate from the context by which they are practiced or from the people working within the classroom setting. In seeking teacher perspectives, it is best to avoid beginning with hypotheses determining the thoughts and feelings of the participants. Rather, it is best to open the study with a few guiding questions, seeking deeper understanding that originates from the participants own ideals (Ary et al., 2006).

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, the process of collecting and constant comparison of data, produces a core category and continually revolves around a main concern. Through sorting the core

category, theory emerges and is organized within the schema (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2002). This grounded theory study searched to understand and explain teacher and student perspectives on relationships that subsist between the middle school teacher and student. Through the process of inquiry, experiences with the data generated insights, hypotheses, and questions that were further studied by gathering additional data (Ary et al., 2006). This process did not seek to define relationships with facts and figures, but instead searched for depth of perspective from teachers and students in middle schools. Qualitative inquiry is a powerful source of grounded theory because it is inductively generated from interviews and observations directly from the field of study (Patton, 2002). The repeated cycle of interviewing and observing teachers and students allowed for the retrieval of authentic insight from the outlooks of teachers and students.

Throughout the study, questioning guided the process of inquiry, and some questions were directed towards the participant in an interview, and others served as a guide and were answered by the researcher. Based on recommendations from Corbin and Strauss (2008), interview questions stimulated thinking about relationships between students and teachers. Initial interview questions were sensitizing questions that asked,

1. What is going on here; that is, issues problems, concerns?
2. Who are the actors involved?
3. How do they define the situation?
4. What is its meaning to them?
5. What are the various actors doing?
6. Are their definitions and meanings the same or different?
7. When, how, and with what consequences are they acting?

8. How are these the same or different from various actors and various situations? (p. 72)

At later stages, questions became more theoretical to allow me to see the process, note variations, and make connections between concepts such as:

1. What is the relationship from one concept to another?
2. How do they compare and relate at the property and dimensional level?
3. What would happen if . . . ?
4. How do events and actions change over time?
5. What are the larger structural issues here?
6. How do the events play into or affect what I am seeing or hearing? (p. 72)

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), practical questions provide directions for theoretical sampling and help with the development of the structure of theory. Practical questions appear similar to:

1. Which concepts are well developed and which are not?
2. Where, when, and how do I gather the data for my evolving theory?
3. What kinds of permission do I need?
4. How long will it take?
5. Is my developing theory logical, and if not, where are the breaks in logic?
6. Have I reached the saturation point? (p. 72)

Based on Corbin and Strauss (2008), guiding questions lend themselves to the actual interviews, observations, document gathering, and analyses of each. These types of questions are open-ended, and then become more focused and refined as the study moves forward. General questions began the process, and follow up questions were

asked to seek out further information about concepts, their properties, and dimensions. Later in the interview, clarifying questions developed from specific information in the data from prior answers.

According to Patton (2002), open-ended questions probe in-depth responses about people's experiences, points of view, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Following the distribution and response to an initial open-ended question related to developing a school vision, purposeful samples of teachers and students were selected for interviews. Following the selection of the specific samples of students and teachers who referenced relationships with one another in the vision exercise, I conducted individual in-person interviews with students and teachers.

After all interviews were complete, I visited the teachers who were interviewed and their students inside the classroom to observe teacher and student interactions during the school day. Observations provided detailed descriptions from a multi-sensory perspective, described by Patton (2002) as "the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational process that are part of the observable human experience" (p. 4). In fact, each face-to-face interview was an observation that consisted of reading non-verbal messages, sensing of how the setting can affect replies, and being attuned to the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Patton, 2002). Follow up member checks were carried out to ensure accurate recording and interpretation of student and teacher perspectives. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument; therefore, methodological credibility is dependent on my competence and rigor (Patton, 2002; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Social situations between teachers and students were observed through systematic procedures, as established by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in order to

develop a theory that explains a process, action, or interaction on a topic (Creswell, 2007). The process of gathering and analyzing data through grounded theory was a cyclical process that involved going gathering data in the field, analyzing the data, returning to the field to gather additional data, and analyzing the new data until the process was exhausted by saturation.

Afterwards, data was coded and analyzed, and then theoretical samples were taken to flesh out categories. Through the constant comparative method, interviews from the field continued to solidify similarities and differences. A theoretical model describing the phenomenon of teacher-student relationships in the middle school setting was created through the synthesis of data. As this study gained deeper understanding of the relationships between middle school teachers and their students, data became saturated, and theory developed, grounded in data from the field represented by the perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2009).

Researcher's Perspective

Embedded in this study were my positions as researcher, principal of the high school in which these students will attend, doctoral candidate, and former middle school teacher and principal. My major area of study for my Bachelor of Science Degree was Elementary Education and Multi-disciplinary studies, with a minor in child development. I have earned a Master of School Administration and a Master of Arts in Education with a focus on Educational Leadership. As part of the Doctor of Education program, I earned an Education Specialist degree. My doctoral degree program focused on teaching and learning, and my current and future studies focus on interactions between teachers and

learners in the social learning setting.

As a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, I am one of six children. I am the first child in my family who has earned a college degree. My parents, who were born during the Great Depression, faced many challenges in their childhood years that impacted their lives as parents. My fondest memories from my school years do not consist of the people who taught me to multiply and divide whole numbers; to read, write, and speak fluently in Spanish; to analyze theme and imagery in great literature, but rather, are a mosaic of the faces of educators who took time to develop relationships with me. Several incredible teachers recognized and cultivated my spirit. The impact of these relationships enabled me to complete high school, despite many personal challenges.

I have 19 years of experience working in public schools, interacting with students, parents, and teachers in several different locations across the United States. Having worked with diverse populations in Washington, D.C. and Boston, MA, in areas where the ethnic minority serves as the majority in South Texas, in suburbs of affluent and middle class areas of Virginia and North Carolina, and in rural Tennessee and Kentucky, my experience with diverse populations extends across several demographic arenas.

My experiences working with students from at-risk situations taught me the value of the teacher-student interaction. I began to see incredible potential in developing relationships with my students, and they began to value themselves. The ability to create genuine relationships with learners and their families afforded me opportunities to get to know people from a non-instructional perspective. The relational component involving leading and teaching people has been as powerful as any instructional tool I have learned in my career.

The middle school years are awkward for students and their parents. I can remember the ages of 12-15 as very tumultuous, insecure times where I doubted everything about myself. During those years, I felt most alone. My passion for learners ignites my desire to study teachers and their students in the middle school, and any subjectivity brought into my work likely stemmed from my experiences as a student from an at-risk environment, a mother of three children, and an educator with experience in a variety of middle school settings and a former middle school principal. As a high school principal, I have a vested interest in the success of my future students and the quality of relationships between students and teachers. It is my desire to capture teachers' and students' vision to determine what type of environment brings out their best work. In order to encapsulate their ideals through a confidential narrative, this study utilizes the open-ended question, "What kind of school would I want for my own child?" for teachers (see Appendix K) and "Describe your dream middle school" for students (see Appendix K), based on the Accelerated Schools' model for school reform (Hopfenberg et al., 1993).

My perception is that students are generally comfortable with me, and because meetings took place during the related arts period, the mood of the occasion was relaxed and upbeat. A few students with older siblings recognized me from the high school but did not know me personally. As a result of meeting during related arts periods, students were not absent from core classes during the time of interviewing, allowing them to become comfortable and focus on the interview. Hence, purposeful sampling allowed me to select students and teachers who were appropriate for the study, based on their responses from the initial vision prompt.

Setting

Kraft Middle School (KMS) (pseudonym) was chosen for this study because it represents a typical middle school in East Tennessee, similar to most middle schools across the southeastern United States (e.g., ethnicity, SES, student-teacher ratio, etc.). Further, I am the principal of the feeder high school and therefore have easy access to the building, classrooms, and participants. During the 2010-11 school year, KMS housed 1202 students within grades 6-8. The KMS population was comprised of 91% Caucasian, 5% African-American, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students, and 100% of staff members are white. Economically disadvantaged students made up 28% of the student population, and approximately 12% had documented disabilities. Additionally, 97% of KMS students scored above proficiency in reading, and 95% scored above proficiency in math. During 2010-11, KMS also housed a substantially separate program for students with physical and substantial cognitive disabilities. Of KMS's typical graduating class of approximately 400 8th graders, nearly 250 feed into Kraft Comprehensive High School (pseudonym), while 200 would attend Harper Valley Academy (pseudonym). Approximately 50 would apply to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Academy, which will open in 2011-12 and operate in downtown Kraftsville. All three schools are sponsored by public school funds.

At the time of the study there were 75 classroom teachers employed at KMS, 10 who were special education teachers who worked in inclusive and separate settings. Approximately 25 teachers lived in the town where they work, 30 lived in neighboring towns, and 20 commuted from further distances. The gender make-up of the faculty at KMS was 90% female to 10% male. Salaries for teachers at KMS ranged from $30,000

to $56,000 per year the year prior to the study (2009 – 2010). Teachers were not asked to share their level of education to prevent them from feeling judged based on the level of degree they had earned. The school year in which data was collected began in mid-August and ended late in May, and the teacher workday was from 8:00 a.m. until 3:45 p.m., which was 15-minutes before students reported to class, and 15-minutes after they were dismissed from school, respectively.

KMS employed one half time nurse, one half-time social worker, one half-time school psychologist, two guidance counselors, two assistant principals, and one lead principal during the 2010-2011 school year. This middle school sponsored a limited number of athletic activities: girls' and boys' basketball, cheerleading, and co-ed track and field. Club sports included cross-country, dance, tennis and volleyball, but they are not considered school-sponsored athletics. KMS also sponsored several clubs and organizations to incite student involvement such as drama, encore choir, band, Technology Student Association, Yearbook, Student Council, Teens for Christ, YOKE (Youth Ministry), and Art Honor Society.

KMS is situated in a small community in the suburbs of Kraftsville, TN, (pseudonym) approximately 15 miles west of the city. At the time of the study, Kraftsville had a population of 183,546 over 92.7 square miles.

As of August 2010, Kraft County (pseudonym) contained 16 high schools, 14 middle schools, 49 elementary schools, and 10 special schools. All Kraft County middle schools and high schools have earned SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) accreditation, and 47 elementary schools were accredited. The school system hosted 56,516 students, 4,088 teachers, and a total of 7,934 employees. At the time the

study was conducted, the demographic makeup of the student body in Kraft County was 79% Caucasian, 15% African-American, and 6% other minority; 10.7% of students have a documented disability and 42.8% are economically disadvantaged.

Historically, Old Kraft (pseudonym) was an agricultural community but has moved towards a blending of industry and vast farmland. Most parents travel to the city of Oak Heights (pseudonym) to work at the national laboratory or into the city of Kraftsville's business center. In most recent years, Old Kraft has begun to attract professional families because of the affordability of housing and proximity to Oak Heights and Kraftsville. However, a minority of farmers and their families continue to reside in the small community surrounding the school.

Participants

Student and teacher participants for this study were theoretically selected through a multi-faceted process. Initially, I distributed a one phrase prompt to students and teachers. Based on those responses, students and teachers were selected for in-person interviews. For the first open-ended response, also referred to as the vision prompt, teachers requested that students "Describe your dream middle school." Students responded to the prompt in writing during a homeroom period. At a grade-level teachers' meeting, I asked teachers to respond to a similar written prompt, "What kind of school would you want for your own child?" The participants who replied to the initial open-response question soliciting their vision for the school included 12 classroom teachers and 234 students. Following the initial written response, I selected a theoretical sampling of 56 students whose responses augmented theory (Creswell, 2007) relating to teacher student relationships, such as "teachers who care, helpful teachers, teachers who like

kids," and "teachers who actually know me as a person." Through the process of scheduling student interviews, the final theoretical sample totaled 30 students. Because of the small sample of teachers volunteering to participate, I elected to use a convenience sample of 11 teachers for individual interviews. All names or other identifying information have been substituted with pseudonyms.

Students

As shown on Table 4, student characteristics varied and provided a representative sample from the school population.

Table 4

Characteristics of Students Interviewed

Student	Grade 6,7,8	Gender M/F	Relocated Y/N	Ethnicity AA/C	Low SES Y/N	Achievement L (Low) A (Avg) H (High)
"William"	7	M	N	C	N	H
"Madeline"	7	F	N	C	N	A
"Wendy"	7	F	N	C	N	H
"Melissa"	7	F	N	C	N	H
"Morgan"	7	F	N	C	N	A
"Michael"	7	M	N	C	N	A
"Louisa"	7	F	N	C	N	A
"Hannah"	7	F	Y	C	Y	H
"Henry"	7	M	N	C	N	A
"Griffin"	7	M	N	C	N	H
"Diana"	7	F	N	C	Y	H
"Brady"	7	M	N	C	N	A
"Micah"	7	M	N	C	N	H
"Mercedes"	6	F	N	C	N	L
"Jennifer"	7	F	N	C	N	A
"Julius"	7	M	N	C	Y	A
"Betsy"	7	F	N	C	Y	H
"Beatrice"	6	F	Y	C	N	A(IEP)
"Donna"	6	F	Y	C	N	A
"Patricia"	6	F	N	C	N	L
"Raymond"	6	M	N	C	Y	A
"Ronald"	8	M	N	C	N	A
"Mason"	8	M	Y	C	N	L
"Richard"	8	M	N	C	N	L
"Ramsey"	8	M	N	C	N	L(IEP)
"Regina"	8	F	N	C	N	A
"Nicholas"	8	M	N	AA	N	A
"Marcus"	8	M	N	AA	Y	L(IEP)
"Teresa"	6	F	Y	C	N	A
"Raquel"	7	F	Y	AA	Y	A

Note. Y = Yes, N = No; AA = African American, C = Caucasian

Teachers

KMS teacher population ranged from first year novice teachers to veteran teachers with over 20 years of experience. In addition, five teachers changed careers after 10 or more years in a non-educational field. Novice teachers range from those who were fully certified with a master's or bachelor's degree from a teacher education program, an alternative certification with a content area bachelor's degree, or were certified in another teaching area, seeking licensure in their current position (see Table 5).

Table 5

Characteristics of Teachers Interviewed

Teacher	Grade Level	Primary Content Area	Initial License	Years of Experience
"Matthews"	8	Social Studies	Elementary/Middle	16
"James"	8	Language Arts Language! (Reading)	High	4
"Andrews"	8	Social Studies Language! (Reading)	Middle	7
"Jeffrey"	7	Math Reading	Middle	2
"Bruce"	7	Social Studies	High	12
"Kristofer"	7	Math	Career Change	4
"Gordon"	6	Language Arts	Elementary	0
"Lewis"	6	Social Studies Reading	Elementary/Middle	4
"Michaels"	6	Science	Elementary	19
"Johns"	6	Language Arts	Elementary	9
"Daniels"	6 & 8	Language! (Reading)	Career Change Elementary/Middle	2

Note. All teachers at KMS were Caucasian and represented the ethnic majority.

Data Collection

Seven months prior to collecting any data, my dissertation proposal earned approval by the dissertation committee, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the

local school system (see Appendix F for Application to Use Human Research Subjects and Appendix G for Request for Permission to Conduct Research).

Phase One included preparation for the study, gathering, distribution, and explanation of all documents to teachers and students, developing a cohesive plan to manage the logistics of distributing, returning, and collecting all consent forms and vision responses. Phase Two involved completion of vision responses from students and teachers, which led to a second round of analysis to determine which students and teachers should be involved in the interviews. Again, logistics played an enormous role in the smooth operation of this study.

In order for this study to be successful, I was required to find common time within the school system's calendar, the school's master schedule, student schedules, teacher schedules, and my own personal and professional schedule. In Phase Two, the overall objective was to gather vision responses and to code them with the intention of creating a theoretical grouping of teachers and students who would be suitable for in-person interviews. After coding preliminary vision responses and theoretically selecting individual participants for interviews based on specific replies in the narrative (Creswell, 2007), scheduling and meeting with individual students for individual in-person interviews posed its own unique challenges. However, once scheduling of interviews was complete, Phase Three, which involved interviewing individual student participants, activated the momentum of the study.

Prior to any involvement with the participants in the study or collection of data, I sent introductory letters to the school community (see Appendix H) and parental consent and student assent forms home with students (see Appendix I) through homeroom classes

and with teachers (see Appendix J) after grade level team meetings. Homeroom teachers collected signed parental consent forms and included their own consent forms and returned all documents to the school secretary in a labeled, sealed envelope. I collected the envelopes from the school secretary the following week, and due to weather delays, I continued to stop by to claim envelopes for the next few weeks. Thus, written consent was obtained from all parties involved with the study (see Appendices I and J). In order to gather information to clearly capture student and teacher voice, I conducted this grounded theory study by interviewing students and teachers, asking follow up questions, and completing unannounced, casual classroom observations in the natural learning environment with teachers and students in order gather rich, useful data for analysis.

To ensure objectivity, equitability, and respect for privacy, all participants were notified in writing and verbally that this study does not reflect on performance, is completely confidential, and names are kept anonymous. In addition, participants were informed that specific relationships between teachers and students would not be studied, nor would "good" or "bad" relationships be defined as part of this study.

Data collection for this study included gathering of 12 teacher and 234 student responses to one written open-ended question transcripts and theoretical memos from individual in-person interviews, and narrative scripts and running thoughts from classroom observations. According to Lofland (1971), there are four people-oriented mandates in gathering qualitative data.

> The qualitative methodologist must get close enough to the people and the situation being studied to personally understand in depth the details of what goes

on . . . . aim at capturing what actually takes place and what people actually say: the perceived facts. (p.4)

In addition, data must consist of pure descriptions of participants, actions, interactions, and environments and direct quotations from people (Patton, 2002). In essence, every observation, including the in-person interview, is a multi-sensory observation of everything seen, heard, and felt by everyone interacting within the setting. An observation form was used to time stamp, record information gathered, and keep researcher's notes.

Triangulation

Data was confirmed by using multiple data-gathering methods. To ensure understanding of all perspectives presented, multiple sources of data were gathered to document the participants' perspectives through initial one-question vision prompt, theoretical memos and transcripts from audio-recorded standardized open-ended individual interviews, and handwritten scripts from classroom observations.

Open-Ended Response

Open-ended responses provide longer, more detailed, and supply more varied content than systematic surveys. Further, open-ended response analysis is more difficult because responses are neither systematic nor standard (Patton, 2002). However, open-ended responses generally provide in-depth insight through the eyes of the participants.

The initial prompt consisted of one open-ended question to which each teachers and students will respond (see Appendix K). In December of 2010, I visited KMS to attend grade level team meetings to share the details and purpose of my study with the teachers. At that time, I invited teachers to participate in vision building by responding

by email, in person, or in writing to the vision prompt. Teachers were asked to complete the prompt, "What kind of school would I want for my own child?" During the grade level team meetings, teachers were instructed to ask students to respond to the following prompt, on paper, with no further explanation or discussion, "Describe the perfect middle school . . ." Teachers agreed to distribute the written prompts to students to their homerooms during the Tuesday enrichment/tutorial period. Teachers were provided copies of the introductory letter and parent consent forms and a large envelope labeled with the teacher's name, grade level and team to allow for immediate sorting of data.

From 12 teacher and 234 student responses (see Appendix L and M), I identified purposeful, information-rich samples for individual interviews with teachers and students. One of 12 teachers rescinded her consent to participate, and the remaining 11 teacher responses were assembled for a convenience sample. One of the twelve teachers who completed the vision statement chose not to participate because she did not want to be observed or interviewed. Because of the small sample of teachers volunteering or responding to the principal's request to participate, I chose to select all consenting teacher participants for interviews. Given the nature of the study to seek teachers' genuine perspectives in a safe, non-threatening environment, I selected a convenience sample to avoid putting pressure on teachers to participate. However, it must be noted that convenience samples can cause credibility concerns (Creswell, 2007) because it cannot be determined if the sample represents the entire population. To resolve concerns with the convenience sample, the principal of the school assisted me with recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds and teaching styles, representative of the school population.

By January of 2011, I collected teacher and student responses and separated teacher responses from student responses. I read every student response and recorded quotes onto a color-coded spreadsheet outlining emerging categories of interest. Once categorized, I selected 56 student participants from the responses that directly referenced teachers or teacher-student relationships in their vision response.

Standardized Open-Ended Interviews

Standardized open-ended interviews consist of carefully and fully worded questions to make sure every interviewee is asked the same questions to ensure consistency and efficiency (Patton, 2002). Standardized open-ended interviews allowed for the systematic collection of information from each person. Table 6 provides a list of standardized questions for the open-ended student interview, and Table 7 presents a list of standardized questions for the open-ended teacher interview. Prior to interviewing selected samples of teachers and students, I conducted a pilot interview with the first participant of each sample group to ensure participants' comprehension and clarity of interview questions. However, because qualitative study continuously evolves throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007), I chose to add follow up questions throughout the study.

I employed in-person open-ended interviews as dual sources of data gathering. During the interview, I carefully recorded participant's words and participants' non-verbal and para-verbal cues throughout observation. Concurrently, in-person interviews combine all the skills of conversational interviewing and asking of questions with the methods of observing everything that is seen, heard, and felt in the environment. Responses to open-ended questions enabled me to understand and attain points of view

from participants. In reference to the purpose of open-ended questions, Lofland (1971) contended: "To capture participants in their own terms one must learn their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality. That, indeed, is the first principle of qualitative analysis" (p. 7). Raw data from direct quotes were gathered to reveal depth of emotion and genuine perspective of the interviewee.

Late in February and early in March 2011, I privately interviewed individual students in a semi-structured format over a 30-minute period to gain perspective on relationships (see Appendix N for Summary of Student Interview Data). Later in March and early in April 2011, I completed interviews with teachers using the same format (see Appendix O for Summary of Teacher Interview Data). The first three student interviews took place in the cafeteria during the morning, but I soon realized that the location was distracting for the participant. I interviewed the remaining 27 students in the office conference room or private office in the guidance department. I met with teachers in their classrooms during their respective planning periods. As the interview progressed, I inserted follow up questions to particular responses as needed to deepen insight. In order to create a safe, non-threatening interview environment, I conducted teacher interviews in their own classrooms during planning periods. Each teacher sat at her desk, and I pulled up a student desk and sat across from the teacher. Throughout the process of interviewing, I maintained theoretical memos (see Appendix P) in order to organize my thoughts and record information about non-verbal behaviors and theoretical perceptions.

According to Patton (2002), there are kinds of questions that can be asked of people. The following types of questions will be used in this study:

1. Background/Demographic questions (Questions 1-3) identify characteristics of the interviewee.
2. Experience/Behavior questions (Questions 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 18, 19, 22) solicit answers about what a person has done or hopes to do.
3. Feeling questions (Question 25) educe emotions from the interviewee.
4. Knowledge questions (Questions 6 and 24) inquire about factual information.
5. Opinion/Values questions (Questions 4, 5, 9, 12, 23) seek to understand one's interpretation.
6. Sensory questions (Questions 15, 16, 17, 20, 21) ask about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, or smelled.

The initial interview questions aimed to gain insight on what relationships between students and teachers currently exist, the opinions of the interviewee on the current status, and what type of school the interviewee would envision as their dream school.

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Table 6

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions – Student Interview

Questions	
1. Please state your name, grade level, and team.	B
2. How long have you been at this school?	B
3. Describe yourself as a student. Describe your attendance, grades, club involvement, etc.	B
4. Describe a few things that you like or dislike about this school.	O
5. Describe your favorite teacher of all time.	O
6. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do in class.	K
7. Explain what types of relationships exist between teachers and students in this school.	E
8. How would you describe your relationships with your teachers?	E
9. What do you need your teachers to do to help you do your very best?	O
10. Describe a class where you are successful and explain why.	E
11. Describe a class that has been difficult and explain why.	E
12. What advice would you give a new student who enrolls here?	O
13. Explain how one average day at this school would be for a student.	E
14. Describe your "dream" middle school and tell why this is the perfect school for you.	E
15. What does it look and feel like? What do you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell?	S
16. What are the principals, students and teachers doing in this school?	S
17. How are people interacting with one another?	S
18. What advice would you give a new student who enrolls in the dream school?	E
19. Explain how one average day at the dream school would be for a student.	E
20. What are people doing in this school?	S
21. Tell me about the conversations between teachers and students. What are they saying?	S
22. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do at the dream school.	E
23. How is this school similar or different from your dream school?	O
24. What do you think are the most important things middle school students need?	K
25. How does it feel to be a middle school student in 2010?	F

Note. Question Types: B=Background/Demographic E=Experience/Behavior F=Feeling K=Knowledge S=Sensory O=Opinion/Value

In the Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions – Student Interview (see Table 3), questions 1-3 requested demographic and background information about the

student. Such questions situated the participant in the study and provided general information for purposeful sampling to maximize similarities and differences for future analysis, follow up interviews, and equitable representation of participants in the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Questions 4 and 5 enlisted opinions about how the student felt about school and teachers. School satisfaction was connected to adolescents' subjective well-being, and students' sense of belonging relates in particular to their relationships with teachers (Boynton, M., & Boynton, C., 2005; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Davis, 2006; Suldo, et al., 2009). Further, classroom climate was determined by the degree of support a student feels from his or her teachers (Brewster & Bowen 2004; Matsumura et al., 2008). Questions 6 and 22 examined student perspective on instructional practices and were compared to behaviors during classroom observations and teacher interviews (Cushman & Rogers, 2008; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Zemelman et al., 2005).

Questions 7-9, 17, and 21, specifically inquired about students' perspectives on their relationships with teachers and types of motivation filtered through teacher student relationships. Maslow (1987) and Rogers (1980) founded the ideals of motivational theory based on teacher-student interactions. Student motivation has been connected to teacher-student relationships in research, and students' perspectives will be examined and compared to teachers' answers to similar questions (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Wentzel, 1997). Issues concerning student school success and failure from a student's point of view were addressed in questions 10 and 11, as they accounted for research related to classroom climate and rigor (see Malti & Noam, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Matsumura et al., 2008; Zemelman, et al., 2005). Similar to "forging a vision" as modeled by Accelerated Schools (1986), students were asked to describe their "dream

school," explain why it was the perfect school, and to explain what was spoken and heard in this school between people who work there (Hopfenberg et al., 1993). In questions 12-14 and 18-20, students were asked to give advice to new students upon entering both the current school and their dream school. Question 23 asked that the student articulate the differences in their current school and dream school. Students possess a natural desire to have relationships with their teachers, and their description of the optimal school setting may be expressed by describing their dream school (Hopfenberg et al, 1993; Pianta, 1992; Wentzel, 2002). Moreover, students who participate in establishing the vision of the school feel empowered and valued as stakeholders (Hopfenberg et al, 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 2005).

Based on the work of Aristotle (355 B.C.), Comenius (1659), Locke (1690), Wollstonecraft (1787/1979), Pestalozzi (1799), Montessori (1912), and Freire (1973); question 15 connected students' sensory perceptions of school with their sense of satisfaction with the current school and the utopian images presented by the dream school. Results from these sets of questions regarding the current school and the dream school provided insight into the students' current well-being, sense of competence, and overall feeling towards school (Curwin et al., 2008; Jensen, 1998). Questions 24 and 25 asked the student to reflect on the needs of middle school students and to describe what life was like as a young adolescent. These questions required the student to reflect and demonstrate his or her understanding of adolescent development and needs, which is fundamental to establishing context to define the unique needs of adolescents and connects social, emotional, and physical development to their ability to learn and

communicate understanding of concepts (Armstrong, 2006; Bennings, 2006; Marzano, 2003; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008).

Table 7

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions – Teacher Interview

Questions	
1. Please state your name, grade level, and team.	D
2. How long have you been at this school? How did you end up in middle school?	D
3. Describe yourself as a teacher. Describe your philosophy, routines, style, etc.	D
4. Describe a few things that you like about this school.	O
5. Describe a few things that you dislike about this school.	O
6. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do in class.	K
7. Explain what types of relationships exist between teachers and students in this school.	E
8. How would you describe your relationships with your students?	E
9. How do you help your students do their very best?	O
10. Describe a class where you have successful and explain why.	E
11. Describe a class that has been difficult and explain why.	E
12. What advice would you give a new student who enrolls here?	O
13. Explain how one average day at this school would be for a teacher.	E
14. Describe your "dream" middle school and tell why this is the perfect school for you.	E
15. What does it look and feel like? What do you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell?	S
16. What are the principals, students and teachers doing in this school?	S
17. How are people interacting with one another?	S
18. What advice would you give a new teacher who comes to work in the dream school?	E
19. Explain how one average day at the dream school would be for a teacher.	E
20. What are people doing in this school?	S
21. Tell me about the conversations between teachers and students.	S
22. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do at the dream school.	E
23. How is this school similar or different from your dream school?	O
24. What do you think are the most important things middle school students need to be successful?	K
25. How does it feel to be a middle school teacher in 2010?	F

Question Types: B=Background D=Demographic E=Experience K=Knowledge S=Sensory O=Opinion

The Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions – Teacher Interview (see Table 7) shows a list of teacher interview questions, and while they are similar to the student questions, open-ended questions allow for unique perspectives from teachers and students gleaned from each individual interview. Since the literature suggests that middle school appointments are less than desirable teaching positions compared to elementary and high school (see Lloyd, Ramsey, & Bell, 1998; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007; Rourke, 2006), questions 1-3 requested demographic information and inquired about teaching certification, teaching philosophy, and length of time in the profession. Questions 4 and 5 requested that the interviewee share their likes and dislikes of the school. As indicated in school reform research and facilitative leadership literature, staff members are more involved and better satisfied at work when they feel supported and valued (see Covey, 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Hopfenberg et al. 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Liu, 2007; Taylor et al., 2007).

Questions 6 and 9-11 addressed instructional practices and classroom routines as related to research on best practice (see Daggett, 1998; Hopfenberg et al, 1993; Zemelman et al., 2005). Further, these questions focused on teaching philosophy and theoretical tradition (see Bandura, 1986; Bruner, 1977; Maslow, 1987; Rogers, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978) from the teacher's experience as referenced by the research (see Arievitch & Hanen, 2005; Bandura, 2001; Levykh, 2008; Walters, 2008). Similar to questions from the student interview, questions 7 and 8 inquired about teacher-student relationships and interactions, described in the literature as essential to student development and learning and crucial to establishing trust and an environment for risk-taking (see Boynton & Boynton, 2005; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Davis, 2006; Suldo et

al., 2009). Teacher perspectives were gathered and analyzed as they related to student perspectives and findings from prior research.

Similar to questions 12-14, 18-20, and 23 from the student interview, questions 12-14 and 18-23 asked the teacher how he or she would give advice to a new student, a new teacher, and then articulate the characteristics of a dream school. Again, the questions related to the current school and the dream school were fashioned from the Accelerated Schools model (Hopfenberg et al., 1993) in order to take stock of the current situation and develop a hopeful ideal. Questions 15-17 were sensory questions that provide an opportunity for the teacher to describe their surroundings without verbalizing judgment on how they interpret those feelings. Emotions associated with senses link to teacher perceptions. In addition, sensory questions allowed the teacher to express emotion related to relationships within the school and may give the opportunity for the teacher to show authenticity (see Bowman, 2004; Curwin et al., 2008; Cushman & Rogers, 2008; Matsumura et al., 2008).

Asking exactly the same sensory questions in teacher and student interviews provided crucial data that revealed similar and differing perspectives between and within groups of teachers and students (Curwin et al., 2008; Jensen, 1998). Paralleling the student interview, question 24 corresponded with the teacher's knowledge of adolescent development and student needs (see Armstrong, 2006; Bennings, 2006; Marzano, 2003; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008), and question 25 asked the teacher to reflect and share any comments with the interviewer related to teacher satisfaction, motivation, and the perspective of the middle school teacher (Maslow, 1987). Anchored in the literature, each question in the interview was customized to gain insight on teacher and student

perspectives in middle school, related to historical and contemporary research on educational practices and relationships between teachers and students.

Classroom Observations

According to Patton (2002), observational data allows the researcher to understand an event at a level that is not quite possible through interviews alone. Observational data must have depth and detail that is descriptive enough to allow the reader to understand what and how actions took place (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2002).

Over a period of two weeks early in April 2011(see Appendix Q), I randomly showed up in teachers' classrooms during regular instructional periods to conduct informal, unstructured observations utilizing an observation protocol (see Appendix R). I recorded my observations in a three-column format to time stamp, record actions, and list interpretations and running thoughts during the observation period. The purpose of the observation was to gather data and compare teacher behaviors to data collected in teacher and student interviews. Students were present during class, but their behaviors were not noted unless there was a specific interaction with the teacher. I chose to observe teachers informally and unannounced to capture a realistic, spontaneous perspective on actual student teacher behaviors and interactions within the school setting. Interestingly, classroom observations were conducted during a three-week period of test preparation for the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), and although content areas varied, the objective of each lesson was virtually the same. In addition, in-person interviews included observational data gathered during the interview session, such as para verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

Segments of the 45-minute instructional period were observed in various sixth through eighth grade core content classrooms. Interactions between teachers and students were noted in the form of field notes, scripts, and running thoughts (See Appendix S) including descriptions and observations of what transpired (see Ary et al., 2006). Time stamped two column notes, separating my factual notations and running thoughts were utilized for all in-person observations. Observation notes and scripts were differentiated from observer comments to achieve maximum objectivity.

Classrooms were observed during instructional time, which included formal instruction, guided practice, warm up activities, assessment of learning, and closure activities. During observations, I focused on teachers, and any behaviors noted by students became relevant only as it related to interaction with the teacher. The time period of observation was several weeks prior to TCAP testing. Although classes observed included reading, math, science, social studies, and English language arts, the objectives were similar due to school-wide test preparation.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2007), in the grounded theory approach, open coding is a procedure for developing categories, followed by axial coding to interconnect the categories, and then selective coding builds a story to connect the more intricate, layered concepts. This story was depicted by theory description and visual model. Further, analysis included the development of a model that integrated theory by "linking categories around a central or core category and refining the resulting theoretical formulation" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 87).

Once I completed the interviews using a digital voice recorder, I transferred the

recordings electronically to my laptop hard drive, which was secured by a username and password. The recordings were archived on the digital voice recorder, and the recorded file remain locked in my personal filing cabinet. Each afternoon, I transferred the numerically coded recordings to a flash drive and hand delivered them to my transcriptionist. The transcriptionist took the flash drive to his home and transcribed the recordings. Once transferred from voice to written documents, my transcriptionist emailed the transcripts to me and returned the flash drive to be locked in my office. I printed the emailed transcripts, made one copy to archive and locked them in my office.

As transcripts were received from my transcriptionist, I coded, analyzed and triangulated all data in order to provide optimal dependability of the information and credibility of the source. In mid-April, once all teacher and student transcripts were complete, I returned to the middle school to provide the participants the opportunity to review their transcripts to validate their comments. The participants initialed the back page of their transcripts to verify the content.

Coding Techniques

Considering the content of data received, categorization and coding was applied. I employed three major coding phases: (a) open coding (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. Coding involved taking raw data and identifying concepts from the data for categorization. In conjunction with categorization, analysis through coding utilized interactive techniques by asking questions and comparing data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Open coding. Open coding involved "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to represent blocks of raw data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). During the open coding process, I qualified terms based on their properties and dimensions. Exact

words of the participants (i.e., "caring teachers"), also known as *in vivo* codes (Creswell, 2007) were used to develop categories. I utilized open coding to develop initial categories of information.

Axial coding. Axial coding involved relating concepts to one another (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Following the open coding process, through axial coding categories, I subdivided information into causal condition, intervening and context, and consequences. According to Creswell (2007), axial coding identified a central phenomenon from the open coded data and returned to the database to identify what caused the phenomenon, what strategies the actors used in response, what context and intervening conditions influenced the strategies, and what consequences resulted from the strategies.

Selective coding. I utilized selective coding after axial coding to divide data into story line and propositions. With selective coding, defined by Creswell (2007) as the final phase of coding, the researcher takes the "central phenomenon and systematically relates it to other categories, validating the relationships" (p. 240). During this phase, the researcher may go back and fill in or refine categories. Depending on where the data analysis leads the researcher, a conditional matrix, or diagram presenting the conditions delineated through axial coding, may be created.

Analysis Technique to Achieve Credibility and Dependability

As the principal of a neighboring feeder school and researcher for the study, I cautiously examined data and utilized credibility checks consistently. To ensure accurate representations of participants' perspectives, credibility checks were carefully placed.

Audit trail. Audit trails are used to confirm data (Ary et al., 2006; Creswell, 2007). I created a complete audit trail to provide accurate data throughout the process that can be confirmed as trustworthy through an auditor. Activity log entries (see Appendix T) specifying the exact time and event involving the study were completed from the onset through the conclusion of the study. In sum, the audit trail documented "how the study was conducted, including what was done, when, and why" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 629).

Audio-recording. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. To ensure objectivity and accuracy, I hired a disinterested but well-informed outside party to transcribe recorded interviews and observations.

Member checks and feedback. Once recordings from interviews were transcribed (see Appendix U and V), I removed researcher comments and made photocopies of notes. I provided transcribed notes to the participants to verify understanding of content and true intent from their perspective. Participants edited and signed photocopies of the transcriptions to verify accuracy.

Memoing and field notes. In qualitative research, memoing, or reflective journaling (Creswell, 2007) provides reflective data during the research process. Through the process of memoing, I maintained field notes, and reflections of observations and interviews. As I continued to reflect on the comments of the participants, supported by the literature, my personal experience as a teacher and school administrator, I further developed theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which enabled me to see the phenomena from the perspective of the participants. Surrounded by layers of data, specific quotes from participants, and visual representations of interactions between

teachers and students, I began to think in terms of how these interactions come together and develop stages of teacher-student relationships and my theoretical memos provided crucial reflections to sharpen my theoretical lens. As a result of these reflections, I revisited and reanalyzed data from participant interviews that was analyzed early in the study from a more theoretically sensitive perspective. As I developed expertise from the words and actions of teachers and students, I was equipped reassemble data and logically tell a story, or construct theory.

Quasi-statistics. As previously mentioned to depict the relationship between teacher and student perspectives, I listed data on sociograms to demonstrate the recurring trends from the teacher and student points of view during the participant selection process in reference to the dream school (see Appendix L and M). Later in the study, sociograms were used to graphically represent data from student interviews (see Appendix W) and to demonstrate consistency of teacher and student comments and data from the researcher's observations their actual behaviors (see Appendix X).

Summary of Methodology

The grounded theory approach to studying relationships between teachers and students in middle school provided a deeper understanding of a relatively undiscovered phenomenon and perhaps informed practices for educators. Grounded theory, which is understood to be "fundamentally realist and objectivist in orientation" (Patton, 2002, p. 128), defined procedures for data collection and analysis, and triangulation reduced researcher bias.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This qualitative inquiry focused on the development and nature of relationships between middle school teachers and their students. Because classroom cultures are as unique as the individuals who inhabit them, interactions between teachers and students are best observed qualitatively (Caine, R. & Caine, G., 1997; Curwin, Mendler, A., & Mendler, B., 2008; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Smoot, 2010; Tomlinson & Doubet, 2005).

Essential research questions focused on the nature of relationships between middle school teachers and their students. The role teacher-student relationships play in middle school settings were of particular interest. Three research questions guided this grounded theory study: (a) What is the process by which relationships between teachers and students evolve in middle schools? (b) What are the sources that comprise teacher-student relationships in middle schools? (c) What role do relationships between teachers and students play in middle school settings?

Overview

This study consisted of five phases of interaction with the participants and data which included (a) preparation and participant selection, (b) vision survey, (c) student interviews, (d) teacher interviews, and (e) classroom observations. Common with grounded theory studies, the process of data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and continuously throughout the process (Ary et al., 2006; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009), developing depth of understanding in the data and multiple layers of valuable content.

Phase One: Preparation and Participant Selection

Following several telephone and email conversations with the KMS principal, I copied and packaged introductory letters and consent forms for homeroom classes. In December 2010, approximately four weeks prior to the actual onset of data collection, I hand delivered packets to the school with specific instructions for teachers. Over a period of three days, I met with grade level teachers during their planning periods to explain the process and distribute materials for 1200 students and 75 teachers. During the grade level meetings, teachers were provided their own consent forms and vision prompts. Teachers were asked to complete the vision and return it along with the consent form if they chose to participate.

Following our meeting, inclement weather conditions caused school to be cancelled on two separate occasions and delayed for one-hour after a third incident of unfavorable weather within a three-week period. Consent forms and letters of introduction were sent to 75 teachers and 1200 students. Finally, 12 teacher consent forms were received of 75 distributed, and 234 parent consent forms and student vision responses were returned from 1202 students after the winter holidays, and after the New Year arrived, the study began.

Phase Two: Vision Survey

Based on *The Accelerated Schools Resource Guide* (Hopfenberg et al., 1993), my method for accessing information regarding teacher and student participants' ideal school was the open-ended written prompt for students, "Describe your dream middle school," and for teachers, "What kind of school would I want for my own child?" Prompts on

blank, lined forms were distributed to students and teachers, provoking participants to think about their dream school.

Survey procedure for student vision responses. Homeroom teachers facilitated the vision survey process, and 234 students and 12 teachers participated in the vision activity. Focused on participants' meanings held about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), individuals chosen for interviews were selected based on the vision responses. At that point, I did not realize that the process of selecting the participants for interviews would involve a study within a study. In order to create a theoretical sample of participants for interviews, I coded all vision responses, using *in vivo* codes, or exact words of the participants. However, careful selection of participants in the beginning most certainly added to the richness of data throughout the process.

Students completed the vision responses during an enrichment class period with their homeroom teachers. "Reach Tuesday" was a weekly 45-minute homeroom session for enrichment or tutorials. During one "Reach Tuesday" enrichment period of their choice within a four-week period, homeroom teachers distributed the blank forms containing the prompt to students. Teachers told their students that participation was voluntary and to raise their hands when finished writing. In order to identify candidates for theoretical sampling, students were asked to write their first and last names on the top of the vision response page and were reminded that responses would be kept confidential. No other instructions were provided. Homeroom teachers collected the completed surveys during the same class period then placed the collected surveys in a sealed envelope provided to them with teacher name, grade level, and team. Teachers returned the envelopes to the front office in a bin at the secretary's desk. Survey responses were

stored in a locked cabinet until I arrived a day or two later to retrieve student surveys. The entire process of collecting vision responses was completed over a period of four weeks. I analyzed and coded packets of responses on the same day I received them.

Data coding and analysis. Vision responses varied from a few bullet pointed comments to multiple paragraph responses. Specific segments of each student response were color coded based on open-coded categories and entered into an Excel spreadsheet, providing data for quasi-statistics (Creswell, 2007). From the dream school responses, the following categories emerged: activities (gray), curriculum and instruction (blue), facilities and environment (green), rules and procedures (yellow), food and cafeteria (pink), schedule and calendar (purple), and teachers (orange). Summaries for student vision responses can be found in Appendix L.

Student vision survey results. The purpose of the student vision exercise was to obtain as much information as possible concerning students' needs and desires of their school. One key component was to obtain this information in a positive, non-threatening format. Based on the results found, when a student spoke or wrote about a dream school, there was a natural tendency to address and adjust those issues for which one may find less desirable. Of the 234 student vision responses received, 56 students (25%) mentioned teachers (i.e., caring, nice, helpful, or fun) as part of their vision for the dream school. Most frequently, students mentioned curriculum and instructional issues (i.e., no homework) and food and cafeteria issues (i.e., better food) in their vision for a dream school. Once the codes were determined and students' quotations were categorized, 56 vision responses with reference to teacher-student interactions were identified, and those students became candidates for in-person interviews.

Synopsis of student vision participants. On the whole, students were satisfied with the daily operation of the school. Many students requested more freedom in the hallways, more choices for related arts classes, and better cafeteria food. There were no indications that students felt unsafe, but references to bullying and being singled out were noted. Of course, students would like to be able to chew gum and talk in class, and have no homework, more social time, and shorter class periods. Eighth grade students tended to be more worried about school rules and dress code while sixth graders requested more extra-curricular activities.

Students prefer teachers who are nice, funny, fair, helpful, supportive, dedicated, understanding, and more relaxed. Students would like to be in class with teachers who explain more, read to the class, make learning enjoyable, listen to students, act like real people, take their time, interact with the students, and have better ways of teaching. Across grade levels, many students expressed their desire for caring, involved teachers in their dream school. Teacher caring evolved as a theme early in the study and continued to build momentum throughout.

Survey procedure for teacher vision responses. During grade level team meetings, teachers were provided copies of the vision prompt to describe the school they would want for their own child. Teachers were given the opportunity to complete these responses after the meeting and return them along with the consent form for the study. Although 75 teacher packets were distributed, several teachers were not in attendance at the grade level meetings. Some were absent, while others had parent meetings to attend. Of the 75 certified staff members invited to the meeting, 38 teachers attended the

meetings in person. Several team leaders collected packets for the teachers in their suite and distributed them.

Most of the teachers willing to participate returned their vision replies with the packets of student responses. Twelve teachers provided consent and responded to the vision survey, but one rescinded her consent when she found out her interview would be audio recorded, followed by a classroom observation. The final group of teacher responses represented three eighth grade teachers, three seventh grade teachers, four sixth grade teachers, and one who taught both sixth and eighth grades (see Table 7). Because of the low response to the vision survey, eleven of twelve teachers were automatically included in the interview pool, with one teacher who completed the vision activity but preferred not to be interviewed or observed.

Data coding and analysis. Teacher responses were color coded and entered into a spreadsheet on the same day received. As expected, most teacher responses were written in full sentences and were longer than responses from the students. Using the same categories from the student vision responses, the following categories emerged: activities (gray), curriculum and instruction (blue), facilities and environment (green), rules and procedures (yellow), food and cafeteria (pink), schedule and calendar (purple), and teachers (orange). Summaries for teacher vision responses can be found in Appendix M.

Teacher vision survey results. It is important to note that teachers responded based on the type of school they would want for their own children, not for themselves. This perspective allowed me to identify teachers who value their own children's interactions with their teachers, rather than their perspective as a teacher working in the

classroom. I assumed teachers would more easily perceive the dream school based on students' needs if they considered the idea from a setting they would want for their own child. If teachers described the dream school from an employee's perspective, then the focus could be directed towards facilities, resources, or teachers' needs. However, if questioned from a parental perspective, a teacher would consider her child's needs in the description. Of the 12 teachers surveyed, 11 (85%) responded regarding facilities and environment, 10 (83%) mentioned curriculum and instruction, and 8 (67%) mentioned teachers.

Synopsis of teacher vision participants. All teachers who participated were volunteers. Teachers were quite concerned with school facilities, such as access to technology and smaller class sizes. In addition, vision responses indicated that teachers value the level of rigor in the curriculum for their children. Although a small number of teachers responded to the survey, most of them noted preferences for effective, caring teachers who have high expectations for achievement, are consistent and fair, and value their children as people.

Phase Three: Student Interviews

Grounded theory studies usually incorporate 20-30 interviews in order to saturate the categories (Creswell, 2007), and smaller in-depth studies may include as few as five or six interviewees (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Because I wanted to gain insight on teacher perspectives as well as student perspectives, I opted to interview 30 students as the primary interview group and 11 teachers across three grade levels, as the secondary group for interviews. Interview questions are designed to help the researcher understand how the individuals experience the process and identifying the steps to the process (Creswell,

2007). To maintain confidentiality, all students were assigned pseudonyms for purposes of analyzing data and reporting results.

Individual student interviews. Of the 56 students solicited to interview, I selected 30 students to participate. The first interview was purposely arranged with a high achieving seventh grader named William (pseudonym) to make sure the questions were worded clearly and to ensure that enough time was allotted to ask all 25 questions. After interviewing William, I discovered a typographical error in Question 2 and changed the wording from "How long you at this school?" to, "How long have you been at this school?" In addition, the current year in Question 25 was changed from 2010 to 2011 since interviews began early in 2011.

Student interviews were initially conducted in the cafeteria during a time when there was no activity. Students and I became distracted by others walking in the hallway, and in order to protect the privacy of our interview, we changed our location to a conference room in the front office and later moved to the counselor's suite. I quickly noticed during the first interview that the student was more receptive and willing to answer questions if I did not write in my notebook during the interview. I found that students were more responsive if I was not wearing professional clothing (e.g., a suit). After the fourth interview, I began to come to the school in khaki pants, casual slacks, or denim jeans and a blouse, rather than in professional attire. In addition, removed my identification badge from the students' view to prevent showing my name or position during the interview. Sensitive to the potential to disturb the site and unintentionally deceive vulnerable participants (Creswell, 2007), I purposely introduced myself as a researcher and student and did not mention my position as principal of the high school.

Data coding and analysis. I transferred audio-recorded interview files from the digital voice recorder to my laptop hard drive, then the recorded files were numbered and saved onto a flash drive in an electronic Windows Media Player format. I hand delivered the flash drive to the transcriptionist the same day of each round of interviews. In most cases, within two days, the transcriptionist emailed scripted documents to me. I began analyzing transcripts the same day they were received.

First, student characteristics were open coded into based basic categories of identifying information (see Table 6). Information regarding student achievement was based on the types of classes and grades students discussed as a result of the open-ended questions. Students also discussed how long they had been at KMS, which indicated if he or she had relocated from another school before or during middle school. Based on the interview responses, I asked the KMS principal to informally verify students' overall achievement and socio-economic levels. I did not have access to any confidential documents such as student grades, free or reduced lunch status, or Individualized Education Plans. Therefore, categories of data in Table 6 are approximate based on student responses.

Actual student comments were entered into an Excel spreadsheet with the columns representing each of the 25 questions, and the rows representing the student and verbatim responses shared during the interview. I entered over 750 phrases into the student interview spreadsheet (See Appendix W: Sample Data from Student Interviews) for future causal comparison (Creswell, 2007). Next, I coded the actual student responses into categories. The color-coded categories of data included the same themes as the vision data, which include activities (gray), curriculum and instruction (blue), facilities

and environment (green), rules and procedures (yellow), food and cafeteria (pink), schedule and calendar (purple), and teachers (orange), but they were not combined with the vision information. Although the same general themes emerged, students' and teachers' preferences differed. For example, a teacher may prefer a challenging curriculum for her child, but a student may hope for a classroom with no homework or tests. Both are general curriculum issues under the same theme, but within that larger category, students and teachers have contrasting ideas. I color-coded this data by hand onto copies of spreadsheets where students' actual words were originally transferred from the printed transcripts.

Axial coding began when the core category of "teachers" emerged (Creswell, 2007). Not only were student quotes categorized in the teacher column included, but also causal conditions, strategies, and intervening conditions were considered in coding (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). I included comments directly relating to teachers, teacher-student relationships, interactions, strategies personality traits, teaching style, actions, or any other phrase referencing teachers.

After I coded student interview data and synthesized student characteristics with their coded comments, I discovered interrelationships, and through selective coding (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009), a story line began to develop. Although teacher interviews and classroom observations were still underway, the coded data came alive. I immediately began to sketch disorganized inter-related thoughts onto chart paper.

Student interview results. Analysis of student interview data resulted in the creation of a student characteristics table, summary of student interview data, development of a spreadsheet depicting multi-layered codes of student comments, a

synopsis of student participants' shared voice, and a partial suggestion to a theoretical model.

Synopsis of student interview participants. As shown in Table 6, all 30 students interviewed attended the same middle school. Students were selected for interviews based on vision responses related to teachers or relationships with teachers. Stratified, purposeful sampling was applied to illustrate subgroups and facilitate comparisons (Creswell, 2007). Thus, minority and low-income students were specifically asked to participate in order to provide equitable representation,

Representative of the school's overall demographics, the final pool of students included 27 Caucasian and 3 African-American students. Because the original student sample did not include any minority students, the school secretary recruited three African-American students. From the interview pool, eight students were high achievers, 16 were average achievers, six were low achieving, and three were receiving special education services. Student achievement level was determined by the response to the third interview question, "Describe yourself as a student. Describe your attendance, your grades, club involvement, etc." Students who were enrolled in all honors classes and received all A's were considered high achievers, and those who mentioned "good grades," some honors classes, or A's, B's and rarely a C were considered average achievers. Students who clearly identified with struggling in school, listed a general or remedial course load, did not mention honors classes, referenced low performance, or mentioned that their grades were "not great" were categorized as low achievers. Students who did not reference performance level in school were placed in the average achiever range. Because the interview did not explicitly ask about income or special education

services, two students' achievement status was unclear. The KMS principal informally verified overall performance level of students, and as a result, I chose to include the two students in the average achiever group (see Table 4 Characteristics of Students Interviewed).

Two students were born in different countries; one female was from England and came to the United States in 2009 because of her father's job transfer, and another female emigrated from the Ukraine to the United States two years ago. Based on student responses, six students moved within the past year and seven were considered of low socio-economic status. The school secretary did not provide a list of students who received free or reduced lunch, but she did verify my impressions on comments made during the interview that reference a less than comfortable lifestyle (i.e., living in a mobile home with relatives, living in an apartment in government funded housing, etc.).

From February through March 2010, a total of seven sixth graders, 16 seventh graders, and seven eighth graders were interviewed using standardized open-ended interview questions (see Table 6). All but seven students completed the "Describe your dream middle school" (see Appendix K) prompt at least one month prior to the interview. Four eighth graders and three minority students representing all three grade levels had not returned the vision response to their homeroom teachers, but the school secretary knew them well and recruited them for the purpose of this study. Additionally, the school secretary sent several duplicates of parent consent forms home for those students who missed the initial deadline for returning the forms. Students who returned the forms were provided a coupon for a free meal at Chick-Fil-A. For the final seven students recruited, I received parent consent to interview without the vision statement. The vision data was

simply used to create a system to develop a theoretical sample of candidates. Because some of the candidates did not actually complete a written vision response, I chose not to combine the data with the interviews. The Summary of Student Interview Data is available in Appendix N.

Shared understanding of student participants. Through the data analysis process, common themes emerged from student data. Students represented diverse groups ethnically, economically and academically, and the overall theme expressed by students is the need for teachers who help them, enjoy teaching, create interactive lessons, answer their questions, and take time to teach and re-teach material. Students indicated that they preferred teachers who enjoyed their jobs, and Wendy said, "my dream middle school would be like where the teachers are fun and the students work hard." Students also thought they learned better through interactive lessons. Melissa commented, "My favorite teacher let us do a lot of hands on stuff. That just helps me learn more," and Wendy told me that she enjoys teachers who can "be energetic and full of energy, and let us do things other than let us read from the book, study and stuff. We can do activities to help us learn." Most frequently mentioned, students simply needed teachers who cared enough to help them learn. Beatrice commented about how her favorite teachers help her: "It's really nice, they care about us, and if we struggle with something, they help us and its just really good." Donna explained why she likes her favorite teacher, "She always, like, helps you. If you need help, then she doesn't get mad at you or anything." Students often felt overwhelmed by the quantity of work in the middle school and the rapid pace on the race to TCAP assessments. Beatrice also told me that she needs "a bit more time to process everything, and my mum said that sometimes

here they throw a lot of stuff at you very quickly." Patricia noted that her favorite teacher, "always made things, when they were hard like TCAP, she always made them seem not as hard. They didn't seem as stressful when I was with her." Students are keenly aware of the rush to cover material in order to allow plenty of time for test preparation the three weeks prior to state assessments.

Individual profiles of student participants. Each of the 30 students interviewed provided his or her unique perspective on teacher student relationships. Individual profiles of student participants provide details from each one-on-one interview.

William. William is a seventh grade, high-achieving student who works hard regardless of the teacher or other students in the classroom. He is annoyed by students who get preferential treatment because they are "special" and thinks everyone should be held to the same standards. He feels that some teachers are unfair and punish students for things they didn't do, fail to provide good instructions, and yell at students when they are upset. He doesn't have an image of a favorite teacher and hasn't considered what middle school students need from their teachers. He is self-motivated and focused on the tasks at hand, "All I do is do my school work and do my best and just do the stuff they give to me, I learn it, I rehearse it." William performs the same way in every class, regardless of the teacher's interventions or expectations.

Madeline. As an average seventh grade student who has lived in Kraft all of her life. Madeline has very definite opinions about what she expects from teachers. Her comments during her interview are representative of many students' feelings, "Sometimes I feel like they don't care very much about what we're doing or they're not trying hard enough to get through to make sure we understand what we doing…" She

tells me that teachers always seem to be in a rush and often tell her, "You should know that," and give a "look." She has one particular teacher who gives expects students to work hard, but she enjoys the work because he has made it easier to understand. He makes a special connection with his students by showing interest in what's happening in their lives. She depends on the teacher to help her understand, and as long as the teacher provides assistance and relates to students in a positive manner, Madeline performs well.

Wendy. Wendy is an all-honors seventh grade student who is involved in many extra-curricular activities. She enjoys classes where students are able to move around and interact with one another as they learn. She feels that she can talk to her teachers "about pretty much anything and can joke around." She needs teachers to make learning fun and be available to talk when she needs someone. Wendy learns best in a social setting where she can collaborate with others and move around the room.

Melissa. Melissa is a seventh grade student who has consistently earned honors throughout her school career. She has noticed that some teachers like certain students but dislike others. When asked how teachers teach class, she responds, "It kind of depends on the persons, like what they do 'cause if they act out in class, I can kind of tell that they're a lot more lenient to people like me." She believes that kind of relationships that exist between teachers and students depend on who the student might be. She learns better when lessons are interactive and classroom methods are varied.

Morgan. Morgan is a seventh grader who works very hard because her parents expect her to do well in school. Her favorite teacher of all time was one who, "We could just like talk to him about anything and he could understand." She needs teachers to

explain things slower and in smaller steps to help her understand. She prefers a school that feels like family, where everyone is welcomed and wants to be here.

Michael. Michael, an average seventh grade student who is very involved in sports, says that teachers "need to spend more time worrying about the questions the students have and not just putting it up there on the board and telling you to look at it." He feels that teachers move too quickly through lessons, and often times students are left confused. He needs teachers to vary methods and provide activities for students to learn the material.

Louisa. Louisa takes a few honors classes and is also involved in band. She's not sure exactly how she learns best, but she likes classes where she's able to work in partners and do hands-on activities. She also mentions that she struggles in math because the lessons go by so quickly. She thinks teachers should provide assignments where students can choose a project based on what they do well. Louisa like her school because, "students who are here are making jokes in class, so that keeps us from getting bored."

Hannah. Hannah is a new seventh grade student who recently moved into the area from Ohio. She says her favorite teacher of all time was someone who cared about the kids, had a sense of humor, worked hard to help kids understand, and was available to talk if students needed counseling. She says that she needs teachers to explain things a lot, and she asks a lot of questions. She learns best, "as long as they can help me in the best way possible without giving me the answer, like leaving me that little space to figure something out on my own, it's fine." Hannah mentions that new students should simply

blend in with the other kids and should not have attitudes. She says, "As long as you're a good student, then they'll be a good teacher."

Henry. Henry is an average performing seventh grader who enjoys his social studies class. He comments about his favorite teacher, "I feel that I could listen to him speak for the entire day. He describes things in depth and adds his own opinion on it. He makes it less boring, he really keeps us awake, and he wouldn't allow us to fail if he could help it." He believes students would learn better if things were a little further explained. He says if teachers explained in more depth, there would not be as many questions.

Griffin. Griffin is a high-achieving student who has made all A's all throughout his school career. He'd like to have time to relax during the day, "just to chill out for a second." He prefers teachers who will allow students to ask individual questions, and he enjoys social studies class where, "He knows everybody and all of their birthdays and stuff. We can just talk to him about school or about outside life, and I like that." Unlike some students, Griffin likes tests and quizzes because they help him know how much he has learned.

Diana. Diana is a seventh grader who is focused on school, takes all honors classes, and makes highest honors. She hasn't missed a single day of school and even plays on the girls' soccer team. Her favorite teacher was one who really got to know her students and helped them if they had personal problems. Diana believes she does her best when teachers explain things more in depth. She says, "Sometimes they just tell you something, but if you don't really get it, they don't explain farther. They just tell you to do the book work." She does not think it's fair for students who get bad grades when

teachers did not explain the material. She noted that often times, teachers are too busy grading papers. Diana agrees that students need structure, and sometimes, they need to be yelled at when they are bad.

Brady. Brady is an average seventh grade student who admits to talking a lot. His favorite teacher of all time had "over a thousand smiley faces set up all around the room." He also says, "I think she loved her job." He believes that it's his job to learn and that he is the one who should be accountable. Brady enjoys doing projects and hands on activities. He advises new students to always do their best.

Micah. Micah is a high performing sixth grader who takes honors courses. He plays the violin, is a student mentor, and participates in math Olympiad. Micah shares how teachers can help him do his best:

> I need teachers to care about me, 'cause what's the point of doing something if they don't want to do it? You can tell, like the grumbling and stuff, and I need to know that the teacher will do their absolute best to make sure you… can be the best you can be.

He would like his teachers to spend some additional time explaining when he doesn't completely understand the subject. He named his favorite teacher as one who listened to his ideas and was interested in his perspective.

Mercedes. Mercedes is a below average student who says she "usually has good academics." She struggled with several of the interview questions and commented, "Mmmm, sometimes I don't know how to answer questions." She likes teachers who provide hands-on, interactive lessons and who show videos. She says she performs her

best when she has fun and there is no pressure. She prefers that teachers have fun and allow students to have fun learning.

Jennifer. Jennifer is a low-average seventh grade student who is not really involved in extra curricular activities. She mentions that sometimes she loses her work and is very forgetful. Jennifer mentioned that she struggles in math because "She doesn't really explain things very well, and we go through things really quick." In her dream school, teachers would do more teaching and "apply it to real life things you could really use . . ." to help students learn. Jennifer mentions that she has good relationships with her teachers, but some teachers are really mean to kids and disrespect them.

Julius. Julius is an average performing seventh grader who feels like some teachers are mean. He enjoys after school clubs, but he says it's hard to manage club activities with so much homework. Julius' most favorite teacher boosted his confidence and taught him how to enjoy reading. His schedule was changed from honors to regular math early in the year, and he feels like his math teacher was upset with him. Regarding students who ask for help from teachers, he says, "If you need help, I mean, if you ask too many questions, they get kind of annoyed. But I mean I just think that teachers should be ready to answer any questions and not annoyed by people." Julius would like for his teachers to answer questions when he has them.

Betsy. An above-average student, Betsy is involved in the technology club and maintains A's and B's. She describes her favorite teacher as someone who "helped you with everything that you had a question for. She would just help you and fight… to get your grade up." Her best teachers make lessons relevant to real life, which helps her learn.

Beatrice. Beatrice recently moved to the United States from England and was eager to share her love for America and her new school. As an average performing student with a disability in reading comprehension, she is surprisingly able to articulate her thoughts in conversation. She considers herself to be a responsible student and appreciates the help she has received from her teachers: "So, I've been quite puzzled, and I haven't really realized what everything means. But, they've been really sweet in telling me what everything is." Beatrice would like to have more time to process information because so much is given to them so quickly. She is happy with her teachers and school just the way they are.

Donna. Donna, an average performing sixth grader, recently came to public school after being homeschooled for two years, then attending a private school for two years. She is not sure what things she needs teachers to do, but she likes that her Language Arts teacher does not mind helping her when she needs extra assistance. In other classes, she usually asks a friend for help when she is confused. Donna likes her teachers and feels that they have good relationships with her.

Patricia. Patricia is a low performing sixth grader who enjoys related arts classes. Her most favorite teacher made hard things easy and had fun with her students. Patricia explains, "I felt like she knew each of us and how we did things and knew that we were all different. So, I felt like she really cared about who we were." She learns best in an interactive classroom where the teacher understands who needs help. Patricia thinks that schools focus too much on standardized tests and not enough on learning.

Raymond. As an average sixth grade student, Raymond only misses school when he is sick and manages to have pretty good grades. He mostly needs his teachers to

explain things well and be organized. He struggles with math because of the way it's taught and the level of difficulty is different from his prior school. He describes an average day as, "We'll usually do on a regular day (pause), a paper or two per class, and once or twice a week, we'll learn some new material." Raymond likes the middle school because it is more organized than his elementary school.

Ronald. Ronald is an average performing eighth grader who reports a few absences per year because he has allergies. Ronald is involved in the school chorus. He needs teachers to, "explain something more than one time, come back to something if needed." His favorite teacher made class fun, and he looked forward to going there each day. He advises future students to go to school and have fun learning. His dream middle school would have, "teachers who know you and understand you and what you go through."

Mason. Mason is an eighth grade student who recently transferred from another county in Tennessee. His grades are average, and he is involved with the school band, plays football, and runs track. He is not sure what he needs to learn, but his favorite teacher was a lot of fun and laid back. He says, "We just kind of did whatever. We had a few projects that we did every now and then." He mentioned that sometimes teachers write students up for silly reasons because they are annoyed. He believes that the most important things middle schoolers need are friends.

Richard. Richard, a low to average performing student tells me, " I'm an average student who pays attention, and does work, and does what I'm told." His favorite teacher made learning fun, treated everyone fairly, set goals for the class, and helped students with anything they needed. Richard says he needs teachers to push him a little harder to

get the best from him. He says that the most important things middle schoolers need are "helpful teachers who will help you through anything. They'll help you understand what you're going through. They don't teach anyone any different. They're just a normal person."

Ramsey. Ramsey is a low to average performing eighth grader who has only missed school because of surgery. Although he has an IEP, he has a couple of C's because he does not do his homework. His favorite teacher made everything fun in class by providing activities and group work. When asked what he needs teachers to do, he said, "Encourage me to do my homework." Ramsey takes ownership of his lack of effort and understands that he needs to study more and work harder. He feels that middle school students need encouragement and friends to help them out.

Regina. Regina is an average eighth grade student who is a student mentor and is a cheerleader. Her favorite teacher explained things well and allowed students to do lab work. Regarding teacher student relationships, Regina says, "All my teachers say they like students. Even if they do something bad, they're just like, 'Oh well, Let's not do that again.'" To do her best, Regina needs teachers to answer questions so that she can understand. In her dream school, teachers and students would talk about their day, ask if they needed help, or just say "Hi."

Nicholas. Nicholas is an eighth grade African American student who is a high-average student and plays baseball. He is not sure what he needs teachers to do to help him, but his favorite teacher was really nice and never gave homework. His dream school would have a sports theme, and all classes would be focused on sports. Nicholas

enjoys learning in small groups and with partners. He says middle schoolers need, "a better learning experience… like be able to understand the material better."

Marcus. Marcus is an eighth grade African American male who appears to have a mild form of autism, possibly Asperger's syndrome, and earns grades below average, except in math. Marcus says he desperately needs help in reading because he wants to grow up to be a pastor. His dream school would have music and technology everywhere. Marcus says, "I like the teachers that stand up, well most of the time. They teach the students, and some of the students could help each other. That's what I like to do."

Teresa. Having moved from the Ukraine a few years ago, Teresa, a sixth grade English language learner has worked hard to perform at an average level among her peers. Regarding how teachers help students do their best, she comments: "I think a teacher always has to be a little mean, well not mean, yeah, kind of, a teacher always has to be a little mean, you know, so a person can do a good job, you know she has to. It's kind of like force you…" Teresa feels that the most important things middle school students need are friends and education.

Raquel. Raquel is a seventh grade, average performing African American student who recently moved from Georgia. She is a competitive dancer and plans to run track, if her diabetes becomes manageable. Raquel tells me that sometimes the teachers are hard to understand, and sometimes she needs to hear things a second or third time. She needs teachers to "break down the information and make sure I understand it before the next subject is taught." She would like a school where teachers and students have simple, nice conversations about their days.

From student interview responses, teachers helping students became the overarching theme to the establishment of teacher-student relationships. Students referenced the need for teachers to see them as people, to care about who they are outside the classroom, and to provide guidance and advice when they need it.

Phase Four: Teacher Interviews

As mentioned in Phase Three, grounded theory studies usually include a minimum of 20 interviews to provide enough data to saturate the categories (Creswell, 2007); however, smaller, in depth studies may include as few as five or six interviewees (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). While 30 student interviews provide the bulk of data for this study, 11 teacher interviews have been included to provide another facet to the teacher-student relationship dynamic. Of the 11 teachers interviewed, five volunteered and six were asked to participate by the building principal. Years of experience, licensure status, grade levels, and content areas varied among the group to provide a heterogeneous, purposeful sample (see Table 5). Private, uninterrupted, 30-minute interviews were scheduled at the teacher's convenience via email or by telephone. Over a period of two weeks, all teacher participants were interviewed individually in their classrooms during their planning periods. Similar to the set up for student interviews, teachers were more relaxed interviewing in their own classrooms and answered more freely when I was not writing. For confidentiality purposes, all teachers were assigned pseudonyms, and teacher room numbers were not included on the data sheets.

Individual teacher interviews. Following the student interviews, 11 teachers were interviewed using standardized open-ended interview questions (see Table 5). Teachers also returned their vision statements to me prior to the interview. Since the

questions for the Standardized Open-Ended Teacher Interview were identical to the interview questions for student interviews, a pilot interview was not necessary.

Data coding and analysis. Identical to the procedure listed for data coding and analysis of student interviews, I sent audio-recorded teacher interviews in an electronic Windows Media Player format to the transcriptionist on the same day of the interview. In most cases, within two days, the transcriptionist emailed scripted documents to me. I began analyzing transcripts the day they were received.

The data from teacher interview responses to the standardized open-ended questions were initially coded with letter codes of two or three capital letters representing the topic (i.e., APP for approachable teachers, BP for behavior problems). Once coded, all categorized data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet with columns designated for interview and observation to allow for future comparisons of what was said in the interview to what was done in the observation (see Appendix X: Sample Data for Teacher Interview and Observation).

Teacher interview results. Analysis of coded teacher interview data resulted in the building of a teacher characteristic table, summary of teacher interview data, development of a letter coding system for each category, creation of a spreadsheet to illustrate and compare teacher comments with future observations, a synopsis of a teacher participants' shared voice, and additions to a partially developed theoretical model.

Synopsis of teacher interview participants. As shown in Table 5, participants ranged from first year teachers to 20 year veterans. In order to include teachers from various grade levels, experience, content area expertise, and licensure, after volunteers

gave consent, purposeful samples were taken by recommendation of the principal. Every teacher interviewee had completed the vision response prior to interviewing.

Ten female teachers were interviewed, along with one male, all of whom were Caucasian. The majority of teachers at KMS are female, and all teachers are Caucasian. Even though the sample seems lacking in heterogeneity, it is representative of the school.

Shared understanding of teacher participants. Every teacher interviewed spoke positively about the school and the experience of teaching middle school. Ms. Daniels commented on how she arrived at middle school: "When I did my interning, I did it at an elementary and a middle school, and when I went to the middle school, I just knew that's where I wanted to be." Although each teacher may not have originally planned to teach middle school, each participant expressed satisfaction and intent to remain in middle school. Mr. Bruce indicated, "I was wanting to teach high school, but once I got here, I just really enjoyed it." Ms. Gordon fully intended to teach elementary school until she was recruited by the principal, and she states, "I got here and would never ever go back."

Teachers also indicated that most of student population was positive with supportive parents. Mr. Bruce stated that the kids "for the most part come from supportive families that they value education." Ms. Lewis agreed that KMS was well supported by parents and said that there is "a nice atmosphere between kids and the parents, well, the kids and the teachers, the parents too." Teachers favored working in teams and the camaraderie built but mentioned a slight sense of isolation with the rest of the school. Ms. Gordon felt supported in the team environment and shared, "I love the support, as a first year teacher, I receive so much support."

In addition, teachers were not happy with the Language! remedial reading curriculum or with teaching reading in general. Ms. Johns said that the remedial program did not work because "it was difficult to put them in a room together and try to teach them because they were all playing off of each other. They didn't have a role model to look to set the tone." Teachers were generally satisfied with the involvement of the administration and amount of support received from them. Ms. Johns believed that "we have a strong administration here. I know we have one administrator that is going to take care of business." Finally, teachers referred to high stakes testing as one of the most stressful components of their jobs and mentioned that TCAP test preparation can diminish teacher and student creativity. Ms. James felt that students should learn comprehension from reading, not practicing tests and said, "I don't' push the tests as much as maybe some other teachers do." Ms. Matthews agreed that "there's a lot more pressure, there's a lot more accountability" in teaching today than a few years ago. Ms. Johns expressed her feelings regarding standardized testing and teacher accountability:

> They try to hold our livelihood and our salaries accountable to a test. I don't think it's fair to hold a teacher responsible (for a student) who doesn't have a place to do homework or doesn't have any kind of stability at home, we can only do so much. At some point, somebody else has got to step up and take responsibility.

Individual profiles of teacher participants. Details of individual responses are provided as individual profiles of teacher participants and demonstrate the uniqueness of each teacher's responses.

Matthews. Ms. Matthews teaches eighth grade social studies, has an elementary/middle license, and has taught for 16 years. Ms. Matthews believes that most teachers in the school are "here for the right reasons" and has a relationships based approach to teaching. She says, "I'm a kid advocate, and that doesn't mean I'm their best friend. I am friendly, don't call me on the weekend to go to the movie with you." Her classroom is structured, routine driven, and standards based. Ms. Matthews differentiates instruction to meet the needs of students. She claims to provide a supportive environment and believes that teachers should care for their students.

James. Ms. James teaches eighth grade language arts, has a secondary license, and has taught for four years. Ms. James utilizes cooperative grouping and constructivist teaching methods with a structured routine. She states, "I like to start the year with here's what's up, here's how we do things, we'll always do it this way. So, once they're trained, things go so much more smoothly." She prefers a system where teachers and students are held accountable, but a school that is, "an inviting place where teachers, administrators, everybody's happy to be there." Her classroom culture is relationships based within a supportive environment. She believes that students should learn in a social setting with caring, flexible teachers who are happy to work at their school.

Andrews. Ms. Andrews teaches eighth grade social studies, has a middle level license, and has taught for seven years. Ms. Andrews leads a structured classroom and prefers to keep things organized. She says, "I like it to be more structured, you know, not at all chaotic or anything like that, so I do like the games and hands-on activities, but in a very structured way." She believes that students need individual attention, and close proximity is the key to providing an environment where students can receive assistance.

She would like the opportunity to plan thematically with the other members of her team in order to fully integrate the curriculum.

Jeffrey. Ms. Jeffrey teaches seventh grade math, has an alternative license (career change), and has taught for four years. Ms. Jeffrey's view of a successful classroom is focused on consistent expectations for behavior and work performance. She states, "They need to know what will be expected from them on a daily basis and what they can expect from me on a daily basis." Making herself available to help individual students before and after school, Ms. Jeffrey acknowledges that math can be a difficult subject for students. She has noticed that as students come through the middle school, the skill gaps continue to widen, and more students seem apathetic about school. She believes that small class sizes would help her address the needs of students and tend to their learning needs.

Bruce. Mr. Bruce teaches seventh grade social studies, has high school certification, and has taught for 12 years. Mr. Bruce has high expectations for his students; in fact, he expects them to learn "past what they are capable of." He tends to be a relaxed teacher who tries to get to know his students and take interest in them as people. He builds confidence in his students through interactive discussions and incorporating current events to keep them engaged. He is also concerned with the number of students who come to school disinterested. However, Mr. Bruce works long hours to plan activities to involve every student and make the most of every moment of instructional time.

Kristofer. Ms. Kristofer teaches seventh grade math, has an alternative license (career change), and has taught for four years. Ms. Kristofer describes herself as very

structured: "The kids know what to expect, they know where the lines are, and they know when they cross them that they'll be action or consequences." She says that hands-on activities do not work well with her personality, but she is very focused on the curriculum. Ms. Kristofer indicates that students trust her and are able to come to her in times of need.

Gordon. Ms. Gordon teaches sixth grade language arts, has elementary certification, and is completing her first year of teaching. Ms. Gordon is very happy to be in middle school; she states, "I'm certified K-6, never though that I wanted to be in middle school. I got here and would never ever go back." She dearly loves her students, tries to be approachable, and remembers what it is like for middle school students. She says, "I want the kids to feel like they can come to me with anything . . . "I feel like if they are in that environment, then they can learn best. So, I just feel like everything I do caters to that." Ms. Gordon uses homeroom for "hang-out" time where she and the kids get to know one another. As a student advocate, she puts the needs of students first.

Lewis. Ms. Lewis teaches sixth grade social studies, has an elementary/middle license, and has taught for four years. Ms. Lewis feels that schools would better serve students with more technology integration. She uses an interactive white board to teach class and allows students to access technology as part of her general practice. She thinks her best classes have been ones that know, "Okay, this is the time that we're supposed to be here to learn, and this is the time when we can joke around and play around."

Michaels. Ms. Michaels teaches sixth grade science, has an elementary license, and has taught for 19 years. Having taught elementary school for 13 years, Ms. Michaels welcomed the opportunity to come to middle school. Her teaching philosophy is centered

on providing a variety of hands-on activities to help students learn. Her personal goal is for every student to learn the material: "That's my job, I have to make sure they know x, y, and z by they time they leave me." She believes students should have opportunities to be retaught and to redo assignments that were sub-par. She is more focused on learning and mastery of content then grades. Ms. Michaels believes that middle school is a time when students should become more independent but still have comfort in knowing that they have help figuring things out when needed.

Johns. Ms. Johns teaches sixth grade language arts, has an elementary license, and has taught for nine years. With a background from working in an urban school, Ms. Johns is very happy to be at Kraft Middle School. She prefers an orderly and quiet classroom, but she also does not mind if students whisper from time to time. As a relationship based teacher, she says, "I want them to feel like they know me well enough to take chances and ask questions." She understands that middle school students' emotions and mood impact their ability to learn, and she wants students to feel like they can talk to her. Ms. Johns also believes that students should have a "good healthy fear" and "fearful respect" for adults in the school.

Daniels. Ms. Daniels teaches sixth and eighth grade remedial reading, has earned an elementary/middle license after a career change, and has taught two years. Ms. Daniels has bad memories from a learning experience in her past, which taught her to be afraid to make mistakes. She believes, "God showed me I could use that for his glory, and I ended up being a teacher . . . I want them to believe that they can do whatever they set out to do, and I'm trying to help them get there." She feels that students need love and understanding, and anyone teaching in the school should have a heart for kids.

Phase Five: Classroom Observations

Grounded theory researchers typically gather information through interviews; however, observations can be used to assist in fully developing the model (Creswell, 2007). As mentioned in Chapter Three, observational data allows the researcher to understand an event at a level that is not quite possible through interviews alone (Patton, 2002). Because this study examines the perspectives of teachers and students through separate interview processes, I found it essential to go into the classroom and observe teachers and students in action to provide a multi-dimensional picture of the relationship process. Objective classroom observations enabled me to further synthesize the perspectives of teachers and students.

Informal classroom visits. For two weeks following teacher interviews, I observed the classroom of each of the 11 teachers who participated. I arrived to each classroom, unannounced, for approximately 15-minutes. I was dressed casually, similar to when I interviewed each participant. I opted to script the interviews by hand instead of causing a distracting with a laptop in the classroom. I did not speak to the teacher or students upon entering; instead, I smiled, sat in the back of the room and began to write what I saw, heard, and otherwise observed. Each observation was time stamped every few minutes, and actions of the teachers and students were scripted. Running thoughts (i.e., observers comments/reflective thoughts) were kept in a separate column on the Observation Form (see Appendix S).

The purpose of the observation was not to verify that teachers and students were accomplishing learning objectives, but to observe the interactions between teachers and students within the structure of the classroom for the purpose of learning. When I

initially compared my study calendar to the school calendar, I was worried that my observations would be conducted during the TCAP 3-week review period. However, once I entered into the classrooms, I realized that every teacher had a similar objective.

Data coding and analysis. After a classroom observation was complete, data was kept in a confidential file in my laptop computer bag and coded that night. Using the same Excel spreadsheet for teacher interview data, I coded the scripts and entered the observed categories into the spreadsheet (see Appendix X: Sample Data for Teacher Interview and Observation).

Classroom observation results. Analysis of classroom observation data resulted in a compilation of data used from the spreadsheet of data for Teacher Interview and Observation. The results from classroom observations provided insight on teacher personalities and classroom styles that may not have been openly shared or observed during teacher interviews. In addition, the synthesized results contributed to modifying the original theoretical model to include teacher and student motivation, relationship and trust, and levels of interpersonal interaction (see Figure 7).

Synopsis of classrooms observed. As referenced in Phase Four, teacher participants ranged from novice (i.e., first year) to veteran teachers (i.e., 20 years of experience) in four core content areas: English language arts/reading, math, science, and social studies. Students ranged from age 11 to 14 in grades 6-8. As advised for qualitative studies, participants were observed in their natural setting (Ary et al., 2006). All classes were in the process of reviewing for upcoming TCAP assessments, and various approaches to test review were observed. Each group observed was in their regular, natural setting within the same general routine as on any teaching day.

Common threads among classroom observations. Focus on TCAP testing became an obvious shared characteristic for all classrooms observed. In every observation, the teacher was directing class and students were seated at desks. During brief periods of seat practice, teachers circulated to check for on task behavior and understanding.

Individual compendia of classes observed. Individual classroom observations were unique to the individuals in the classrooms and their situations. The individual compendia describe the specific insights gained in each observation.

Matthews' reading class. Ms. Matthews' class became quickly focused upon her entry and announcement to get started. The students were quietly engaged with working warm-up practice problems while she took attendance. Ms. Matthews utilized the interactive white board to begin the class review. Ms. Matthews requested, "I need a smart cookie to tell me about the story." She called on students at random and uses genuine praise frequently throughout the discussion. She had "absolutes" posted on the wall instead of rules and procedures.

James' language arts class. Ms. James' class began with the class assisting the teacher complete a crossword puzzle via the interactive white board. Students are quite social and off task in the beginning. Ms. James clearly has a higher tolerance for disorder and random comments than the other teachers. One student answered and she replied, "Wow, amazing guess," in a sarcastic tone. Students also make derogatory comments regarding others' answers.

Andrews' social studies class. Ms. Andrews' students were chatting as she entered the room. She gave directions to the class, and they began working. When a

student asked to have directions repeated, Ms. Andrews paraphrased the directions, and the student thanked her. She circulated across the front of the room while they worked, and students came to her to ask questions. She provided help, and students returned to their seats. Ms. Andrews was tolerant of noise, and her students were social but productive.

Jeffrey's reading class. Ms. Jeffrey's class was reading and following along with an audio-recorded version of the novel. She stopped frequently to paraphrase, ask questions, and to check for understanding. She began a discussion with students about the story, and students became more engaged and asked questions. Students and teacher were cooperatively engaged in the reading selection, focused on learning. Students who asked questions raised their hands and were recognized. Other times, the teacher randomly called on students to answer questions.

Bruce's social studies class. Mr. Bruce began class by returning papers and giving students the opportunity to correct their mistakes. He gave instructions as he walked around the room, and he paraphrased instructions without prompting. Rules and expectations were posted on the wall, and the tone of the class was active but relaxed. His method of review was to discuss a few TCAP types of questions per day, then continue with the curriculum. He monitored from various locations in the room as he reviewed strategies and taught from the test questions, elaborating and expounding on the information in the question. After the quick review, Mr. Bruce continued class with a Bingo game version of review. Students transitioned from one activity to the other without interruption or distractions, following instructions and staying involved.

Kristofer's math class. Ms. Kristofer was providing direct instruction from the interactive white board. Teacher and students were going over test questions from a prior exam. The schedule was posted on the wall, and student desks were in rows facing forward. Several students were not paying attention, are distracted and talking, or were otherwise disengaged. She sarcastically gave a student a written reprimand and said, "I wrote you a love note." A few moments later, she looked at the student and said, "Guess what's next?" The student replied, "A referral." As students worked problems, Ms. Kristofer circulated; however, she tended to avoid the students in the back of the room, who were obviously zoned out.

Gordon's reading class. Ms. Gordon's class was working to create test questions for an upcoming vocabulary test. Each student had written four questions on index cards, and by the teacher's direction, they were passing the questions around to answer them and prepare for their test. She was circulating, looking over students' shoulders, and giving positive feedback. Students and teacher laughed together as they worked. One student had a question, and Ms. Gordon replied, "Think about it. Is it an action or emotion?" She gave wait time did not answer the question for the child. Ms. Gordon repeated instructions as part of her normal routine, and her question answer session was interactive and upbeat.

Lewis' social studies class. As class began Ms. Lewis posted the agenda on the interactive white board. She instructed students to copy the information from the white board into their student agendas. Very few students followed through with the assignment. Noise level continued to increase in the room, and students were off task and laughing aloud. Ms. Lewis returned after stepping out of the room and told students

to have a seat and get out their homework. Ms. Lewis circulated to check homework completion, and several students were still distracted. While circulating, Ms. Lewis said, "No, Trevor (pseudonym) today?" Students responded, "Yay!" Teacher replies with a smile, "It's quiet, I just noticed." Students then laughed. Ms. Lewis gave instructions to read the first screen, she reiterated and said, "Read. Don't say anything. Read."

Michaels' science class. Ms. Michaels' class had completed a TCAP practice test, and now the class was moving on to discussion. Speaking in a pleasant tone, Ms. Michaels said, "Okay, let's go over the answers. I'm not taking a grade, but we do need to follow along." Students were quiet and attentive. One student answered a question wrong, and Ms. Michaels narrowed the options to assist him with the answer, and asked, "Did those words make you nervous?" She followed with a confident, relaxed response on how to approach difficult words on the test. She circulated during the discussion, continuing to speak in a positive, encouraging tone. She reminded students not to be nervous about the test because they know the material, and "there are no tricks on the test." Ms. Michaels transitioned from the test review to a "Brain Pop" interactive video and developed a discussion from the video clip.

Johns' language arts class. Ms. Johns was passing out homework papers to the class and announced, "I'm gonna pass this back. If you get your own, switch." She told them, "I need you to be quiet and listen." She then asked a student to pass out the question packets. Class continued with the teacher calling on a student to read the question and give the answer. One student asked for a reading part, and Ms. Johns answers, "You know if you ask, I'm not going to do that. Now you know." While most students were paying attention, there was very little activity or interaction. Ms. Johns

asked Ginny (pseudonym) to see if Tom (pseudonym) understood "now." Her tone was quite edgy with the students, and she seemed irritated with students who were distracted, but she did not leave her stool at the front of the room.

Daniels' reading class. Ms. Daniels' remedial reading class consisted of nine students in a very small classroom with no windows. She stood at the front of the room, and students' desks were lined along the perimeter. She called on volunteers to read aloud, and six of the nine students were paying attention. Ms. Daniels continued to ask questions from the front of the room, not making eye contact with any of the students. Although she called on the students, there was very little engagement with the content or interaction between students and teacher. After all of the answers are complete, Ms. Daniels took up those papers and handed out a new set of reading packets.

Summary of observations. Although the lessons presented were similar in content, teachers' presentation of the test review varied greatly. While some classrooms were interactive and review became a social activity, others were teacher driven and students were not engaged. Sarcasm at the expense of the student was present in several classrooms and minimized positivity in the classroom environment (i.e., Johns, Lewis, Kristofer, and James). In classrooms where teachers were confident, relaxed, happy, and engaged, students responded well. In some cases, teacher interview responses that were "relationships based" did not coincide with the uncaring teacher behavior demonstrated in the classroom (i.e., Daniels, Johns, and Lewis,). In other situations, interactive teachers minimized their involvement with the students during the interview discussion (i.e., Michaels, Gordon, and Bruce). Although teacher driven, three teachers engaged

students and maintained an environment of mutual respect (i.e., Jeffrey, Andrews, and Matthews).

Observation data indicates that teachers and students who have developed mutually trusting relationships are more on task and productive, regardless of the level of collaboration among students. Rather than student-to-student interaction, teacher-student interaction and engagement tended to be the catalyst for on task behavior.

Description of Theoretical Model

As stated in prior sections of this study, a theory emerged from data taken directly from the participants' perspectives on the phenomenon being examined (i.e., the process by which teacher-student relationships evolve in middle school). After thorough review of related literature and intricate coding and comparison of dense data originated from teacher and student interviews and classroom observations, I assembled a theoretical model (see Figure 12) of the concepts that manifest teacher-student relationships in the middle school classroom.

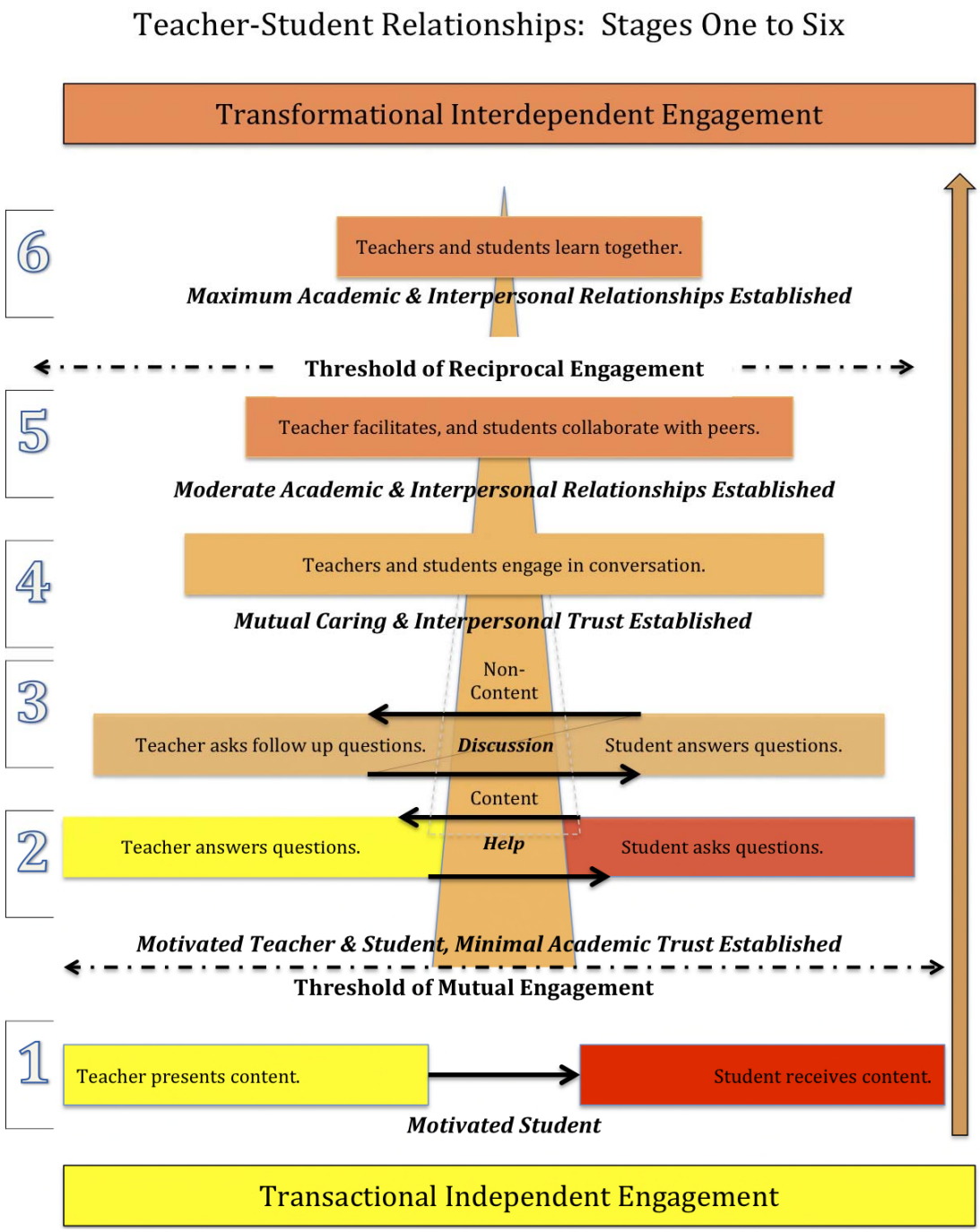

Figure 6. Teacher-Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational

Teacher-Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational (see Figure 6) framework demonstrates a progression of very basic relationships that simply exchange information to higher order mutually satisfying relationships between teachers and students. The transition from transactional independent engagement to higher levels of engagement is propelled by the development of trust between teachers and students. Teacher motivation is essential to developing relationships beyond the basic level, while the most basic level of relationship is dependent on student motivation, with the presence of minimal trust between the student and teacher.

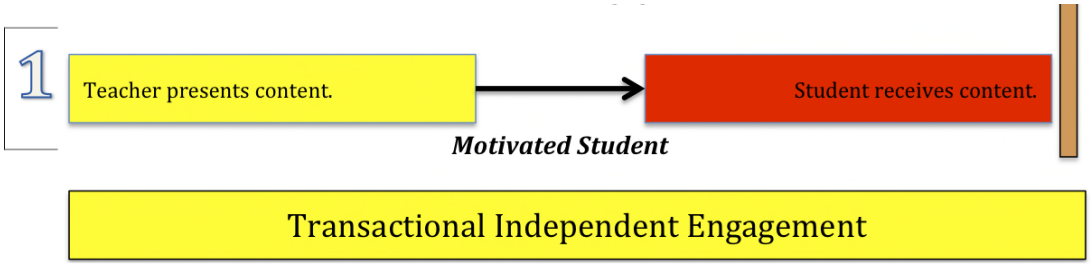

Figure 7. Teacher-Student Relationships: Stage One

The most basic level of engagement between teachers involves the teacher presenting content, and the student receiving information shared by the teacher (see Figure 7). As denoted by the title, engagement is based on independent exchanges rather than mutual communication. Commonly, this lower level of engagement is delivered through lecture and note taking or practice. These forms of lessons are teacher-driven and rarely involve mutual dialogue. This level of engagement is focused primarily on content delivery in the simplest form. Madeline expresses her dissatisfaction with the lack of interaction between students and teachers:

> Mr. Smith (pseudonym) doesn't teach us anything… What he does is says 'Read the section and for homework do the directed reading.' And the next day we check the directed reading, and then we take the quiz, and he gives us directed reading for the next section. That's what we do everyday.

Highly motivated students are satisfied with this process because they believe that it is the student's responsibility to provide the teacher with the product she desires. For example, Raymond explains what he needs from teachers, "Just explain everything in a good manner, just be organized . . . " and Teresa noted, "If you listen and pay attention, you'll probably be successful in everything." William, a high performing seventh grade

student, asks for one simple thing to help him learn, “Quiet, well, quiet and quiet while I’m working.” He also says, “All I do is my school work and do my best and do the stuff they give to me.”

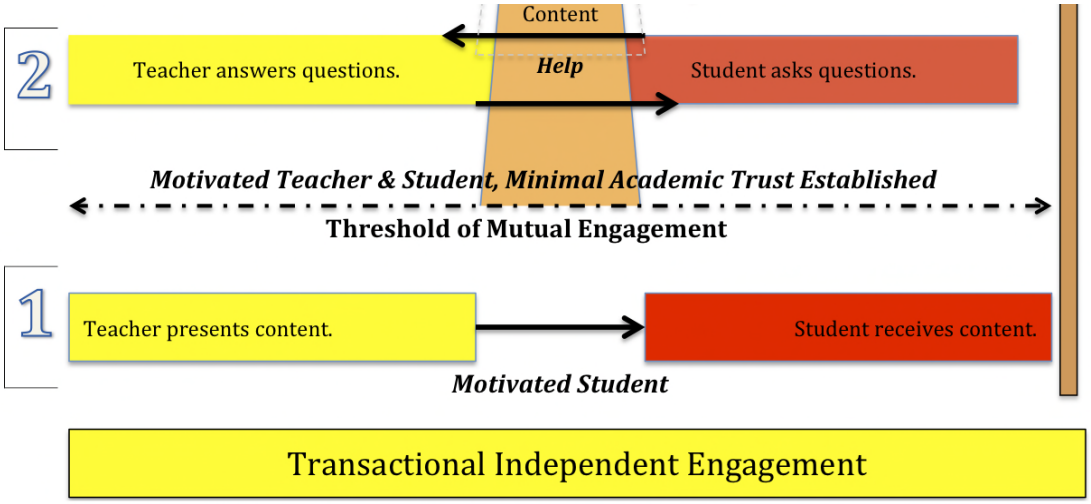

Figure 8. Teacher-Student Relationships: Stages One & Two

Beyond the minimum level of teacher-student interaction, a threshold of shared engagement creates a pathway to a basic form of mutual engagement around course content and classroom business (see Figure 8). Here, teachers continue to provide students with the content, but make themselves available to offer answers to student questions, prompted by the student and provide some help to students when they need assistance, thus further motivating students. Griffin, a seventh grade participant comments about teachers who help students:

> I like it when we can come up and ask them certain questions. I know that in the past, some teachers, they just pretty much taught the lesson and pretty much said go to work. But now, the teachers that I have now, their desk is open and you can come in whenever you want.

This level of engagement works well for students who are at least slightly motivated and comfortable approaching the teacher with questions. At this level, teachers do not necessarily seek out students; instead, students must come to the teachers to request

assistance. As indicated by Patricia, "I feel like they (teachers) need to understand who needs help on what and maybe know you can't just go through a section and teach all the things in that section and move on." Nonetheless, a sense of academic trust may be established when teachers listen to students questions and are available to answer questions and elaborate on content. For students who are not comfortable approaching the teacher with questions or are unable to articulate their misunderstanding of content, this level does not initiate the teacher-student relationship.

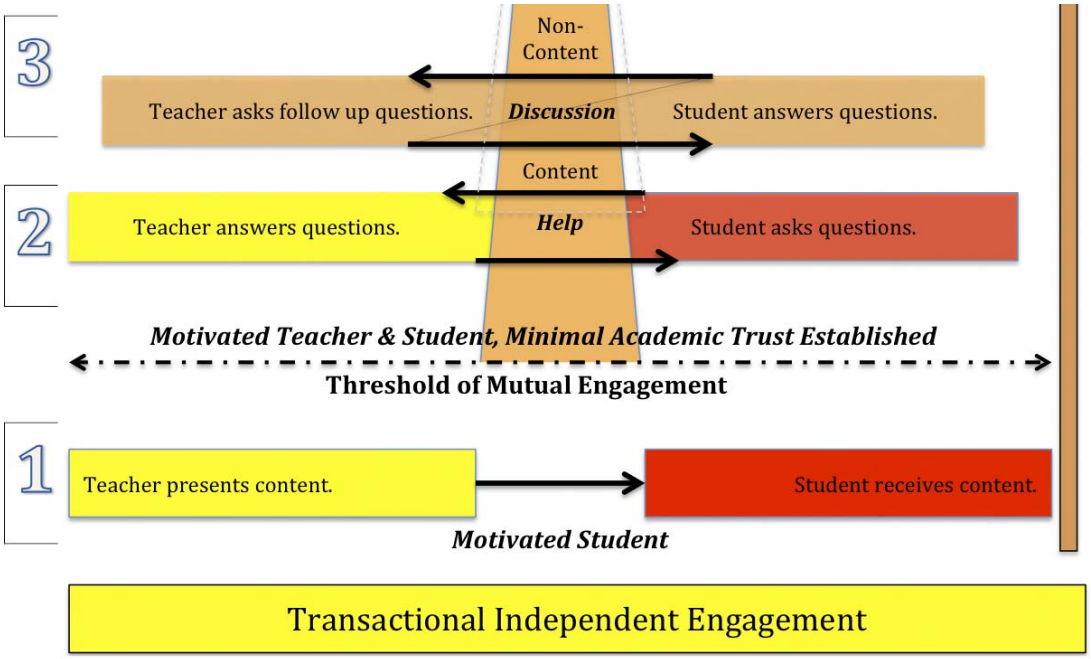

Figure 9. Teacher-Student Relationships: Stages One, Two, & Three

Continuing from the content level of mutual engagement are opportunities for teachers and students to have question-answer exchanges regarding content (see Figure 9). One step further than students asking teachers questions, this stage involves the repeated interaction of teachers and students asking questions back and forth. Students who are usually comfortable with the content and have academic trust in the teacher feel satisfied with this level of teacher interaction. More than simple questions and answers, teachers and students may advance a more mature level of content related discussion and have a mutual investment. This discussion format goes beyond simple rotations of questions and answers and implies a shared exchange of ideas about the content. However, students who are uncomfortable with the content, lack experience advocating for themselves, or are unable to access the material may still find this level of engagement frustrating and unfulfilling. Madeline describes her frustration with some

teachers, “They might be in a rush, but they just don’t want to take the time, or they’re just not. You ask them a question, I feel like sometimes they make you feel like you’re not very smart.” Obviously, Madeline needs a teacher who will take the time to answer her questions, build her self-confidence, and value her as an individual.

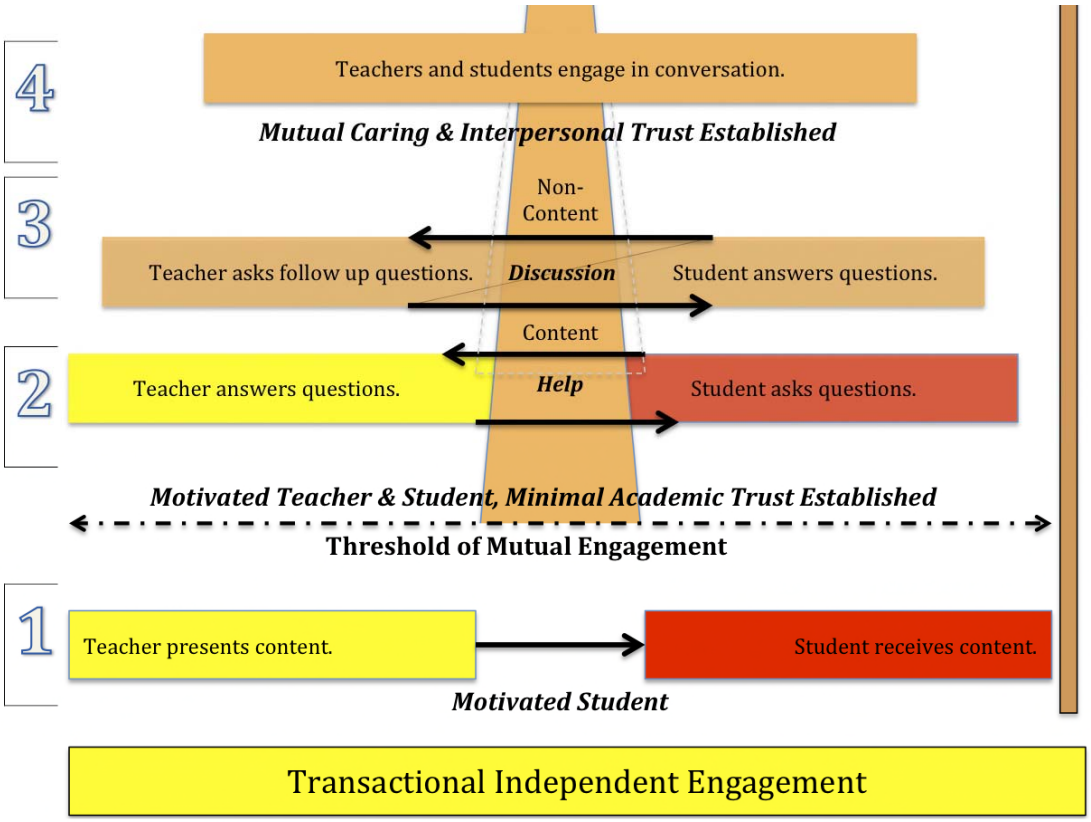

Figure 10. Teacher-Student Relationships: Stages One, Two, Three, & Four

When teachers demonstrate an interest in students beyond the content, mutual caring and interpersonal trust are established (see Figure 10). Particularly when teachers show interest in the students as people and share about their own personal experiences, students and teachers develop a higher level of trust, thus strengthening the teacher-student relationship. At this point, students who are less motivated or have been unable to perform to teachers' expectations in the past begin to become involved with the class and develop an interest in school. For example, Beatrice, a student who struggles with a learning disability in reading comments on how class is taught: "Lecturing, group activities, hands, on… or does it even matter as long as the person cares about you?" Conversely, high achievers continue to develop mutually satisfying relationships with

teachers, but these higher forms of interaction are not essential to their overall academic success. However, if students are expected to exceed expectations, then the caring relationship and interpersonal trust solidify an environment for risk-taking. It is important to note that academically at-risk students may begin to participate in content related discussions that are just beyond the threshold of shared engagement. Patricia, a sixth grade student participant notes, "I felt like she really cared about each of us and she knew who we were. She didn't just count us as a student."

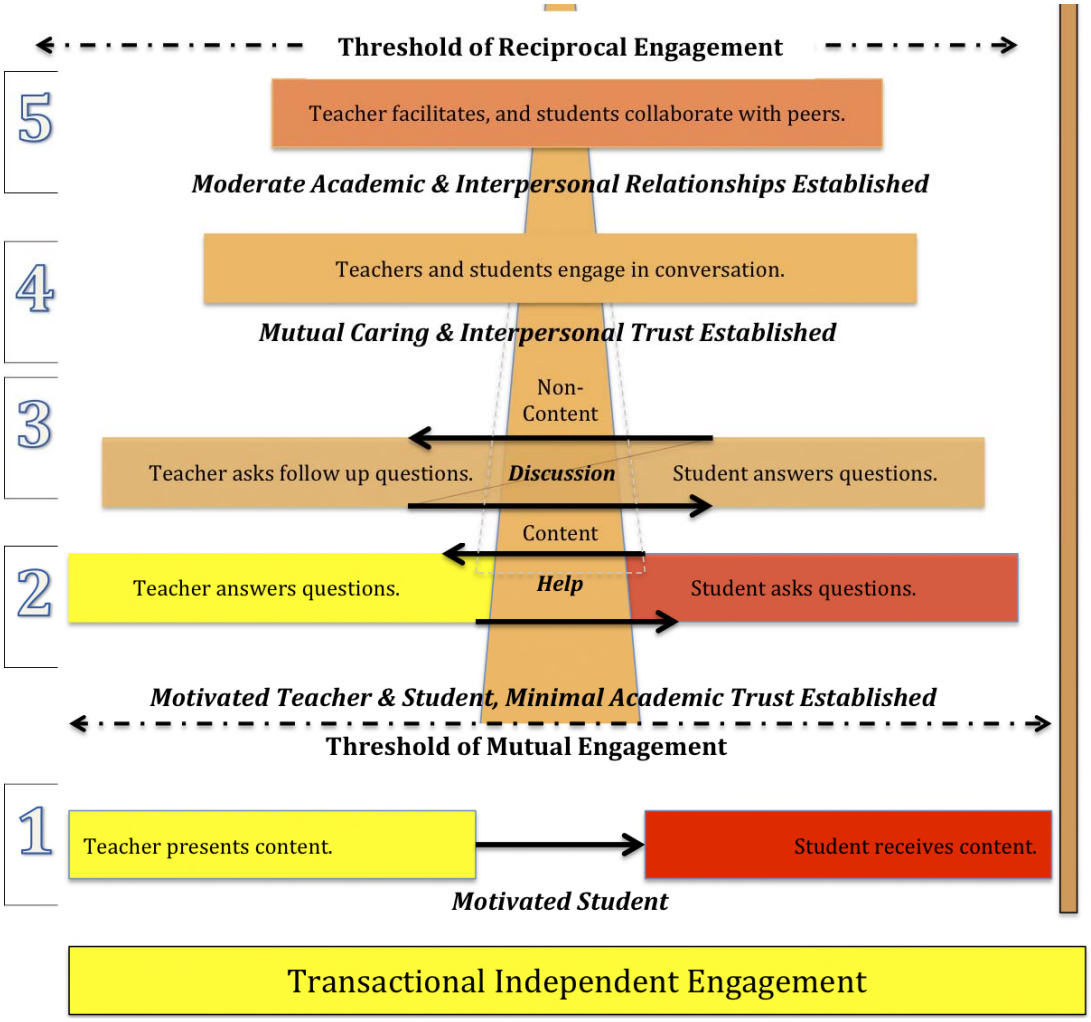

Figure 11. Teacher-Student Relationships: Stages One through Five

As teachers and students develop trust in one another, often teachers begin to allow students to collaborate and work in groups (see Figure 11). Teachers become facilitators and provide opportunities for students to socialize with one another within the learning environment. Many classroom teachers are quite successful with this model of teaching and learning, and students look forward to class, are engaged in learning, and have positive feelings toward the teacher. Until this point, teachers have taken control of the delivery of content, and students are minimally engaged in discussions. However, as

mutual academic and interpersonal trust is established, teachers become more comfortable with providing students freedom to work together and interact with one another. Ronald, an eighth grade student reminisces about a former teacher, "Ms. Moore (pseudonym) was funny, she did a lot of not necessarily projects, but fun things you look forward to when you got to her class. One day we got to go outside and do this s'mores making, and you just couldn't wait to go there."

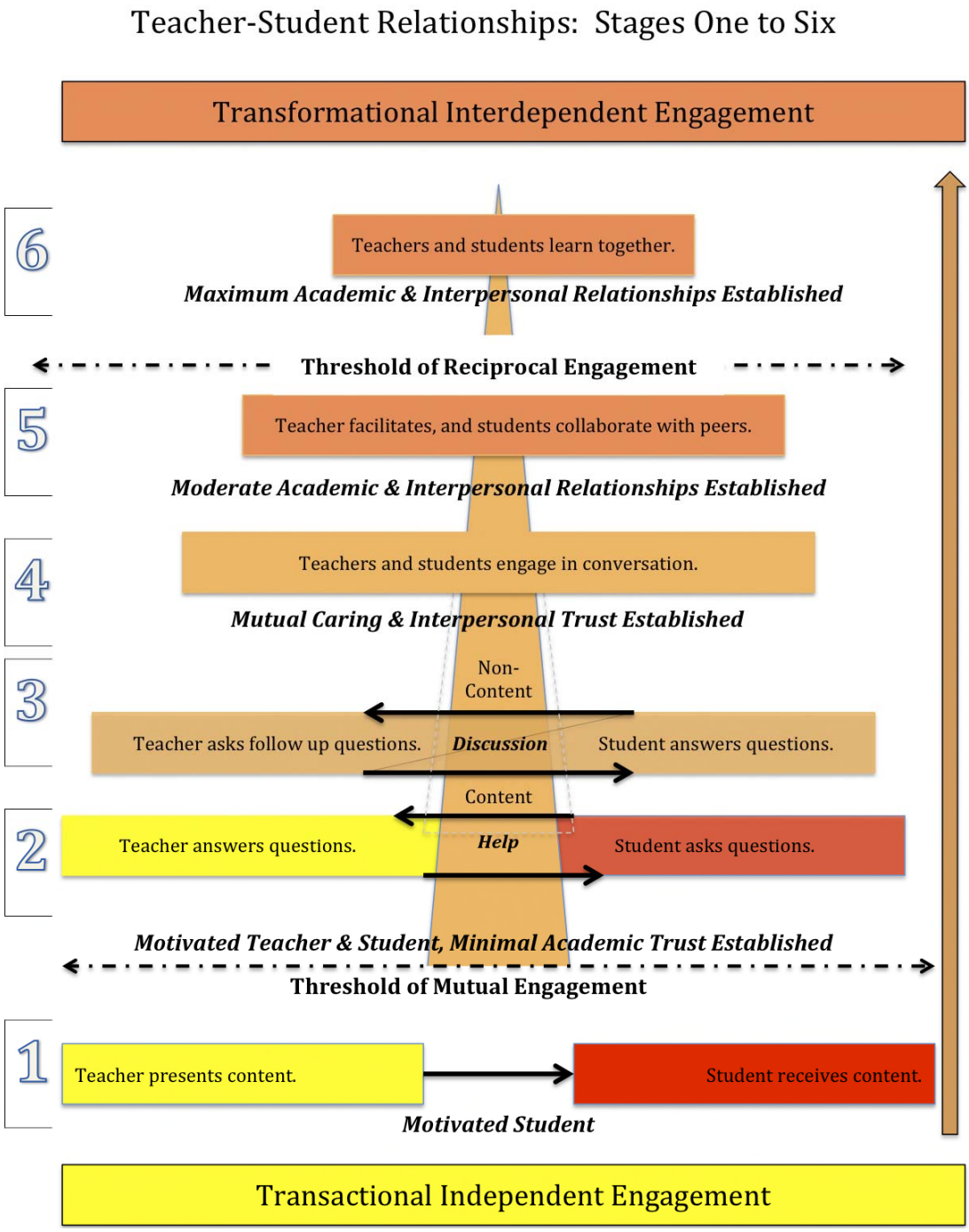

Figure 12. Teacher-Student Relationships: Stages One through Six

Advanced beyond the level of shared engagement lies the threshold of reciprocal engagement (see Figure 12). On this level, teachers and students develop a higher order of trust and caring that allows the class to function as a learning community. Micah mentions a very special teacher from his past:

> Ms. Mackie (pseudonym), I really loved her. And what I really liked about her is that some days I'd just think of a really interesting idea, and sometimes she'd just look at me and say, "You know what? That's good. We're changing the entire class schedule to do this weird idea." I'm thinking, "You're a teacher, and you're listening to me?"

When teachers reciprocate interpersonal and academic trust with their students, the classroom becomes a shared teaching-learning community. Unity of purpose is established, and the culture of shared ownership is built on the strengths of the members in the class. This level of constructivist teaching is rare; however, it represents the pinnacle relationship in teaching and learning: transformational interdependent engagement.

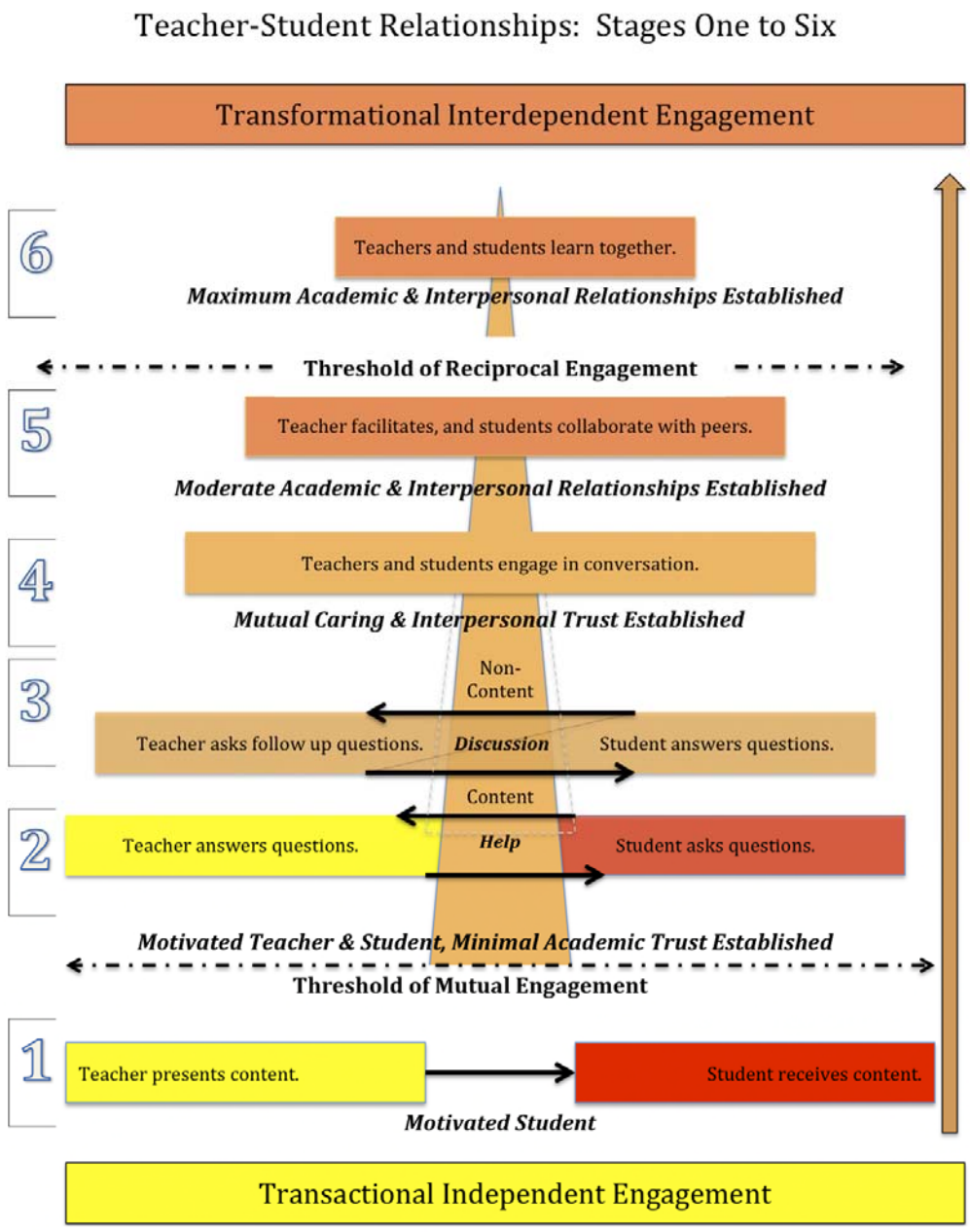

Figure 13. Teacher-Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational

As depicted in Figure 13: Teacher-Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational, the development of relationships between teachers and students is established on trust, mutual engagement, and willingness to relate interpersonally with one another. This model demonstrates the stages of relationship development between

teachers and students in the middle school; however, it does not necessarily indicate that every relationship progresses through these all of these stages. Some teacher-student relationships remain at Stage One, and for other teachers and students, higher levels of interaction may be achieved. Once teachers and students are able to learn together in a community based on mutual trust and investment, separate roles of teachers and students are transformed into a unified body of reciprocal learners.

In July 2011 two teacher participants (Ms. Jeffrey and Ms. Andrews) were consulted on their impressions of the theoretical model of Teacher-Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational. At Kraft High School, Jeffrey and Andrews met with me to discuss the model. Both teachers had been particularly genuine in their responses during the interviews and their classroom observations were consistent with the interview content. The teachers were not teammates, but they were familiar with one another because they work summer school at the high school together.

Jeffrey noted that several students at KMS are motivated, high achievers, and regardless of the level of interaction between teachers and students, some students will learn and be successful. Usually, these students come from homes where parents support and value education. She also agreed that teachers who trust their students with content are more willing to allow students to facilitate and reciprocate teaching. After looking at the model, she also accepted the notion that at risk students are more invested in learning when they have developed interpersonal relationships with teachers. As a teacher who prefers to direct instruction and control the learning environment, Jeffrey acknowledged that an interdependent classroom could benefit all students, especially the hard to reach students. She also noted that the process of building trust would take time, but over time,

those relationships could be established. Further, Ms. Jeffrey expressed concerns that her teaching may have been considered less effective because she had not always promoted to the next level of engagement on the model with her students. At that time, we discussed the meaning of the levels and changed the "levels" to "stages" to reference more of a developmental continuum rather than a judgment of quality.

Agreeing with Jeffrey, Andrews commented that many students in her classes are also self-motivated and perform well in most situations. More relaxed in her approach with students, she indicated, similar to the model, that teachers and students who engage in conversation outside the content develop trusting relationships. Andrews approaches her students with a more casual, conversational style and allows students to get to know her as a person. She has a higher tolerance for student socialization and integrates collaborative learning models in class. Although she has not reached the level of complete reciprocity with students, she noted that teacher-student relationships are very important to the learning process, and the more trust that is built, the more freedom she can give her students. Andrews responded:

> I looked back at the theoretical model and I agree with the model I have experienced where students start building trust in their teacher as the school year progresses. I have noticed in the past that students usually relate to teachers where they share a common characteristic and vice versa. I believe that as soon as that trust is established, then students will confide in teachers. I feel however that a year is a little bit of a short time because I have noticed for myself that I feel closer to students who I see more frequently. I think that if you do show most students attention, they will accept it and put much more trust in you. I feel that a

> student puts trust in a teacher by first seeing a common interest in them. I think that this trust is very powerful in the sense that it will increase the student's confidence and they will, in turn, do better on their work.

Both teachers agreed that class discussion is a higher form of interaction than teachers answering content related questions. While the conversational exchange of content creates more advanced interaction between teachers and students, the discussion of non-content related topics hook students' interest and develops interpersonal bonds and trust. Ms. Jeffrey and Ms. Andrews also confirmed from their experience that teachers and students can develop healthy relationships with students, but it requires a mutual investment and mutual respect.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this grounded theory study: (a) What is the process by which relationships between teachers and students evolve in middle schools? (b) What are the sources that comprise teacher-student relationships in middle schools? (c) What role do relationships between teachers and students play in middle school settings?

What is the process by which relationships between teachers and students evolve in middle schools?

The first research question was developed to outline a process by which teachers and students develop relationships in middle school classrooms. At KMS, teachers initiate relationships with students through their development of routines, presentation of content, management of classroom resources, and individual teaching personality. Relationships are established as students respond to teacher cues, academically and

interpersonally. As trust is established between the teacher and student, relationships progress from transactional academic towards a higher order transformational relationship. It is important to note that students from at-risk environments may not begin this process at the same point as a motivated learner. While naturally engaged learners are motivated at the transactional level, less motivated learners must have developed interpersonal trust with the teacher in order to take academic risks. In order to achieve an optimal transformational teacher-student relationship and reciprocal learning culture, teachers must take an interest in students outside of the content area, facilitate instruction rather than direct it, and allow students to know them as people.

What are the sources that comprise teacher-student relationships in middle schools?

The second research question focused on the elements that construct a relationship between a teacher and student in the middle school. Students clearly communicated the need for teachers who are motivated to teach the content, care for students, and are willing to help them. For students who are academically motivated, a transactional relationship between the teacher and student is satisfactory; however, students from at-risk environments must have needs of security and belonging met in order to develop academic trust. Relationships between teachers and students are based on academic and interpersonal trust. For some, academic trust is established when a students' need for information is met. For other students, mutual engagement occurs when teachers not only deliver the content, but they provide assistance to students when needed. For students lacking academic confidence, interpersonal trust is essential to learning. When teachers take an interest in students as people, communicate caring, and become transparent, interpersonal relationships are established.

What role do relationships between teachers and students play in middle school settings?

Teacher-student relationships in middle school settings are critical to student development. Students openly share their needs for teachers who are caring and helpful. Teachers agreed that students need support from caring, helpful teachers. Motivated students continue to achieve as long as the teacher provides content and assists them when they need help. Lesser-motivated students must be provided a safe and secure environment in order to take academic risks. Optimal relationships between teachers and learners are established in caring, supportive environments. Academic and interpersonal relationships, established by mutual trust and caring are created when teachers support the social and emotional needs of students by taking interest in their lives and sharing themselves. Strong relationships between middle school teachers and students provide reinforcement for students to rise to the challenge of contributing to a shared, mutually accountable learning community.

Summary of Results

Interactions between teachers and students result in some form of relationship. A few students indicated that they simply need teachers to give them information. Once expectations are communicated, then students can deliver a product, based on the teachers' needs. However, for increased academic risk-taking and problem solving at critical levels, teachers and students must develop mutually satisfying relationships.

Teachers determine the level of relationship established with students beginning with delivery of content, communication of expectations, elaboration during the lesson, and assisting students who need help. Beyond helping with academic tasks, teachers may

develop relationships with students outside the content area by engaging in conversation related to the students' lives. Students and teachers note that students become more engaged when teachers care about them as people and take interest in their lives. In addition to conversation, teachers may choose to invest in developing a caring, trusting, mentor relationship with students. Teachers and students communicate the need for adolescents to have an adult who will give advice and support. Students and teachers agree that trust is essential to learning, and helping is the foundation for building academic trust. When teachers allow students to know them as people and begin to release control of the classroom and facilitate learning, students become contributing members of a learning community.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

From a constructivist perspective, grounded theory methodology searches to explain a process, action, or interaction (Creswell, 2007), and the pragmatist interactionist perspective focuses on "the interest in the act itself and the relationship of thought to the act itself" (Mead, 1936, p. 404). This study combined constructivist, pragmatist, and interactionist perspectives into a hybrid paradigm to create a model of the manifestation of teacher-student relationships in middle school. This chapter summarized findings, situated findings into the historical context, related results to theoretical foundations and to the literature. Finally, limitations of the study were discussed, recommendations for future research were suggested, and conclusions were ascertained.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to gain insight into the role teacher-student relationships play in middle school settings. Professional literature is heaving with studies on the benefits of teacher-student relationships in schools (see Bergin, C. & Bergin, D., 2009; Davis, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Mizell, 2002; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007), but insufficient research has been conducted on how relationships are developed or their roles in the classroom. In addition, school reform efforts have omitted the role of teacher–student relationships in best practices.

Because of the intricate design and significant amount of data collected, this study was divided into five phases: (a) preparation and participant selection, (b) vision survey, (c) student interviews, (d) teacher interviews, and (e) classroom observations.

From the onset of data collection, student and teacher responses were rich. Very quickly, the theme of "teachers who care" resonated from narrative responses of students and teachers. While many described their dream schools based on a desire for state of the art facilities, access to technology, and viable resources, effective teachers remained an intangible request for many student and teacher participants. When asked, "What do you need your teachers to do to help you do your very best?" students responded with comments related to helping them, explaining, elaborating, and answering their questions. Students who felt like teachers were not there to help them resented their classroom experiences. Additionally, students enjoyed being in classrooms where teachers took interest in their personal lives and were willing to discuss topics outside of the content.

Teacher interview responses were focused on matters of classroom routines, procedures, and teaching style. Many teachers stated that they preferred structure and routine coupled with consistent expectations for behavior and student performance. In addition, most teachers indicated that in middle schools, it is the teacher's role to listen and advise students on issues other than the curriculum. They expressed a desire to be approachable and trusted by students, seeking to provide a safe environment for risk taking. Teachers acknowledged that the middle school years are difficult for students, and they need support and understanding from the adults around them. However, the classroom observation communicated a difference between what some teachers referenced in the interview and actual implementation in the classroom. The presence of

sarcasm at the expense of the student replaced the sense of humor noted by a few teachers. Other teachers who mentioned classroom routine and structure were observed with unruly or disorganized classroom presentations.

Through the constant comparative method of collecting and analyzing data from narrative "Dream School" responses from teachers and students, individual student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations. From the multi-dimensional sets of data, theoretical questions were generated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) until saturation was achieved and theory was constructed (Creswell, 2007) to explain the nature of teacher-student relationships in middle school. The theoretical model, Teacher Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational (see Figure 13) was developed through synthesis of data gathered from teacher and student interviews and classroom observations.

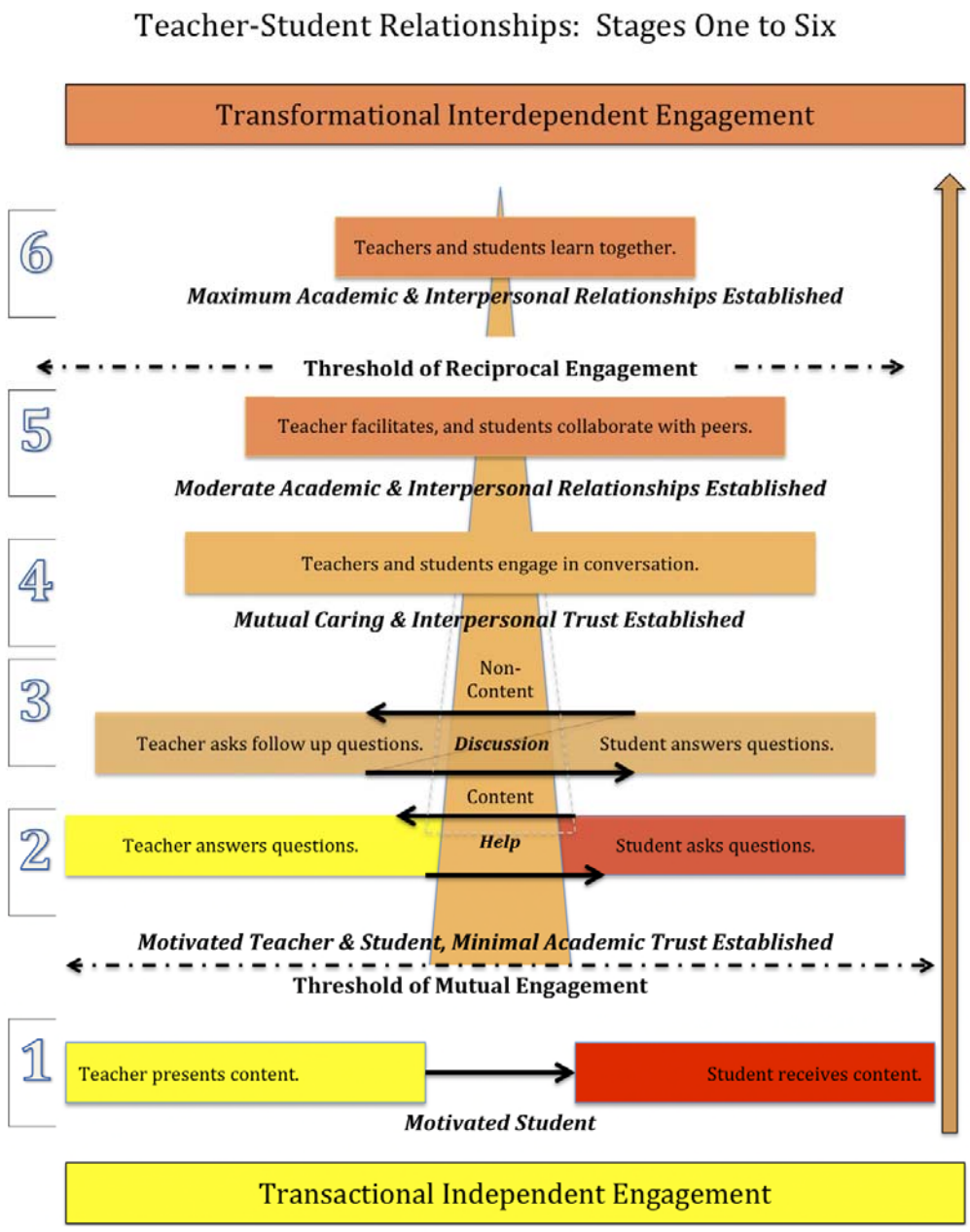

Figure 13. Teacher-Student Relationships: Transactional to Transformational

Situating Findings into Historical Context

Confucius (500 B.C.) spoke of selfless teachers who worked to help others succeed (Legge, 2002), and based on the findings of this study, a helping attitude is a

basic need for the establishment of teacher-student relationships. Throughout antiquity and into the present, teachers have been viewed as role models for their students (Broadie, 2005; Gutek, 2005; Legge, 2002; Life, 2005; Marrou, 1956; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007; Smoot, 2010), demonstrating an example of appropriate behavior and ethical living. Although this study did not explicitly address the ethical role of a teacher, students referenced their teachers as role models who relate to their problems and give advice.

In order to restore the original teacher-student relationship established at creation, which was distorted throughout antiquity, Jesus provided a faultless example of a teacher's role in the education of a student (Burbules, 2004; Jones, 1996; Life, 2005; Luxton, 2001). When Jesus developed caring relationships with his followers, he modeled appropriate practice for educators. Jesus' teaching was equitable, non-threatening, genuine, and based on unconditional love for his followers. In order to fully acquire understanding of God's will, a genuine, trusting relationship between teacher (Jesus) and student (follower) was essential. The results of this study affirm that reciprocal trust between teacher and student are crucial to a well-developed facilitative educational model.

Desiderius Erasmus (1499) focused on practical application (Gutek, 2005), and based on the findings of this study, students learn through relevant instruction and interaction with content. Through the voices of teacher and student participants, this study affirms the ideals of Johann Comenius (1659) who founded schools based on a culture of love and kindness and believed that teachers should be trained to provide practical, sensory lessons (Gutek, 2005; Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). In addition, this

study upholds the beliefs of John Locke (1690) that learners gain understanding by interacting with a sensory environment (Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). Many students referenced the need for student-centered, hands-on learning, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) believed that students learn from discovery experiences (Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007). Practices were observed in a few classrooms similar to those of Mary Wollstonecraft (1787/1789) who encouraged children to think critically, to combine ideas, and to compare things that are similar and different.

John Pestalozzi (1799) first introduced education as a mutual effort between teacher and learner (Pulliam & VanPatten, 2007) and defined the blending of the mind's moral, physical, and intellectual capacities. Teacher and student participants in this study affirm that best practices include teaching the whole child and the connectedness to adolescents' developmental needs to learning. John Pestalozzi and Maria Montessori (1912) valued individual instruction and the relationship between teacher and learner, and this study supports the need for individualized instruction and one-on-one help provided to students. Jean Piaget (1955) contributed to the understanding of child development, and throughout this study, teachers and students referenced developmental (social and emotional) needs of middle school students. Although teachers spoke of students' developmental needs, they may not have implemented best practices in their classrooms. Perhaps more relevant to this study and similar to the beliefs of his predecessors, Paulo Freire (1973) acknowledged the need to educate all children and emphasized sensory experiences. Supported by this study and demonstrated by the theoretical framework, Freire believed that positive reciprocal teacher-student relationships lead to critical thinking (Gutek, 2005).

Relating Results to Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical frameworks, designed to provide the structure for the study, may overlap with the paradigms as they are often used to guide or justify a particular methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and are less definitive than in quantitative research. As acknowledged in Chapter 2, grounded theory was chosen for this study because of a current absence in theory on the phenomenon of middle school teacher-student relationships. The study was guided by data collected from the participants, and the core phenomenon of teacher-student relationships, which led to lengthy periods of comparison until theoretical saturation was achieved.

While there were no existing theories directly explaining how teacher-student relationships manifest, several educational traditions contributed to my definition of education as a social practice and provided a theoretical foundation for this study. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986 & Vygotsky, 1988), Discovery Learning Theory (Bruner, 1996), Motivational Theory (Maslow, 1999 & Rogers, 1980), and Constructivism (Bruner, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978; Rogers, 1980; Bandura, 1986; Maslow, 1987) provide a solid theoretical framework that is affirmed by the study of teacher-student relationships in middle schools. Throughout this study, teacher and student participants confirmed the emotional (need for belonging) and social (need for interaction) connections to learning. Constructivism, having evolved from humanism and SCT, supports the ideal that learners are whole people and affirms the interconnectedness of students' minds, emotions, social, and cultural needs (McCombs, 2003). The results of this study acknowledged adolescence as a social construction and verified that learning cannot be separated from its social setting (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008).

Social Cognitive Theory

Lev Vygotsky (1988) and Albert Bandura (1986) founded educational principals of social cognitive theory (SCT) indicating that learning is socially manifested, and learning is revealed to students through social experiences before understanding is internalized (Arievitch & Hansen, 2005; Levykh, 2008; Bandura, 2001; Walters, 2008). The results of this study support the tenets of SCT but include the teacher as an essential member and participant within the social learning environment. Teachers become role models and facilitators, providing an essential relational support to students and fostering the teaching and learning experience. As proposed by Bandura (2001) and Vygotsky (1988), the interview responses from teacher and student participants support the idea that students and teachers benefit from an interdependent relationship, built on interpersonal and academic trust.

Discovery Learning Theory

Influenced by the ideas of Vygotsky (1988), Jerome Bruner (1977) maintained that environment and experience stimulated cognitive growth. Moreover, Bruner (1977) affirmed that teachers should be intuitive and sensitive to the reasons why students arrive at incorrect answers and should be able to provide simultaneous approval and correction. This study's findings reinforce Bruner's (1977) claim that interactive, non-threatening classrooms support student learning. Likewise, teachers who provide a balance of positive reinforcement and constructive criticism develop stronger relationships with students and are able to encourage them to take academic risks. In this study, sarcasm was an apparent source of humor from the teachers' perspectives, but students' found sarcasm as a way of making fun of students who make mistakes. In this study, strong

teacher-student relationships offered a framework for discovery learning where teachers provided a safety net for students as they advance through challenging learning experiences in order to solve problems.

Motivational Theory

Relational humanism was founded on the ideal that genuine relationships are fundamental to helping counseling patients in therapy and perceived the "self" as socially designed (Hansen, 2007). Learner-centered instruction, grounded in the work of Maslow (1987) and Rogers (1980), recognized that relationships between teacher and learner in a mutually supportive environment support students' affective and cognitive needs (Hansen, 2007; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Walters, 2008). The results of this study demonstrated that teacher-student relationships not only enhanced the basic teaching-learning process, but also assisted with the development of students' motivation towards school and critical thinking efforts. In this study, the affective domain clearly influenced the cognitive domain, particularly with at-risk students. Similar to the person-centered approach in Rogers' (1980) therapy methods, the interpersonal, experiential, interactive approach to student-centered teaching and learning provided a safe, supportive environment for middle school students to develop social and intellectual confidence.

Constructivism

The work of Bruner (1977), Vygotsky (1978), Rogers (1980), Bandura (1986) and Maslow (1987) affected constructivism, where the learner is viewed as a constructor of his or her own learning, founded on inquiry based experiences within the social setting. This study acknowledged adolescence as a social construction and embraced constructivist ideals, with origins in humanism and SCT because learning could not be

separated from the social setting. Comparatively, McCombs (2003) defined a research-validated, learner-centered principle where students are viewed as individuals with "minds, emotions, and personal developmental, social, cultural, and individual differences" (p. 94). This study affirmed that teacher-student relationships develop trust between teachers and individual students and meet basic needs to establish optimum learning potential.

Relating Results to the Literature

As summarized by Ysseldyke and Tardew (2007), John Carroll (1963) noted that effective instruction "is a function of the ratio of the time they spend learning to the amount of time they need to learn a skill" (p. 3). Throughout this study, students and teacher participants voiced that teachers should instruct class based on the needs of students. Students mentioned on several occasions the need to have more time to work on a skill in order to learn it. Further, students also indicated that they prefer to learn by practicing through interactive, hands-on experiences.

Emergence of Middle Schools

In the 1960s junior high schools transitioned into middle schools based on the idea that young adolescents should be placed in schools where mentor relationships between teachers and students are established within small learning communities. As environments intended to foster transitions, middle schools were designed to implement flexible, interactive, interdisciplinary curriculum through the concept of teaming (Armstrong, 2006; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Rourke, 2006; Wentzel, 1997). In 1973, The National Middle School Association (NMSA) was established and in 1982, the NMSA published a position statement entitled, *This We*

Believe, followed by *Breaking Ranks in the Middle,* published by the NASSP in 2006. Both texts articulated the need for middle schools to represent academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and socially equitability (Rourke, 2006). Results from this study indicated that KMS was a typical middle school, housing students in suites that serve as small learning communities. Related arts classes (band, art, music, computer applications, industrial arts, home economics, etc.) were flexible and rotated several times per year to provide students with a variety of experiences in the unified arts. The results from this study support literature stating that middle school students need classroom environments with opportunities to be social, active, trusted, and unconditionally loved (Cornelius-White, 2007; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Rourke, 2006) with caring adults who balance student autonomy and teacher control (Armstrong, 2006; Klem & Connell, 2004; Strahan & Layell, 2009). At KMS, the opportunities for social interaction, freedom to question, and available student choice were dependent on each teacher's needs and styles rather than those of the students.

Classes at KMS varied from rigid and lecture driven to completely unstructured and unruly. The homeroom session, scheduled at the beginning of everyday, provided teachers and students time to develop relationships, and many teachers took advantage of this time to get to know their students. Other teachers provided free time for students to talk and do homework. Depending on the teacher, homeroom period may not have served the purpose for establishing mentoring relationships between teachers and students. Additionally, the data from student interviews and observations confirms that the mentor connection was not consistently established between teachers and learners. The general absence of role models, lack of personal adult relationships, emotionally flat

learning experiences, short of respect for student opinion, and focus on academic learning rather than social and emotional development are known as common fundamental errors made by non-middle schools (Armstrong, 2006; Curwin, 2008; Erwin, 2004; Jackson & Davis, 2004; Rourke, 2006). Findings from this study indicate that inconsistencies in flexibility, misuse of sarcasm, a solely academic (test driven) focus, and lack of social and emotional support in some classes create a confusing, dichotomous learning culture where students must adjust to teacher personalities and expectations multiple times per day.

Triggering American Education Reform

Beginning with the flight of Sputnik to the moon in 1957, America's educational system has fought to regain competitive global credibility. Since 1965, the United States has been involved in reforming American schools. Educational reform has focused on rigorous curriculum as a mode to global preparedness. In 2008, Bill Daggett and the International Center for Leadership in Education created a framework of essential components to high quality instruction. Rigor, relevance, and relationships provided the context for 21st Century basic skills. Although students in this study mentioned participating in honors courses and making good grades, there was no obvious rigor in the classroom. Students referenced teachers moving quickly through the curriculum, but they did not speak of actual activities that posed a challenge. In most cases, honors classes represented more work rather than added challenge. During interviews, teachers referenced honors classes from the level of student rather than the level of rigor in the curriculum. I observed few lessons that incorporated critical thinking or problem solving skills, and teachers failed to mention those skills during interviews. Data indicated that a

majority of teachers practiced rote, question-answer activities in preparation for the state exam.

To further advocate for equity in education and increase accountability for teachers and learners, No Child Left Behind (2001) emphasized the value of inclusive practices placing students with special needs in the least restrictive environment. Allowing students with special needs to attend classes in the general education setting exposed them to greater levels of accountability and challenging curriculum amongst their peers. Response to Intervention (RTI) applications, generated by the revision if IDEA (2004), attempted to provide tiered instructional interventions for struggling learners primarily in the general education classroom.

While most of the classes at KMS were inclusive, the segregating of students by categorizing some classes as "honors" continued to propagate the learning gap. Because those who were honors were tracked together throughout their classes, non-honors students followed a lower performing cohort of core classes. Teachers indicated no curricular differences from honors to non-honors classes, but they referenced the types of students in each category. During observations and student interviews, honors classes did not appear to be more rigorous, but instead there tended to be less instruction and more work for students. In this school, the term honors class implied that the teacher does less teaching, and the students do more learning independently from the text. Observations and student responses supported the idea that instead of increasing the quality of work in honors classes, the quantity of student work was increased.

At KMS, students with deficits in reading were channeled into a remedial reading program where students received leveled instruction, but this class was a programmatic

"dumping ground" where assigned teachers felt punished. Teachers simply guided students through comprehension packets, and once the packet was complete, they moved on to the next packet. Therefore, some of the data collected in this study contradicts the intentions of IDEA (2004) and RTI efforts to sustain as many students in the general classroom as possible. Data collected from teacher and student interviews and observations indicated that in some cases, students with differing abilities were segregated from one another. For example, students with reading difficulties were separated from their peers into smaller groups and provided inadequate instruction, and students included in the classroom were often ignored and seated in the rear of the classroom while the rest of the class moves on.

Contemporary Models for Best Practice

The Model Schools Program and the International Center for Leadership in Education advised teachers to implement strategies "to enhance learning through rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction based on sound relationships and active student engagement" (Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008, p. 1), but institutions failed to define sound relationships in their publications. This study classified and described relationships as referenced by the International Center for Leadership in Education, along with other models, tended to reference relationships but avoided defining them (Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Marzano, 2005; Rigor, 2008; Zemelman et al., 2005). While high levels of rigor and relevance were specifically examined in this study, I have acknowledged the need for rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction. However, data from this study strongly suggest that relationships are essential to higher order learning and cannot be omitted from any school reform framework (see Figure 2).

In addition, this study advanced beyond affirming the need for relationships in classrooms and described a process by which relationships between teachers and students are manifested. While critical challenge and understanding rise with increase in rigor and relevance, the level of trust established by relationships stabilizes the learning environment for all types of learners, providing fertile ground for risk taking, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) defined best practices as an interconnected model of student-centered, cognitive, and social interactions (see Figure 1). Within the social domain, lie democratic and collaborative practices. This study upholds that teacher-student relationships contribute to best practices because democracy and collaboration cannot exist without trusting relationships between teachers and students. Since the affective domain overlaps with cognitive and student centered, all aspects of best practice are impacted by the level of relationship between teachers and students. Student-centered instruction contains experiential, holistic, authentic, and challenging instruction, but without academic and interpersonal trust, teachers may not allow students to actively participate or drive instruction. Furthermore, the cognitive domain, which includes expressive, reflective, constructivist, and developmental activities, teachers must have established relationships with students in order to provide lessons based on individual aptitudes and needs. Based on the results of this study, teachers who have not established trusting interpersonal and academic relationships with students are unable to fully apply the best practice framework.

The Accelerated Schools Project (1986-present) focuses on building an interactive learning community, envisioning students as equal stakeholders. Powerful learning

(Hopfenberg et al., 1993), based on a constructivist teaching model, must include authentic, interactive, learner-centered, inclusive, and continuous instruction. While teachers and students referenced individual components of powerful learning, the combination of all components was rare. From data gathered during student interviews, teacher interviews, and through informal observations, only two classrooms (Bruce and Michaels) demonstrated key elements of powerful learning.

Adolescent Development

Research on adolescent development reveals that adolescents in middle schools differ greatly from one another (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006), and the impact of hormones on the brain causes emotional turmoil (Jansen, 1998; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Siegel, 1999). Students' developmental levels varied within the study, and less mature students expressed a desire for recess or a break, while more mature students focused on their needs for teachers to elaborate on content and demonstrate an interest in their students as people. Although individual needs vary from one student to the other, the need for guidance and assistance from teachers was one common need expressed through student and teacher interviews. Data from the study shows that students and teachers agreed on the role of teachers helping and providing guidance to students. In addition, teacher-student engagement plays a valuable role in the communication process of teaching and learning, as master teachers demonstrate a proficiency in communication and pedagogy of authentic engagement (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Kunjufu, 2005; Monroe, C., 2006; Payne, 1996; Ryan, 2006; Woolley et al., 2009; Yeo et al., 2008).

Several studies reflect on the bearing of teacher-student relationships on student life satisfaction, self-efficacy, social competence, and general life satisfaction (Bergin, C.

& Bergin, D., 2009; Danielson, 2009; Levykh, 2008; Suldo et al., 2009) and claim that students are influenced by culture and desire meaningful relationships with adults (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; San Antonio, 2006; Vygotsky, 1988; Walters, 2008). Further, studies by Burris and Garrity (2008) demonstrated that teacher engagement led to student engagement and established a step towards creating a richer pupil-teacher relationship. In addition, research conducted by R. Caine and G. Caine (1997) and writing by Jensen (1998) asserted that emotions are connected to cognitive functioning. Further, neuropsychological research suggests that relationships with adults are essential for student brain development and critical measures of success in schools (Erwin, 2004; Daggett & Nussbaum, 2007; Siegel, 1999). Interviews with students clearly indicated the need for belonging and desire for supportive, engaging relationships with teachers. Students who acquired a sense of belonging looked forward to class, regardless of the content. Research from multiple sources suggests that teacher support, particularly with minority populations, impacts student engagement (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Collins, 2005; Davis, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004; Suldo et al., 2009; Umana-Taylor, 2009; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005; Woolley et al., 2009). Based on interview and observation data, teachers who provided clear structure and support to their students yielded higher quality time on task and fewer discipline problems. Consequently, the teacher-student relationship theoretical framework indicates that unmotivated or at-risk students must have established interpersonal relationships with teachers in order to feel secure taking academic risks.

Wentzel (1997) deduced that the transition from elementary to middle school often results in mistrust between teachers and students. Further, research implies that

students' overall success in school impacts their life satisfaction (Curwin et al., 2008; Danielson, 2009; Erwin, 2004) and ability to establish lifelong skills for success (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Matsumura, et al., 2008; Suldo et al., 2009). Similar to the beliefs and practices of Freire (1973), Montessori (1912), and Rogers (1969), Nakkula and Toshalis (2008) revealed that relational teaching facilitates learning through reciprocal caring and support of others. Although classroom relationships including reciprocal teaching and learning were not observed, in this study student interview data referenced the intensity of learning and increase in student commitment level when teachers allowed students participate in planning an activity, choose a lesson, or become the teacher.

Effective Schools

Effective schools provide the framework for best practices (Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2006), and school administrators are responsible for establishing a culture of support for teachers on behalf of students' best interests (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Hopfenberg et al., 1993). Results from teacher and student interviews indicated that the KMS administration provided adequate support to teachers and students. Although a few teachers commented on differences in expectations between novice and veteran teachers, in general, they were satisfied with the administrative support of the principals. While some teachers mentioned the need for larger classrooms, smaller class sizes, and more technology, basic needs of teachers and students were met.

Effective Teachers

Researchers claim that effective teachers plan, instruct, and assess students based on students' developmental needs (Bowman, 2004; Jackson & Davis; Tomlinson, 2001); however, results indicated that classroom instruction at KMS did not always follow a

developmental model. Results from interviews and observations indicated that three teachers (Bruce, Michaels, and Gordon) considered student needs for planning instruction and assessment. Most other teachers planned based on their own personal style of teaching and evaluation. Findings in this study verified research and showed that teacher self-esteem played an important role in the progression of teacher-student relationships and level of teacher to student engagement. In addition, teachers who were able to connect with students beyond the content level had developed a transparent identity and invited students into relationships (Bowman, 2004; Cushman & Rogers; Curwin et al., 2008; Matsumura et al., 2008; Smoot, 2010; Towne, 2009). Results from student interviews, teacher interviews and classroom observations confirm research maintaining that effectual teachers engage learners through instruction and create a warm, positive classroom climate (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Boynton, M & Boynton, C., 2005; Danielson, 2005; Suldo, 2009).

Interpersonal Relationships

Pianta and Walsh (1996) argued that school failure is not due to a lack of rigor, but instead is caused by a relationship problem between teachers and students. This study confirms that unsuccessful students lack relationships with their teachers. However, this study also showed that in some cases, high achieving students could be successful without an interpersonal relationship with the teacher. These students are able to base academic trust on the exchange of information and are less concerned with risk-taking or failure. Multiple studies conducted by researchers in on the impact of trust on learning indicate that students may be more inclined to learn from someone they know and trust (Bergin, C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Curwin et al., 2008; Davis,

2003; den Brook & Levy, 2006; Smoot, 2010). This study affirmed that students who have developed trusting relationships with teachers are more willing to work hard and participate in challenging activities. In addition, Cornelius-White (2007) completed a meta-analysis of studies on classroom climate and indicated that reciprocal trust and "certain attitudinal qualities" within the teacher-student relationship "yield significant learnings" (p. 114), and positive teacher behaviors such as "nondirectivity, empathy, warmth, and encouraging thinking and learning"(p. 134) ranked above average in correlation over other educational innovations. Results from this study endorsed Cornelius-White's (2007) statements and claimed that trusting teacher-student relationships serve as a catalyst for learning, particularly for students from at-risk backgrounds.

External Influences

Standardized testing has become a bitter reality in middle school classrooms. From the initiation of the Education Reform Act (1965), followed by the NCLB (2001) and revisions in IDEA (2004) to the most recent implementation of the American Competitiveness Initiative (2006), teachers have carried the burden of accountability for student performance. Although reform efforts communicate best practices, constructivist teaching and learning are not easily measured by a standardized assessment. While classrooms are becoming more inclusive, providing interventions within the general education setting, expectations for individual student performance have increased, sending a mixed message to educators (Buffam et al., 2009; Rourke, 2006; Zhao, 2009). Data from teacher interviews and observations indicated that teachers are under duress in relation to student performance on the state assessment. In addition, students affirmed

that teachers were worried about the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) and that teachers spent less time teaching and more time focusing on the test. Through teacher and student interviews and classroom observations, data from this study clearly affirms the stress induced by AYP measures.

The focus on standardized testing continues to cause stress in the middle school classroom. Teachers are unable to exercise creativity due to the time constraints in preparation for TCAP tests. Students are often on the receiving end of teacher stress in the form of sarcastic comments, lack of patience, less than thorough coverage of content, and a constant rush to complete the lesson and move on to the next. With this school system moving to a new tenure model and strategic compensation plan, the stress is not likely to decrease any time soon.

Furthermore, students from at-risk environments arrive to school with a disadvantage in relation to other students, bringing a different set of skills, resources and experiences to the classroom (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Results from this study support research claiming that students from low socioeconomic or minority families arrive to class with more basic developmental needs than those from affluent households. According to experts on at-risk student needs, humanistic principles, high expectations, and tough but loving relationships are essential to student success and understanding and sympathy must be coupled with high expectations (Collins, 2005; Monroe, L., 1997; Payne, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005). The outcome of this study affirms that middle school students need a balance of nurturing and stringency in the classroom. At KMS, reluctant learners from at-risk environments were

often seated in the back of the classroom, disengaged from the lesson, and emotionally segregated from their peers.

Summary of Relating Results to Literature

The literature review, accompanied by this study of a group of 11 teachers and 30 students, combine a basis of professional literature and research and unique insight regarding teacher-student relationships in middle school. The study denoted that trust is established when teachers are willing to engage students in conversations that are non-content related, revealing themselves interpersonally. Accordingly, teachers who communicate an attitude of caring about students as people develop trusting relationships with students. Those same types of teachers tend to allow students to become part of the learning community and take ownership of their learning. Based on the findings of this study and the literature review, students may be more inclined to learn from someone they know and trust (see Bergin C., & Bergin, D., 2009; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Curwin et al., 2008; Davis, 2003; E Science, 2008; Smoot, 2010).

Nonetheless, comprehensive school reform models tend to send teachers mixed messages. While focus on rigor and challenging curriculum that will ensure each child's success, students with differing abilities are placed in classrooms with the expectation that they will all become proficient (NCLB, 2001). Daggett and Nussbaum (2008) discuss the implementation of rigorous and relevant instruction, fostered by positive relationships, but they fail to define the relationships mentioned in their reform model. An internationally known strategy for establishing best practices for 21st century learning, the Rigor Relevance Framework, eliminates relationships completely form the model (see Figure 2). Based on Tomlinson (2005) and validated by this study, less motivated or

under achieving students were more receptive to teachers who were motivated, caring, and are willing to help students with personal and academic concerns. Students are more willing to discuss their own experiences with familiar teachers who have made connections with them (Streibe, 2008), and den Brok and Levy (2006) noted a connection between students' perceptions of teachers' interpersonal behaviors and student achievement. In addition, teacher-student relationships established on genuine care, concern and trust have long-term impact on students' intellectual development through adolescence (Davis, 2003; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008; Wentzel, 1997).

Likewise, the allusion brought forth by this study and supported by the literature is the desperation teachers feel about teacher accountability and standardized testing. Not only has testing increased performance anxiety in students and teachers, in some classrooms, it has shut down the teaching learning process for a period of weeks in order to review for the test. As teacher accountability becomes measured by student performance, a tremendous amount of stress has been placed on teachers who are forced to concentrate on the state assessment instead of quality instruction and student development.

Another reflection of the study determined that high achieving students can find success within a transactional, superficial teacher-student relationship, but their personal commitment to learning is diminished without an established interpersonal relationship with their teachers. On the other hand, less motivated students have difficulty relating to the content in a classroom where the teacher simply delivers the content, and students are expected to receive it. Based on research, students placed into the mainstream or inclusive classrooms have a greater chance of success when ongoing dialogue between

teachers and students is present (Tomlinson & Doubet, 2005; Tomlinson, 2001; Moore, 2008). A most basic need of all students is to receive assistance from the teacher when help is needed. Refusing to help a student or to tell him to "look in the book" gradually deteriorates a reluctant student's hope for learning. Frequent, informal interaction establishes a safe environment for risk taking and develops a sense of belonging (Boynton, M., & Boynton, C., 2005; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Curwin et al., 2008; Marzano, 2003; Price, 2008).

Although research based best practices advocates for student-centered, cognitive, social components to learning (Zemelman et al., 2005), the element of teacher-student interpersonal interaction is largely absent. Contemporary best practices have identified the social student-to-student social needs in student-centered classrooms (Davis, 2003; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Marzano, 2005; McCombs, 2003, Zemelman et al., 2005), but few have considered the basic need of student-teacher interaction in educational settings. Nonetheless, brain and adolescent development research indicates that relationships with adults are essential for student brain development, future self-regulation, development of identity, and overall success (Caine, R., & Caine, G., 1997; Daggett & Nussbaum, 2008; Erikson, 1993; Erwin, 2004; Jensen, 1998; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosna, 2006; Siegel, 1999).

The results of this study call out to teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service, to consider students' socio-emotional and relational needs as integral parts of cognitive development. Teachers must be able to transfer from knowing how to help students to actually taking action towards helping students develop into healthy, well-adjusted adults.

Implications and Recommendations

While findings from this study support a theoretical basis for social learning, teachers tend to take back control of their classrooms and direct instruction as a response to the pressures of standardized testing and AYP. Several implications were devised from this study and provide evidence that teacher-student relationships may have lasting impact on student success. Although teachers communicated through the interviews that adolescents need supportive teachers, behaviors in the classroom did not indicate a clear representation of the caring, supportive mentor relationships between teachers and their students. Consequently, teachers understand that middle school students need supportive teachers who are willing to listen and meet their individual needs, but outside influences do not always allow teachers and students to develop worthwhile, trusting relationships. As a result, the rush of covering all the material in order to prepare for the state exam has created classrooms of insecurity, confusion, and tension.

Teacher education programs prepare secondary teachers for content specific instruction, and elementary programs cater to teachers on a basic, broad, developmental level. Teachers trained in middle grades education primarily focus on one or two content areas but receive minimal training on adolescent development. As a rule, teacher education programs must address developmental needs of adolescents. Students enter adolescence as early as age 11 and continue to develop through high school. Adolescence impacts students from grade 5 through 12, which comprises the majority of our student population in K-12 schools.

Not only should teachers be trained in the area of relationship development with their parents and school community, teachers must work to build social skills that

develop trusting relationships and interpersonal bonding. Once the human connection is addressed, teachers will find that trust is established, and students will become more motivated to work. If teachers invest in relationships on the front end, then less time is needed to address issues of conflict and lack of motivation. Teachers must leave pre-service programs with an understanding of the social nature of the classroom and the necessary interaction in order to reach all children. Moreover, in-service training must continue using best practices frameworks, integrating the developmental needs of adolescents.

Authors of research based instructional practice must consider the developmental, whole-child needs of learners and tie-in teacher-student interactions into the frameworks. The human condition is more difficult to understand than rote statistics, but education is a people process where human beings interact in a shared environment. Researchers must begin considering the human element factor in teaching and learning in order to accurately measure student performance across content areas over the long term. By the same token, achievement must be defined by the ability to think critically and apply knowledge to solve real-world problems rather than answering multiple-choice questions on an exam.

Moreover, school administrators must value the role of teacher-student relationships and set expectations to support best practices based on the developmental needs of students. Administrators must lead by example and foster relationships with teachers in their own mega-classrooms to provide a living example for their faculty and students. While relationships are a central focus in optimal child development, it must be noted that structure, routine, high expectations, and accountability must be integrated into

a framework that balances adult guidance and student autonomy. Administrators must consider teachers as their students and schools as their classrooms in order to develop an appropriate model where increasing interpersonal trust leads to academic risk taking. Self-studies and professional learning communities can be geared towards looking at student data, and teachers can address developmental and cultural needs of students in reference to performance. Correspondingly, administrator visibility inside and outside the classroom creates an environment of trust at school and communicates caring to students and staff.

Additionally, administrator preparation programs must also focus on teacher developmental needs in order to provide a context for training teachers. In any case, developmental needs can be addressed at the school and individual teacher level by empowering teacher leaders to begin sharing their best practices, utilizing students in focus groups to continuously measure the quality of relationships in schools, and including students and teachers in strategic planning. Optimal school cultures promote high academic performance and should be included in the school's strategic plan.

Further, teachers are custodians of the living curriculum, and the state objectives and indicators can be molded into interactive lessons that engage students in worthwhile discussions and interactions. Becoming part of the learning community will enable teachers to live the curriculum and create an understanding of the learner's perspective. Relinquishing complete control of the classroom demonstrates teacher's trust for his students, and providing proper structure, expectations, and rubrics guide the work of the class. The essential element to facilitating learning is teacher engagement. Once teachers become disengaged, students reflect the behavior.

Teachers can apply current events and real-world situations in order to make curriculum relevant and reachable for students, but teachers must begin to think from a relational perspective, such as, "How can I communicate this information in relation to the students' wants, needs desires, and daily lives?" rather than simply transmitting factual content. On a daily basis, teachers must focus on passionately sharing information among a caring group of learners, rather than simply directing instruction mechanically. Developing a common bond will create camaraderie in classrooms and reduce sarcasm and blame, and when teachers do make mistakes, the learning community is accepting and forgiving of one another. With a vision for each learner to reach his optimum potential as a contributor of a learning community, the focus remains on the individual learner and less on the pressure of testing or content completion.

Teacher-student relationships impact learning and student success. Hence, they are one component that combines with other elements that encompass best practices. The purpose of this study was not to imply that teacher-student relationships are the sole source of student success, but to bring an awareness that teacher-student relationships are essential to student success and do contribute to student success. Researchers, teacher education programs, school systems, administrators, and teachers must embrace the idea that teaching and learning is a social process between teachers and students. All things considered, educators must consider each student as a needed member of the learning community who is valued, trusted, and competent.

Limitations

As mentioned in Chapter 3, studies involving human interaction tend to be complicated and unpredictable, and because the researcher is the translator of each event,

the study and communication of the process is complex (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The primary areas of limitation for this study reside in the design of the study, particularly during the selection of participants.

As researcher for this study and principal of a neighboring school, responses could have been impacted by my position. In an effort to reduce these limitations, I entered the building as a visitor, removed my name badge, wore casual clothing, and avoided introducing myself as a principal. Since many of the participants live and work in the same community as I do, it is possible that natural behaviors may not always be exhibited in my presence. To ensure objectivity, equitability, and respect for privacy, participants were assured at the time of consent and during the interview that the study does not reflect on performance, is completely confidential, and names are kept anonymous.

The population at KMS is ethnically homogenous with minority representation of only 5% African-American, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. Related literature on the topic of teacher-student relationships indicates that relationships are key to the success of students from at-risk environments, minorities, and low socioeconomic status (see Collins, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005; Payne, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005); therefore, purposeful samples of minority populations were taken in order to ensure equitable representation in the study. Since all faculty members at KMS at the time of the study were Caucasian, all teacher participants were Caucasian. Similar to the female to male ratio at KMS, from the sample of 11 teachers, only one male teacher participated in this study. In addition, the education level of teachers was not provided and could have contributed to understanding of teachers' perspectives.

Design

In reviewing the stages of this study, to better communicate the process to students, I would have visited each homeroom and explained the purpose of the vision prompt and the process of the study. Perhaps I would have had better response from the eighth and sixth grade groups if I had distributed the letters and consent forms myself. In addition, I would have considered the winter season in greater detail to avoid snow delays during the process of data collection. When fewer responses of the vision response were received, the study immediately became limited because the theoretical sample was taken from a smaller population. Additionally, this study was designed to observe teachers during one specific class period and could have provided more detailed, comprehensive data if I had observed teachers throughout their day with different students and content areas.

Sample

With limited teacher involvement, my theoretical sample of teachers was only one person less than the original group who gave consent. Therefore, it was not a true theoretical sample, but more of a convenience sample. Even though more emphasis was purposely placed on the student sampling to get a broad picture of student perspectives, I was unable to filter through teacher responses for indicators of relationships. Although I scheduled appointments with academic teams during planning periods, several teachers did not attend. This process could have been improved if I had rescheduled with those who had not attended or asked the principal to attend the meetings. In addition, an effort to ensure gender balance in the teacher sample may have improved the richness of the study.

Credibility, Dependability and Transferability

As the principal of a neighboring high school and researcher for the study, I carefully examined data and utilized credibility checks consistently. Triangulation of data was employed to ensure accurate representations of participants' perspectives, and credibility checks were carefully placed. A complete audit trail provided accurate data throughout the process that can be confirmed as trustworthy. Activity log entries specifying the exact time and event involving the study have been included from the onset through the conclusion of the study. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder, immediately transferred to the transcriptionist, and transcripts were returned to me approximately two days later. Transcribed notes were from interviews provided to the participants to verify understanding of content and true intent from their perspective. Participants edited and/or signed photocopies of the transcriptions to verify accuracy. Time stamped two column notes, separating the researcher's factual notations and running thoughts were utilized for all in-person observations. Field notes, or reflections of observations and interviews were maintained through memoing. Quasi-statistics were used to demonstrate characteristics and components of data received.

As is the nature of qualitative research, the findings from this study may not be easily be generalized to other middle school settings with different demographics in different contexts. The population studied was housed at one school and was ethnically homogenous. Most families in Kraft are Caucasian, and the minorities represented at KMS are 5% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Asian; however, the represented minorities total about 9% of the overall population. Purposeful samples of minority populations were taken in order to ensure equitable representation in the study. Students'

life situations vary as is the nature of qualitative research based on other demographics, but racially, there is very little diversity.

Recommendations for Future Research

The potential for future studies relating to teacher-student relationships in classrooms may be expanded beyond a study of middle school to any grade level preschool through higher education. The possibilities for continuing study on teacher-student relationships are virtually limitless. The study introduces prospective studies such as specific populations of students or teachers within the school, across the school district, or other several other schools in various locations. Teacher-student relationships in private, public, and homeschool settings could be studied or compared to highlight differences or similarities in approaches to teaching and learning. This study took place in a suburb of East Tennessee and could be replicated in other regions or other countries. The study could be conducted with a broad sample of participants or focus on females, low-income, students from at-risk environments, gifted students or other specific demographic groups. The study could be housed in an urban or rural school, or could be set up to compare schools from different settings. Further, this study could be expanded to examine the role and development of administrator-teacher relationships.

In future studies, one might consider focusing on fewer teachers, visiting throughout the course of the day and observing and interviewing students from different class periods and content areas. Certainly, quantitative studies may confirm hypotheses and measure the academic impact of teacher-student relationships.

The instructional design established by the Christian faith in relation to Old Testament and New Testament philosophies could be researched based on the role of

relationships in the Bible. The impact of biblical teaching methods on classroom instruction would expose the value of Christian teaching methods and bring spiritual insight into secular classrooms. Jesus' teaching model could be studied and applied to modern teaching strategies or compared to other historical educators. The original educational model, demonstrated by God and Adam (see Genesis 2:16) could be contrasted with the teacher-student relationship throughout antiquity in Greece and in Hellenistic times. Further, the role of teacher and learner as modeled by Jesus, and after Christianity was established, could pose a fascinating topic of study in comparison to educational models in antiquity and contemporary education.

This study contrasts other studies that have mentioned teacher-student relationships as an aside topic or accessory to a larger, greater study. Hopefully, this study will generate new interest in teacher-student relationships. It verifies that education is a person-to-person relational process where the classroom teacher must address affective and cognitive needs.

Conclusion

This study investigated the progression of teacher-student relationships in middle school classrooms. A review of educational literature, tracing historical educational tradition from pre-500 B.C. through the 21st century was intended to provide a broad support and stable surroundings for this study. The interpersonal process which teacher-student manifests relationships was identified through teacher and student perspectives.

Through the process of constant comparison (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009) and following grounded theory recommendations from Creswell (2007), Corbin and Strauss (2008), and Glaser and

Strauss (2009), the amalgamation of data from this study exposed a valuable interpersonal process impacting the daily routines of teachers and the long-term successes of students that had otherwise been unnoticed in professional research, classroom methods and strategies, and school reform. This study captured the voice of teachers and students and examined teacher-student relationships from their respective points of view. Additionally, this study carefully considered teacher and student behavior in conjunction with their perspectives.

As a result, theory was generated from the participants' data, and teacher student relationships and the stages of development were defined. Furthermore, this research may reveal opportunities to create significantly more supportive, burgeoning learning environments and flourishing school cultures. Equally as significant, this study could lead future research in the documented direction of teacher-student relationships and their impact on teaching and learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission to Use Graphic from International Center for Leadership in Education

From: Light, Debra [debbiel@leadered.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2010 9:34 AM
To: Tracy Sands
Cc: Icle Info
Subject: RE: Permission to use graphic from website.

Hi Tracy,

Thank you for contacting the International Center. I have attached our Rigor/Relevance Framework graphic for you to use in your dissertation. Let me know if you need anything else. Best of luck to you!

Debra Light
International Center for Leadership in Education

-----Original Message-----
From: Tracy Sands [**mailto:tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us**]
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 3:09 PM
To: Icle Info
Cc: tdsands@liberty.edu
Subject: Permission to use graphic from website.
Importance: High

Hello,

I am currently working on my dissertation through Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. As a school administrator, I have worked with the Rigor-Relevance Framework in Texas and in North Carolina. I would like to use the graphic from the website in my dissertation:www.leadered.com

Please advise as to the process of requesting permission to use.

Thanks very much for your time.

"To laugh often and much... To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children... To leave the world a better place... To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Appendix B: Permission to Use Graphic from Elementary School Journal

Greta Wahlers [gwahlers@press.uchicago.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2010 11:46 AM
To: Tracy Sands

RE: [ContactUs - Permissions] Permission to use portion of article

Dear Tracy,

Thank you for your permission request. Please consider this email the University of Chicago Press's official permission to republish the material you requested below gratis in your dissertation, provided that you give proper credit to the journal. Please let me know if you have any further questions. Good luck on your publication.

Best wishes,
Greta
Greta Bennion
Journals permissions
The University of Chicago Press
P (773) 834-7201
F (773) 834-3480
-----Original Message-----
From: Tracy Sands [mailto:tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us]
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 8:13 PM
To: Permissions
Subject: [ContactUs - Permissions] Permission to use portion of article
User feedback
System information:
User: not logged in
Institution(s):
Date/Time: Wed Feb 10 18:12:46 PST 2010
Previous page: http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/esj/current?cookieSet=1
Browser/OS: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 8.0; Windows NT 6.0; WOW64; Trident/4.0; FunWebProducts; GTB6.4; SLCC1; .NET CLR 2.0.50727; Media Center PC 5.0; .NET CLR 3.5.30729; .NET CLR 3.0.30618)
IP address: 024.218.178.199
User-entered information:
Contact name: Tracy Sands
E-mail address: tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us
Category: Permissions
Subject: Permission to use portion of article
Feedback: Dr. Matsumura has given me permission to use part of her article from Elementary School Journal in my dissertation. However, she believes final permission lies with the copyright holder, which is Elementary School Journal. Please advise to the process of requesting permission. See details below.

The article requested:
Matsumura, L. C., Slater, S. C., & Crosson, A. (2008). Classroom climate, rigorous instruction and curriculum, and students' interactions in urban middle schools. The Elementary School Journal, 108(4), 293-312. Retrieved from http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu

The figure I would like to use includes information on "The Context of the Teacher" from this article. I'm conducting a grounded theory study on relationships between middle school teachers and students. This article has been very helpful, and I believe the figure will be very helpful to my study.

Please advise me as to the protocol for gaining permission.
Thanks so much for your time,
Tracy Sands

Appendix C: Permission to Use Graphic from School Psychology Review

From: Din, Jia [jdin@apa.org]
Sent: Thursday, March 25, 2010 2:55 PM
To: Sands, Tracy Davis
Cc: Thomas, Karen
Subject: RE: Permission (MH)

File: Sands, Tracy (author)

Dear Tracy Sands,

Thank you for your permissions request (copied and pasted below) asking to use one APA journal figure in an upcoming publication.

APA's policies on copyright and permissions can be found by visiting the Copyright and Permissions Information page located at http://www.apa.org/about/contact/copyright/index.aspx.

In reading over the APA Permissions Policy, you will discover that there are some instances under which formal APA permission is not required. This is one of those instances. However, an appropriate credit line is required (as outlined in our Policy).

Thank you again for your interest in APA-copyrighted material.

Sincerely,

Jia Din
Permissions Associate, Permissions Office
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
phone: 202.336.5632
fax: 202.336.5633
jdin@apa.org

From: Permissions
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2010 9:09 AM
To: Tracy Sands
Cc: tdsands@liberty.edu; Permissions
Subject: RE: Permission (MH)

Dear Tracy Sands,
Thank you for your recent permission request to APA. This note acknowledges the receipt of your email. Your request is copied or provided in the email below.

If you write back to us about the status of your request, please provide the following date as our reference number: "March 19" and include this email in your reply. We are now working on permissions submitted approximately 4 weeks ago and we will handle yours in turn unless you have a more pressing and critical deadline.

**If you have a critical deadline, please email kthomas@apa.org<mailto:kthomas@apa.org>

**If you have questions or concerns regarding this permission request, please send your response to permissions@apa.org<mailto:permissions@apa.org>.

Sincerely,

Myra Holmes

[cid:image001.gif@01CAC743.A27C6CC0]

Myra Holmes
Copyright and Permissions
American Psychological Association
750 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
Phone: 1-800-374-2722
Fax: 202-336-5633
permissions@apa.org<mailto:permissions@apa.org>

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

For Use of APA Material

Date: March 18, 2010

Your contact information:
Name: Tracy Davis Sands
Organization name: Liberty University
Department: Education
Complete postal address: 29 Kelly Lane, Hanscom AFB, MA 01731
Country: USA
Office phone: 978-528-8650
Fax number: 978-436-9424
Email: tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us<mailto:tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us> or tdsands@liberty.edu<mailto:tdsands@liberty.edu>
Your reference code number (if required):

1. The APA material you want to use:
Suldo, S. M., Shaffer, E. J., & Riley, K. N. (2008). A social-cognitive behavioral model

of academic predictors of adolescents' life satisfaction. School Psychology Quarterly 23(1), 56-69.

2. Do you want to use:

• The entire material, unedited?

• Portions of the material? Please give APA page number(s) ___

• A specific section? Please give APA page number(s) ___

• Scale or test material? Please give APA page number ___

• A photo? Please give APA page number ___

• Appendix material? Please give APA page number ___

X Other / Please specify: Path Model Figure

3. What media do you want to use the APA material in?

X Print only (for Dissertation)

• Electronic / Please give details:

• Both print and electronic / Please give details:

• Other / Please give details:

4. The material will be used in:

• Journal • Book • Newsletter • Magazine

• Directory • Newspaper • Other / Please specify:

Publication name:

Publisher:

Estimated publication date:

Estimated print run:

• Presentation or Seminar

Title:

Date:

Number of copies needed:

Is the presenter the author of the APA material? YES NO

Is the presentation or seminar continuing education? YES NO

Is there a fee for attendees? YES NO

X Dissertation or Thesis

The Relationship Factor: Teacher-Student Relationships in Middle Schools

• Email distribution • Listserv

Please give details:

• Secure Intranet site • Public Internet site • Restricted Internet site
Please give URL and other details:

• Classroom use (Print)
Institution name:
Course name:
Course start date:

• Classroom use (Electronic reserve)
Institution name:
Course name:
Course start date:

• 1 semester (6 months)
• 2 semesters (12 months)
• Other / Please specify:
Instructor's name:
Number of students enrolled:

• Online CE course
Organization:
Course name:
Course start date:

• 6 months • 12 months • Other / Please specify:

If your school has a PsycARTICLES or PsycBOOKS license, your site license policy grants permission to put the content into password protected electronic (not print) course packs or electronic reserve for your users. Please see the license policy at www.apa.org/pubs/librarians/policies/course-packs.aspx<http://www.apa.org/pubs/librarians/policies/course-packs.aspx> for more information, and discuss this use with your librarian.
• Other / Please give details:
5. Any additional information to tell us:

This model will simply serve as a figure to demonstrate the path of support that leads to students' subjective well-being.

_____
From: Tracy Sands [mailto:tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us]
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2010 4:02 PM
To: Permissions
Cc: tdsands@liberty.edu
Subject: Re: Permission

Request form attached. Thanks very much for your time.

Tracy Sands

Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2010 1:13 PM
To: Publications@naspweb.org

From: tdsands@liberty.edu

Request to use copyrighted material in dissertation

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a doctoral student at Liberty University, and I am working towards completion of my dissertation. I am using the following source as one of my references:

Suldo, S. M., Friedrich, A. A., White, T., Farmer, J., Minch, D., & Michalowski, J. (2009). Teacher support and adolescents? subjective well-being: A mixed-methods investigation. School Psychology Review, 38(1), 67-85. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov.

I would like to use the Path Model figure in my dissertation. The reference from your website to this article is:
http://psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=buy.optionToBuy&id=2008-04403-006&CFID=6012677&CFTOKEN=12166027

Please advise me on the process of obtaining permission to use the Path Model in my dissertation.

Thanks very much,
Tracy Sands

Tracy D. Sands
Principal

Appendix D: Permission to Use Graphic from Heinemann

Date: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 1:25 PM
From: Harden, Jill (Heinemann) [jill.harden@heinemann.com]
To: Sands, Tracy Davis

RE: Permission to Use Figure

Dear Tracy:

Please consider this email permission to use the below material from *Best Practice, 3e* by Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde in your dissertation. Please be sure to credit the author, title, copyright year, and Heinemann as publisher.

Please note that if you wish to publish this material in the future, you will need to reapply to us for further permission.

Good luck to you with your work.

Thank you,
Jill

Jill Harden
Permissions, Contracts and Copyright Assistant

From: Sands, Tracy Davis [mailto:tdsands@liberty.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 11:09 AM
To: Harden, Jill (Heinemann)
Subject: Permission to Use Figure
Importance: High

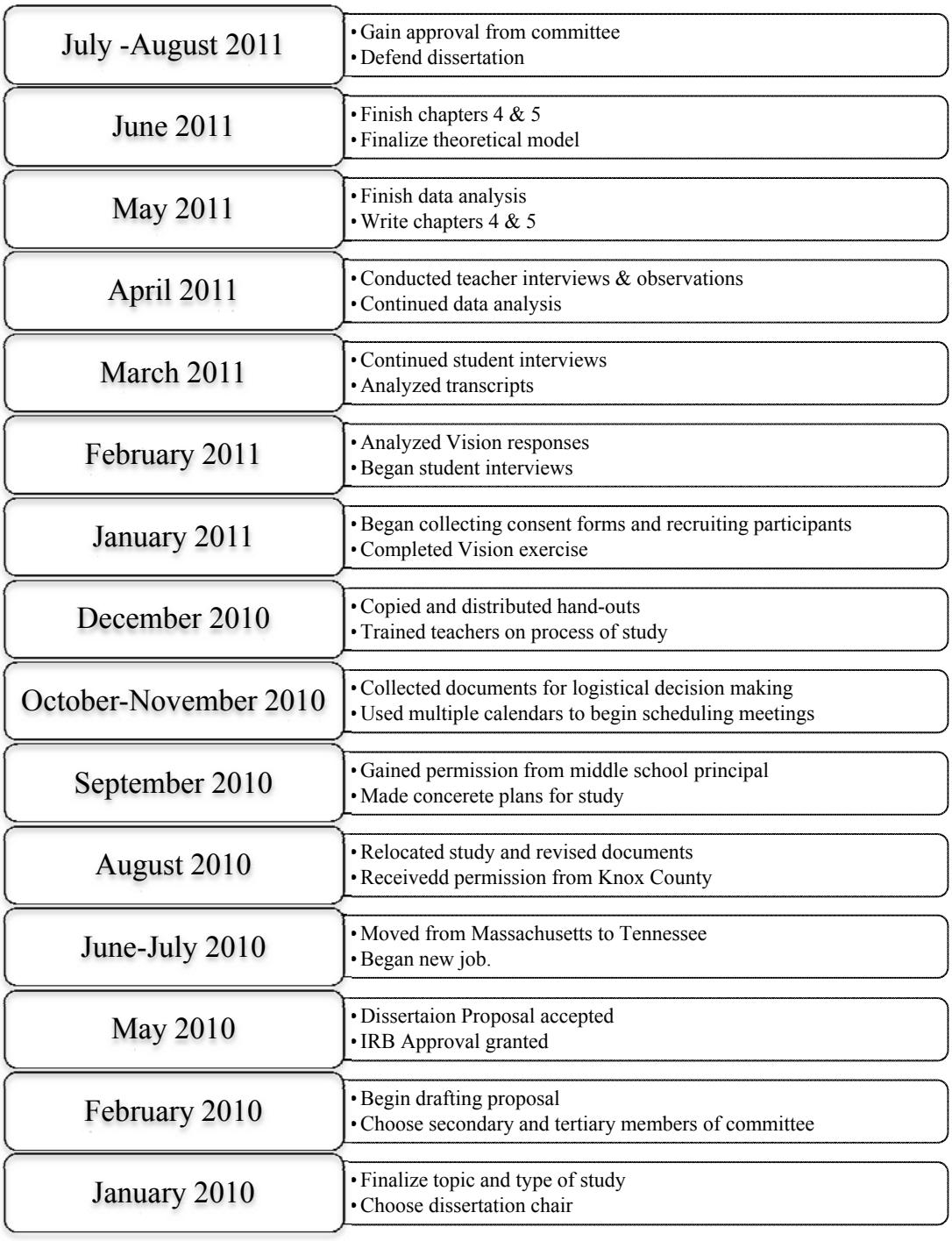
Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a doctoral student at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA and Principal of Cyril D. Locke Middle School in Billerica, MA. I would like to request permission to use Figure 1.1 on page 12 of the following resource:

Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (2005). *Best practice: Today's standards for teaching and learning in America's schools* (3rd ed.). Portsmouth, NH; Heinemann.

I am conducting a grounded theory study on relationships between teachers and students in middle schools, and I would like to use this figure as part of my dissertation. Best practices cannot be deleted from any professional writing involving teaching and learning, and I feel this graphic speaks clearly and concisely to the overlapping principles of best practice.

Thank you for your time,
Tracy D. Sands



Appendix E: Dissertation Study Timeline

Appendix F: Application to Use Human Research Subjects

11/06 Ref. #

APPLICATION TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Liberty University

Committee on the Use of Human Research Subjects

---

1. Project Title: The Relationship Factor: Teacher-Student Relationships in Middle School

   Full Review ☐ Expedited Review X

2. Funding Source (State N/A if not applicable): N/A

3. Principal Investigator

Tracy Davis Sands	Office: 978-528-8655
Principal, Locke Middle School	Cell: 617-538-8719
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University	Work: tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us
	School: tdsands@liberty.edu
	Address: 29 Kelly Lane
	Hanscom AFB, MA 01731

4. Faculty Sponsor (if student is PI), also list co-investigators below Faculty Sponsor, and key personnel:

Dr. Lucinda Spaulding	Liberty University
Assistant Professor	College of Education
Name and Title	Email: lsspaulding@liberty.edu
	TE 112 432-592-4307

5. Non-key personnel:

Dr. Joseph Fontanella	Liberty University
Assistant Professor -- Adjunct	College of Education
Name and Title	Email: jffontanella@liberty.edu

6. Consultants:

Dr. Anthony Serio	Address: 500 Boston Road
Superintendent	Billerica, MA 01821
Billerica Public Schools	Cell: 978-808-5105 Office: 978-528-7901
	Email: aserio@billerica.k12.ma.us

7. The principal investigator agrees to carry out the proposed project as stated in the application and to promptly report to the Human Subjects Committee any proposed changes and/or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others participating in approved project in accordance with the Liberty Way and the Confidentiality Statement. The principal investigator has access to copies of 45 CFR 46 and the Belmont Report. The principal investigator agrees to inform the Human Subjects Committee and complete all necessary reports should the principal investigator terminate University association. Additionally s/he agrees to maintain records and keep informed consent documents for three years after completion of the project even if the principal investigator terminates association with the University.

Tracy D. Sands

Principal Investigator Signature Date

Lucinda S. Spaulding, Ph.D.

Faculty Sponsor (If applicable) Date

Submit the original request to: Human Subjects Office, Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd., IRB Chair, Suite 2400 CN, Lynchburg, VA 24502

Appendix G: Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

1.	Investigator Name:	Tracy Davis Sands Principal, Karns High School Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
	Work Address:	Karns High School 2710 Byington Solway Road Knoxville, TN 37931-3200
	Home Address:	2607 Wayland Road Knoxville, TN 37914
	Current Address:	29 Kelly Lane Hanscom AFB, MA 01731
	Email Address:	Work: sandst@k12tn.net Home: eddr2010@gmail.com University: tdsands@liberty.edu
2.	Telephone Numbers:	Work: 865.539.8670 Home: 781.538.5348 Cell: 617.538.8719
3.	Position of Investigator:	Principal, Karns High School, Knoxville, TN Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
4.	Investigator's Advisor:	Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, Assistant Professor Liberty University, College of Education 1971 University Blvd., Lynchburg, VA 24502 Office: TE 112, Phone: 432.592.4307 Email: lsspaulding@liberty.edu
5.	Title of Proposed Study:	The Relationship Factor: Teacher-Student Relationships in Middle School

6. Description of the Study:

Intended Purpose This study is being conducted to examine and compare teacher and student perspectives on the middle school teacher-student relationship. Insight gained from perspectives will be used to formulate a theoretical model. Information gained from the study will inform future teaching practices and understanding of adolescent needs.
Targeted Population Middle school students will be selected as volunteers from a population of 1200 students. Middle School teachers will be selected as volunteers from population of 90 faculty members.

- Students' ages range from 11 to 15.
- Small student focus groups will represent both genders, varying ethnic backgrounds, health status, and ability/performance levels.

- Teachers will be selected as volunteers from an entire population of 90 faculty members.
- Teachers' experience ranges from 1st year to nearly 30 years in education, and age ranges from teachers in their early twenties to teachers nearly 60 years old, with a balance of represented ages, genders, and years of experience.
- Exclusion will be voluntary in the large group questionnaires.
- Students chosen (10-15 from each grade level 6th, 7th, and 8th) for individual interviews will be purposely chosen from the open-ended responses to represent varying responses and perspectives.
- The 10-15 teachers chosen for individual interviews will be purposely chosen from the existing faculty to represent diversity in backgrounds, ages, and experience.
- The original large sample of adults will be 90 teachers, and the large sample of students will include 1200 students. Twenty teachers and 30-45 students will be chosen for individual interviews and observations.

Data Collection Procedures and Time Required Because students and teachers must be interviewed and observed during the school year, this study will begin with seeking informed consent and beginning gathering data in August of 2010 and shall conclude by December of 2010.

- Volunteering students, whose parents have given informed consent, will complete a one question open-ended response: "Describe your dream middle school…"
- Students who agree to participate will complete the open-ended prompt in writing during homeroom class. Homeroom teachers will collect the responses, place them in a sealed envelope, and the researcher will personally collect them from each teacher following the homeroom session. All responses will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher/principal's office.
- Volunteering teachers, from whom informed consent is obtained, will complete a one question open-ended response: "What kind of school would you want for your own child?"
- All teachers who agree to participate will complete a written, narrative open-ended response during a large group faculty meeting. Following the faculty meeting, the researcher will collect all written responses, place them in a sealed envelope, and store them in a locking file cabinet in the researcher's office off-site. While in the school, any not in the immediate use of the researcher will be stored in a portable locking file kept in the possession of the researcher.
- From the original groups, one teacher and one student will be selected to pilot an interview to ensure comprehension. The researcher and each interviewee will conduct a separate, complete in-person interview, the researcher will gather data, and a separate transcriber who is an undergraduate education student at Liberty will transcribe data.
- Once the researcher receives transcriptions, she will check for clarity and comprehension through member checks with the interviewee. The two interviewees (one from teacher group and one from student group) will be asked to give feedback on clarity and the wording of the questions. All interviews with students and teachers will take place in a private conference room, one-to-one with the researcher.
- As stated by the informed consent letter, confidentiality of the content contained within the data, recordings, and documents will be upheld. Pseudonyms will replace all

identifying information within the study. In addition, the interviewer will inform the interviewee at the beginning of the interview that confidentiality will be of utmost importance and will be upheld throughout the process. Both the interviewer and interviewee will sign a statement of confidentiality.

- All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by an undergraduate student who is not directly involved with the teachers or students. The transcriber will not be present during the interviews, but will transcribe from audio recordings in a separate setting. The undergraduate student/transcriber will be familiar with educational language but have no relationship with or connection to the interviewees.
- From the volunteer student group, small purposeful samples of students will be selected to participate in audio-recorded individual interviews with the investigator. An outside person will transcribe all interviews.
- From the volunteer teacher group, small purposeful samples of students will be selected to participate in audio-recorded individual interviews with the investigator. An outside person will transcribe all interviews.
- Informal observations will be conducted inside the classroom setting, within the regular school day, and audio-recorded. An outside person will transcribe all observations.
- Prior to the observation, the researcher will consult with the classroom teacher and reiterate that all data collected, including identifying information for students and teachers will be kept confidential.

Confidentiality All data and identifying information will be kept confidential, and the system will be kept anonymous unless given permission by the research committee.

- The site, school, location, names of participants or any other identifying information will be protected, and pseudonyms will be used.
- Participants will be informed of confidentiality in writing through the introductory letter, on the consent form. Additionally, a Researcher's Commitment to Confidentiality will be included on the consent form, signed by the researcher, and a copy of the form will be returned to the participant: " I have informed the participants in my study both orally and in writing that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process of this study and that all data gathered during the study will be kept in a secure location."
- Prior to asking the first question in the interview, the standard interview statement will be made before questions are asked: "Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As you have been made aware in writing and in conversation, all information gathered will be kept confidential and in a secure location. Names will be kept anonymous and all identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms."
- All data collected, written and recorded will be kept in the locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office or portable locking file. No one except the researcher, the transcriptionist, and committee members will have access to the data or notes.
- All notes, data, results, and study information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office when not directly in the researcher's possession. A portable locking file will be used to keep materials secure when being transported to and from

the researcher's office and while in the possession of the transcriptionist and/or committee members.
- Data will be collected, analyzed, and securely stored beginning in August 2010.
- Data and narrative notes will be destroyed following the defense of the dissertation, approximately in January 2014, or three years following the completion of the study.
- Results of the study may be used for future study, analysis, or publication with confidentiality maintained.

Projected Value of the Study The results of this study will provide valuable information to students, teachers, and parents regarding the relationships between teachers and students.
- The results of this study will guide instruction and communication practices that provide an optimal learning setting for young adolescents.
- The results of this study will inform instructional practice and lead to future studies of relationships in education.
- One potential benefit to this study would be the contribution to the professional knowledge in the area of teacher-student relationships in middle schools and the role relationships play in student development.
- Additionally, insight gained from the perspective of the student will enhance our understanding of student development in them middle school as it relates to classroom interactions.
- One major interpersonal benefit will be the gained understanding of others' perspectives of classroom interaction. Teachers and students may be more cognizant of their own words and actions once realizing others' perspectives.
- Another significant benefit to this study will be the relatively new area of research and generation of theory involving how teacher-student relationships are manifested in middle school classrooms. This study may lead to more primary research on relationships in classroom settings Pre-K to Post-secondary and inform teacher preparation programs on relational components of the teaching learning process.

7. Single copies of supporting documents attached:

   - Letter to school community
   - Parent/Student consent form
   - Teacher consent form
   - Open-ended response questions
   - Student interview questions
   - Teacher interview questions
   - Observation form

8. Projected timeline for the study:

   08/2010 (mid) Send home information letters and consent forms
   08/2010 (end) Distribute and collect open ended survey
   09/2010 (beg) Begin observations and interviews
   11/2010 (beg) Conclude follow up interviews and data analysis
   12/2010 Conclude study and produce final document

Appendix H: Letter to School Community

XXXX XX, 2010

Dear Kraft School Community:

Welcome back from April Vacation! To celebrate springtime and new beginnings, we are in the process of revising our school vision and mission statement. Parents, students, teachers, and community members have been asked to share their perspectives on the kind of school we want for our children and for ourselves. The most important aspect of revising the vision of the school is to capture stakeholders' points of view within the school community and share a vision for educating our students. We invite you to be a part of the vision process.

As a doctoral candidate with Liberty University, I am conducting a research study of our middle school. This study is designed to learn more about how teachers and students interact with one another and create relationships in middle schools. Teacher and student perspectives are essential to this study. The purpose of this study will be to provide insight into the role teacher-student relationships play in middle school settings. This study is designed to gain deeper understanding of the connections between classroom teachers and young adolescent students.

First, all teachers who give informed consent and all students whose parents give informed consent will be asked to complete an open-ended response question related to their school vision. Following the initial open-ended response, a select group of students and teachers will be invited to participate in individual interviews and classroom observations. The purpose of selecting a few people to participate in the interview and observation process is to gain deeper understanding of individual perspectives. Individuals will be chosen based on their responses to the original open-response question.

Data will be collected from in-person interviews with students and teachers and through classroom observations. These observations are not evaluative in nature. Classroom observations will consist of a holistic observation of interactions within the classroom where narrative data is collected. All information gained through the study will be kept confidential, and participants may choose not to participate at any time, even after they have given consent.

Please feel free to call me at tsands@billerica.k12.ma.us or 978.528.8650 if you have questions regarding the study. In addition, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding at lsspaulding@liberty.edu or 434.592.4307 for any additional inquiries.

Many thanks for your continued support of our school.

Sincerely,

Tracy D. Sands, Principal

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form -- Student

Your child is invited to participate in a research study of the relationships between teachers and students in middle school. Your child was chosen for the study because he or she is a student at the school being studied, and student perspectives are very important to the study.

This research is being conducted by Tracy Sands, who is a doctoral student at Liberty University and the principal of the school being studied. Tracy is a former middle school teacher and has worked with middle school students for nearly 20 years. This study is for academic purposes, and Tracy must complete a research study in order to satisfy the dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Education degree. The researcher's dissertation chair is Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, Professor of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

For the purposes of this study, relationships between teachers and students are defined by the interactions between teacher and learner within the classroom setting. The purpose of this study will be to provide insight into the role teacher-student relationships play in middle school settings. This study is designed to gain deeper understanding of the interactions between classroom teachers and young adolescent students.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study by signing this consent form, your child will also be asked for his or her consent. If both you and your child agree to allow him or her to participate in this study, he or she will be asked to:

- Sign and return this consent form to Mrs. Sands
- Complete one open-ended survey question related to the school vision
- Participate in the study by agreeing to meet with Mrs. Sands for one 40-minute audio recorded interview during an activity period, study period, or other time arranged before or after school
- Complete a simple demographic questionnaire about his or her classroom experiences
- Be available to respond to any follow up questions Mrs. Sands may have following the interview as she begins to analyze data and write results
- Direct any questions or concerns to Mrs. Sands or her dissertation chairperson, Dr. Spaulding

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. He or she has the right to choose to not participate in this research, and your decision will be respected. If he or she decides to join the study, he or she may decide not to participate at any time in the future. He or she may also skip or refuse to answer any questions.

All information provided by your child will be kept strictly confidential. Mrs. Sands will not include your name, your child's name, or anything else that could identify him or her, friends, or family members in any reports for the study. All recordings and documents

will be kept in a safe place and will not be shared with anyone. Mrs. Sands will not use the information you provide for any purposes outside of this research study.

You may ask any questions you have about this research now. If you have questions later, you may contact Mrs. Sands at 978.528.8650 or tdsands@liberty.edu or her dissertation chair, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding at 434.592.4307 or lsspaulding@liberty.edu.

Parent/Guardian Consent

_____ I have read the information contained in the student consent form. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I give consent for my child, _____ to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian's Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature:_____Date:_____

Student/Participant Consent

_____ I have read the information contained in the student consent form. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I consent to participate in this study.

Student's Name (print): _____

Student's Signature:_____Date:_____

Appendix J: Informed Consent Form -- Teacher

You are invited to participate in a research study of the relationships between teachers and students in middle school. You have been chosen for the study because you are a teacher at the school being studied, and teacher perspectives are very important to the study.

This research is being conducted by Tracy Sands, who is a doctoral student at Liberty University and the principal of the school being studied. Tracy is a former middle school teacher and has worked with middle school students for nearly 20 years. This study is for academic purposes, and Tracy must complete a research study in order to satisfy the dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Education degree. The researcher's dissertation chair is Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, Professor of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

For the purposes of this study, relationships between teachers and students are defined by the interactions between teacher and learner within the classroom setting. The purpose of this study will be to provide insight into the role teacher-student relationships play in middle school settings. This study is designed to gain deeper understanding of the interactions between classroom teachers and young adolescent students.

If you agree to participate in this study by signing this consent form, you will be asked to:

- Sign and return this consent form to Tracy
- Complete one open-ended survey question related to the school vision
- Participate in the study by agreeing to meet with Tracy for one 30-minute audio recorded interview during an preparatory period or other time arranged before or after school
- Complete a simple demographic questionnaire about his or her classroom experiences
- Be available to respond to any follow up questions Tracy may have following the interview as she begins to analyze data and write results
- Direct any questions or concerns to Tracy or her dissertation chairperson, Dr. Spaulding

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your participation or nonparticipation will not impact your standing as a teacher in any way. You have the right to choose to not participate in this research, and your decision will be respected. If you decide to join the study, you may decide not to participate at any time in the future. You may also skip or refuse to answer any questions.

All information provided will be kept strictly confidential. Tracy will not include your name or anything else that could identify you, colleagues, friends, or family members in any reports for the study. All recordings and documents will be kept in a safe place and will not be shared with anyone. Tracy will not use the information you provide for any purposes outside of this research study.

You may ask any questions you have about this research now. If you have questions later, you may contact Tracy at 978.528.8650 or tdsands@liberty.edu or her dissertation chair, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding at 434.592.4307 or lsspaulding@liberty.edu.

Teacher/Participant Consent

_____ I have read the information contained in the student consent form. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I consent to participate in this study.

Teacher's Name (print): _____

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix K: Initial Survey Questions for Building a School Vision

Faculty Survey

Please respond to the following question:

"What kind of school would I want for my own child?"

Student Survey

"Describe your dream middle school…"

Appendix L: Summary of Student Vision Data

Number of student responses received matching the emerged categories.

Grade Level	Activities	Curriculum & Instruction	Facilities & Environment	Rules & Procedures	Food & Cafeteria	Schedule & Calendar	Teachers	Total Participants
6	38	33	25	8	34	12	10	52
% of total	73	63	48	15	65	23	19	100
7	38	115	84	68	108	95	47	169
% of total	22	68	50	40	64	56	28	100
8	2	6	4	4	4	3	2	13
% of total	15	46	31	31	31	23	15	100
Total Responses	78	154	113	80	146	50	59	234
% of total	33	66	48	34	62	21	25	100

Appendix M: Summary of Teacher Vision Data

Number of teacher responses received matching the emerged categories.

Grade Level	Activities	Curriculum & Instruction	Facilities & Environment	Rules & Procedures	Food & Cafeteria	Schedule & Calendar	Teachers	Total Participants
6	1	3	4	1	1	0	2	4
% of total	25	75	100	25	25	0	50	100
7	2	4	4	2	0	0	4	4
% of total	50	100	100	50	0	0	100	100
8	0	3	3	0	0	0	2	3
% of total	0	75	75	0	0	0	50	100
Total Responses	3	10	11	3	1	0	8	11
% of total	25	83	85	25	8	0	67	100

* One teacher works with both 6^{th} and 8^{th} grades and was included for both levels.

Appendix N: Summary of Student Interview Data

Participant	Date of Interview	Time of Interview	Location	Date Consent	Date Vision Returned
"William"	2/11/11	9:32 a.m.	KMS Cafeteria	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Madeline"	2/11/11	10:03 a.m.	KMS Cafeteria	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Wendy"	2/11/11	10:35 a.m.	KMS Cafeteria	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Melissa"	2/14/11	9:33 a.m.	Conference	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Morgan"	2/14/11	10:05 a.m.	Conference	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Michael"	2/14/11	10:38 a.m.	Conference	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Louisa"	2/15/11	9:40 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Hannah"	2/16/11	9:02 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Henry"	2/16/11	9:31 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Griffin"	2/18/11	9:35 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Diana"	2/18/11	10:07 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Brady"	2/18/11	10:42 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Micah"	3/21/11	12:27 p.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Mercedes"	3/21/11	12:57 p.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Jennifer"	3/23/11	9:30 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Julia"	3/23/11	10:04 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Betsy"	3/23/11	10:28 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Beatrice"	3/23/11	11:55 a.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Donna"	3/23/11	12:23 p.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Patricia"	3/25/11	12:02 p.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Raymond"	3/25/11	12:20 p.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Ronald"	3/25/11	2:15 p.m.	Counseling	1/13/11	N/A
"Mason"	3/25/11	1:56 p.m.	Counseling	12/14/10	12/14/10
"Richard"	3/25/11	2:37 p.m.	Counseling	1/13/11	N/A
"Ramsey"	3/25/11	2:53 p.m.	Counseling	1/13/11	N/A
"Regina"	4/6/11	1:52 p.m.	Counseling	1/13/11	N/A
"Nicholas"	4/6/11	2:20 p.m.	Counseling	4/5/11	N/A
"Marcus"	4/6/11	2:53 p.m.	Counseling	4/5/11	N/A
"Teresa"	4/7/11	12:34 p.m.	Counseling	4/5/11	N/A
"Raquel"	4/8/11	9:34 a.m.	Counseling	4/7/11	N/A

Appendix O: Summary of Teacher Interview Data

Participant	Date of Interview	Time of Interview	Location	Date Consent Received	Date Vision Returned
"Matthews"	3/28/11	1:52 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Andrews"	3/28/11	2:22 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"James"	3/28/11	2:53 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Bruce"	3/31/11	9:38 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Jeffrey"	3/31/11	10:11 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Kristofer"	3/31/11	10:38 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Lewis"	4/6/11	12:07 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Gordon"	4/6/11	12:35 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Michaels"	4/8/11	12:03 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	4/8/11
"Daniels"	4/8/11	12:36 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Johns"	4/8/11	1:04 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11

Appendix P: Sample Theoretical Memo

2/14/11

Today, I completed 3 interviews, and I am positive that 3 is the maximum I can handle in one sitting, given that I will not be writing any answers in my notes while the student is present.

The seventh graders are very willing to share, provided I keep my pencil down and make sure I am relaxed and providing nods and smiles as we go along. It's much better in the conference room away from the hallway traffic and custodian's power sweeper.

I've decided not to tell students I'm a principal and to wear business casual clothes. It seems that students are already nervous about being recorded, and adding the rigidity of formal clothes and pen and paper seems to put them on edge.

"Melissa" seems frustrated with the limited amount of freedom and need to always be silent even though she is a good student with excellent attendance. Her favorite teacher uses hands-on activities, which she mentions about two teachers.

She indicates that the teachers are "cranky" sometimes because of some of the other kids who don't work and that teachers kind of take it out on everyone. She says that teachers treat some students differently, like as if they get on a bad list and have a different set of rules. She said that teachers are strict with the kids who don't make good decisions but are lenient with the others. I can see now why some struggling students see this as a double standard.

She also seems irritated with teachers doing the same thing over and over. She gets bored when nothing changes. She also indicated that teachers help her do her best when things are interactive and kids can get up.

The advice she gives a new student is not to be strictly serious with the teachers and to be funny with them. I wonder if a student who is on the "bad side" would say the same thing. Can they be funny with teachers too?

She also notes that one teacher has yelled at them enough to make a friend of hers cry. She says he doesn't realize that they are just 7th graders. She says teachers' stress effects the kids. She says she has considered leaving band because of this problem. It looks to me like she is the one who was made to cry.

If a "good student" feels this defeated and frustrated, then how would a struggling, at risk student feel? Do teachers realize the impact they have on students' well-being? It seems that the stress of standardized tests has directly impacted how teachers relate to their students. The stress and anxiety has become contagious.

Appendix Q: Summary of Classroom Observation Data

Participant	Date of Observation	Time of Observation	Location	Date Consent Received	Date Vision Returned
"Andrews"	4/4/11	12:47 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Lewis"	4/4/11	1:34 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Michaels"	4/4/11	1:54 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	4/8/11
"Johns"	4/4/11	2:26 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Daniels"	4/6/11	9:00 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"James"	4/6/11	9:19 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Matthews"	4/6/11	9:31 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Bruce"	4/7/11	1:43 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Jeffrey"	4/7/11	11:53 a.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Kristofer"	4/7/11	11:40 a.m..	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11
"Gordon"	4/7/11	2:01 p.m.	Classroom	1/13/11	1/13/11

Appendix R: Observation Form

The format of the observation will be a memo-style record that will be video or audio recorded to ensure credibility. A personal laptop will be used for word processing to record everything I see, hear, and otherwise acknowledge within the given environment during the 30- minute observation.

Group/Individual Being Observed: _____

Location:_____Grade/Subject:_____

Beginning Time:_____Ending Time:_____

Time Stamp	**Action Observed**	**Interpretation/Running Thoughts**

Page ___ of ___

Appendix S: Completed Observation Form

The format of the observation will be a memo-style record that will be video or audio recorded to ensure credibility. A personal laptop will be used for word processing to record everything I see, hear, and otherwise acknowledge within the given environment during the 30- minute observation.

Group/Individual Being Observed: "Andrews" Date: April 4, 2011

Location: XXX Grade/Subject: 8

Beginning Time: 12:45 p.m. Ending Time: 1:02 p.m.

Time Stamp	Action Observed	Interpretation/Running Thoughts
12:47	S's walk in T reminds S's to be on best behavior T steps out Most S's seated, returning from lunch	S's talking to one another Comfortable, relaxed environment No work displayed on walls (TCAP) next week
12:48	S's socializing, talking T at hall duty Agenda posted, info, bell scheduled posted, rules and cons.	
12:49	posted	T dressed casually, denim skirt, casual top
12:51	S's seated, most Noise level is lower, chatting, friendly Few S's shhhing one another T – OK, who's not in their seats You need to get out bell ringer packet (repeats directions) S's follow, T says Thx to S returning paper	

Page 1 of 3

The format of the observation will be a memo-style record that will be video or audio recorded to ensure credibility. A personal laptop will be used for word processing to record everything I see, hear, and otherwise acknowledge within the given environment during the 30- minute observation.

Group/Individual Being Observed: "Andrews" Date: April 4, 2011

Location: XXX Grade/Subject: 8

Beginning Time: 12:45 p.m. Ending Time: 1:02 p.m.

Time Stamp	**Action Observed**	**Interpretation/Running Thoughts**
12:52	T reminds S's to work on page 3 & 4 T walks from front S comes to get help w/pencil T sharpens pencil for S S's continue to work Ss' come to desk to ask T ?'s	S's responsive, quiet, working S's engaged, quiet Class, very quiet, working
12:54	T moves stool to front of room T while you finish, come to get quiz if you want to retest We are not going to get it back (old quiz) S asks if we can get it back T nope S Can we know our grade? T nope	Doesn't have to circulate, all still working T tolerant of noise S's respectful but social S's know when to work, when to talk

The format of the observation will be a memo-style record that will be video or audio recorded to ensure credibility. A personal laptop will be used for word processing to record everything I see, hear, and otherwise acknowledge within the given environment during the 30- minute observation.

Group/Individual Being Observed: "Andrews" Date: April 4, 2011

Location: XXX Grade/Subject: 8

Beginning Time: 12:45 p.m. Ending Time: 1:02 p.m.

Time Stamp	**Action Observed**	**Interpretation/Running Thoughts**
12:55	T makes sure you get a WS, good job Reminds S as they come up	S's socializing, very comfortable in class Although students seated in rows, large class
12:57	T OK Let's go over T calls ?'s S's answer chorally T gives hints S raise hands T "or not…" T "thanks for giving that to him" when another s answers for him.	Predictable routine, structure Some s's raise hands, some do not, slight use of sarcasm Most s's engaged, but following along
12:59	T OK, put this away TCAP quiz tomorrow S I'm so excited T I know, listen up (her phone rings) S's talk while T on phone	S's very relaxed, laughing, smiling

Appendix T: Sample Activity Log

Activity Log

Date	Time	Location	Activity	Purpose	Notes
3/31/11	9:27	KMS Office	Sign in	Document visit	Pre-Interview
3/31/11	9:34	Bruce's Room	Interview	Gather data from teacher	Interview started a few minutes late because teacher was talking with students in the hallway as the commuted to class. We walked to class together from the corridor. Teacher was very casual and cordial and didn't seem bothered by starting a few minutes late.
3/31/11	9:54	Hallway bench	Reflections	Collect thoughts	Memo main thoughts
3/31/11	9:57	Hallway	Walk to class	Interview teacher	Teacher was waiting
3/31/11	10:02	Jeffrey's Room	Interview	Gather data from teacher	Teacher was seated at desk when I arrived. I approached her and sat down in a student desk across from her. Teacher smiles, touches her face when she speaks. Very much to the point and moves on to next question, open with opinion, speaks genuinely.
3/31/11	10:25	Hallway bench	Reflections	Collect thoughts	Memo main thoughts
3/31/11	10:28	Hallway	Walk to class	Interview teacher	Teacher was at doorway.
3/31/11	10:30	Kristofer's Room	Interview	Gather data from teacher	Teacher chose to sit across from me in another student desk rather than at her own desk. Classroom very structured, tone very formal.
3/31/11	11:07	Conf Room	Make notes	Gather fresh thoughts	Do not interview more than three consecutive sessions or more than three in one visit unless absolutely necessary. Allow more time to memo after each interview. Allow time for mental breaks and restroom.
3/31/11	11:27	Office	Sign Out	Document Sign Out	Return to work
3/31/11	12:08	My office	Transfer audio	Copied recordings to desktop in secure file, saved to flash drive, hand delivered to Toth.	
---	---	---	---	---	---
4/3/11	8:27	Home	Received transcripts via email from Toth	Saved with pseudonym and number code.	
4/3/11	12:15	Home	Began coding transcripts		
4/3/11	18:27	Home	Finished coding transcripts, saved notes, locked in file cabinet. Checked batteries on digital voice recorder, stocked spare batteries for interviews on 4/4/11.		

Appendix U: Sample Student Interview Transcription

Record of Transcript

Transcript/Recording #: R.P.05 -- "Patricia

Interviewer/Researcher: Tracy Sands

Date of Interview: 3/25/11

Date of Transcription: 3/31/11

Transcriptionist Signature: JMToth

1. Please state your name, grade level, and team. RxxxPxxx, 6th grade, 6d
2. How long have you been at this school? The whole year (1st year)
3. Describe yourself as a student. Describe your attendance, grades, club involvement, etc. I am a straight A student, I don't have perfect attendance, but I try to be here as much as I can. I really try and listen as much as I can in class. T: clubs, sports, musician? S: I play the trumpet, I'm in yearbook, I do competitive gymnastics
4. Describe a few things that you like or dislike about this school. I like how we have so many options of extra things that we can do like art, technology, and the many clubs we can join. I like all the teachers, well most of the teachers. T: is there anything you don't like? S: can really think of one right now T: what about the cafeteria food? S: I don't eat lunch here, I pack a lunch T: that's a pretty good sign that you'd prefer not to eat the food here S: yeah

5. Describe your favorite teacher of all time.

That'd have to be my 3rd and 4th grade teacher. She could talk to us not only like a teacher but almost, not necessarily a friend but like an adult friend. And we did a lot of activities and to make things more fun we did lots of things and whenever we had a class party it wasn't just to play it had something we could always learn from, but it was always fun. She always made things when they were hard like TCAP, she always made them seem not as hard, she always made us focus on them but they didn't seem as stressful when I was with her. It was just fun to be in her class, cause she made everything so different then they've been.
T: and do you think she cared about you? Why do you think she did all of those things the way she did them?
S: I felt like she really cared about each of us and she knew who we were she didn't just count us as a student. She counted us as… I know that she does it this way and this is how she likes to learn things so I'm going to help her do things this way. And I felt like she knew each of us and how we did things and knew that we were all different. So, I felt like she really cared about like who we were.

6. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do in class.

She would give us a lot of visual, she would make us do like a reenactment, maybe not get totally into it, but we'd do just a little bit of an overview of what it was or maybe in science if we were studying electricity we would do little things where we'd stand together
T: like role play
S: yeah, and we'd watch a lot of movies and we would do a lot of slide shows and interactive things on the board. Activities where you'd cut things and make little booklets or something so it made things more fun than they would be than just writing a paper.

7. Explain what types of relationships exist between teachers and students in this school.

I don't know

8. How would you describe your relationships with your teachers?

I feel like they know what I need. Especially with the math I'm in. I do 7th grade advanced math, I feel like my teacher knows what I need, she knows that I'm, she doesn't try to teach specifically to me cause she has a whole class but she knows and helps me with those things that I don't know cause I had to skip a year but, I feel like my teachers understand who knows what and how to use that in class.
T: to make you better no matter what?
S: yeah

9. What do you need your teachers to do to help you do your very best?

I feel like they need to understand who needs help on what and maybe know you can't just go through a section and teach all the things in that section and move on because some people know more in one section than they do in others and whole classes are like that too. So, I feel like if they know what to focus on more, we learn more because we get taught what we need to.
T: right, because the things that you know you don't really need to do again necessarily right
S: yeah

10. Describe a class where you are successful and explain why.

Probably math, cause my dad is an engineer and I have a lot of people in my family that really help with that and I feel like all my math classes the teachers really know how to challenge the students and they don't just teach you what you need, they teach you more so that next year you already have a bit of what you need to know. I feel like math is one of those things where if you don't challenged, you don't get as much of a good, even if you know what you're supposed to know at the moment, if you don't know what's coming up, you may not understand it as much
T: it's called foresight, you need to see beyond what you're doing in that moment

11. Describe a class that has been difficult and explain why.

Probably sometimes in language because I'm good at language but it's hard to understand cause there's so many different things that you have to say that this is what is always true. But, there's this and it always hard to remember those and sometimes in language there's not as much you can do to get people to learn that. You can't do as much activities cause it's
T: it's in a book, so it's something, so at some point you have to do the reading
S: and there's just so much that you have to know and you can't just go by a rule that it just makes it hard.
T: right, exceptions in the English language, are you talking about like grammar rules and spelling rules and all of those things that it's not the same all the time?
S: yeah

12. What advice would you give a new student who enrolls here? T: Like how to survive KMS.

Almost about the same thing as dream school, don't worry, the teachers can help if you don't really know what's going on. They'll really help you, and try and do what you think you're best at because there's a lot of things you can go into. From art to computers and things like that where maybe at other schools you wouldn't be able to.

13. Explain how one average day at this school would be for a student.

In the mornings we work on homework in homeroom. We can have teachers help us. In the mornings a lot of people use the teachers to help them do things that they can't normally do in class, like ask them for help with homework. You have your normal classes where we do activities, in some classes, just work you have your related arts where some people do chorus, or band or orchestra. And then you have your gym technology, art and things like that and then you have your
T: your other core classes?
S: yeah, and then after school there's a lot of activities that you can be involved in

14. Describe your "dream" middle school and tell why this is the perfect school for you.

It would probably be a place where there are so many extra things you can do, not just in related arts but you can choose more, what kind of ss you want to take, what kind of science you want to take rather than having to have
T: the same science as everybody else cause its 7th grade or 6th grade? I think I know what you mean
S: yeah, and then having to be able to have more of a choice in your related arts rather than having to have this kind of gym, your having to have art and you're having to have this and that's really the only choices you get. And I like it where maybe the classes aren't as big. I mean I don't want a class of ten students but I don't want a class of thirty either. And I want one where maybe you could have, probably the same amount of teachers, I like having one teacher per class cause they know more about what they're doing because they're into that one subject.
T: and they do it all day long, right (laughs)
S: yeah

15. What does it look and feel like? What do you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell?

I see a school that's a normal size school probably it has students' work everywhere, like art work and the things they work on in class you can see that when you walk down the halls. I can see maybe like being able to listen to music cause that helps a lot of people concentrate. A normal clean smell, like you can't smell any of the garbage, but you don't want the perfumy smell either

16. What are the principals, students and teachers doing in this school?

The principals are going to the classes and seeing what the students are doing, even helping participate in some classes, the teachers get involved and don't just sit at a desk all day but they get involved with the class and things like that.

17. How are people interacting with one another?

Everybody hangs out and everybody knows who likes to be together and, I don't know, that's a hard one to answer

18. What advice would you give a new student who enrolls in the dream school?

Don't be nervous and don't be afraid to choose the classes you want to do and don't worry that you're not going to have any friends and that the teachers are going to be mean because everybody's just really supportive at the school

19. Explain how one average day at the dream school would be for a student.

Skipped

20. What are people doing in this school?

Skipped

21. Tell me about the conversations between teachers and students in this dream school. What are the teachers saying to the students?

They could talk about the things they do in life that maybe relate to their classes like trips that have to do with social studies or things like that.

22. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do at the dream school.

They do activities like experiments in science or models in social studies. They do lots of presentations. They get to do lots of interactive lessons.

23. How is this school similar or different from your dream school?

They're very similar I'd say because the teachers here are most of the teachers have very fun lessons where you can see things from a different point of view besides just words in a book. It's a nice school. There's things everywhere you can see that kids are doing so much at the school. You do have a lot of choices not, you don't have a ton but you have some sort of choice in the classes in what extra classes you take, for related arts, but
T: I think what you're telling me is in your dream school just give us more choices all the way around, not just related arts but the kinds of science the kinds of things that we do so that if we like a certain thing or if we're good at a certain thing let us get better and better at that?
S: yeah

24. What do you think are the most important things middle school students need?

We need support because things get really hard in middle school because everything changes. We need a lot of guidance because we don't know what's right, we don't know what we should be doing sometimes and again we need choice. Cause now's the time where our parents can't decide everything for us. We need to be able to choose what we think would be good for us and if it doesn't turn out maybe the teachers after a while can say this is right for you, but give us the choice at the beginning and maybe say I'll let you choose now but if it doesn't work out maybe we can change it.

25. How does it feel to be a middle school student in 2011?

It's nice, I feel like a lot of higher people, not in schools but that decide school things are more focusing on standardized tests. I don't think those are extremely important because they don't focus on everything you learn in class. Other than that, I feel the technology we have really helps us and it gives us more ways that we can learn, so in some ways its good but in some ways
T: it can be a distraction can't it
S: yeah
T: it's like how you use technology, it's not a good thing or a bad thing to me, it's how people learn to use it
S: yeah

Appendix V: Sample Teacher Interview Transcription

Record of Transcript

Transcript/Recording #: J.W.079 – "Ms. Daniels"

Interviewer/Researcher: Tracy Sands

Date of Interview: 4/8/11

Date of Transcription: 4/10/11

Transcriptionist Signature: JMToth

1. Please state your name, grade level, and team. XXXX, 6th grade language, team 6X	D
2. How long have you been at this school? How did you end up in middle school? About 9 years. I was teaching elementary in an inner city school and it was a very needy community and a very needy environment. I was fine with that up until the point I had my first child and then I felt like there wasn't enough extra of me for the kids because of my son. I was finding myself extremely worn out at the end of the day feeling like I just hadn't met all the needs of the children and coming home very stressed and starting to really not like my job. So, when that happened I had a friend that was a principal, I had had his two daughters in elementary school and I asked him, "what do you think about me possibly transferring schools?" and he was the one who suggested a middle school. I hadn't really seen myself as a middle school teacher, but since I've been here I know that's definitely cut out for.	D
3. Describe yourself as a teacher. Describe your philosophy, routines, style, etc. I like there to be order, I like it to be fairly quiet, I don't mind students talking when they're working if they're whispering it doesn't bother me at all. I want them to feel comfortable, I want them to feel like they know me well enough that they can take chances and ask questions. They feel safe with me that I'm not going to humiliate them, I like for us to be able to joke around, I think it's really important that we, I think middle school students connect with people they feel they can connect with. That's just kind of how I deal with life anyway. So I like to be able to do that in the classroom. But I do like for it to be structured. I like my desks in rows. When I speak I want them to be quiet and I want them to listen. When I tell them something, I want them to do it the first time and not argue, I feel like I just talk to them like I would my children. Just being myself and I think they can learn if they feel safe and comfortable and they feel appreciated and liked and that may be the elementary in me.	D

4. Describe a few things that you like about this school. I like that we feel like a family here. I like that, the teachers especially the 6th grade teachers, we're close, we work together. There aren't really any big egos, it's just a team. I love our principal I think she sets the tone that we are a team and she includes everyone's thoughts and opinions. She's a great leader, and I like that it's a school we can feel proud of, we have many achievements, we have very talented students. I think that we offer success to students that might not otherwise feel successful, we find a way, we offer that to them, we meet the needs emotionally and intellectually of all of our students. That's what I like about the school.	O
5. Describe a few things that you dislike about this school. That's a little bit harder, I can't really think of anything. I'm pretty happy.	O
6. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do in class. I don't like for my students to have a lot of homework, so we try to do all of our work in class and sometimes they have to have some homework that we need to go over. I like to have an opener for them to do so they feel like they come in and have a purpose to get started on, it sets the tone. We get out whatever we were working on, if we have something that's kind of hanging over, we review and discuss it. We have a lesson on that or maybe it's something new we're going to talk about, I talk about it for a while, I let them talk about it for a little bit. Then they have an opportunity to work on whatever the assignment is in class. They ask whatever questions they need, usually I don't make them take it home for homework. If they can show me in ten items that they understand what the skill is there's really no need to take it home and do 50 of them just so I can say I'm working them.	K
7. Explain what types of relationships exist between teachers and students in this school. I think the relationships between teachers and students are positive for the most part. I think with every school there are some teachers who maybe are tired and carry a lot of stress. So, they seem to struggle connecting with the kids more than others, but we don't have a lot of those and I think that you cannot get along with and click with everybody you meet, so there's always going to be a struggle with certain relationships with kids, but I don't see it a lot, and I see teachers really working to not have that happen.	E
8. How would you describe your relationships with your students? I like for my students to feel comfortable in talking to me about their work, I like for them to feel like if they have a problem that's effecting their mood or their emotions, they feel safe that they can talk to me, that I will give them advice as best I can, I've really worked on keeping my poker face with them no matter what they say, no matter what it is they've done or what they're going to tell me. As long as I can look at them in the eye and not react to it, I think that builds some trust. So I like for them to feel like they can talk to me.	E
9. How do you help your students do their very best? With a lot of encouragement, with telling them right up front I know what you can do and that's exactly what I expect. If you don't do that then you're going to get the chance to do it over. I think just letting them know, I know what you are capable of, your own personal best.	O

10. Describe a class where you have successful and explain why. This has been a good year, I feel like I have been successful with all of my classes this year and I still, I just think it's clear expectations, sometimes when you're dealing with discipline, the least amount you can say really sometimes is the best. If you can look at somebody and convey a look to them, I think it's better to do that than use words and just kind of being myself and not taking life too seriously with them.	E
11. Describe a class that has been difficult and explain why. Recently I had an opportunity to experience that, I was chosen to teach Language ! and I don't feel very successful in the classes I taught. I had to teach it for three years, these were the students who struggled academically and behaviorally and with their attention spans. It was difficult to put them in a room together and try to teach them because they were all playing off of each other. They didn't have a role model to look to to set the tone. They were together most of the day because they spent the two hours together so that's what they did pretty much every class they went in. In my own heart of hearts I didn't feel that the curriculum matched up to what I need to be teaching and what's going to be tested, so I had a sense of guilt in my own self that I felt like I was just wasting a lot of time with them. So it made me feel kind of depressed T: and they didn't want to be there either apparently I: they did not want to be there, they knew they were different. 6th grade language teachers don't generally teach phonics and they're not tested on that, they're not tested on a lot of the grammar questions and things that we spent so much time on. Those students needed to have as much time as the other students who were getting two hours a day on curriculum that's tested. These students I think maybe 30 minutes, and that's just not enough, a mini-lesson, so I didn't feel successful with them, I don't think my test scores show any kind of reflection of what kind of teacher I can be or what kind of student they can be if they have a role model, a peer teacher or somebody to help them.	E
12. What advice would you give a new student who enrolls here? The advice is going to different depending on the student, where they came from, why they're here, what classes they're going to be taking. I normally tell them the same thing we tell the other students. You need to be organized you need to be friendly, you need to choose your friends carefully. And be respectful, I think we're very receiving especially this group of kids, they have big hearts and they've been really friendly.	O
13. Explain how one average day at this school would be for a teacher. Skipped	E
14. Describe your "dream" middle school and tell why this is the perfect school for you. I just have to say, I love it here, I don't know how we could perfect it.	E
15. What does it look and feel like? What do you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell? Skipped	S

16. What are the principals, students and teachers doing in this school? In the perfect middle school, there needs to be someone or two or three someones the buck stops here, especially with the students. Students can know that they're loved and that they can love even when they have a good healthy fear with someone and I think if you're in a situation with tons and tons of children and they have no fear of anyone or a fearful respect of someone then you're going to have chaos and you're going to have interruption and your learning environment is going to be effected. So my dream middle school is that the administrators understand that, are not afraid to discipline, but at the same time, use common sense with that. There are different situations. The administrators would be compassionate would support the teachers and stand behind them and just make it a healthy safe learning environment that's not interrupted.	S
17. How are people interacting with one another? Skipped	S
18. What advice would you give a new teacher who comes to work in the dream school? We had a mentoring team, we always just told them, you're in a great place, you're going to get lots of support. My advice is, if you have a question ask it. Because no one's going to look at you funny and we're going to find the answer for you so we're very supportive of new teachers and just ask.	E
19. Explain how one average day at the dream school would be for a teacher. Skipped	E
20. What are people doing in this school? Skipped	S
21. Tell me about the conversations between teachers and students. If I'm instructing, I'm talking about the instruction and sometimes they will bird walk a little bit with you and I let them do that a little bit, I think it makes them feel comfortable. Not taking away from the learning time, just so they feel like I care about what they have to say, I am interested in how they relate whatever it is we're learning to whatever it is to what they want to tell me, cause that kind of is a check of learning as well. If it's class change time, bus hall time, usually we talk about something, they like to taell me about things they've read, they like to tell me something they're doing with their family. Sometimes they ask me questions about myself. But they don't ask a lot of questions from me, they want to talk about themselves and sometimes that might come from they don't get that opportunity at home, I don't know but they like to tell me what they're doing, we like to talk about that.	S
22. Describe how class is taught, and what the teachers and students do at the dream school. Skipped	E

23. How is this school similar or different from your dream school? We have strong administration here, in a couple areas it could be a little stronger, in the discipline area, I know we have one administrator that is going to take care of business and that person really wears themselves out with it, so I guess if it needed to be better we would need to have a little more strength there. T: I know that it's very common in schools when there's more than one assistant principal to get that consistency, because just as teachers have their own style, administrators have their own style and if you send student a to this administrator and something happens but you know if the other administrator had handled it you might have gotten the satisfaction that you needed. That's something that because of human nature, that's a constant battle in schools. It doesn't matter what the handbook says, there's still room for interpretation and teachers feel support through the way their administrators discipline the kids, when that's the way they need help. I: and that's true because we try to handle everything we can here. We really do not send very many students to the office, especially my team, we just don't. We'll deal with a kid and be very long suffering with them unless it's something that's so blatant. Which doesn't happen all that often, now we worked together as a team, our school did to come up with standards for discipline so principals can be on the same team, if this happens, then this happens. It's been better this year than it has before	O
24. What do you think are the most important things middle school students need to be successful? Middle school is a time when students are coming out of feeling like it's ok to be a kid, it's ok to be momma's boy/girl, it's a time they're coming out of that and their goal is to be this strong and self-sufficient teenager, but they don't really have the skills for it emotionally, they think everyone is noticing every single thing that they do, everyone's looking at them. They're very hard on themselves, they're very hard on each other. So I think what 's very important is that a teacher understands that and can help her students to feel less self-conscious about things, definitely not to make a spectacle of them, show them that just because this has happened it's not the end of the world, cause emotionally speaking, I think we have teenagers and we see this with the suicide rate, there's no fixing it, it's over. I think that we really need to support in teaching them that it doesn't matter what's happened, there's a way that it can be handled, it's not going to effect the rest of your life.	K
25. How does it feel to be a middle school teacher in 2011? Right now, it feels very, very stressful because we feel very unappreciated. The children are still great, we still, most of the parents are still very supportive, we still love each other, but I think there are a lot of… I think we're being looked at as are you doing your job? We need to oversee that you're doing your job, are you teaching them what they need to be taught. I don't think they realize that it's not, it is about teaching in that, that is the most important, but there's a whole nother aspect to teaching a child than standing up and teaching a lesson T: and it's not measurable I: it isn't measurable in any possible way and to try to hold our livelihood and our salaries accountable to a test T: so you're thinking about the competitive salary that they're talking about and the tenure issue I: yes, I don't think it's fair to hold a teacher responsible who doesn't have a place to do homework or doesn't have any kind of stability at home, we can only do so much, at some point somebody else has got to step up and take responsibility, and I don't know where we're going to go with that. T: the feeling right now is that it's a pretty thankless job. I: it really is T: and the pressure, the kids have even noticed that there's tension that everybody's worried about scores and they're worried about the test	F

Verified by Interviewee: _____ (Initials) _____ (Date)

Appendix W: Sample Data from Student Interviews

Grade 6

Student	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
44	NM 6D Mercedes	first yr	good acad no sports sometimes sick TSA	some are fun a lot of classes no recess	fun (brown)	videos interactive thing hands on play jeopardy
50	GD 6D Donna	former homeschool	good grades here most soccer	like everything	nice she always helr doesn't get mad	front of class groups
49	AB 6D Beatrice	England been here 2 yrs	like quite fun responsible no inst no sports volley at home	kind teachers sweet sped tchr nice helps me I like the school	nice knows you pers nice explains stuff helps you	not sure lot of diff stuff talking videos interactive stuff

Student	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
43	NM 6D Micah	first yr	honors classes likes school violin mentor student council student rep math olympiad	Reach Tues wonderful read get caught up don't like that I like to figure out things with num	I've had a lot of all time? she liked my ide changed sched have to read	hands on work sheets like hands on be free time tutored feel special as t
52	JR 6D Raymond	since aug	pretty good gra miss one or two sports football basketball	organized common attitude	can't really	SKIP

Appendix X: Sample Data from Teacher Interview & Observation

Code	"Gordo	INT	OBS	"Lewis'	INT	OBS	"Micha	INT	OBS
Activity Based		x	x					x	
Authority Figure									
Advisory Period									
Approachable Teachers		x	x						
Available Resources									
Available Technology									
Before/After School Help								x	
Behavior Problems						x			
Basic Skills									
Coping Abilities									
Career Change									
Consistent Expectations									x
Corrective Feedback									x
Cooperative Grouping			x					x	x
Confident Instruction			x						
Clear Communication									x
Constructivist Methods									
Close Monitoring									x
Close Proximiity			x						x
Critical Thinking									
Data Driven									
Differentiated Instruction									
Distractions, student noise						x			
Difference in Principal									
Discussion w/students			x						
Extra Curricular Clubs									
Extra Curricular Interest									