A SURVEY OF EDUCATION FACULTY REGARDING POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

By
Angella Hill

Submitted to
The Educational Leadership Faculty
Northwest Missouri State University Missouri
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education and Human Services
Maryville, MO 64468

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the attitudes and perceptions the teaching staff possessed toward relationship building with their students, and to determine whether said relationship building made a positive impact on classroom management. The research includes findings that answer the questions, “Can building relationships with students reduce the incidence of classroom disruptions?”, “Should teachers take the time to engage in outside classroom activities in order to build stronger relationships with their students?” and “Can chronic behavior students be impacted by maintaining positive relationships with their teachers?”

The research was conducted using an anonymous survey distributed via email and hard copy through interoffice mail to 25 teachers, 22 of whom responded. The findings were analyzed through Microsoft Excel and A Statistical Program (ASP) software. Findings indicate that there is a difference between teachers who engage in relationship-building techniques with students and the reduction of both chronic behaviors and classroom disruption. Professional development in the area of relationship-building techniques is warranted. Additionally, the district may want to consider the implementation of some pilot projects with teachers willing to demonstrate and document their personal success within the classroom.
INTRODUCTION

Background, Issues and Concerns

A middle school, hereafter referred to as JBMS, struggles with the ability to maintain order within multiple classroom settings. Numerous teachers have expressed unease with the fact that more time is being spent addressing negative behaviors within the classroom than actual teaching of curriculum; and because of that, educators within this building experience a faster burnout rate than other districts of similar size. JBMS is the largest of four middle schools within its district, with 997 students. The school has failed to meet AYP in both math and communication arts without safe harbor in all demographics the previous three years. Two years prior, they received the label of a Title I School, and as of last year, have been reclassified from suburban to urban school setting. Demographics include 68% free and reduced; 57% Caucasian, 33% African American, and 10% Other. The majority of students are part of a low socioeconomic status. Multiple strategies have been employed to aid the school in reducing negative classroom behaviors, such as BIST (Behavior Intervention Support Team), parent-teacher conferences, student support groups, no-contact contracts between students, full-time SRO (Student Resource Officer), behavior plans, hall restriction, and other various techniques.

Practice under Investigation

The practice under investigation is how to reduce negative classroom behaviors most effectively and subsequently reduce the teacher burnout rate.
School Policy to be Informed by Study

JBMS has grades six through eight. Classes are taught by certified teachers, some with paraprofessional assistance and some with Special Education teachers in a CWC setting. The school practices the BIST continuum and has a part-time SRO on campus. The educational demographics are approximately 50-50 in terms of teachers with experience 1-10 years and 10 or more years of service. This along with the research findings suggests age is not a factor in determining a teacher’s success rate in the reduction of classroom disruptions and relationship-building with their students. The research will determine if the practice of the teachers building relationships with students decrease classroom disruptions. The results will inform teachers about relationship building.

Conceptual Underpinning

The conceptual underpinning utilized in this study was taken from Ruby Payne’s “Theory of Poverty” (2005). Payne suggests that children from a poverty background view school as an abstract rather than a reality, whereas children from a middle-class background see education as a necessary means to success. Children from poverty are more apt to attend school to socialize rather than to receive education. Understanding this idea lends credence to the fact that the majority of behavior issues within the classroom are found within the lowest socio-economic class. They do not view the education system as a necessary part of life, but rather, a vehicle in which they can immerse themselves in their day to day relationships. As a result, these students tend to struggle with educators keeping them from their main purpose in attending to school and “forcing” them to engage in less desirable behavior, such as being attentive to classroom instruction. Through the course of this study, it was made very clear the major offenders of breaking rules were the lower socio-economic class. Since these types of students thrive on
relationships, it is in the best interest of all involved that relationships are forged between teachers and students, thus reducing both chronic behavior and classroom disruptions.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that there are too many classroom disruptions, which takes away from instructional time for all.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine whether teachers who build positive relationships with students have a decreased recurrence of behavioral issues within the classroom setting. The information attained will allow educators the opportunity to adjust their current classroom management techniques and effectively increase instructional time within their classrooms.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

Null Hypothesis

Ho. There is no difference between building relationships amongst teachers and students and the reduction of classroom disruptions.
Anticipated Benefits of the Study

The results of this study will inform educators of the benefits to developing positive relationships with their students. These results will reinforce the impact the investment of time from teacher to student has on quality instruction.

Definition of Terms

AYP: Average Yearly Progress

A provision of the 2002 No Child Left Behind law that requires each school to meet predetermined student achievement criteria.

CWC: Class within a class

A responsible inclusion model of service delivery for students with mild to moderate disabilities. CWC is a collaborative teaching model which pairs a special educator and a general educator.

BIST: Behavior Intervention Support Team

A regular education process to address and resolve student problems in learning and/or behavior.

SRO: Safety Resource Officer

SRO’s responsibilities are three areas: Teacher, Counselor, and Law Enforcement Officer. Provide additional assistance to administration and faculty with student behavior.

IEP: Individual Education Plan

Written document that states the disabled child's goals, objectives and services for students receiving special education.
BIP: Behavior Intervention Plan

The written plan used to address problem behavior that includes positive behavioral interventions, strategies and support. May include program modifications and supplementary aids and services.

Summary

JBMS is located in Independence, Missouri, and is the largest of the four area middle schools. It contains students in grades six through eight. The majority of students live below the poverty line and struggle with day-to-day classroom behavior. This research looks at the impact building positive relationships between teachers and students can have on decreasing the negative behavior within the classroom. Utilizing the conceptual underpinning of Payne’s “Theory of Poverty”, this research will outline ways to influence these students and reduce negative behaviors.
“Student misbehavior is one of the most significant stressors and causes of burnout among teachers” (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011 p. 28). Teachers experience misbehavior on a daily basis, and oftentimes they can be deterred from their instruction time in order to solve problems or reprimand students. “Students who frequently engage in problem behavior tend to disrupt teacher instruction and impede others' learning, and they can seriously limit their own opportunities for academic and social success” (Marchant & Anderson, 2012 p. 23). The view that negative student-teacher interaction adversely impacts classroom climate is well documented. There have been numerous studies and research compiled as to student-teacher relationships and their impact on classroom management. All research points to a shared sentimentality: without a positive relationship between the student and his/her teacher, classroom disruptions will increase. All students, whether well-adjusted or struggling with structured environments, rely on their teacher to provide them with guidance throughout the course of their education. They need the reinforcement from their teacher that they are capable of learning and worthy of attention. There are some students that require more than others, however, to achieve success. In order to be successful, “The development of positive, caring relationships is important for all students and is crucial for students with behavior disabilities” (Souveny, 2008 p. 2).

Much research has been done regarding positive interaction between teachers and students. In many cases, students make a conscious choice as to whether they will be attentive or disruptive in class. There are many factors to be aware of, that can influence a student’s decision to behave. “The behavior a student exhibits, then, comprises “purposive acts” based on
their interpretations of school and classroom life, and especially of their relationships with teachers” (Schlosser, 2002 p. 136). Understanding that students will respond more appropriately when they have established a positive working relationship with their teacher will encourage educators to consider investing more than just their contract time in their students. To establish a strong and positive relationship with a student, it is important to note that it is a complex structure built of many components. According to Pianta (2006), the child–teacher relationship perspective tends to “embrace the complex social, psychological and emotional process involved in interactions and relationships between teachers and children..” (p. 704). Once teachers embrace that there is a strong correlation between building relationships and less classroom disruptions, there will be a major shift in the dynamic of their teaching.

Relationship-building is the cornerstone of good classroom management. Quite often, educators are the major source in teaching social norms, especially in the lower socioeconomic class. Students without this particular piece of puzzle can struggle with all remaining aspects of their education. In school, one of the most important tasks young children face is to form a close and harmonious relationship with the teacher (Doumen, Verschueren & Buyse, 2009). Teachers must find a way to build rapport with their charges, so that classroom disruption becomes a minor occurrence, rather than the driving force within the very fiber of the classroom. “Children who engage in disruptive and aggressive behaviors are likely to upset classroom order..” (Doumen, Verschueren & Buyse, p. 664). When there is discourse in the classroom, learning cannot be achieved.

Achieving an environment where all students feel safe and cared for is paramount to success. Teachers giving of their time and of their energy will encounter more success within
the classroom than those who punch a clock and do not become invested within their charges’ lives. Emotional needs of students are vast and varied, and to be aware of a student’s needs is a major step to controlling classroom disruption. “In order to be sensitive to students’ needs, it is necessary for teachers to perceive students’ emotional states accurately. For example, correctly identifying a student’s escalating anger and acting quickly on that information may prevent the student from engaging in disruptive behavior” (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey 2011 p. 30). Teachers are simply making their lives easier, and inching away from the inevitable burnout caused by classroom misbehavior, if they invest in the complete package that is their student’s lives.

In order to provide an environment where all students, regardless of their race, religion, or socioeconomic status can thrive, a relationship must be established between teacher and student. “Learning is facilitated when a close, positive relationship exists between teacher and pupil” (Mill, 1960 p. 1). When there is a positive relationship between educator and pupil, their potential to succeed is unlimited. “The affective quality of children’s relationships with their teachers is associated with many positive school outcomes”, (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008 p. 8). Building a relationship with students can provide success in all areas. “Children's feelings of connectedness to teachers and to schools can influence their social and emotional adjustment as well as their academic performance,” (Fowler, Banks, Anhalt, Der, Kalis, 2008 p. 169). In fact, an actual study done by the Department of Educational Psychology at Texas A&M confirmed, “these studies find that the provision of a relationship with one’s teacher characterized by high levels of support and low levels of conflict predicts improved academic performance,” (Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012 p. 350). And since educators are in the business of achieving academic growth, it seems logical that they would like to find the path of least
resistance. Establishing a positive relationship between teacher and student is the most logical solution to today’s classroom disruptions.
RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The alpha level was set at 0.25 for all tests with this research. The independent variable is the degree of positive relationships. The dependent variable is the classroom disruptions and chronic behaviors. Chi-Square was the test that was utilized for this study.

Study Group Description

The study group included both teachers and students of JBMS. Faculty included 22 participants of the 25 surveyed. Teachers cover approximately 997 students divided into grade levels, 6, 7 and 8. Approximately 65% of all teachers are classified as tenured, and 35% have been teaching five years or less. All classes are co-ed and the majority of IEP students are mainstreamed. There are CWC classes in each grade level. As of last year, the school district which houses JBMS was reclassified from a suburban to urban school setting. Demographics include 68% free and reduced; 57% Caucasian, 33% African American, and 10% Other.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Information regarding these students came from a 10 question anonymous survey filled out by 22 of the faculty. See Appendix A for survey. Anonymity insured truthful answers. Seven of the ten questions were to determine relationship building techniques amongst the educators and their students. The remaining three questions gauged the quantity and frequency of classroom disruptions on a daily basis. Questions were answered by either a “Yes” or “No” response, and also by multiple choice. Responses were collected and sorted by the researcher. Words were recoded as numbers in answers so that the statistical analysis could be completed.
Statistical Analysis Methods

A Statistical Package (ASP) software was used to complete the statistical calculations in this study. Additionally, Microsoft Excel was used to compile the totals used in the research. In addition, a Chi-Square was utilized to establish the degree of relationships found between teacher involvement with students and their effect on classroom disruptions. A total of six tables were constructed, using a 2x2 and 3x2 method.
FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM DATA ANALYSIS

RQ #1
Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

Table 1 The survey questions addressed in this table asked how many teachers taught summer school versus how many classroom disruptions they experienced on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Summer Y</th>
<th>Summer N</th>
<th>Chi-Sq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt 1 to 3 disruptions/period</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt 4 to 7 disruptions/period</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt More than 7 disruptions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0000167017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. ≤ 0.25

A chi square analysis was used to compare teachers who participated in summer school and the frequency of classroom disruptions within the current school year. Of the 22 teachers that participated, 8 (36%) of the teachers that stated they teach summer school and experienced between 1 and 3 class disruptions, while 14 (64%) of the teachers who did not teach summer school reported classroom disruptions more than 4 times in a daily period. As shown in Table 1, there is a significant difference (Chi Square (1) = 22, p-value = .0000167) between teachers who teach summer school versus teachers who do not teach summer school, and the amount of classroom disruptions encountered on a daily basis. The null hypothesis is rejected for this question. There is a difference between teachers who teach summer school and teachers who do not teach summer school, and the amount of classroom disruptions experienced by both groups in a daily period. It was concluded that teachers who taught summer school experienced a
significant decrease in actual classroom disruptions during the school year, than teachers who did not teach summer school. The group that engaged in summer school and began building relationships with their students prior to the actual school year commencing had an advantage over the non-summer school teachers and their students.
RQ #1
Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

Table 2 Survey question asked if teachers participated in student activities outside of class and how many classroom disruptions they encountered during the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Outside N</th>
<th>Outside Y</th>
<th>Chi-Sq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 disruptions/period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 7 disruptions/period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.4375</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000732718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 7 disruptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A chi square analysis was used to compare teachers who participated in outside activities that involved their students, and the frequency of classroom disruptions. Of the 22 teachers that participated, 6 (27%) of the teachers that stated they participate in the outside activities of their students had between 4 and 6 daily class disruptions, while 16 (73%) of the teachers who did not participate in outside activities reported classroom disruptions more than 6 times in a daily period. As shown in Table 2, there is a significant difference (Chi Square (1) = 14.4375, p-value = .000732718) between teachers who participate in outside activities that involve their students versus teachers who do not participate in outside student activities, and the amount of classroom disruptions encountered on a daily basis. The null hypothesis is rejected for this question. There is a difference between teachers who participate in their students’ activities outside of the classroom and teachers who do not participate in their students’ activities outside of the classroom, and the amount of classroom disruptions experienced by both sets in a daily period. Teachers who participated in their students’ activities outside of the school day experienced a
much lower occurrence of classroom disruptions on a daily basis than teachers who did not participate in their students’ activities outside of the school day.
RQ #1
Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

Table 3 The survey question asked if teachers participated in summer school versus how many chronic behaviors they experience on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Summer Y</th>
<th>Summer N</th>
<th>Chi-Sq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior 1 to 3 behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior 3 to 5 behaviors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior More than 5 behaviors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.2381</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000297812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. ≤ 0.25

A chi square analysis was used to compare teachers who taught summer school and the frequency of chronic bad behavior experienced on a daily basis. Chronic behavior is characterized as a child exhibiting negative behavior on a consistent basis. There can be more than one child a teacher sees during the day that exhibits this type of behavior. Of the 22 teachers that participated, 8 (36%) of the teachers experience chronic behavior 2-3 times per day, while 14 (64%) of the teachers who did not participate in summer school reported chronic behavior more than 4 times in a daily period. As shown in Table 3, there is a significant difference (Chi Square (1) = 16, p-value = .000297812) between teachers who participate in summer school and teachers who do not participate in summer school, and the occurrence of chronic behavior on a daily basis. The null hypothesis is rejected for this question. There is a difference between teachers who taught summer school and teachers who do not teach summer school and the amount of chronic behavior they experience on a daily basis in a regular school year. Teachers who taught summer school experienced less chronic behaviors in a classroom period over the regular school year than teachers who did not teach summer school.
RQ #1
Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

**Table 4** Survey question asked if teachers participated in student activities outside of class and how many chronic behaviors they encountered during the regular school day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Outside N</th>
<th>Outside Y</th>
<th>Chi-Sq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior 1 to 3 behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior 4 to 5 behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior More than 5 behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00708341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A chi square analysis was used to compare teachers who participated in outside activities that involved their students, and the frequency of chronic behaviors seen within the classroom on a daily basis. Chronic behavior is characterized as a child exhibiting negative behavior on a consistent basis. There can be more than one child a teacher sees during the day that exhibits this type of behavior. Of the 22 teachers that participated, 6 (27%) of the teachers that stated they participate in the outside activities of their students saw between 4 and 6 chronic behaviors on a daily basis, while 16 (73%) of the teachers who did not participate in outside activities reported experiencing chronic behaviors between 4 and 6 times a day. As shown in Table 4, there is a significant difference (Chi Square (2) = 9.9, p-value = 0.00708341) between teachers who participate in outside activities that involve their students versus teachers who do not participate in outside student activities, and the amount of chronic behaviors that are seen on a daily basis. The null hypothesis is rejected for this question. There is a difference between teachers who participate in their students’ activities outside of the classroom and teachers who do not participate in their students’ activities outside of the classroom, and the amount of chronic
behaviors experienced by both sets in a daily period. Teachers who participated in their students’ activities outside of the regular school day experienced a lower occurrence of chronic behavior within the classroom than teachers who did not participate in their students’ activities outside of the classroom setting.
RQ #1
Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

Table 5 Survey asked teachers how often they went over their classroom expectations and how many classroom disruptions they experience on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Expectation &gt;4</th>
<th>Expectation 2-3</th>
<th>Expectation &lt;2</th>
<th>Chi-Sq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt 1 to 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt 4 to 7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Disrupt More than 7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0000463339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. ≤ 0.25

A chi square analysis was used to compare teachers who reviewed their expectations with their students on a weekly basis and the incidence of daily classroom disruptions. Of the 22 teachers that participated, 6 (27%) of the teachers that reviewed procedures more than four weeks in a school year stated they experienced between 1 and 3 class disruptions, while 16 (73%) of the teachers who reviewed their expectations 3 weeks or less in a school year experienced 3 or more classroom disruptions on a daily basis. As shown in Table 5, there is a significant difference (Chi Square = 25.2, p-value = .0000463339) between teachers who review classroom expectations 4 or more weeks in a school year and teachers who review their classroom procedures 3 or less weeks in a school year, and the amount of daily classroom disruptions experienced. The null hypothesis is rejected for this question. There is a difference between teachers who review classroom procedures 4 or more weeks in a school year, and teachers who review their classroom procedures less than 3 weeks in a school year and the incidence of daily classroom disruptions experienced by both groups. Teachers who reviewed their classroom expectations 4 or more
weeks in a school year saw a significantly lower occurrence of classroom disruptions than
teachers who reviewed classroom expectations less than 4 weeks in a school year.
**RQ #1**

Is there a difference between positive teacher-student relationships and classroom disruptions?

Table 6 Survey asked teachers how often they went over their classroom expectations and how many chronic behaviors they experience on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Expectation &gt;4</th>
<th>Expectation 2-3</th>
<th>Expectation &lt;2</th>
<th>Chi-Sq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior 1 to 3 behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior 4 to 5 behaviors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Behavior More than 5 behaviors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.41578E-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. ≤ 0.25

A chi square analysis was used to compare teachers who reviewed their expectations with their students on a weekly basis and the incidence of chronic behavior on a daily basis. Chronic behavior is characterized as a child exhibiting negative behavior on a consistent basis. There can be more than one child a teacher sees during the day that exhibits this type of behavior. Of the 22 teachers that participated, 6 (27%) of the teachers that reviewed procedures more than four weeks in a school year stated they experienced between 1 and 3 chronic behaviors on a daily basis, while 16 (73%) of the teachers who reviewed their expectations 3 weeks or less in a school year experienced 3 or more incidences of chronic behavior on a daily basis. As shown in Table 6, there is a significant difference (Chi Square = 44, p-value = E-6.415) between teachers who review classroom expectations 4 or more weeks in a school year and teachers who review classroom expectations 3 or less weeks in a school year, and the amount of chronic behaviors experienced on a daily basis. The null hypothesis is rejected for this question. There is a difference between teachers who review classroom procedures 4 or more weeks in a school year, and teachers who review their classroom procedures less than 4 weeks in a school year, and the
incidence of daily chronic behaviors experienced by both groups. Teachers who review classroom expectations more than 4 weeks in a school year experience a significantly lower occurrence of chronic behaviors with the classroom on a daily basis than teachers who review their classroom expectations less than 4 weeks in a school year.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The null hypothesis stated there was no difference between teachers who built relationships with their students and the amount of classroom disruptions experienced on a daily basis versus teachers who did not build relationships with their students. The results of this study indicate that there are areas of significant difference between teachers who take the time to invest in a relationship-building process with their students, and teachers who refrain from engaging in anything more than their contracted period of teaching. Overall, educators who spent significant time teaching summer school, attending extracurricular activities of their students, and going over classroom expectations on a regular and consistent basis found classroom disruptions and chronic behavior students at a significantly lower rate of occurrence.

In contrast, educators who did not teach summer school, attend extra-curricular activities of their students, or expound upon classroom expectations on a consistent and regular basis, found they experienced a considerably much higher occurrence of classroom disruptions and chronic behavior students than their counterparts. It is important to identify these two types of disruptions, as they are unique of one another. Classroom disruptions can occur from any student at any time and usually are not repeated on a consistent basis; chronic behavior is limited to a specific child with negative behavior displayed on a regular basis.

Questions on the survey were designed to establish two things: teacher relationship-building techniques and the amount of classroom disruptions each teacher experienced on a daily basis. There were 10 questions in all; seven referred to relationship-building techniques, and three pertained to classroom management. Two of the questions were not a significant statistical difference. One of these questions asked if teachers recognized individual achievement within
the classroom, and all 22 participants answered “Yes”. A second question not utilized asked if teachers allowed the students to share personal experiences within the classroom and again, all 22 participants stated “Yes”.

There were two additional questions from the survey that were determined not relevant to the study, and bared no significant statistical difference. Both questions addressed a teacher-parent relationship, and because the study was about teacher-student relationships, it was determined irrelevant to the findings.

A total of six questions were used from the survey, four relationship-type questions, and two behavioral questions. Cross-tab contingency was performed on each combination, resulting in six chi-squares. In each of the six tables, it was determined that the null hypothesis must be rejected; thus supporting the hypothesis that building relationships with students can decrease the number of classroom disruptions.

There appears to be significant differences between teachers who concentrate on building relationships with their students and the amount of classroom disruptions experienced on a daily basis. Crowe states, “When children feel accepted and trust their teacher cares about them, they are generally eager to work with that teacher”. Instead of adhering to contracted time, educators who invest in the personal and emotional well-being of their students find a significant decrease in classroom disruptions, as well as a decrease in the occurrence of chronic behavior students. Teachers who understand the importance of relationships with their students are likely to cover more content within the classroom due to fewer distractions.
Building relationships between teachers and students is tantamount to a solid education; especially when it comes to chronic behavior. However, it takes time to build rapport between one another. For example, the study revealed teachers who worked summer school had an advantage with chronic behavior students that teachers who refrained from summer school did not. Those who did not participate in summer school lacked the time necessary to establish rapport with these students and as such, had to develop relationships with them at the same time as the remaining class. This ultimately led to decreased instruction time and increased disruptions.

Conceptual underpinning points out that children from poverty are more apt to attend school to socialize rather than to receive education. They seek to find acceptance and belonging within the confines of school. The demographics from the middle school for this study support this underpinning as it is a low, socioeconomic community with many of the student body at the poverty level. Since relationships are of the utmost importance to this demographic, it stands to reason that the majority of behavior issues within the classroom occur when circumstances, such as classroom instruction, prevent students from participating in socializing. As a result, they tend to struggle and cause disruption.

However, when these students build relationships with their teachers, they too become invested in the learning process. Their sense of worth is supported, and they feel an obligation to be productive in the classroom. When a teacher shows an interest in a student more than just at grade card time, the students are more apt to try harder within the class.
The school district may want to consider an in-depth study of relationship-building techniques and teachers with successful classroom management. Research could be gathered to pinpoint most chronic students and then administration could observe behavior in each students’ class; noting success versus struggles. This could be done by tracking individual observation in class and office referrals. Another technique would be to provide the survey on Appendix A to all staff, asking their opinion on success strategies for classroom disruptions and chronic behavior kids. Finally, chronic behavior students could be questioned regarding the differences in some classes and why it is easier to behave for some teachers than it is for others.

Once this information is gathered and successes for both teachers and students can be identified, professional development could be designed for all, encompassing student input as well as “model teacher” behavior. Staff could have training on proven relationship-building techniques and also review student perceptions as to what styles work in helping them curb their behavior as it relates to student-teacher rapport.

Another area of study could be done when teachers and students are engaged in summer school. A questionnaire could be utilized with students to see why they are more eager to please some teachers than others and to identify positive traits that could be shared with contract time educators in the hopes that certain triggers can be identified and dealt with prior to school year commencing.

Additionally, a study outside the middle school environment could be conducted, to see if the findings are similar in elementary or high school levels. It would be interesting to note if there is a difference in classroom disruptions and age.
Finally, a study could be obtained outside the current demographic. Since JBMS is considered a Title I school district, it would be noteworthy to test the theory of relationship-building and classroom disruptions in an area where socioeconomic status is a different level. Conceptual underpinning states that due to socioeconomic status, students of poverty struggle to see school as anything but a place to socialize, thus creating disruption within the classroom. Although students can benefit from a relationship with their teacher at any socioeconomic level, “students who live in poverty need a strong and trusting relationship with the teacher and an environment that is safe and secure”.
REFERENCES


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Fowler, L; Banks, T; Anhalt, K; Der, H; & Kalis, T. (2008). The Association Between Externalizing Behavior Problems, Teacher-Student Relationship Quality, and Academic


APPENDIX A

Survey for Action Research Paper

1. Have you taught summer school within the last three years?
   a. Yes  b. No

2. How much time do you spend communicating classroom expectations with students?
   a. Less than a week  b. 1 to 2 weeks  c. 3 to 4 weeks  d. more than 4 weeks

3. Within the classroom, do you publicly acknowledge individual achievement?
   a. Yes  b. No

4. Do you support students outside of school environment? (concerts, sports, other events)
   a. Yes  b. No

5. Do you take time out of class to allow students to share personal experiences?
   a. Yes  b. No

6. How often do you contact parents for positive behavior in class?

7. How often do you contact parents for negative behavior in class?

8. What is the average number of classroom disruptions per day?
   a. 0  b. 1-3  c. 4-7  d. More than 7

9. In your classroom, how many chronic behavior kids do you have in a day?
   a. 0  b. 1-3  c. 4-7  d. More than 7

10. On a daily basis, how often do you feel frustration in the classroom?
    a. Never  b. 1-2 times  c. 3-4 times  d. More than 4 times