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Teacher Attitudes and Practices that Support Student Learning

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

C. Travis Sutton

May 2014

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Dr. Virginia Foley

Dr. Pamela Scott

Keywords: Observation, Classroom, Discipline, Management, Punishment

## ABSTRACT

### Teacher Attitudes and Practices that Support Student Learning

by

C. Travis Sutton

Generally in today's classrooms educators have the responsibility to develop teaching practices that are best suited for a particular group of learners. Since the early days of 1-room schools, various teaching styles have been developed to accommodate a changing world. As the curriculum has broadened through the years, individual student needs have remained the focus as teachers have become more and more accountable for student learning.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate or identify how successful teachers manage their classrooms. It defines key student behavior issues that most teachers experience daily. The study further investigates the hypothesis that lesson planning and productive teaching with overall good student behavior is not a product of good luck or chance; it results from efforts made by caring teachers who aid learning for their student. I attempt to determine what the typical teacher does in efforts to reach the goal of effectively educating students and managing various issues that arise within the classroom setting simultaneously.

The study was conducted in a rural community within middle school grade levels. All teachers were interviewed and asked open-ended questions during the 2013-14 school year. Also, the teachers were observed in their actual classrooms. I examined the practices that enable them to teach. The teacher responses offered valuable information about perceptions pertaining to

excellent teaching, classroom management, and the relevance of teaching factors that enhance student learning.

Exerting extra effort toward minimizing classroom disruptions, while consistently providing a learning environment, requires an assertive approach in planning before the students enter the classroom. This research can provide all educators insight to such of an educational environment that has proven to be productive in today's complex world. These teaching attributes would better assure students upon their arrival to the classroom each day, a routinely excited, enthused, and caring educator.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family who has always supported me and my endeavors. I truly appreciate all of you!

To my parents Ronda and Ruby Sutton – thank you for everything you have done. You raised me with the understanding of the importance of an education. You set high expectations for me and constantly encouraged and supported me in my pursuits. I am thankful for the way I was raised, developing ideals that have helped me be the person I am today.

To my children Brock, Ember, and Bryce – you are such an inspiration to me. I have been blessed to be able to watch you grow and mature into the fine young adults you are and who are strong in your convictions and passionate about your future ambitions as well as your life in general. The people you encounter are lucky to have come in contact with you. What an example you are for others.

Finally, to my wife Amy – I do not know how I will ever be able to say thank you for all the inspiration you, Brock, Ember, and Bryce have provided. I am so blessed not only to have you as my wife but also as my best friend. I know at times you became frustrated due to the amount of time I spent on this research in order to seek my life passion. It is over now and my time and attention are yours again! You stood by me when I did not seem appreciative enough and pushed when I needed motivation during the completion of four degrees. I love you.

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To the Powell Valley Elementary School: I am proud to have been a part of this professional learning community. During the time in this degree program, we have celebrated many triumphs and consoled each other during various trouble and trials. More importantly, we have grown together as educational leaders.

Finally, to my committee: thank you does not seem to be enough. Dr. Scott, Dr. Foley, and Dr. Blankenship – each of you have shared your guidance and wisdom throughout the entire program. You have questioned and caused me to learn.

To my chair: Dr. Glover, you have been there for me from the initial planning stages of this research study. I have appreciated you, not only as an educator, but also as an advisor and encourager. You helped prompt my interest early in my days with the cohort by providing an idea of what I might want to research; for that I am grateful.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"Many instructional arrangements seem 'contrived,' but there is nothing wrong with that. It is the teacher's function to contrive conditions under which students learn. It has always been the task of formal education to set up behavior which would prove useful or enjoyable later in a student's life" ~ B. F. Skinner (as cited in Scribd, 2012)

It was the first day of Janet's 15-week student teaching assignment, a common requirement for perspective future teachers to obtain hands-on experience. During her last semester in college, she was prepared to begin by simply observing a science class for the first week and gradually assuming all the teaching responsibilities of the class for the remainder of the first half of the semester. Then, during the second half of the semester, she would move to another grade level to repeat the process and complete the student teacher requirement. This is another commonality for future teacher graduates within colleges and universities just prior to graduating. The overall process is intended to better prepare college students for a career in the teaching profession.

Throughout the first few days of observation she noticed that the various middle school students were seemingly eager to get everyone off task. Upon entering the science classroom the students seized opportunities to provoke class distractions or disruptions by talking loudly, essentially refusing to participate, and harassing other students. Janet's mentor teacher, Mr. Jones, seemed very well-liked by nearly all of the students. However, it frequently was only a matter of time before Mr. Jones would have to succumb to unruly classroom behavior or be forced to administer some type of student discipline that would perhaps consist of threats of

sitting a student in the hallway or sending the student to the principal's office for possible in-school suspension where parents may be contacted or other actions such as paddling administered.

Janet's college professor then encouraged her and all her other student teaching peers to make time to observe other classroom lessons at their placements. Therefore, she observed Ms. Smith's second period social studies class that was located just across the hall from Mr. Jones's class. Coincidentally, she observed the same group of students, but in this particular classroom setting there were far fewer interruptions. There she observed the students entering the classroom with minimal transitional time. She felt that the social studies teacher seemed to be just as well liked as Mr. Jones. However, there was an obvious difference in student behavior in Ms. Smith's classroom as compared to the behavior issues that were evident in Mr. Jones's class. Therefore, there was little reason for Ms. Smith to address any type of classroom behavior issues during the time Janet observed the social studies classroom.

Janet was surprised at the difference in the attitudes of the same students within the two separate classes. She considered and was satisfied that factors such as the gender of the tenured teachers or subject content had very little effect on the differences in student behavior. She guessed that perhaps planning and classroom management could possibly have had the greatest effect on the students' behavior.

Janet consulted with her colleagues throughout the education department. They all concurred that depending on which teachers that were being observed within the schools, students behaved differently. All of her colleagues suggested that multiple factors may have contributed to the different ways certain students acted and performed for various teachers. The student teachers agreed that from both a student perspective and a teacher perspective the reason

for the better student behavior may have appeared subtle. However, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages for the teachers as well as the students during the learning process.

### Statement of the Problem

My experiences as an assistant school principal along with conversations with other school administrators suggest that the scenario presented is characteristic of the variation in the quality of teaching in many schools. Teaching is a very challenging profession and not all teachers are equally effective. One of the most important challenges is preventing student behaviors that interfere with learning (Feldmann, 2001; McKinney, 2005; Seidman, 2005).

Disruptive classroom behavior may include sleeping in class, disruptions or distractions from electronic devices such as cell phones or pagers, entering class late or leaving early (without permission), challenging a teacher's authority, arguing with other students, packing up early, eating or drinking in class without permission, threats, harassment, physical altercations that draw the teacher or the students' attention away from the lesson, and failing to participate in class activities. Additionally, bullying and harassment outside the classroom interfere with learning but may be more difficult for the teacher to detect. Students may not think that there is anything wrong with some of these types of behavior.

Disruptive behavior and the way they are handled have played a critical role in the success or failure of teaching careers (Tom, 1998). Some teachers may seem to ignore disruptive behavior even though discipline issues negatively affect faculty, students, and school administration. Some faculty may have become disappointed with their career choice and even dread teaching (Meyers, 2003). Morrisette (2001) found that classroom disruption has contributed to additional faculty feelings of stress, discontent, and eventual burnout.

I attempted to identify the classroom management practices that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. Data were collected through the findings of this study that may benefit teachers and identify further research possibilities.

### Limitations

The school selected for this study is a small, rural, K-8 school. The school is divided into two totally separate buildings for middle school students and primary school students. Each building has its own gymnasium, library, and cafeteria. The findings of this study should not be generalized for other sites although professionals in other schools may find some value in the study. Findings of this qualitative study were limited to perceptions of the teachers interviewed or observed and interpreted by the researcher who was currently the assistant principal of the school.

A potential limitation of this study involves my relationship with the study's participants. I am the assistant principal in the school. In order to collect data that truly represent the ideas and beliefs of teachers; I must take great care in assuring the teachers who are interviewed that I will be focusing my research on positive attributes of effective classroom teachers. Therefore, I informed the teachers about how they were chosen to participate, explaining how the selection process did not involve me. It solely involved the school principal who conducted an examination of teacher evaluations, observations, and walk-throughs to determine the best classroom teachers. The school principal created a list of what he believed to be 10 of the most excellent teachers. Then randomly, six participants were chosen from the principal's list of 10 for this research study.

### Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What teacher attitudes positively influence student learning?
2. What teacher practices positively influence student learning?
3. What teacher attitudes negatively influence student learning?
4. What teacher practices negatively influence student learning?

### Definitions of Terms

Certain terminology must be understood to relay the findings of this study. The following is a list of such terms.

- *Attribute*: a usually good quality or feature that someone or something has (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Bullying*: the act of intimidating a weaker person to make them do something (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Classroom Disruption*: to cause (classroom) to be unable to continue in the normal way (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Conflict*: opposition between two simultaneous but incompatible feelings (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Core Curriculum*: a set of courses that are considered basic and essential for future classwork or graduation (math, science, English, and social studies) (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Discipline*: a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Discipline Issue*: activity that affects rules that govern conduct or activity (Kindiki, 2009).

- *First to the Top*: Tennessee's plan to include projects and initiatives that target multiple areas of school reform but share a single goal: improving student performance (Tennessee Department of Education, 2012).
- *General Curriculum*: the courses that are taught by a school, college, etc. (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Inclusion*: the placement of special education students in a classroom with general education students with the necessary accommodations and services needed (Special Education Terms and Definitions, 2009).
- *Student Incentive*: something that incites or has a tendency to incite to determination or action (of a student) (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)*: to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).
- *No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*: (NCLB) a federal mandate that provides school choice, flexibility, and accountability in order to lessen the achievement gap so that no child is left behind.
- *Pedagogy*: the art, science, or profession of teaching (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

- *Practices*: a method, procedure, process, or rule used in a particular field or profession; a set of these regarded as standard; to do something again and again in order to become better at it (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Punishment*: rough physical treatment; the infliction or imposition of a penalty as retribution for an offense (Merriam-Webster, 2012).
- *Race to the Top*: a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:
  - Adopting standards and assessments
  - Building data
  - Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals
  - Turning around or improving achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).
- *TEAM*: Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model, a teacher evaluation rubric (team-tn.org).
- *Victim*: A person harmed, injured, or who suffers as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action; a person who has been attacked, injured, robbed, or killed by someone else (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present a theoretical examination of classroom management practices. The topics covered are:

- Classroom Management Problem
- Student Behaviors that Interfere with Learning
- Problem of Student Discipline Issues
- Types of Student Discipline Issues
- Bullying and Gender
- Effects of Bullying
- Social Infrastructure
- Characteristics of Discipline Issues
- Implications
- Moral/Ethical
- Legal Dimensions of the Problem
- Corporal Punishment
- Corporal Punishment in Schools
- Perceived Pros and Cons of Corporal Punishment
- Constructivist Theory
- Practical Constructivism – Constructivism Applied
- Tactical examples
- Contemporary Teaching Qualities
- School Climate

- Joint Efforts
- Summary

### Classroom Management Problem

At any given moment teachers must choose which actions and interactions should receive their attention within the classroom. This spontaneous type of immediate decision-making makes teaching much more difficult than is commonly assumed (Seidman, 2005). Doyle (1986) contended that classrooms are difficult to manage because they are multidimensional, simultaneous, and unpredictable for teachers. To complicate matters further the classroom environment is immediate public and creates a situation wherein teachers must immediately perform right then, right there, and in full view of everyone (Seidman, 2005).

Classroom disruption as defined in this study is behavior that a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the learning process. Generally, disruptive behavior interferes with the educator's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instruction. Beginning in the 1980s with a focus on Scandinavia, Olweus (2003) was one of the first 20<sup>th</sup> century researchers to study such classroom disruptions consisting of instances of inappropriate student behavior in schools and specifically addressed bullying. He concluded that bullying was not merely linked to hormone levels regardless of age, and that most bullies had average or better than average self-esteem.

Disruptive behaviors that result in managing student behavior during the school day have been found to be quite common in schools. For example, a national study of sixth graders discovered that 13% of students reported having been bullied while 10% reported bullying someone else (Nansel et al., 2001). A study of third graders showed that the prevalence of such a discipline issue more than doubled with 40% reporting being the victims of physical or verbal

harassment (Silvernail, Thompson, Yang, & Kopp, 2000). Beginning as young as kindergarten age, at least half of the children reported being victimized in some form (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). Most researchers agree that victims of this type of student behavior suffer serious emotional consequences ranging from depression to their own serious aggression (Chamberlain, 2003), and the inability to manage student behavior is a major issue among new teachers (Kaya, Lundeen, & Wolfgang, 2010).

Methods of strict management of student behavior such as corporal punishment have not been successful in eliminating occurrences of unacceptable issues in our schools (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). Nearly all research promotes more than one specific preventive program to curb the problem. Furthermore, corporal punishment does not promote a teachable alternative, may cause violent behavior, or result in psychological damage to the recipient. Scholarly publications have consistently identified preventive, collaborative, and instructional methods as promising means to reduce bullying in the educational setting (Skiba & Peterson, 2003).

Matthews (1998) said that the most effective classroom environment is one in which there is a sense of trust, advocacy for the student, engaging learning activities, and a sense of regular adventure. Students should be encouraged to actualize, to participate, and to think of their classroom as a community. Because each individual has a unique learning style, classroom success is based on flexibility, the willingness to adapt and evolve on a moment's notice, and taking the idea smoothly to a higher degree while teaching. Likely in schools today, classroom management remains challenging at almost every level. In its base form it is the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly and that learning is accomplished with a minimum of interruptions (Matthews, 1998).

Schneider (2003) reported that teachers seem increasingly frustrated by the difficulties of classroom management. The U.S. National Educational Association noted that almost 40% of teachers surveyed said that, given the choice, they would probably not go into teaching again because of “negative student attitudes and discipline” and their lack of freedom in managing their classes (Schneider, 2003, p. 1). Perhaps providing a school–university partnership as well as more lessons and advice on handling specific classroom management situations could be an effective attempt to better prepare new teachers (Kaya et al., 2010). According to Matthews (1998) many teachers indicated they no longer felt they were in control of their own classrooms. The use of corporal punishment was not only unfashionable but in many cases illegal and not a successful strategy. A large majority of parents favored student rights. However, they understood that ignoring the expertise and authority of the classroom teacher would lead to an unsupportive environment for the teacher (Matthews, 1998).

#### Student Behaviors that Interfere with Learning

Student behavior issues are widespread. For example, schools have reported that between 13% to 40% of students have been identified as victims of bullying or exhibiting inappropriate classroom behavior. Like bullying, other serious discipline issues such as fighting, vandalism, threats, or harassment are most frequent in middle and secondary schools, and these incidents often turn into more serious violent acts. Slightly over 1% of students nationally reported having been physically assaulted, while the odds of students getting into a physical fight are one in eight (Bucher & Manning, 2003). Alarming, 1 in 12 students who stay home from school does so because of a fear of being bullied (Bucher & Manning, 2003).

The number of less serious offenses is much greater. A study by Boulton, Trueman, and Flemington (2002) showed the following for one school district: for the seventh grade 88.2% of

females and 43.5% of males reported calling someone names during the previous week, while 100% of females and 56.5% of males report laughing at someone. The general pattern found in this research indicates that for grades 7 through 10, 75.3% of all students reported calling someone names, 48.8% of students reported leaving someone out, 75.3% reported laughing at someone, 40% reported hitting or pushing someone, 40.6% reported spreading false stories, 31.8% reported stealing, 37.1% reported threatening someone, and 32.4% reported forcing a fellow student to do something against his or her will. This research is consistent with much research in that it contains high levels of reported engagement in specific forms of school related discipline issues. Dake, Price, and Telljohann (2003) suggest that 19% of elementary students in the United States report being bullied by another student as a school discipline issue.

Additionally, the percentage of these types of student behavior issues had increased from 1980 until 2001. In a 1980 survey Olweus found that 16% of students age 8 to 16 were involved with bullying problems, 7% as bullies and 9% as victims. In 2001 Olweus as a leader of a government-initiated national initiative implementing a bullying preventative program agreed with further research that the percentage of students victimized had increased to approximately 50% and the number of students bullying had increased drastically to 65%. Amundsen and Ravndal (2010) suggest that this issue has not been fixed.

### Problem of Student Discipline Issues

To be effective in the prevention of various student discipline issues, it would make sense for educators to understand these problems. Therefore, educators need to assess the problem(s). Educators need to understand the extent of the associated social, emotional, psychological, educational, and physical problems that accompany student discipline issues. Seriously unacceptable student behavior, according to Olweus (2003), is evident even in preschool with the

problem peaking in middle school. It is important, therefore, that interventions be implemented as early as possible. The types of inappropriate student behavior change with development and encompass many social systems. Peers play a dominant role in both supporting such things as bullying and promoting a society of aggression. They may likewise play an important role in reducing the occurrence of such discipline issues if their influence is channeled correctly (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003).

America's public education system has historically been expected to lead to the development of self-discipline in children. Many educational researchers examine the way teachers have been successful in identifying self-discipline problems in children (Critchley & Sanson, 2006). Using an authoritative leadership style, effective classroom management, and a positive school climate have been identified as being effective in reducing the occurrences of certain discipline issues (Critchley & Sanson, 2006). Smith (2003) suggested that teachers or schools that subscribe to the use of corporal punishment are not only less effective but also lower the positive atmosphere of the entire educational process for everyone involved.

#### Types of Student Discipline Issues

Student discipline problems encompass a range of issues. They often result in a cause-and-effect relationship in which power or perceived power is channeled as aggression that becomes directed at another and causes some form of physical, emotional, social, or psychological suffering. Olweus (2003) attempted to define such discipline issues more simply as when a student is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students and teachers. Variation existed among researchers and educators as to what are classified as inappropriate student behavior. Some common types are: being called names, being left out of activities, being ridiculed, being hit or pushed, having false rumors spread,

having belongings stolen, being threatened, and being forced to engage in behaviors (Boulton et al., 2002). Chamberlain (2003) indicated that even in elementary schools the most common verbal abuse involves being called derogatory sexual terms. More recently e-mail and online activities have been considered possible discipline issues that must be addressed. All of these types of inappropriate behaviors can at any time result in a school disruption or distraction that becomes a discipline issue to be addressed on an average school day (De Paul, Asla, Perez-Albeniz, & de Cadiz, 2006).

Regardless of the type of student discipline issues that occur at school, research has clearly indicated that bullying specifically entails an imbalance in strength and that the victims have difficulty defending themselves (Critchley & Sanson, 2006). Further, most bullying is proactive, meaning that the aggressive behavior on the part of the bully occurs without provocation from the victim (Olweus, 2003). Many researchers make a distinction between indirect and direct types of discipline issues. Olweus (2003) defines direct bullying as “relatively open attacks on the victim,” while indirect bullying is “social isolation and exclusion from a group” (p. 10).

### Bullying and Gender

Studies such as one conducted by Boulton et al. (2002) have shown that there are differences in male and female participation in bullying and especially between direct and indirect forms of bullying. Their study among 8-, 11-, and 15-year-olds showed that there was a clear trend in general for pupils aged 11 to 15 to use less physical forms of bullying. Boys used more direct physical assault in all age groups, especially at 11 and 15. Conversely, girls aged 11 and 15 used more indirect aggression than the male counterparts. Both boys and girls used a similar level of direct verbal aggression.

Another study by Ahmad and Smith (1994) found that the most common form of bullying – direct, verbal name calling – occurred with very little sex distinction. The greatest distinctions between the sexes were found to be in secondary school when girls had decreased direct physical bullying that was still common among boys. Girls, however, had increased their involvement in indirect forms of bullying primarily through spreading rumors behind others’ backs. Other types of indirect aggression in which girls actively participate include gossiping, suggesting shunning of another person, and becoming friends with another person as revenge.

Boulton et al. (2002) specifically studied the difference in male and female bullying in grades 7-10 in the following categories: calling names, excluding others, laughing at others, hitting and pushing, telling lies, stealing, threatening, and forcing behaviors. In grade 7 female participation percentages in all bullying acts were higher than that of male participation with name calling being the highest at 88.2% female participation and 43.5% male participation. By grade 10 the male participation in name calling had risen to 88.2% while female participation had risen to 93.3%.

Additionally, research suggests that there is some variation in the genders as to bullies and victims. A study by Whitney and Smith (1993) found that boys are generally bullied by boys but not by girls. Girls reported being bullied equally by both boys and girls. One reason for this could be that victims are almost always physically weaker and smaller than the bully; therefore, because girls usually have these attributes they do not generally bully boys.

### Effects of Bullying

The effects of bullying on both the victim and the bully are highly negative. In addition to an increased risk for depression and suicidal thoughts, loneliness increases while self-esteem decreases. Whitney and Smith (1993) note that these factors may be both a consequence and a

cause of bullying, citing it as a reciprocal relationship. Anxiety is another effect of bullying, and although research on the anxiety levels of the bully is inconclusive, the victims are 3.2 to 4.2 times more likely to suffer symptoms of anxiety than those who were not involved in bullying (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). Even more serious results were found in a Finnish study wherein researchers reported that bullies were more likely to suffer from diagnosable psychiatric disorders (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001).

Few studies have been conducted on the relationship of bullying and physical health, but one researcher found significantly greater instances of physical health symptoms among victims of bullying than among nonbullied students (Williams, Chambers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996). Williams et al. (1996) concluded that students who were bullied were more likely to wet the bed, have trouble sleeping, and experience more than occasional headaches and stomachaches. There were more psychosomatic symptoms reported such as neck and shoulder pain, back pain, irritation, tantrums, and fatigue.

Bullying has been found to cause other behavioral and academic problems as well. Frequent problems are conduct issues in school, fighting, weapon carrying, theft, property damage, substance abuse, cheating, and other illegal activities (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). Compared to nonbullying students, bullies were more likely to be involved in behaviors such as alcohol abuse, tobacco use, and fighting. Also, there exists a significant relationship between bullying others and weapon carrying, cheating on tests, stealing, vandalism, trouble with the police, and skipping school (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). Victims were also found to be likely to have high levels of absenteeism and were more likely to misbehave (Haynie et al., 2001).

### Social Infrastructure

Most instances of student discipline issues can be attributed to social issues that create conflict between the participants as well as their teachers and parents. Many of these issues have a foundation in the child's home (Mishna, 2003). Often, students may seek to avoid abusive situations by becoming abusers themselves. Along with the effects of low social status, rejection by peers may leave students who have some form of learning disorder unprotected and susceptible to experiencing inappropriate classroom behaviors (Mishna, 2003). Some students will disrupt the classroom to establish limits in an attempt to create a sense of consistency when there is none offered at home. Negative attention or even punishment may seem better to some students than no attention at all (Schneider, 2003).

Whether male or female, discipline-problem students tend to have had troubled backgrounds. They have had more family issues such as a history of physical or emotional abuse or inconsistent behavior at home. However, age has not appeared to be a factor as younger children are not any more vulnerable to becoming a discipline-problem student than are older children (Johnson et al., 2002). Research has presented interesting information on the family environment of participants of discipline issues. Bond et al. (2001) asserted that socioeconomic status, parental level of education, and family composition (divorced or remarried) have not been significant factors associated with students who cause problems. However, he found a relationship showing that children of lower socioeconomic status were more likely to be students who are victims of students who cause problems. Additionally, Bond et al. (2001) concluded that students from separated or divorced families were 1.5 times more likely to become bullying victims than those whose families were intact.

Baldry and Farrington (2000) report that parenting styles may also be associated with bullying behavior; for example, bullies were 1.65 times more likely to come from homes where the parents practiced authoritarian styles of child-rearing as opposed to children whose parents practiced a more participatory style. Parents who were demanding and allowed their children few opportunities to control social circumstances were more likely to have children who were victims of bullies (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001).

Supportive parenting has been shown to be associated with lower levels of bullying. Involvement from the father slightly decreases the likelihood of a child being a victim of bullying. Relationships characterized by extreme parent-child closeness, however, have been shown to be related to higher levels of victimization, especially in boys. Children from harsh home environments are more likely to be bullies than children who are from nurturing home environments. Children from abusive homes were more likely to become bullies and victims. Additionally, children who were bullies or victims experienced 25% more physical mistreatment and 9% more emotional mistreatment than children who did not participate in bullying (Leff, 1999).

Bullies are frequently children who have been bullied themselves. Sometimes, they are children who are experiencing life situations with which they are unable to cope, leaving them feeling helpless and out of control (Heinrichs, 2003). They may be children with poor social skills who do not fit in with their peers or who cannot meet the expectations of family or school. They misbehave to feel empowered, competent, successful, and in control (Hoffman & Hutchinson, 2009).

Children who are not victims of bullying tend to possess better social skills. They tend to possess some form of conflict management or resolution skills as well. They are more assertive

without being too aggressive or appearing confrontational. They are quick to offer compromises and alternative solutions to social problems. They tend to be more aware of people's feelings and are the children who can be most helpful in resolving disputes (Dake et al., 2003).

Dake et al. (2003) suggest that a relationship exists between bullying and educational issues such as academic achievement, student bonding, and absenteeism. Skiba and Peterson (2003) concluded that bullies are less academically competent than those who do not bully. Also, students who participated in bullying activities were significantly less likely to be well-adjusted in school and report high levels of bonding. Alienation is a significant factor related to students who bully. When focusing on the classroom itself, educators should realize that as the academic bar is raised, students with behavioral problems may turn to off-task or disruptive behavior in order to cope with a lack of academic ability or feelings of inadequacy. Some students may want to interfere with other students' learning because they think they cannot compete or keep up with their classmates. Physical punishment is not a feasible answer to this type of behavior as such treatment may only harm the student psychologically and socially. Instead, educating students about proper behavior expectations is the best course of action for insuring that these children do not fail socially or academically (Skiba & Peterson, 2003).

#### Characteristics of Discipline Issues

Researchers have presented conflicting ideas regarding the physical characteristics of students who involve themselves in inappropriate behavior. Olweus (2003) found in a study conducted in 1973 that personal hygiene, obesity, and physical disabilities were unrelated to victimization. His study reported that the only physical characteristic related to students being harassed by other students was stature: the victims were smaller and weaker than students who

were not bullied. Contrary research by Lowenstein (1978) found that victims were considered both less attractive and had more physical disabilities than those who were not harassed.

A number of studies have also been conducted on the psychological characteristics of students who become discipline issues. Such research suggests that children who are involved in discipline problems are at risk for a variety of mental disorders, the most common being depression (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005). Compared to children who do not cause discipline problems, students that did were 2.8 to 4.3 times more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms, while students who become part of school discipline issues such as bullying were also 4.0 times more likely to report severe suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino, M. Rimpela, Marttunen, A. Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999). An important finding regarding interpersonal relationships was that students who were rated as popular by other students were less likely to be drawn into discipline issues by other students (Mynard, Joseph, & Alexander, 2000). Also, a behavior management system that emphasizes positive reinforcement may be the key to students making appropriate choices regarding classroom behavior (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005).

### Implications

Classroom interruptions and student distractions are two general examples of issues teachers commonly face. Amundsen and Ravndal (2010) suggested a more positive approach to classroom management. For example, instead of expecting some children to fail by starting lessons with, "How many know this," the teacher could start the model with definitions on the board or overhead projector. An introduction such as, "Today we are going to learn about x, y, and z. I will bet some of you have experience in x, y, and z and we will use that experience in a bit." Then follow this, as much as feasible depending on grade level, with the Bloom model to move continually from the basic set of cognition (rote) to higher and higher levels of questions

leading to the analysis and synthesis of material. Look more for the mode of thought than the answer as many questions have multiple correct views and be sure to praise original thinking that will encourage children to comment. If the teacher says, “No, that’s not right,” there is an implication of criticism and futility. Finally, understanding that we live in a litigious environment, set up fair but enforceable rules and communicate these clearly to students and parents during open house or conferences. Firm but fair and always consistent is a better rule for long-term success (Amundsen & Ravndal, 2010).

Amundsen and Ravndal (2010) suggested a more positive approach to classroom management. To attempt to minimize these type of issues and begin the process of teaching fairness, empathy, and better communication within the classroom, a teacher might begin each school year with the formation of a room constitution that outlines behavioral rules, respect issues, limits, and consequences. If the students participate in a structured model such as this, they are more apt to follow those behaviors and accept the process (Amundsen & Ravndal, 2010).

### Moral and Ethical

Most individuals by about age 5 (school age in most countries) have a very basic understanding that there are consequences for their particular actions. Breaking rules, for instance, results in punishment, whereas doing an excellent job on something usually results in a reward. In contemporary schools classroom management may emphasize punishment or consequences and others may emphasize correct behavior. Through constructivism individuals may change the manner in which they view themselves, their universe, and their place in the universe. Therefore, intimidation and sarcasm or belittling a student can allow a teacher to control a classroom by removing social power from a student or students. These are extreme practices that are still used

in some areas because they tend to produce short-term results and increase external discipline, rather than self-discipline, within the class (Foote, 1999).

One might ask why a teacher would use a negative or preventative model instead of motivating the student in a way that ensures success and mitigates negative behavior before it starts? There are times when children may need a time out, or, if particularly disruptive, have play time taken away. Covey (2004) suggested that by emphasizing the positive by saying for example, “You put a lot of work into this,” “Thank you for sitting quietly,” or “Yes, that’s right, what else could you add here,” one has a far better chance of modifying and rewarding positive behavior rather than punishing bad behavior. More recent studies concur that a teacher can increase good behavior and creativity within the classroom by patterning positive and respectful behavior (Covey, 2004).

#### Legal Dimensions of the Problem

What would a teacher do if students came to school wearing something that signaled a protest to the war in Afghanistan or a tee-shirt with an antigovernmental picture or slogan? Would the teacher refer the matter to the administration for decision and would the administration then react based on what might be predicted or anticipated to happen? In fact, does a prohibition against the wearing of a clothing item as a form of symbolic protest violate the First Amendment’s protection of freedom of speech?

In 1965 and early 1966 in the Des Moines Independent Community School District this scenario happened. Upon learning of their intent the administration resolved that all students wearing any armbands be asked to remove them or face suspension. When the Tinker and Eckhardt students refused to remove them, they were suspended. Des Moines argued that school officials had the right within the structure of the school to enforce rules and regulations that were

designed to keep order and were in line with other rules for the school grounds. Tinker's side, in turn, argued that the First Amendment applies to public schools and that in order to ban such freedom of expression the school would need to demonstrate factually that the behavior was indeed disruptive to the school environment.

In a 7 to 2 vote the Court ruled that the wearing of armbands was "closely akin to pure speech" and protected by the Constitution. The district also failed to show that the forbidden conduct would interfere substantially with appropriate school discipline or activities (*Tinker v Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 1969).

The *Tinker* case involved teachers and administrators who alleged that students should not wear certain items to school and that those items cause undue disruption in the class. With the rules imposed by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) and the *Race to the Top Act* (2011) as well as the standardized testing that requires educators to be accountable for a certain level of instruction within the classroom, teachers may want to question how learning can occur if students are wearing pornographic or offensive clothing or messages that upset other students. *Tinker* set a precedent regarding the Constitutional rights of students within the schools, but some might ask, "What about the right to an education faced by other students in the classroom?" (Moser, 2009).

The trend in state court and lower federal court decisions has been that classroom management is important enough that clothing depicting unsavory or distracting material (bigotry, sexual acts) is inappropriate for the educational experience, is not protected under the First Amendment, and can be banned from the classroom. One response to this situation is enforcing a school dress code or requiring school uniforms. One can debate the efficacy of these provisions but the basic difference is that the *Tinker* case was classified as a nonoffensive protest

(a black armband) and as a Constitutional right. However, blatantly offensive images or clothing that hinders learning is unproductive and schools have a clear right to regulate that behavior according to state court and lower federal court decisions.

### Corporal Punishment

Perhaps there is no consensus about the definition of corporal punishment (Vockell, 1991). However, in regard to schools according to Vockell (1991) the term applies to the presentation of an unpleasant stimulus contingent upon some behavior or the infliction of physical pain contingent on the occurrence of misbehavior. Generally, teachers may see this as a traditional alternative or method to help manage a classroom. Most people may think of corporal punishment as spanking or paddling, but the definition actually encompasses a broad number of punishments that include forcing students to write sentences or making athletes run excessive drills in basketball practice. Advocates of corporal punishment argue that it must also be *contingent*, meaning that the recipient must see the cause-and-effect relationship between their bad behavior and the punishment inflicted. Punishment is the contingent presentation of an unpleasant situation.

Perhaps corporal punishment is used frequently in both homes and schools nationwide, but as Johns and McNaughton (1990) point out, even with this Biblical principle many educators and parents argue that corporal punishment should not be an acceptable method of school discipline. Perhaps attitudes have changed since 2001; however, statistics show that 94% of parents use corporal punishment at home (Straus, 2001). A more current statistic regarding the use of corporal punishment at home was not found.

## Corporal Punishment in Schools

Corporal punishment has historically been an accepted method for addressing student behavioral issues in the United States and has been the popular method particularly in southern United States. This is evident through a variety of court cases involving corporal punishment. The 1977 Supreme Court case, *Ingraham v. Wright*, helped to determine the legalities of corporal punishment. Students argued that the paddlings were unconstitutional according to the Eighth Amendment. The court ruled against them and stated that paddling a student on the bottom in the presence of witnesses was not cruel and unusual punishment, thus making it legal to inflict corporal punishment on students (Hinchey, 2004). In a more recent case, *Wofford v. Evans*, the court ruled that a student may have corporal punishment administered without notice and that it does not violate the right to due process (Brooks, 2005). *Durante Neal, Eugene Neal, et al. v. Fulton County Board of Education* heard in Atlanta in 2000 upheld this decision (Barnes, 2003).

Hyman (1996) explained that 29 states have forbid the use of corporal punishment since 1976. Following the Wright ruling in 1977 researchers such as Vockell (1991) conducted studies on the effects of corporal punishment to demonstrate that the Court's decision was based on faulty assumptions about demographics and learning. Further study convinced many leaders and policymakers that the use of corporal punishment is both ineffective and inappropriate. Corporal punishment has been banished in the affluent suburbs, while instances are more common in the South where the ratio of poor children is higher (Stevahn, 2004). Southern states alone comprise the top six states with the highest percentage of students receiving corporal punishment ("States too slow," 2002).

### Perceived Pros and Cons of Corporal Punishment

A perception of corporal punishment seems to be that the recipient will view it as unpleasant. However, advocates argue that it may serve as a deterrent for unacceptable behaviors because of its unpleasant nature. A second perceived advantage is that corporal punishment can be administered and completed quickly. Punishments such as detention or in-school suspension remove the disruptive behavior from the learning environment. However, such punishments can take time and may not always be viewed as negative by the recipient. Additionally, students in schools where corporal punishment is employed know what will happen if they misbehave; there is no ambiguity about the consequences (Vockell, 1991).

There are also a number of perceived disadvantages of corporal punishment, the first being the fact that researchers state that the punishment is likely not to be related to the misbehavior (Chamberlain, 2003). Inappropriate behaviors – looking out the window, not turning in homework, talking rudely to the teacher – are not likely to be cured by being paddled. Adults often engage in these types of behaviors and receive no punishment for them. Additionally, as children grow older and mature they can understand consequences and corporal punishment becomes less necessary (Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006).

### Constructivist Theory

This study is grounded in a constructivist philosophical framework. Constructivism provides an understanding of how the pedagogical process can function successfully and allow for an accurate assessment of the level of discipline and management skills needed by a teacher. A constructivist framework provides a template or structure from which to base our assumptions and to formulate the reasons for our decisions and ideas.

Constructivist theories also provide a framework for analyzing the data collected in this study. Therefore, constructivism helps explain learning and knowledge as a product of experience. This more complex idea has origins in the actual learning process – not simply just rote memorization (Kim, 2005). Social constructivism represents students as having individual needs based on their unique backgrounds. Dougiamas (1998) suggested that individual needs are quite complex, different, and require and benefit from a viewpoint that supports their uniqueness as part of the overall learning experience.

This more complex way of learning presented by Dougiamas (1998) implied that there is not one truth that is universal but rather an individual and unique truth that students (individuals) acquire based on their worldview, instruction, and experimentation. The teacher is the guide but the student is the one actually responsible for learning because no one can force someone to learn. Instead, the teacher is a person who helps make the learning process more robust, but the student remains actively involved.

There are many constructivists within the pedagogical and psychological fields: Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Yuri Bronfenbrenner. Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) is a theory that suggests learners can be challenged to extend their ways of learning. This can be accomplished by extending their activities somewhat beyond their comfort levels as a way to enable learning and extend knowledge, ability, and skills. By experiencing the successful completion of challenging activities, learners gain self-confidence and motivation that guide them to even more complex challenges (Matthews, 1998). While this rather broad concept of social constructivism is the most commonly used rubric for the theory according to Matthews (1998), there are other theoretical aspects that are useful in the art of teaching:

- Trivial constructivism – the most basic form of the theory, principally an outgrowth of the work of Piaget who had the idea that knowledge is actively created by the learner not passively received from the environment. Prior knowledge is essential, and interaction with the environment part of the learning process. (Gordon, 2008)
- Radical constructivism – adds a second principle to trivial constructivism and does so more abstractly without viable interpretations of experience. The student, however, does not necessarily construct knowledge of a real world. This is in response to the idea that each person expresses a different reality and needs to find shared meanings between people. A simple explanation shows that the color red is interpretive, yet we can find a view of red that is agreeable so we can discuss that color and use social and cultural conventions with which to identify and learn about color. (Hardy, 1997)
- Cultural constructivism – A wider view of the universe takes learning into a situation in which the *ecology* of the individual (e.g., customs, religion, biology, tools, and language) is part of the learning experience. The tools we use affect the way we think; for example, using a label on a folder saves long explanations, telephones change the nature of conversation, and the Internet changes the way we communicate globally. Cultures change and, therefore, cultural constructivism would be evolving and would focus on the changing process. (Oxford, 1997; Phillips, 1995)
- Critical constructivism – This theory identifies the learner as being suspended between a mix of cultural, environmental, social, and political influences. It also refutes cold reason (knowledge as external truth) and hard control (teacher’s role as a controller locking students into their version of culture). These ideas make a classroom a journey into prior

knowledge, regardless where it may have originated, rather than knowledge that has been available and accepted completely by the learner. (Taylor, 1998)

If we think about constructivism as a pedagogical theory of the classroom, we can also think of it as a basic theory of communication. For hundreds of years, instructors have stood in front of a podium and lectured to students perhaps unaware of the background, interest level, or understanding of the class. The classes were structured around an outline from the professor's perception and often resulted in ambiguity and uncertainty on the part of the student. Students learned to reiterate and provide rote answers based on what they guessed the professor wanted or what the grading criteria might be.

In contrast, the constructivist approach focuses teacher attention on the learning needs of students because the outcome of the learning process is more important than delivery of content. The means of getting an answer to a problem can be more of a gradual or developing process for the learner. Concepts presented by the teacher clearly define different paths towards learning. Suping, (2003) referred to this as *value added learning* in that it requires all participants to become involved equally in the process of the acquisition and understanding of knowledge through more than one avenue.

#### Practical Constructivism – Constructivism Applied

More recently some have considered how cognition interacts with learning particularly when dealing with classroom issues such as behavior and learning theory. The exciting thing about these developments is that they open up a number of multidisciplinary ideas that, when considered together, give a better understanding of the ways students interact and react (e.g., sociology, anthropology, psychology, ethnic studies, and others).

Jeremiah (2009) suggests that a particular strength of using a multidisciplinary approach to the subject of classroom management is that it allows an alternate way to look at situations and allows one to synthesize many events that may be happening so that one might find techniques to handle larger issues more effectively. In many ways this is in complete contrast to a biochemical model of cognition (explaining thought and behavior through chemical reactions that can be quantitatively measured) (Jeremiah, 2009).

Also, according to Jeremiah (2009) the field of cognitive science is multidisciplinary by its very nature. It includes the basic theories of psychology as well as the more modern disciplines of neuroscience, anthropology (particularly in relation to how humans relate), linguistics, and artificial intelligence. Cognitive scientists are interested in mental structures and processes of the mind; cognitive science incorporates concepts and methods from philosophy and cognitive psychology, whereas behaviorism dominated the psychological sciences during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Johnson-Laird (2009) has attempted more rigorous definitions of cognitive science. A computational view emphasizes that cognitive science, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, tries to clarify the workings of the mind by treating them as computations – not necessarily of the sort that is carried out by the digital computer but of a sort that lies within a broader theory of computation that may appear less logical and perhaps more humanistic (Johnson-Laird, 2009).

One of the founders of learning theory, particularly as it relates to classroom interaction, is Jean Piaget. According to McLeod (2009) Piaget saw classroom learning and interaction as a more biological way of managing a particular kind of environment successfully – in this case, the

classroom. Essentially, his ideas are based on two biological operations: organization and adaptation.

Humans organize their observations into a hierarchy of meaning such as important, not important, marginally important, and vital. Adaptation is the tendency to adjust to the environment and is a process by which we create matches between our original observations and new ones that might not seem logical at first but provide new solutions to unique problems. This for Piaget was a crucial difference in human development and one that allows *schemas* (original observations and conceptions) to change and evolve based on environmental stimuli (Schickendanz, 2001).

Yuri Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) developed an ecological approach. His early background in developmental psychology thrust him into working with the U.S. Army during World War II where he found that the environment was the most important factor in shaping human behavior.

For Bronfenbrenner, however, the development of children is very complex and interactive. It is fluid in the sense of time and place and far more interdependent upon societal and cultural modeling than its predecessors. One can think of Bronfenbrenner as a sociological Stephen Hawking – explaining the very minute and how it works with the very large. Hawking, of course, investigates the way small quantum data interact with the environment and how the larger cosmos interacts with the atom (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this manner Bronfenbrenner sees the world from the very tiny micro system (the atom) through a series of *universes* to form what we might term *culture* or *society*. Within each of these structures actions and interactions flow both ways and much of what harkens towards human development is the result of situational and environmental issues (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

For example, young children in the ghettos of Rio de Janeiro often sell candy to locals and tourists as their only means of financial support. These children have been able, because of their environment, to make rather sophisticated mathematical calculations in their heads, understand weights and measures, profit and loss, and numerical relationships far beyond their years. In contrast, Yaqui children in northern Mexico have had no use for this type of knowledge but they understand very complex weaving patterns that require exceptional dexterity and the ability to visualize multidimensional objects (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus, according to Bronfenbrenner, it is the relationship between the external and internal environments that shapes not only what is important (skill set) for human development but the manner in which what is important becomes ecologically part of the dominant culture (Johnson-Laird, 2009).

Children learn best, according to Vygotsky, through interactions with their surrounding culture. Learning through interactions with the surrounding culture, Vygotsky said, could be seen as a part of their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Mooney (2005) stated that children need the guidance of teachers to support them as they work to expand their individual ZPDs.

Vygotsky proposed that supplying the child with a combination of theoretical and empirical learning methods is a more robust way to ensure a variance in cognition (Karpov & Bransford, 2006). This cognition moved to something he called *leading activity* that becomes an important formative step in the development of self-consciousness. This learning process enables a way to define the student's role within the world, especially in middle childhood development. Self-reflection is one major accomplishment during this period when children transition from using social and cultural norms as values for evaluating the external world (peers and others) toward mastering these concepts for inward or self-reflection.

As this process evolves the child in the middle range begins to use leading activities to interact with peers. During this time the child attempts to master and internalize adult values and transfer that experience into what becomes expectations of others as the child begins to be cognitive that those expectations are not always met. Thus, part of this formational process is learning to cope with disappointment and to understand that human emotions are fluid – sometimes people are disingenuous and sometimes quite honest. It is a difficult task to come to the realization that so many things can occur because of chance or circumstance (Karpov & Bransford, 2006).

Eun (2008) explained that failure to attain appropriate leading activities may result in a number of dysfunctions that hinder the child's ability to move on to the next stage of emotional learning. Failure in leading activities often separates children from their peers because they do not feel they belong. Nor are they accepted by others. This begins to impart a low self-image and an inability to thrive with one's peer group. Such an individual may be accused of being an outsider who is unable or unwilling to participate in group activities. They become unable to model behavior or understand the subtle differences in adult behavior and the manner in which adults sometimes treat each other. It is also interesting to note that children who miss or are deficient in leading activities at this stage score much lower on standardized tests and are not adept at discussing relevant points after reading or listening to a story (Eun, 2008). Classroom disruptions may be generated as a result of the expression of student opinions and ideas that were generated outside the classroom.

### Tactical Examples

A constructivist approach suggests that teachers can acknowledge the individual nature of each student and her or his learning style and use the most productive teaching techniques

available to investigate. Classroom success is based on flexibility and fluid intuition – of being able to reach beyond what we might see as the obvious and into the more complex nature of learning (Suping, 2003). In addition to the constructivist theoretical approach that should guide the nature of instruction, there are a number of templates that can be put into place to ensure classroom success and a learning environment that is pleasant, engaging, and optimistic (Suping, 2003).

For example, a very simple change model in a classroom situation is the seating arrangement. Because each group is diverse, their interactions will produce distinct psychological dimensions and results. One set of variables may cause distractions to occur, while mentoring could occur when pairing particular personalities. The effective teacher will arrange a classroom with certain parameters at the forefront: maintaining the ability to walk through and check desks and work effectively, avoidance of distractions for those easily distracted, placing particular personalities together, ensuring appropriate modeling of behavior, and task management. The realities of the divergent classroom are sometimes at odds with this goal; mainstreaming, overcrowding, or curriculum pressures often make creating the ideal arrangement impossible. Minimizing potential negative behaviors prior to their occurrence is a powerful and necessary tool (Jones, 2007). Various planned activities or games can assist teaching content as well as help with recurring discipline issues.

### Contemporary Teaching Qualities

Traditionally teaching qualities consisted of such characteristics as teacher-centered classrooms where the teacher assigns seats and clearly controls the learning environment. Power and responsibility are held by the teacher as he or she plays the role as instructor in the form of lectures and decision maker regarding curriculum content and specific outcomes.

Most contemporary scholars such as Wong and Wong (1998) and Gardner (1993) agree that the key to a successful classroom is being able to adapt to various learning styles. Each teacher has a different set of teaching practices just as each student has a different learning style. Teachers who have been in the classroom understand that when there are 22-32 children per room, it is sometimes difficult to match a mix of various student learning styles continually with an appropriate uniform teaching practice or lesson at the appropriate time. These are rather broad generalizations about stylized cognitive processes but all fit into the paradigm of *learning style*. It is interesting to note the difference in the way the newer cognitive models establish more specific learning styles or generalizations in the process (Gardner, 1993).

While there are similarities in style, the more current development of cognition involves less factual knowledge and more steps to evaluating that knowledge. Instead of the entire purpose being the evaluation of the data, the new model reflects better understanding of the human factor. Thus, the basic premise for a new or current educator is to guide individuals to deeper and more thoughtful questioning, to allow students to discover answers, and to enable students to learn and to move up the hierarchy toward evaluation instead of remembering (Overbaugh & Schultz, 2006).

Evidence presented so far in this chapter seems to lead to the idea that today educators embrace contemporary teaching concepts that change continually and build upon multiple teaching techniques. Overbaugh and Schultz (2006) asserted that students should be assessed and teacher-student relationships regarding academic needs established. After the evaluation is complete the next step is to synthesize that data and create something new or a newer approach to a process.

Instead of knowledge (rote memorization and accumulation of facts), intelligence is taking what we know (experience), applying it to the task or issue at hand, and creating and evaluating that information for new paths and judgments. Intelligence in the modern world is less what one knows and more how one applies what is known to a new problem (Overbaugh & Schultz, 2006).

In classrooms today, teachers tend to focus more on moving up the hierarchy of learning, moving beyond the rote memorization, and asking students the questions: “What?”, “Why?”, and “So What?” Gardner (1996) insists that more in-depth planning is needed to accommodate the various learning styles among the learners. Also, DeLeslie (1997) acknowledges a paradigm shift and it is resulting in an educated populace with the ability to assimilate large amounts of information quickly, take that information and analyze it critically, and synthesize a set of new results from that information. In the past and generally speaking, it was accepted that collecting facts can be valuable as a foundation, but now it is far more important to know where and how to find information, how to critique that information proactively, and how that information may be used to increase one’s knowledge and ability to function productively in the world. Certainly, teaching facts is a necessity as we must have a basis for commonality, but the contemporary classroom will be easier to manage and more learning will occur if facts are the starting point and ideas the eventual destination (DeLeslie, 1997; Gardner, Kornhaber, & Wake, 1996).

### School Climate

Some school policies demand immediate consequences for breaking some school rules. They are often called zero tolerance policies. Such policies address consequences punitively following when rules are broken. These policies have recently become primary strategies in attempting to prevent student discipline issues and forms of school violence. Critics of this type

of program point out that it does little to teach proper behavior because it is founded in a fear of punishment and for this reason zero tolerance should not be a method used to reduce occurrences of discipline issues such as bullying (Bucher & Manning, 2003).

Zero tolerance has been extremely controversial in terms of its fairness of application and effectiveness because there is little evidence to date to show that it improves school safety or contributes to a positive school environment (Orpinas et al., 2003). This type of policy is reactive instead of proactive as it does little to prevent occurrences and offers only punishment as a deterrent. Researchers such as Limber and Cedillo (2003) criticize zero tolerance as a knee-jerk response and a way of pushing the problem kids out of school and losing the teachable moment (Chamberlain, 2003). Experts say that zero tolerance is not a feasible solution and in some cases may actually worsen the problem. The children who harass their peers need exposure to prosocial peers and adults, preferably in a school environment. Corporal punishment closely resembles zero tolerance policy in that it addresses discipline issues from a purely after-the-fact standpoint (Bucher & Manning, 2003).

Research by Hyman (1996) indicates that schools that rely solely on disciplinary programs such as corporal punishment and zero tolerance not only fail to see a reduction in occurrences of bullying but report an increase in punishable behaviors overall. It is clear from statistics that programs such as these do not work. These programs can be replaced with programs that use the curriculum to teach conflict resolution skills as well as proper and acceptable social behavior.

Despite its critics zero tolerance policies have found their way into many schools across the nation. As a result of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 that requires states to legislate zero-tolerance laws or risk losing federal funding, almost all schools have zero-tolerance policies for

firearms; 87% of schools have similar policies for alcohol, 88% for drugs, and 79% for violence. Researchers caution that during the implementation of zero tolerance policies educators must ensure that their approach is fair. One issue regarding the administration of zero tolerance is that some school officials treat all behaviors, whether major or minor, with equal severity. As the interpretations of zero tolerance become more and more broad, a near epidemic has resulted and caused a plethora of expulsions and suspensions for trivial reasons (Bucher & Manning, 2003).

The effectiveness of zero tolerance might be improved, some researchers say, if it is not used solely to rid the school of troubled students. A committee consisting of parents, teachers, and community leaders should be involved in the formulation of zero tolerance policies that would be used in conjunction with other efforts. The policies should guarantee students' constitutional rights and should not be seen as a cure-all for misconduct. Administrators also need to be aware that zero tolerance can provide a false sense of security and has the potential to alienate students who are actually seeking help (Kaya et al., 2010).

Having a positive school climate is one contributing factor to reducing school violence. Programs that train teachers in methods that foster and promote a positive school climate offer a means of intervention that has a more positive influence on school behavior. Positive reinforcements at each grade level should be recommended as a means to reduce occurrences of discipline issues among the students (Romi & Freund, 1999).

### Joint Efforts

Although many adults can recall incidents in which they became a student discipline issue or a victim of school bullying, they seem to fail to assist aggressively in preventing such discipline issues today (Quinn, Barone, Kearns, Stackhouse, & Zimmerman, 2003). Presently, it appears that the dominant people in children's lives are not working together to solve the

problem. Instead, many seek remedies such as corporal punishment and like-minded programs or policies that provide a short-term fix as opposed to a long-term solution. Ironically, Olweus (2003) suggests that those same people argue that present methods of teaching self-discipline are not working. Migliore (2003) has shown that teachers believe that the four most serious problems facing schools today are that students are coming to school unprepared to learn, that there is not enough parent involvement in the student's life, the prevalence of student apathy, and the issue of poverty. Many agree that another factor is the lack of discipline in the home. The attitudes and routines of relevant adults can better or slow the occurrences of student discipline issues like bullying (Olweus, 2003).

Specifically regarding bullying, many teachers report that the most common form is verbal and much contains derogatory sexual terms (Chamberlain, 2003). Children who live in low socioeconomic areas are at greater risk of being exposed to social conditions that foster bullying. Teachers should be aware of how differing social backgrounds can contribute to bullying and should incorporate such knowledge into preventative curricula (Stevahn, 2004).

School personnel receive training and work together as a unit to develop self-regulating behavior among students. Bear (1998) suggests that currently schools rely on disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment when children fail to exhibit self-discipline and when incidents occur such as bullying or school violence. Hyman (1996) also suggests that such disciplinary measures are not effective in reducing the overall reoccurrence of such behaviors. Instead, such disciplinary measures provide only a temporary halt to the behavior (Bear, 1998). Additionally, Hyman (1996) concludes that corporal punishment, instead of being used as the last option, is often the first form of punishment chosen as schools with high rates of corporal

punishment have high suspension rates as well and are more punitive in all disciplinary reactions.

In addition to corporal punishment a popular means of handling bullying is to remove the misbehaving student from the situation. Vockell (1991) showed that removal does not teach appropriate behavior. This same research suggests that educators should work together when attempting to prevent disciplinary problems. Instructional methods should be used that address correct behavior and that might possibly reduce the overall occurrences of bad behavior such as class disruptions and school violence. Educators can teach social skills routinely through specific lessons and in conjunction with other activities throughout the day (Migliore, 2003). There are some children who require much social instruction, while all children may need some social reinforcement or instruction concerning certain specific social issues (Rigby & Slee, 1999).

An overall positive school climate promotes better relations between educators and students. School discipline must be maintained in order to achieve the primary goals of learning academically and socially (Romi & Freund, 1999). Instead of using disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment, self-regulating behavior could be taught to the students by incorporating information into the current curriculum of the school (Roland & Galloway, 2002).

Olweus (2001), Vockell (1991), and Brooks (2005) all suggest alternate types of punishment with the idea of a joint effort being the most popular. According to Mercure (1993) there are a number of nonphysical forms of logical consequences that are being implemented nationwide. One alternative to corporal punishment is a *peer conflict-mediation program* that trains students and employs them to guide their fellow students in resolving their conflicts amicably. Another proactive alternative is inviting parents to school to babysit their misbehaving children for the entire day. This consequence for example is designed to embarrass the child into

behaving and also gives the parent an idea of how their child behaves at school, thus allowing parents to support the school by addressing school behaviors at home. Another option is sending the children to the office for a time-out where they sit isolated and work on assignments.

Having students begin the day reciting the schools attitude pledge is another option being used. Some schools hold assemblies every 6 weeks that focus on school rules and disciplinary options. Yet another option is for children to make restitution as a logical consequence (that is, a student caught writing on the walls would have to clean them). Some researchers such as Taylor (2002) promote creative, unconventional types of consequences and give an example of classmates throwing jelly at a misbehaving student. Regardless of the method, researchers and educators seem to agree that the most important aspect of discipline is having a consistent, clear-cut policy (Bower, 2002).

Although the variety of methods supported by researchers varies by great degrees, there seems to be a consensus that corporal punishment is rarely, if ever, the best action to pursue (Bower, 2002). Most scholars agree that the best method of discipline is one in which there is a joint effort by teachers, parents, community, and students to promote learning the consequences for undesirable behavior, provide opportunities for positive behavior, and provide a long-term solution for correcting the behavior. There are numerous ways to accomplish these goals from incorporating lessons into the curriculum to having community disciplinary programs. Regardless of the method, the most successful action is that of joint effort (Amundsen & Ravndal, 2010).

### Summary

Perhaps many children experience being perceived as demonstrating inappropriate or unacceptable behaviors in school. Most children may have been the recipient of bullying as well

as other violent behaviors at some point throughout the educational process. Regardless, all forms of inappropriate and/or clinic susceptible classroom behaviors including behaviors outside of class have the potential of negatively affecting the learning of all students.

Teachers must be able to organize the classroom and manage students' behavior in order to achieve positive learning outcomes. All stakeholders such as teachers and students as well as parents have a reason to improve classroom management. Perhaps a multi-level approach can better ensure that teachers become more effective while providing a more robust learning environment. The foci of this chapter have been the identification or characteristics of student discipline issues and behaviors, how these have been viewed or handled in the past, and the constructivist learning theory. The purpose is to provide a foundation for an examination of the successful classroom management practices of teachers.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

According to Snape and Spencer (2003) “qualitative methods are used to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their contexts” (p. 5). The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how successful teachers manage their classrooms. This study examined teachers’ practices that enable them to teach. The teachers’ responses offered valuable information about perceptions of teaching, classroom management, and the relevance of factors that enhance student learning. Chapters 1 and 2 presented an overview of the study and a review of related literature.

This chapter presents the research methods used in the study. The elements of this research study were as follows:

- Selection of Participants
- Data Collection Procedures
- Data Analysis Procedures
- Quality of Verification
- Summary

Only state tenured teachers with high evaluation scores, exceptional walk-throughs, and recommendations by the school principal were selected to participate in this study

#### Selection of Participants

The principal of Valley School is responsible for 24 state tenured teachers based on the *Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM)*. The criterion for participants in this study was experienced, tenured teachers who are considered excellent and presently employed. Therefore,

the principal comprised a list of 10 tenured teachers based on excellent evaluation scores, walk-throughs and observations. Six participant names, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Graves, Mrs. Wilder, Mrs. Bean, Mrs. Cline, and Mr. Evans, were drawn out of an envelope to participate. This process left four alternate teachers if needed. Therefore, all teachers were chosen by the principal before randomly narrowing the list to six participants by the principal. This method in selecting teachers was used to validate the participating teachers and better assure that all participants who were selected practiced successful classroom management strategies.

I contacted the six potential teacher participants in person to explain the purpose of the study, obtained their permission, and asked each participant to sign the letter of consent. A copy of the consent letter may be found in Appendix C. All teacher participants were informed about the primary focus of the study, which consists of excellent teaching, and that they were selected by their principal based on excellent evaluation scores, walk-throughs, and observations.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Six teachers who had received high teacher evaluations, observations, and walk-throughs in the past were chosen from an initial list of 10 selected by the school principal for participation in this study. The final six middle school instructors from the selected school were then invited to participate in the study. I was able to confer with the principal periodically throughout the study regarding any questions. Also, I was able to consult the school principal in peer debriefing and reviewing teacher performance throughout the study.

Middle schools typically consist of at least three grade levels – 6, 7, and 8 – but may expand to four grades to include 5th. The study was conducted at four middle school grade levels (5-8) in a rural school located in eastern Tennessee. I interviewed six teachers in four core subject areas (math, language arts, science, and social studies). The interview protocol is posted

in Appendix B. I asked each teacher (potential participant) in person and stated to them during this time that I would contact them via email for their consent if they were interested. The participants could then reply to my request via email. The potential participants were given 30 days to respond.

After the participants agreed, I began interviewing using questions according to the interview protocol. The focus of the interview was gaining their perceptions related to how they managed their classrooms. The participants were given transcripts within a 7-day period of the interview to approve and an observation time was scheduled.

I prepared to observe each of them within the regular classroom setting after the first round of interviews. I focused on teacher methods, including body language that directed student behavior while promoting learning during the observations.

Following the observations, I prepared for the follow-up interview by supplying the participants with collected data accumulated during the observation. Data consisted of a list of notes regarding their successful teaching methods and classroom management. This and other data were used to identify trends, similarities, or differences among teachers that contribute to effective teaching. This research method was used to help generate possible themes for identifying how effective teachers manage instruction while handling certain disruptions.

During this second interview, the participants had an opportunity to analyze notes from the prior classroom observation. As before, the individual participants were given transcripts of the second interview to approve.

These were the 10 steps that guided the data collection process.

1. Ask school principal permission to participate and get participation letter signed.

2. Attain a list from the school principal of the 10 tenured teachers with excellent evaluation scores, walk-throughs, and observations.
3. Randomly select six of the tenured teachers recommended by the school principal.
4. Ask teachers permission to participate and get participation letter signed.
5. Interview using protocol.
6. Give the interviewees a copy of the interview transcripts for any corrections needed and schedule an observation time.
7. Observe the six individual teachers teaching a lesson within the classroom.
8. Give the observed teachers a copy of any list or notes by the researcher pertaining to the individual teacher observation.
9. Do a follow-up interview regarding individual teacher observation.
10. Give the interviewees a copy of the interview transcripts from the second interview for any corrections needed.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

According to Creswell (1998), “The qualitative approach allows the researcher to study individuals and groups in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 15). A qualitative approach was selected for this study so that teacher perceptions of their own teaching and classroom management practices could be analyzed.

The following research questions guided the researcher through the research process:

1. What teacher attitudes positively influence student learning?
2. What teacher practices positively influenced student learning?
3. What teacher attitudes negatively influence student learning?

4. What teacher practices negatively influence student learning?

During the first round of interviews, I used the interview protocol enabling the questions to evolve as teachers responded. Themes were slowly becoming evident through the individual interviews by the six participating teachers. Themes emerging from the results of the first set of interviews were identified.

Announced observations were conducted during this study observing core subjects such as language arts, math, science, and social studies. A beginning, middle, and end of the lesson were observed to better assess excellent teaching practices throughout an entire lesson. More themes developed through the six individual classroom observations.

The second or last set of interviews allowed for more in-depth questioning related to the emerging themes developed from the first round of interviews as well as the classroom observations. Themes generated from the first interview or observation and later refined by the second interview were organized into a conceptual framework that identified common practices that the participating teachers attributed to their classroom success.

Data from each individual participating teacher were separated by each research question and responses. This inductive approach, meaning that the research moved from the specific to the more general, enabled me as the researcher to produce a grounded theory. Therefore, the data were analyzed to identify possible recurring themes resulting in a theoretical approach for how these participating teachers manage their classrooms successfully, enabling effective student learning.

Organization of the data was essential in that it enabled me as the researcher to examine each participant's response one question at a time. This conceptual framework helped me organize the large amount of collected data into smaller groups of single interview questions or

the various responses from all participants. Therefore, interview questions were examined one question at a time for each individual participant, allowing better analysis of positive similarities or possible differences.

### Quality and Verification

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness for qualitative studies must follow the constructs that confirm reliability or dependability. Both reliability and dependability have been confirmed by having the ability of a system or component to perform its required functions under the stated conditions of this study for a period of time.

I requested ETSU Institutional Review Board approval and strictly followed their guidelines for protection of participants. The teacher participants were chosen by the school principal who has repeatedly observed and evaluated them based on the TEAM rubric. All interviews were open-ended and teachers were encouraged to elaborate on their answers. Therefore, participants were reminded that they were chosen for this study by their school principal based on their effective teaching practices. Throughout the interview process, all participants were encouraged to be honest, share ideas, and stimulate suggestions concerning their excellent teaching practices.

Data were collected during my observations within the classroom. This approach focused on observing how these teachers are successful in helping students learn, rather than any discovery of teaching deficiencies. The data were collected by me during an interview, observation, and a follow-up interview with each teacher participant. My aim throughout the study was to be viewed as neutral, nonjudgmental, and focused on open-ended questioning. Observation notes consisted of effective teaching methods through activities within the lesson I observed for analysis later.

Teachers were interviewed individually in a location where they felt most comfortable, during a time of the participant's choosing, and without the presence or influences of other distractions. Interview questions were related to the nature of interview protocol.

To assure member checking, I submitted the transcripts of interviews to the teacher participants for verification. Also, peer debriefing was used to ensure that personal bias did not enter into the data collected during the research. Peer reviews were conducted by two school administrators, one of those was outside of the specific school site used in this study. These peer reviews included all available data such as interview transcripts.

### Summary

This chapter presented research methods for selecting participants, collecting data, and establishing procedures to analyze the data. Also, a description of how member checks through peer debriefing and peer review were used to increase the validity of the study. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis for each individual participant one interview question at a time as well as the response to data from classroom observations. Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the meaning of the data along with recommendations for practice and additional research.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

“A scholar is committed to building on knowledge that others have gathered, correcting it, confirming it, enlarging it” ~ Parker J. Palmer (Wikiquote, n.d.).

#### Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how successful teachers manage their classrooms. This study examined teachers’ practices that enable them to teach while minimizing any distractions or disruptions. The responses of teachers offered valuable information about perceptions of the excellent teaching, classroom management of teachers, and the relevance of teaching factors that enhance student learning.

#### Research Questions

Based on the perception of six selected teachers at Valley School in grade levels 5-8, this study examined the following research questions:

1. What teacher attitudes positively influence student learning?
2. What teacher practices positively influence student learning?
3. What teacher attitudes negatively influence student learning?
4. What teacher practices negatively influence student learning?

#### Selection of Participants

The principal of Valley School is responsible for 24 state tenured teachers evaluated based on the *Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model* (TEAM). The participants in this study were experienced, tenured teachers who are considered excellent by their principal. The principal compiled a list of 10 state tenured teachers based on excellent evaluation scores, walk-throughs,

and observations. Six teachers' names were drawn out of an envelope to participate. This process left four alternate teachers available if needed. This method in selecting teachers was used to validate the participating teachers and better assure that all participants who were selected practiced successful classroom management strategies according to their high teaching attributes.

Table 1 indicates the participants' pseudonyms, years of experience and education level.

Table 1

*Participants, Experience, and Degree(s)*

Teacher Participants	Years of Experience	Degree(s)
Mrs. Walker	15	BS, MA
Mrs. Graves	8	BS, MA
Mr. Evans	26	BS, MA + 30
Mrs. Bean	22	BS, MA
Mrs. Wilder	7	BS, MA
Mrs. Cline	34	BA, MA

The study was conducted with participants who teach in a variety of grade levels (5-8) and with teachers who teach in core subjects (math, science, reading/language arts and social studies) at Valley School. I interviewed and observed all six tenured teachers. The study was conducted using an initial interview with the participating teachers, an observation of the classroom, and a follow-up interview with a 100% participation rate.

#### Results from the Initial Interviews

Of the six respondents to the initial interview all held a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. One held 30 credits or more above a master's degree. When asked "Do you enjoy your

job or do you ever regret the decision of becoming a teacher and if you had it to do over, would you choose something else as a career choice?" all six participants said they enjoyed what they do and would not choose any other career. In fact, five of six specifically responded by stating that they "loved" their job. Mr. Evans stated, "When the day comes that I no longer enjoy it that is when I will move on." Mrs. Cline stated, "I could retire at any point and I actually love it more now than I ever have maybe with the exception of my first three years of teaching."

When the participants were questioned about how students see them as teachers and as individuals five of six participants specifically reported forming a type of personal relationship with their students. Mrs. Walker stated, "I try to build a relationship with them (students) but at the same time I have expectations for them." Mrs. Graves stated that "you have to have a relationship with your students." Mr. Evans stated that "as a person, students see me as a teacher and as a dad also as a friend, also as a member of the community, also as someone who comes to ball games, somebody who remembers their birthday, somebody who tells them good job." Later questioning revealed that Mrs. Bean supported relationship-building with students as well. When asked "How do you relate to students?" she replied, "I think you have to spend some individual time with each student and talk to them as a group and I think that if you talk to them when you see them in a store or in the community somewhere and let them know you're still interested in them and care about what they're thinking about." However, Mrs. Cline relies more on mutual respect between the teacher and student. She stated that she thought students know that she really respects and cares for them and this is the reason she receives the respect that she does as a teacher.

In response to the question, "What do you do to keep students engaged and on task?" four of the six responses saw importance in relating pertinent lessons or activities to the students.

Mrs. Graves responded, "A lot of times I like to talk about personal issues. Then you lead from there to what your lesson is and it's like they have a personal click with it also." Mrs. Cline responded that, "I try to make things interesting and connect it to real world and to real world life." Mr. Evans stated, "I find methods that are relative to them to learn that material." Mrs. Walker responded that while making learning fun, "I try to make it apply to them, sometimes apply it to what they'll do when they get older." Mrs. Wilder's answer was similar to Mrs. Walker's that learning should be fun. Mrs. Wilder added that "they (students) get bored with one thing so we move on to something else and keep it interactive and fun."

Regarding communication four of the six participants viewed it as key to building student and teacher relationships. Perhaps the way communication is conveyed and not necessarily the mere fact of communication existing is apparent in the participant's responses to the question, "How do you develop those relationships?" Mr. Evans responded, "By being real and genuine. Be genuine because a student knows whether you're real or fake. They will appreciate and respect that and you'll be able to build a relationship with them."

Mrs. Walker responded, "I try to see them out in the community and I try to speak to them and their parents. Even out in the hallway, even those who have left me I still try to have a relationship with them and talk to them and let them know they can talk to me about anything, school, work, or otherwise."

Mrs. Graves responded, "I think it's all in how you talk to them, doing something, as simple as a kind gesture or just being kind. So we get to talking and I think it's just letting them know I care. It's like I'm not here to give you bad grades, I'm here to help you. I don't want to see you fail."

Mrs. Bean responded, “I think you have to have some individual time to spend with each student and then talk to them as a group. I think that if you talk to them when you see them in a store or in the community somewhere to let them know you’re still interested in them and care about what they’re thinking about.” Though it is less obvious within Mrs. Cline’s response regarding the necessity of communication when building student and teacher relationships, the intent is still somewhat evident. She responded by saying:

Well, I don’t think that you can be “best friends” with them, but you still have to be friends with them and yet know them like what they like to do. I’ll randomly ask, “How was your weekend? What did you do this weekend?” Well, you know some of them race motorcycles, four-wheelers or whatever and we talk about that a little bit. So you have to relate to them.

Mrs. Wilder stated, “You have to be stern going in and most kids want to be disciplined in one form or another – to be told what they can and cannot do.”

All participants showed evidence of time spent on in-depth planning as possibly important. They expressed similar beliefs regarding preparation and planning for their students: Mrs. Graves stated, “My classroom management is kind of keeping them engaged all the time.” Mrs. Wilder stated, “Keep the students on a task; keep them doing something.” Mrs. Walker stated:

We use a variety of things. I try to stay in close proximity to the students. I try to walk around and make sure they are on task, if they’re doing seat work. I also take advantage of cooperative learning situations and so I walk around to facilitate those groups and make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Mrs. Bean stated, “We start out as a whole group, doing things as a whole group, and try to teach the kids how to work in groups and how to work individually and how to help each other.” Mr. Evans stated, “Be respectful to each other and I try to model my expectations. You raise your hand because there are more of you than there are of me and I wouldn’t ask them more than what I would ask of myself. I just do that.”

Mrs. Cline stated:

Ok, well from the beginning of class I use a little math it's a spiraling math worksheet. It's like a 3<sup>rd</sup> of a page. It has like ten problems on it. As they come in the door, it's called an add sheet, arithmetic developed daily, they get the add sheet and they work on that the first 10 minutes of class. It's all different skills. It spirals through the year. It's basically to get them in the room. It gets them on task. It's math when they walk in the door. They walk in the door, they get their worksheets (short add-sheets), they start working on them immediately. That gives me time. I don't call roll I look roll and I get an add sheet for a missing student and that's how I keep up with make-up work. That gives me time to get that done and then we go over them and that gives them time to go over those questions. It goes over everything from fractions to metric system. It always has a written problem. I've found that that sets the tone. That's why 8<sup>th</sup> grades are like little puppies. They come in, they know what they're doing, and they do it. Then, I switch gears, if we are doing intervention for 30 minutes or 35 minutes, whatever the allotted time is, then we switch gears again and it's just a transition, a flow. They learn the system then we generally go over the lesson. If they have homework I have a box that they put that in. We don't spend a lot of time on that. I tell them, "We're not going to spend 20 minutes just to turn in homework papers." It's just a flow. You have to keep everything flowing and going because you only have so much time and that's what I tell them. They'll blink their eyes and their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year will be gone. So, we try to keep everything flowing along.

Showing consistency regarding daily routines was evident from the responses to "What expectations do you have for student classroom behavior?" Each participant shared high expectations regarding student classroom behavior. Mrs. Graves stated that "I try to keep them moving and my expectations are high for them. I don't like them to sit in their chair all day. I don't like them just to sit there like mud. I expect them to do what I ask them to do and above that." Mrs. Wilder stated, "I expect them to when I'm talking, they're listening, but when they're working they're allow to talk to help each other."

Mrs. Walker stated:

I expect them to be respectful, not only of myself but of each other. If someone is presenting or talking, I expect the class not to be talking while they are presenting. They can ask questions at the end. Going back to the Golden Rule, treat others like you would want to be treated. That's my ultimate expectation.

Mrs. Bean stated, "I expect them to stay on task when I teach them, most of them do but you will have one every once in a while that won't." Mr. Evans stated, "I expect respect, not just

for me as a teacher but respect for each other.” Mrs. Cline stated, “I think that’s because I make a big deal that when they come in that door on that first day, that this is math, this is what we do, this is all we do, I’m all about math, I’m all about getting you ready for high school and I don’t know if that’s why.”

When asked, “How do you know if students are learning?” five of the six participants indicated they rely heavily on some type of verbal communication with their students. Mr. Evans stated, “Through their work and through talking with them, quizzing and talking to them, and can they apply it. Can they take what they learn and apply it to real life situations . . . through verbal or written scenarios.” Mrs. Graves stated, “Tell me what you learned about this . . . if they can describe it then I know that they know it.” Mrs. Wilder stated, “By communication, taking, having little quizzes at the end of class, having them write in their journals.” Mrs. Walker stated, “Questioning. I do a lot of questioning while I’m teaching . . . they had to explain. They couldn’t just pick a side.” Mrs. Bean stated, “I have a little bin where they can reflect on what they learned and what they didn’t learn. I like for them to talk to me and tell me if they don’t understand something.”

The final two questions in the initial interview generated a wider variety of responses. In response to the question, “What else can you tell me that makes you an excellent teacher?” two of the six participants clearly expressed the importance of mutual respect with high expectations. Also, two of the six participants clearly expressed the need to love and care for the students. When asked, “Is there anything else that you would share or I need to know regarding your teaching practices?” half of the participants stressed the importance that they try to use a variety of teaching methods. However, it is interesting to note that half of the participants viewed this question as another opportunity to express their love and passion for working with children. This

response reinforced some of the comments from a previous question, “What else can you tell me that makes you an excellent teacher?”

Participants in the study offered a variety of comments regarding the question, “In what ways do you involve others such as parents in student learning?” All of the participants communicate with parents periodically and mentioned academic reasons such as low scores. However, only half of the participants mentioned student behavior as another reason to involve parents. Mr. Evans stated, “I ask the parent if there is anything in the student's life that we need to know that could be connected to his/her behavior such as sickness, death, loss, anything they want to share to help us help the student to be the best that he/she could be.”

Mrs. Wilder stated:

If their (parents) kid's getting to bed on time, have they had trouble with a particular subject or trouble with me. If there is a pattern or is there something in their past that's going on parents are contacted. During my planning time or whenever I see a pattern developing of behavior or not turning in their papers or doing poorly, parents are contacted.

Mrs. Walker stated that, “We try to keep the parents aware of what's going on . . . we are all seeing the same thing, good or bad, so that we can make a better environment for the student. Their behavior, organizational skills, how they're acting or behaving in class as well as what type of work like if its good work or if it needs to be improved.”

Mrs. Bean stated, “If we feel like a student is struggling at that time we try to call and get them back on task. We send report cards home. We call the parents. They will come in when we have after school parent teacher conferences, things like that, and talk to you about their children.”

Mrs. Cline stated that “If there’s a real concern I will call home if I see that the child has stopped working or he’s doing terrible. I’ll call home to see if there’s an issue at home or if there’s some problem that I don’t know about because there’s time that there’s something going on . . .”

Mrs. Graves stated:

If they are struggling with something I may send some homework home to look over because their parents will be there to direct them like I direct them. All kinds of information such as if a child is struggling then I’ll call them up and say something is going on. What do you see at home that would explain why they are struggling? Have they always had this problem? If I see that a child is doing great of course I put it all over their paper. “Yay! Great! Wonderful!” Show this to your mom and dad when you get home.” If I see the parents when I am out I always talk to the parents. I don’t shun them or anything whether it’s a good one or a bad one. Always speak to the parents. “How is your child liking this?” A lot of times parents come up and say, “Oh we love doing this or we love doing that.” As far as reporting, we have graded papers, progress reporting, grade cards, things like that.

### Results from the Teacher Observations

During observations I recorded in my notes several teaching attributes that I observed being used by each of the six participants. A variety of instruction or teaching methods was observed using various teacher resources. The following are notes taken as each participant was being observed teaching:

- Mrs. Bean started this Reading lesson promptly at 8:00 a.m. by clearly stating the lesson objectives. The state standards were visible and in view. Mrs. Bean showed evidence of crossing the curriculum from Reading to Social Studies via the reference, “You see some of these in Social Studies, in like wars and such.” The lesson reviewed such things as terms as the teacher checked for prior knowledge through questioning, “Where might you hear or see a slogan?” The lesson objective was restated throughout the lesson. Terms and concepts were associated to some current real-life events (debates/political speeches, commercials, etc.). The teacher stated, “This might make you feel fear like in war.” Later, the lesson developed into a group activity. All resources and materials were readily available throughout the lesson (poster board, color markers/pencils, grab-bag, etc.). In closing, Mrs. Bean’s students began reflections in their diaries/journals and the teacher will use these as an assessment for this lesson.

- Mrs. Wilder’s lesson started promptly as she stated what was to be learned by clearly going over the standards/SPIs listed on the board and included in Power Point slides. The Science lesson was introduced with a short video about Biomes. Mrs. Wilder used questioning to assess informally. “What are some environmental conditions that . . .?”, “What is biotic?” and “What is abiotic?” The lesson used SmartPals with a partner to write their answers down. The PowerPoint presentation enhanced visual learning with pictures supported with text and important terms. Mrs. Wilder moved around the room to monitor progress and kept everyone on task. Students were encouraged to elaborate and think critically . . .” You can’t just say they are adapted to deserts; you must tell me why. Tell me about adaptation.” A more formal assessment (test) was referenced by the teacher.
- Mrs. Cline’s math class routinely starts by collecting and working on provided add-sheets. She always starts her class with add sheets that she provides to students as they enter the classroom. This short activity serves as a way to get the class settled and focused. Previous homework was collected and lesson began by going over the add sheets. She proceeded to utilize the Internet to show students visually what the Pythagorean Theorem is attempting to do. She identified attributes and characteristics regarding the mathematician known as Pythagoras. In doing so she also referenced Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. While reading from Wikipedia, she discussed historical facts such as how it was noticed that hammers make various sounds based on shape and dimension. “We are going to do mental math on our add sheets.” “If the hands on a clock show 9 o’clock what kind of angle is formed?” “Tell me about your thought.” Appropriate grade level academic verbiage was used by both students and teacher (hypotenuse, right triangle, Common Core labels, square areas/leg, etc.). The closure of the lesson consisted of a start to homework reminding students that the remainder would have to be completed on their own. Mrs. Cline reminded everyone that Progress Reports come out tomorrow.
- Mrs. Graves started the Language Arts lesson promptly at 12:30 with a search for students’ prior knowledge and referencing previous learning/lesson. The teacher role-modeled the correct way to write in the possessive form . . .” I want you to write your name using what I have written on the board” and “Now I want you to circle the apostrophe “s” and underline the noun.” She moved around the classroom to monitor student progress. The lesson transitioned quickly (30 seconds) to the Smartboard. There Mrs. Graves followed the prompt from the Smartboard and asked, “What is a plural noun?” The middle portion of lesson consisted of students engaged in various activities that appealed particularly to the audio, visual, and kinesthetic learners. The teacher role modeled, leading the class by example, and did an exceptional job using different volume levels during the instructional portion of the lesson. Also, I observed whole-method teaching as well as a teaching-in-part method that seemed to be effective, taking difficult

concepts and/or material for learners and breaking down complicated context enabling students to analyze and formulate in parts (i.e. first write “s” . . . then second underline the noun). One minute before ending the lesson, the teacher informally assessed what was learned.

- Mrs. Walker’s math class started promptly with a description of what was going to be learned and questioning regarding estimation, “When might we estimate?” This was followed by a short video so that the students were able to recall “key words.” Today’s objectives were clearly written on the dry-erase board. The Smartboard was used to illustrate estimation using number lines and real-life possible scenarios. There were high expectations with constructive praise from Mrs. Walker, who used phrases such as “I want to hear math talk” and “Good vocabulary!” The lesson was paced throughout – “OK, I am going to give you two more minutes” as the classroom displayed student work, various steps/manipulatives, assignments, word wall, technology, and resources. Textbooks were used for independent work. Mrs. Walker role-modeled for students using the board as a visual and thinking aloud for students. She worked the first problem.
- Mr. Evans’s reading lesson started promptly with his clearly stating the lesson objective and expectations. Students assembled into stations/centers in which they seemed familiar. Mr. Evans was conscious of all centers while primarily working with the vocabulary/comprehension center. He managed the classroom as he would acknowledge productivity as needed to keep students on task – “Guys at the tape player center are tracking along with the tape.” Grouped students were able to hear the thinking process as Mr. Evans verbally thought aloud as he role-modeled . . .”When we work with fluency we . . .” and “flow smooth and drop your voice when you come to that period.” Mr. Evans referenced Longfellow’s poem regarding Paul Revere’s Ride during the Revolutionary War in comparison to the Civil War Era. This was to help students create and write using certain vocabulary. There was evidence throughout the centers of students working together. Transition of centers was with minimum interruption and took 3 minutes. The lesson was not limited to only vocabulary terms suggested within the text or required curriculum; Mr. Evans integrated other context terms such as *deacon*. The students returned to their seats during the closing of the lesson to tidy-up the classroom before leaving.

### Results from the Follow-Up Interviews

To conduct this study I used an initial interview and an observation with a follow-up interview. The follow-up interview questions were formulated based on questions derived from the initial interview and observations. The follow-up questions were structured to determine

specifically what successful teachers do and how they manage student behavior in order to excel in the learning process. The data gathered were used to answer six research questions:

1. When might you experience any type of problems within the classroom?
2. What kind of problems might a teacher experience within the classroom?
3. How do you usually handle problems within the classroom?
4. How would you handle student conflict within the classroom?
5. How would you handle bullying within the classroom?
6. How can a teacher perhaps avoid getting in the way of student learning?

### Research Question 1

When might you experience any type of problems within the classroom?

The first research question was used to examine the times during the teacher's day that possible problems may occur.

Mrs. Wilder stated that:

Sometimes their personalities clash. Sometimes they will get into arguments with their group work and I will have to pull them to work individually. I have a lot of struggling students this year that need a lot of one on one teaching and I feel like there aren't enough of me to go around individually and they may not get all they need.

Mrs. Graves stated, "I find that students tend to blurt out answers. You have to control that through gestures and comments you make to the kids, not in a grouchy way but in a mannerism that they understand."

Mrs. Walker stated that:

When you are doing cooperative groups you have to make sure that you're being a good facilitator and make sure that they keep on task because if a group gets off task then you can have some discipline problems. Also, if there are things going on in the students home life that can cause them to act out and you can over plan or under plan that can be some challenges as well.

Mrs. Bean stated, “If you don’t keep the children on task then you’re going to have problems. If there is a confrontation between students you will also have problems.”

Mrs. Cline stated that:

Well I think the most important problems from a teaching standpoint is if you’re not prepared. If you’re not ready to go when the students arrive, if you have to come up with activities on the spot that’s when problems arise. As far as students, I don’t have many problems from students but when I do it’s because the student is behind and uses mechanisms to get out of work like they try to sleep or they try to act out. Generally it’s because they don’t know what’s going on so they have to compensate in some fashion.

Mr. Evans stated, “When or if you fail to properly plan.”

### Research Question 2

What kind of problems might a teacher experience within the classroom?

The second research question was used to examine and identify problems that excellent teachers do or do not face.

Mrs. Wilder stated, “Problems might arise when students come to school unprepared, leaving stuff at home, wanting to sleep, and wanting to talk about everything else but school. They are not focusing on their work.”

Mrs. Graves stated that, “Children blurting out answers, answering when they shouldn’t be answering and not allowing the teacher to randomly choose students. Sometimes they tend to show out in front of others to get the “look at me” thing. That’s when you need to immediately try to take care of that situation.”

Mrs. Walker stated, “Discipline problems and – like I said in the last question – if they have something going on in their home life or outside of school that can cause discipline problems or there might be drama within the classroom if the students aren’t getting along.”

Mrs. Bean stated that:

When students know they have a new teacher then the students are going to try them to see what they can get away with. For example, the last time I had a substitute they were so loud that she could not get them quiet and she had to go get you, the principal; because they were so loud she could not teach. She could not calm them down in order to teach the class. I witnessed a student in 5<sup>th</sup> grade having problems at home because her mom was in jail. I have a student in my class in the back who is having problems because something has changed with him within the last two weeks. I don't know what that problem is yet and if you don't know what that is that can cause problems.

Mrs. Cline stated that:

Like I said, behavior issues. Sometimes you will have a student with behavior issues and nothing is going to change that and it may not be because they don't know the subject but generally with most students it is because they don't know the subject and have to compensate. Again, I feel like planning is the key. If you're not planning you're going to be in trouble.

Mr. Evans stated, "Behavioral, classroom management, technology problems, materials not matching the grade level of students, not enough materials, not enough seating, physical environment."

### Research Question 3

How do you usually handle problems within the classroom?

The third research question was used to examine and identify further problems or any possible similarities or differences in the way problems are handled.

Mrs. Wilder stated, "I try to pull them aside and talk to them, make sure everything is ok with them. I tell them that they can do better and to try to focus on what they are doing in school and work with them."

Mrs. Graves stated that,

You try to avoid it but if it can't be avoided, my first move is to talk to the child one on one. I don't embarrass the child I just say I need to speak with you or I need to speak with you out in the hall or at my desk. Quietly talk to them and treat them like an adult with respect and say, "Look you can't do this and this is why" and explain to them why this is wrong because sometimes they don't understand what they have done wrong. You tell them to quit but sometimes they don't understand why.

Mrs. Walker stated that:

It depends on what the problem is. If it is home life there isn't much you can do other than assure the student that you are their listening ear and that you care about them and that this can be their safe place that they don't have to think about things going on at home or outside of school when they are in the classroom with you because they are all there together. With drama problems, we try to nip it in the bud or squish it before it becomes something major.

Mrs. Bean stated that:

I think you have to take the student away from the classroom and talk to the student one-on-one and see what is going on with the student so that he or she can change to be a better student. Sometimes you have to find out what is going on with the student like that student we brought in here. He is now doing better since his break down that day. He's struggling with his work because he doesn't have any help at home but he is trying to do better.

Mrs. Cline stated that:

For student behavior, I use a three strike rule. We have a clip board that we use for behavior and it goes from like one to five but generally it goes to three. If have to call you down the first time I don't stop my class and write it down but if I have to call you down a second time for talking or sleeping or bothering somebody else I say, "You've already got called on for this once and now you're doing it again. It's like third strike and you're gone." Generally with most classes I have to do that once because when they realize that they might have to sit out in the hall and get a zero for the day, most of them don't want that.

Mr. Evans stated, "I avoid it when possible by planning, analyzing data, matching material to student ability if waiting for books."

#### Research Question 4

How would you handle student conflict within the classroom?

The fourth research question was used to examine the possible occurrence of conflict and how it was identified or corrected.

Mrs. Wilder stated that, "First off, I tell them to stay away from each other if they can't get along, then if they have to work together then come up with a compromise. Sometimes keep

them separated on one side of the room and the other. I've got one that doesn't want to work with anybody in a group and usually works by himself."

Mrs. Graves stated that:

I usually try to let them work it out unless it turns to screaming or is getting too intense; because problem solving is one of the things we need to teach these kids. We have parents that want to problem solve too much for their kids but it is important for them to learn to reason things out. If they can't then I step in and say, "Look both of you might be right in a certain sense but you have your opinion and you have yours let's just be happy about that." I observe the students to see what they do and if I see one that I know will get upset or mad I might step in there a little earlier but I tell those students if you know you're getting upset and think you need a moment talk to me and tell me and I'll give you that time.

Mrs. Walker stated that, "It depends on the personality of the student and depends on what type of conflict it is. Generally speaking you try to talk to each of the students and get both sides of the story. If needed, I try to get them to work it out and resolve whatever the issue is."

Mrs. Bean stated that, "The first thing I do is I separate them, put one on one side of them room and one on the other. I try not to put them in the same groups in class if I can help it. If it keeps going on then you have to take the students out of the classroom and let them talk to one another about what's going on."

Mrs. Cline stated that:

I generally don't have a problem with that but when I do I say usually one of two things. I say, "You're supposed to check your drama at the door," or, "Do we need a geography lesson here in math class to remember where you are because we don't act that way in here." I have a very high standard for behavior in my classroom." After that I usually don't have any more problems but I have had fights in my classroom. Knowing they come back from P.E. and they are already wound up and ticked off, I have had that happen but generally I don't have a lot of problems with conflict in my class.

Mr. Evans stated, "Analyze it, plan for it, see what it is, talk it out, just be observant and use good judgment."

## Research Question 5

How would you handle bullying within the classroom?

The fifth research question was used to examine the possible occurrence of bullying and how it is dealt with in comparison to conflict.

Mrs. Wilder stated, “I usually try to talk to them. I also try to keep an eye on them and take notes on what’s going on and try to keep them separated. If that persists then I usually send them to principal.”

Mrs. Graves stated that:

I think most kids don’t think that they are bullying. When I talk to them about that they say no, I did not do that. They think that bullying is pushing someone down or putting your hands on someone. You have to go and explain to them what bullying is. Then ask them do you feel like if someone did this to you then you would feel like that person was over you or wrong to you and most of the time they say yes. If they do it again then they know what they are doing and if I see that then I don’t put up with it. I get in a very serious voice if I see a kid bullying and understand what they are doing and that would be a situation where I would send them to the office.

Mrs. Walker stated that:

Following the chain of command, you have to document by filling out the paperwork and get the student to say why they did that and reflect and report it to the office. You also talk to both students the bully and the victim. You also let the students know that they are safe and that the bully will be punished.

Mrs. Bean stated that:

I talk to the whole group. As a matter of fact, we had this talk this morning because I have a student who doesn’t smell good and they pick on her for it. I ask them, “What if that was you? How would you like to be treated?” If it keeps on, then I will talk to them individually because they know they have to follow the rules.

Mrs. Cline stated that:

What amazes me is that people are sometimes acting like bullying is a new concept, something that just came up, but I think you can look back in the bible and find instances of bullying. I had an assistant principal years ago that said, as long as the students in a conflict, like bullying, it’s hard to identify in a large group setting if the student doesn’t use strong body language, but in a classroom setting and if its verbal, I can stop that right then. I can say we don’t do that in here, we don’t talk like that in here, that’s not

acceptable. It's the standards you set. Now if it's more subtle that's harder to identify. You know if they're looking at someone and making fun with a look, then that's harder to see but if you set high standards in your classroom it prevents the occurrences of bullying. I don't have many problems controlling that but it is hard to control, I think it's the newest catch phrase of what people are using, you know like an excuse, you know like what's your latest excuse just like ADHD. People think it's something new but it's been going on forever. But I don't think that it's a bad thing, and by that I mean like peer pressure, which is a form of bullying, can sometimes make you work harder or better. Unless it's being pointed out like your being picked on which I don't think it's always the case.

Mr. Evans stated, "Analyze it and find out if it is really true bullying or just conflict, see if it can be resolved verbally and if it can be resolved in the classroom or taken to a higher level."

#### Research Question 6

How can a teacher perhaps avoid getting in the way of student learning?

The sixth and final research question was used to examine any unforeseeable concerns of the participants by the researcher.

Mrs. Wilder stated, "I just go in and teach my planned lesson and try to let the students work independently. I let them ask questions but I try to let them do it on their own and go back and correct it after they try to figure it out."

Mrs. Graves stated that:

Be prepared. I think there is a time for us to teach and there is a time for students to practice the learning. If you see an activity where things are going great you don't stop them. You let them keep going. You can add to that but never stop that. If you see their brains moving and learning never stop that. If they are involved in an activity and you're running out of time let them go five or ten more minutes. Never stop the learning.

Mrs. Walker stated, "You have to let the students have time to think. You can't always be there being the answer key. You have to let them think for themselves some."

Mrs. Bean stated that, "When their personal lives get in the way of learning, is one thing. I've seen where a teacher talks more about herself then about the students. They talk about their personal lives all the time to the kids."

Mrs. Cline stated that:

I think this is one of the things, and this is hard for me because you have this lesson plan to finish and I have to hit these points 1, 2, 3, 4 and Katy bar the door if I don't get it done because tomorrow I'm supposed to be going on to this next lesson. And sometimes I don't think we go too fast but I think we try to cover too much like just about the time the light bulb is coming on and they are grasping the concept we'll say, "Well what about this?" I think that sometimes you need time to reflect like you need to pause and see because I say planning is key but you need to know if they are getting this or am I just pushing to go on and I think that there is a fine line there because I know a lot of teachers – like when my child gets home and I'll ask did your teacher not teach you this and she will tell me yes but she moved on too fast. This happens with 8<sup>th</sup> grade too where I will ask if they get this and are we ok and I'll notice that some are hesitant to say anything. The ultimate classroom is when they say, "Mrs. Cline can we stop and go over this one more time?" With my 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I think I've got most of them there and they know if they do ask that that there won't be any repercussions. I think that we push too hard to finish our lesson plan and not to see if the students are done with the lesson.

Mr. Evans stated, "By being aware of his or her surroundings, see what the situation is and where is it heading."

### Summary

Chapter 4 begins with a brief description of the sample with research questions, selection of participants, and the process used for data analysis. The chapter also includes descriptive data of the initial interview of the six participants followed by a teacher observation of each. The chapter closes with data from a more in-depth follow-up interview consisting of developed questions from the initial interview and teacher observation. Conclusions based on the data analysis are discussed in Chapter 5 along with implications for practice and recommendations for future study.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS, RECOMMENATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This case study examined the classroom management practices that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. The data gathered were used to examine teachers' practices that enabled them to teach and minimize any distractions or disruptions. It answered research questions regarding teacher attitudes before, during, or after actual class time that might influence student learning. My intent was to describe successful teacher attitudes and practices that manage certain student behaviors.

A summary of the findings and conclusions based on data analysis are discussed in this chapter along with the implications for practice and recommendations for further study. Several characteristics imperative to qualitative research applied to this study. These included an initial interview, an observation, and a final follow-up interview. This type of holistic nature of qualitative inquiry enabled natural settings in which observations occurred with a small population for study available in contrast to the larger number of participants necessary for statistical significance in quantitative research (Merriam, 1988). I determined that a qualitative study presented the best chance for participants to share their teaching strategies and perceptions regarding effective teaching.

The observations and interviews were structured to determine how successful teachers' practices enable them to teach and minimize any distractions or disruptions. The data gathered were used to answer four basic research questions:

1. What teacher attitudes positively influence student learning?
2. What teacher practices positively influenced student learning?
3. What teacher attitudes negatively influence student learning?

4. What teacher practices negatively influence student learning?

Summary of Findings

This study used interviews and observations as a qualitative method to gather data. Six certified teachers with different levels of education and experience were purposefully chosen, observed, and interviewed. The interviews and observations were structured to determine or identify successful practices used by successful teachers within the classroom. The extent of education and experience of each participating teacher did not seem to make a difference in their abilities to be successful as a teacher.

The data gathered in the initial interview showed evidence that successful teachers are consistent in what they do within the learning environment. The continual consistency and routine successfully works with their students.

Relationship-building with their students is valued among the interviewed participants. The teacher participants build relationships between themselves and students relying heavily on communication skills.

During observations I recorded several teaching strategies being implemented within the classroom. It is evident or very obvious to me as the observer that these successful teachers spend time planning. They lose minimum instructional time and use a variety of methods or activities within a lesson.

The final follow-up set of interviews gathered data that clearly confirmed more similarities and emerging themes. The overall data show that successful teachers used similar practices in their classrooms on a consistent basis. The findings indicate that these six teachers who are considered successful share certain attributes and put these into practice in their

teaching. Table 2 presents a matrix of how the individual teachers compare on several similar practices and two emergent themes.

Table 2

*Teachers' Practices and Emergent Themes*

<b>Similar Practices</b>	<b>Importance to Teachers</b>
1. Self-motivated by the teaching profession	6 of 6
2. Values student-teacher relationships	6 of 6
3. Plans with multiple lesson activities	6 of 6
4. Concerned about meeting student needs	6 of 6
5. Serves as a role model for students	5 of 6
6. Offers familiar classroom procedures with high expectations	5 of 6
7. Reviews and searches for prior knowledge through questioning	5 of 6
8. Builds knowledge of student needs	5 of 6
9. Views conflict and bullying as different issues	4 of 6
10. Involves parents regularly	4 of 6
<b>Emergent Themes</b>	
1. Passion	6 of 6
2. Consistency	6 of 6

4 of 6 Marginal evidence   5 of 6 Evidence   6 of 6 Consistent evidence

### Interpretation of Findings

Teachers' beliefs and values are not necessarily always identified as major factors for successful student academic achievement or behavioral outcomes for students. The effect of teachers' personal traits or values regarding the educational process and implementation was not emphasized within the research presented in Chapter 2 Literature Review. However, through the initial interviews, teacher observations notes, and the follow-up interviews all of the participants provided collaborative signs of a possible relationship between a teacher's passion and excellent teaching practices for the students involved.

Just as planning may be one of those essential skills of a competent teacher, love of the teaching profession reinforced by the love to work with children may be essential skills of the content teacher. It is easily understandable that if the teacher loves to teach, their students may very well love to learn. Therefore, the same could apply in regard to student behavior; if the teacher is always prepared for class, then it is more likely students will also be prepared and not have behavior issues.

The single most important quality that every content teacher may possess is love and passion for teaching young people. However, very knowledgeable teachers who might love their jobs can struggle – not necessarily because they do not care but possibly because they get caught up so much in the day-to-day routine of teaching subject content forgetting that their students have lives and are human. Therefore, this makes developing student-teacher relationships very important and only through the ability to communicate effectively with the students can it be most successfully achieved.

Although each teacher and each classroom is different, classrooms tend to be successful when teachers have effective routines. Successful teachers have consistent classroom routines that promote learning and reduce levels of poor student behavior.

Paying attention to effective routines makes for a smooth-running classroom that seems to be a more pleasant experience for teachers and students alike. More importantly it makes it possible for students to learn more efficiently and more effectively. Perhaps the only problem is that if teachers do not follow through consistently and actively explain the routines or the reasoning behind them as well as model them consistently and persistently, the routines could not have any lasting effect.

Consistency is not only consistency of consequences but consistency of actions, attitudes, and procedures. When successful teachers follow the same routines every day, react with patience every day, treat students as fairly as possible every day, they are consistent. Students could then learn what to expect from the teacher – which is to come prepared to learn respectively. Teachers who consistently plan their day do not have to plan for disruptive behavior due to their consistent preparation. Also, being clear about expectations, the lesson, and procedures with students is vital in establishing a consistent environment.

### Summary of Results

The observations and interviews were structured to determine how successful teachers' practices enable them to teach and minimize any distractions or disruptions. The data gathered were used to answer four basic research questions:

1. What teacher attitudes positively influence student learning?
2. What teacher practices positively influence student learning?
3. What teacher attitudes negatively influence student learning?

#### 4. What teacher practices negatively influence student learning?

##### Research Question 1

What teacher attitudes positively influence student learning?

Teachers who participated in this study showed passion and seemed self-motivated regarding their teaching careers. Data collected in this study are in agreement with Amundson (2010) who suggested that a more positive approach to classroom management was needed. Covey (2004), who also agreed with findings such as those in this study, emphasized that the positive teacher has a far better chance of modifying and rewarding positive behavior rather than punishing bad behavior. Therefore, the findings of this study concur with others that teachers can increase good behavior and creativity within the classroom by patterning positive and respectful behavior (Covey, 2004).

Each teacher participant stressed the importance of being prepared through planning. This study revealed this trait not only through the interviews but during the observations as well. Gardner (1996) insists that more in-depth planning is needed to accommodate the various learning styles among learners.

Teachers recommended and interviewed during this study are regarded as excellent teachers based on observations during walk-throughs and evaluations conducted by their school principal. Interviews and observations completed in this study suggest that these teachers do not regularly experience any type of bullying issues. This is supported in research by Dake et al. (2003) who suggest that a relationship exists between bullying and educational issues such as academic achievement, student bonding, and absenteeism.

The teacher participants within this study suggest, as do Overbaugh and Schultz (2006) that students should be assessed and teacher-student relationships regarding academic needs

established. As evidenced in this study, students may misbehave to feel empowered, competent, successful, and in control (Hoffman & Hutchinson, 2009); this research found that each of the study's teacher participants was prepared to handle inappropriate classroom behavior when or if it existed. In fact, they each had classroom rules that were understood by the students regarding classroom behavior. A behavior management system that emphasizes positive reinforcement may be the key to students making appropriate choices regarding classroom behavior (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005). Parental involvement was considered by all teacher participants when regarding misbehavior and was relied on heavily. Doyle (1986) contended that classrooms are difficult to manage because they are multidimensional, simultaneous, and unpredictable for teachers. To complicate matters further the classroom environment is immediate, public, and creates a situation wherein teachers must perform immediately – right then, right there, and in full view of everyone.

The first research question was intended to examine subtle influences that help teachers to be successful in the classroom. Data showed that all teacher participants said that they had made the correct career choice and passionately love what they do. This response became apparent immediately and became a trend. During the initial interviews all participating teachers' answers concurred with the statement made by Mrs. Wilder, "I love working with children and I wanted to do something to help children to be successful on most jobs."

While observing each participant all appeared enthusiastic and energetic throughout their well-planned lesson. Also, it was evident during the teacher observations that relationships between teacher and student had been developed on an individual basis. This was supported by participants describing the building of relationships with students or referring to it directly as

Mrs. Graves stated during the first interview, “You have to have a relationship with your students.”

## Research Question 2

What teacher practices positively influence student learning?

In today’s classrooms it is imperative to know one’s students and plan lessons accordingly. Otherwise, students may sense the teacher’s unpreparedness in the presentation or the lesson. During observations the teacher’s prior knowledge of the students seemed essential, and interaction with the classroom environment was part of the learning process Gordon (2008). During this study the teacher participants were engaged in their lessons with the students and lessons were conducted with multiple activities. Teaching factual information is a necessity as we must have a basis for common attributes, but the contemporary classroom will be easier to manage and more learning will occur if facts are the starting point and ideas the eventual destination (DeLeslie, 1997; Gardner, Kornhaber, & Wake, 1996). Teachers who do not appear caring and knowledgeable of the desires or wants of their students or are perhaps unable to implement multiple teaching methods such as direct instruction, hands-on, or visual instruction may limit themselves as educators. Questioning was relied on heavily by each teacher participant. This more complex idea has origins in the actual learning process – not simply just rote memorization (Kim, 2005).

Teacher participant data in this study revealed only subtle differences in ways classroom misbehavior was handled if necessary. It is interesting to note the difference in the way the some cognitive models establish more specific learning styles or generalizations in the process (Gardner, 1993). As student discipline issues were not a major problem for teacher participants in this study, parents were not relied on heavily but were a possible option for addressing teacher

concerns. A large majority of parents favored student rights. However, they understood that ignoring the expertise and authority of the classroom teacher would lead to an unsupportive environment for the teacher (Matthews, 1998).

The second research question was intended to examine the more visible or obvious practices that help teachers to be successful in the classroom. All teacher participants reported that planning was important. Mr. Evans suggested during the final follow-up set of interviews that teachers might experience problems “when you fail to plan.” This became more obvious during the teacher observations. While observing the teacher participants I found they were not only well prepared to teach their lessons but all lessons contained various learning activities. This was supported by Mrs. Bean’s comment from the first interview, “You just can’t teach them one way. You have to teach them to do something and you have to meet with them and show them where they’re going to and where they’ve been.”

### Research Question 3

What teacher attitudes negatively influence student learning?

Today’s teachers should be encouraged to supply structure for their students that appeals to a diverse group of learners. Therefore, teachers are to be prepared to adapt their instruction and willing to facilitate learning; otherwise, success in teaching is limited. Jeremiah (2009) suggests that a particular strength of using a multidisciplinary approach to the subject of classroom management is that it allows an alternate way to look at situations and allows one to synthesize many events that may be happening so that one might find techniques to handle larger issues more effectively.

Just as excellent teachers instruct using multiple methods and activities, as teachers they must be willing to innovate and try new teaching strategies according to student needs. Suping

(2003) referred to this as *value added learning* in that it requires all participants to become involved equally in the process of the acquisition and understanding of knowledge through more than one avenue.

These teachers seem to focus on their own positive attributes rather than negative elements that might interfere with their teaching. In other words, they see their roles as preventing negative influences by being a positive role model.

The third research question was intended to examine subtle influences that might help teachers avoid influences that might hinder successful teaching. Data revealed that teaching can become overwhelming at times for both the teacher and students. Successful teachers enjoy their jobs and realize that learning must be enjoyable as well. Mrs. Walker stated during the second follow-up interview, “You have to let the students have time to think . . . You have to let them think for themselves some.”

During the last set of follow-up interview questions there was evidence from Mrs. Cline who said, “I think that we push too hard to finish our lesson plan and not to see if the students are done with the lesson.” After observing the classes it must be noted that inadequate written and oral communication or not really knowing and fostering a positive relationship with the students could negatively influence student learning.

#### Research Question 4

What teacher practices negatively influence student learning?

Neither the importance nor the existence of certain student inappropriate behaviors has changed. All teacher participants were aware of the importance of student conflict and bullying. Olweus (2003) was one of the first 20<sup>th</sup> century researchers to study systematically instances of inappropriate student behavior in schools and specifically addressed bullying.

Some common types of bullying are name calling, excluding others from activities, being ridiculed, hitting or pushing, spreading rumors, stealing, threatening others, and forcing others to engage in behaviors Boulton et al. (2002). All teacher participants were aware of the importance of parenting. Baldry and Farrington (2000) report that parenting styles may also be associated with bullying behavior; for example bullies were 1.65 times more likely to come from homes where the parents practiced authoritarian styles, like corporal punishment, of child-rearing as opposed to children whose parents practiced a more participatory style.

The teacher participants in this study are considered to have minimum student disruptions or distractions. Although the variety of methods supported by researchers varies by great degrees, there seems to be a consensus that corporal punishment is rarely, if ever, the best action to pursue (Bower, 2002). Corporal punishment was not mentioned by any teacher participant regarding student conflict. Smith (2003) suggested that teachers or schools that subscribe to the use of corporal punishment are not only less effective but they also lower the positive atmosphere of the entire educational process for everyone involved (Critchley & Sanson, 2006). Corporal punishment has been banished in many affluent suburbs while instances are more common in the South where the ratio of poor children is higher (Stevahn, 2004).

Teacher participants used in this study taught students ranging from the fifth grade through the eighth grade. Age has not appeared to be a factor as younger children are not any more vulnerable to becoming a discipline-problem student than are older children (Johnson et al., 2002).

The fourth research question was intended to examine the more visible or obvious practices that help teachers to be successful in the classroom. Research from this study suggests that teachers must be engaged with students within the classroom. Otherwise their behaviors

could hinder the learning environment. During the second interview regarding conflict Mr. Evans supported answers from the initial interview when he said to “analyze it, plan it, see what it is, talk it out, just be observant, use good judgment.” The observation revealed that by not starting promptly or losing instructional time during transition could result in practices that negatively influence student learning.

### Conclusions

Extensive research has been done on instructional practices that improve student achievement (Berends, 2004; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Walberg & Paik, 2004; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005). Most researchers agree that student behavior consisting of bullying, harassing, and distracting or disrupting the learning process in general creates students who could suffer serious emotional consequences ranging from depression to their own serious aggression (Chamberlain, 2003) and ways to manage student behavior are of primary concern among new teachers (Kaya et al., 2010). Inappropriate student issues that result in managing student behavior during the school day have been found to be quite common in schools. For example, a national study of sixth graders discovered that 13% of students reported having been bullied while 10% reported bullying someone else (Nansel et al., 2001). A study of third graders showed that the prevalence of such a discipline issue more than doubled with 40% reporting being the victims of physical or verbal harassment (Silvernail et al., 2000). Beginning as young as kindergarten age at least half of the children reported being victimized in some form (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997).

So, after completing the literature review for this study, I had anticipated that these successful teachers would have strong disciplinary practices in place. Instead of successful teacher participants consisting of strong disciplinarians and perhaps supporters of corporal

punishment, the participants in this study virtually viewed it as insignificant and avoided it. In fact, the quality of classroom work by these successful teachers served to prevent disruption so that there is little need for such control measures.

There is a clear need for teachers who love what they felt destined to do and genuinely care about their students. While continually building on student-teacher relationships successful teachers could then minimize unacceptable student behavior through planning productive lessons. Perhaps successful teachers could possibly eliminate most minor classroom interruptions and all major or more serious offenses such as bullying and harassment within the classroom. The types of teachers in this study share certain attributes such as the passion for teaching that is fired by the love of the profession. This passion initiates the desire to know as much as is needed about the student to prepare lessons tailored-made for individual groups of students.

Findings from this research study support two conclusions:

1. Passionate teachers who truly confess a love for the teaching process have a positive effect on instructional practices in the classroom for the participants.
2. Teachers who are well prepared and focused on students experience greater success.

#### Implications for Practice

Public school teachers across the country are held accountable for student achievement and are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities in efforts to make them more successful as teachers. The ability to increase the student learning process is proposed as a needed training for professional development for teachers. This study showed that for six teachers who are considered successful based on evaluations, walk-throughs, and principal recommendations credit their success to their love or passion for what they do. They believe in always being prepared before class time with productive activities made possible by knowing

student needs and being consistent day to day during class time. These two factors alone make certain classroom distractions or disruptions avoidable.

School districts need information regarding hiring potentially successful teachers and involving them in future professional development or teacher mentorships. Once aware of the attitudes and practices of successful teachers school systems could proceed with plans to encourage teachers to pursue their attributes. A professional development program based on teacher passion and consistency in the classrooms may offer teachers the opportunity to become familiar with the best practices to use in their classrooms and would support the development of more effective teachers. This may only occur if administrative teams agree to supply the time and money needed for teachers to make these practices fundamental components of their teaching.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how successful teachers manage their classrooms. This study examined teachers' practices that enable them to teach. The responses of teachers offered valuable information about perceptions of the excellent teaching, classroom management of teachers, and the relevance of teaching factors that enhance student learning.

This study was a description of the instructional practices of a group of six middle school teachers. Based upon the findings of this study, further research is recommended in the following areas:

- A similar study should be conducted to target successful teachers in other locations throughout the United States and at different grade levels. This study was confined to one school within one county in east Tennessee and to grades 5 through 8.

- Future research should be designed to examine the effect that successful teachers make in helping other teachers develop effective instructional practices. For example, are successful teachers considered as mentors and, if so, how effective are successful teachers in mentoring new teachers?
- This research did not include a measure of state student achievement. Tennessee has increased data on teacher effect and this is an area for further research.
- With a growing emphasis on teacher accountability, the teacher education programs and evaluation models should consider factors that contribute to successful teaching. It is recommended that further study into teacher mentorship programs and evaluation models be done to determine the significance of this study.
- Research should be conducted to compare successful teachers from this study with unsuccessful teachers to see if any differences can be associated with this study.

The participating teachers used to compile the data for this study have a variety of teaching methods. This study was intended to be a foundation for further research. Educators can teach social skills routinely through specific lessons and in conjunction with other activities throughout the day (Migliore, 2003). Most contemporary scholars such as Wong (1998) and Gardner (1993) agree that the key to a successful classroom is being able to adapt to various learning styles.

The focus of this study could expand to include data collected from the students. According to these data students are more successful when treated with respect. This research supports the idea that students are not to be embarrassed or belittled. Vockell (1991) shows that removing the student does not teach appropriate behavior. Administrators also need to be aware

that zero tolerance can provide a false sense of security and has the potential to alienate students who are actually seeking help (Kaya et al., 2010).

The focus of this study could expand to include collected data from the parents of students. Migliore (2003) has shown that teachers agree that the four most serious problems facing schools today are that students are coming to school unprepared to learn, that there is not enough parent involvement in the student's life, the prevalence of student apathy, and the issue of poverty. Perhaps providing a school-university partnership as well as more lessons and advice on handling specific classroom management situations could be an effective method of preparing new teachers (Kaya et al., 2010).

### Final Summary

For this study six successful middle school teachers who experience little classroom disruptions were interviewed. The results reveal that best attitudes and practices are being implemented by these teachers. Sharing genuine passion for the teaching profession is one way that teachers may improve their instructional practices and experience minimum classroom distractions or disruptions. Also, the participating teachers shared practices that are consistent and give their students structure that they can expect. Certain parts of this study support the results of previous research and demonstrate highly effective teaching practices and limit behavioral issues in the classroom. Thus, the expertise that the participating teachers have should be used to help other teachers become successful teachers without fear of losing students within the lesson.

With teachers continuing to seek a teaching profession with fewer problems school districts need to learn more about the attitudes and practices of successful teachers in order to hire better personal and better train existing teachers. Professional development is an important

factor in effective teaching. Understanding the importance of student-teacher relationships, where passion meets a consistent learning environment, enables effective teaching which is the key to helping students reach their full potentials.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to the Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent of Claiborne County Schools: Mrs. Connie Holdway

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mrs. Connie Holdway:

I am currently a doctoral student in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University. Consequently, I am conducting a qualitative study to investigate or identify certain teacher techniques within the classroom that manages student behaviors in order to better ensure the best education possible for their students. As the researcher, I will observe and ask the teacher interviewees questions related to their role as an educator and specifically how they handle certain classroom issues regarding student behavior. Data collected from the observations or interviews will be used to develop a theoretical framework summarizing the perceptions of what each teacher does to manage student behavior and promote high academic achievement. I plan to contact Mr. Early Perkins, the school administrator to attain consent to conduct this study at their school.

With your permission, I would like to conduct six (6) confidential interviews at the Powell Valley Elementary site. In order to ensure quality of verification, peer debriefing and peer review will be conducted. When my project is complete, you will receive a copy of my research conclusions as an affirmation of the excellent training aspiring leaders are receiving through the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at East Tennessee State University.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to permit me in expanding the knowledge base related to high quality leadership training for educators who aspire to be leaders. If you should have any questions or concerns, we can discuss those at your convenience. You may contact me by phone at (865) 585-0653 (cell), or email at [suttont1@k12tn.net](mailto:suttont1@k12tn.net).

Please notify me of your permission to conduct two sets of interviews with each of the six participants at the aforementioned school by returning this letter with your signature. For your convenience, I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,  
C. Travis Sutton  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Claiborne County School System

APPENDIX B

Letter to the School Principal

Principal of Powell Valley Elementary: Mr. Early Perkins

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mr. Early Perkins:

I am currently a doctoral student in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University. Consequently, I am conducting a qualitative study to investigate or identify certain teacher techniques within the classroom that manages student behaviors in order to better ensure the best education possible for their students. As the researcher, I will observe and ask the teacher interviewees questions related to their role as an educator and specifically how they handle certain classroom issues regarding student behavior. Data collected from the observations or interviews will be used to develop a theoretical framework summarizing the perceptions of what each teacher does to manage student behavior and promote high academic achievement. I plan to contact Mrs. Connie Holdway, the Claiborne County School Director to attain consent to conduct this study at your school as well.

With your permission, I would like to conduct six (6) confidential interviews at the Powell Valley Elementary site. In order to ensure quality of verification, peer debriefing and peer review will be conducted. When my project is complete, you will receive a copy of my research conclusions as an affirmation of the excellent training aspiring leaders are receiving through the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at East Tennessee State University.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to permit me in expanding the knowledge base related to high quality leadership training for educators who aspire to be leaders. If you should have any questions or concerns, we can discuss those at your convenience. You may contact me by phone at (865) 585-0653 (cell), or email at [suttont1@k12tn.net](mailto:suttont1@k12tn.net).

Please notify me of your permission to conduct two sets of interviews with each of the six participants at the aforementioned school by returning this letter with your signature.

Sincerely,  
C. Travis Sutton  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Powell Valley Elementary Principal

## APPENDIX C

### Letter to the Participants

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am currently a doctoral student in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University. Consequently, I am conducting a qualitative study to investigate or identify certain effective teacher techniques within the classroom that manages student learning in order to better ensure the best education possible for their students. As the researcher, I will observe and ask the teacher interviewees questions related to their role as an excellent educator and specifically how they handle certain classroom issues regarding the teaching process. Data collected from the observations or interviews will be used to develop a theoretical framework summarizing the perceptions of what each teacher does to manage student behavior and promote high academic achievement. Your superintendent of schools, \_\_\_\_\_ has granted approval for me to contact you to ask if you are willing to participate in my qualitative research study.

I am presently contacting you upon your principal's high recommendation to request two interviews and a classroom observation in regard to your excellent teaching performance. You will receive a transcribed copy of the interviews as well any notes taken from the classroom observations to verify accuracy of its content.

This research study is specifically focused on excellent teaching practices related to any verbal or non verbal and any other attributes that are contributed to your success as a teacher. When my project is complete, you will receive a copy of my research conclusions in an effort to make a contribution to the school as well as the entire learning community.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to contribute to the knowledge base with regard to a high quality academic teaching methods and classroom management.

Sincerely,  
C. Travis Sutton  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

## APPENDIX D

### Initial Interview Protocol

1. How do your students see you as a teacher and a person?
2. How do you see yourself?
3. What do you do to keep students engaged and on task?
4. How do you relate to students?
5. How do you develop those relationships?
6. In what ways do you involve others such as parents in student learning?
  - a. What types of information do you share?
  - b. What kinds of questions do you ask others such as parents?
  - c. When do you engage with others such as parents?
  - d. How do you report student learning to parents?
7. Describe your classroom management strategies?
8. How do you organize students to work in groups, on assignments and projects?
9. What expectations do you have for student classroom behavior?
10. How do you know if students are learning?
11. What else can you tell me that makes you an excellent teacher?
12. Are there anything else that you would share or I need to know regarding your teaching practices?

Thank you for participating in this interview....Travis

## APPENDIX E

### Follow-up Interview Protocol

1. When might you experience any type of problems within the classroom?
2. What kind of problems might a teacher experience within the classroom?
3. How do you usually handle problems within the classroom?
4. How would you handle student conflict within the classroom?
5. How would you handle bullying within the classroom?
6. How can a teacher perhaps avoid getting in the way of student learning?

## APPENDIX F

### Informed Consent Form

Spring 2013

Please read carefully the following Informed Consent specifics and sign this form if you fully give your permission to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent for your personal records.

Researcher: C. Travis Sutton  
Graduate Student, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University  
\_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

Dissertation Title: Teacher Attitudes and Practices that Support Effective Teaching

#### Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate or identify key issues that some teachers have within the classroom and various teaching techniques teachers use to address such issues. Through this inquiry I am attempting to determine what the typical middle school teacher does in an attempt to reach the goal of effectively educating students while managing various teaching practices and behavior issues that arise within the classroom.

#### Request for Participation:

The researcher requests your voluntary participation in this study. Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw your words from this study at any time.

**Research Method:** The researcher will interview and observe experienced teachers within your school who serve as tenure teachers, have been recommended by the school principal and experienced academic success. The researcher will ask the interviewees' questions related to their role as an educator and specifically how they prevent and handle certain classroom issues regarding student behavior.

#### Duration of Research Participation:

You will participate in two individual interviews and one lesson observation that will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes during the 2013-14 school year.

#### Confidentiality:

This study only investigates or identifies certain effective teacher techniques within the classroom in order to better ensure the best education possible for their students. Your interviews and observation will be digitally recorded and only used on the final printed transcript, or in the final research report. You as the participant will be able to analyze the transcripts to make any

omissions or corrections for clarity. The digital recording and corresponding transcripts will be secured during and following the data analysis of this study; these items will be secured in the researcher's home office for five years per IRB guidelines.

**Method of Recording Interview:**

The researcher will digitally record your interview to ensure complete accuracy of your responses. The digital recording will be secured during and following the data analysis of this study. The recordings will be secured in the researcher's home office for five years per IRB guidelines.

**Right of Refusal:**

You may refuse to participate in this study at any time.

**Right to Withdraw:**

You may withdraw from this study at any time. You may withdraw your words from this study at any time.

**Feedback and Benefits:**

You will receive a copy of the study's research conclusions to review. The benefit of your participation in this study is to share with colleagues and university professors what you learned about the mentor and intern relationship. This information could be used to strengthen the internship program for aspiring principals.

**Copy of Consent:**

You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent for your personal records.

**Permission to Quote:**

Your words may be used in the final research report to clarify or further explain a component of the theoretical framework. The researcher will not identify the source of the quote unless authorized by the participant who is quoted. In addition, the researcher will take precautions to ensure that there are no specific identifiers within the body of the quote such as names of other individuals.

---

Signature of Voluntary Participant

---

Date of Participation

---

Signature of Researcher

## APPENDIX G

### ETSU IRB Letter of Approval



East Tennessee State University  
Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707  
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

#### **IRB APPROVAL – Initial Expedited Review**

August 20, 2013

Charles "Travis" Sutton

**Re:** Teacher Attitudes and Practices that Support Effective Teaching

**IRB#:** c0813.9s

**ORSPA #:** n/a

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:

- xform New Protocol Submission; Site Permissions; Teacher Consent (no version date, stamped approved 8/18/13); Email Letter to Participants; Interview Questions; CV

On **August 18, 2013**, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on **August 17, 2014**. The expedited approval of the study will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents** have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:

- Teacher Consent (no version date, stamped approved 8/18/13)

Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent.

**Projects involving Mountain States Health Alliance must also be approved by MSHA following IRB approval prior to initiating the study.**

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a



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case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 ([www.etsu.edu/irb](http://www.etsu.edu/irb)). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,  
Chris Ayres, Chair  
ETSU Campus IRB

VITA

CHARLES TRAVIS SUTTON

- Education: Public Schools, Claiborne County, Tennessee  
B.A. History, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate,  
Tennessee 1998  
M.A. Educational Supervision and Supervision, Lincoln  
Memorial University, Harrogate,  
Tennessee 2005  
Ed.S. Educational Supervision and Supervision, Lincoln  
Memorial University, Harrogate,  
Tennessee 2006  
Ed.D Educational Leadership, East Tennessee State University,  
Johnson City, Tennessee 2014
- Professional Experience: Teacher, Powell Valley Elementary; Speedwell,  
Tennessee, 1998-2005  
Assistant Principal, Powell Valley Elementary, Speedwell,  
Tennessee, 2005-present