A SURVEY OF FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS ON ATTITUDES AND BUILDING 
STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS WHEN USING DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN 
THE CLASSROOM 

By 

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Abstract

This study investigates the need to build strong student-teacher relationships in the classroom in order to promote student achievement. The study shows that dialogue journals can be implemented in a classroom in order to help build student-teacher relationships. This study was completed to see if dialogue journals could build student-teacher relationships and to see if students had a positive attitude towards dialogue journals. The research includes findings which answer the questions, “Do dialogue journals create a strong student-teacher relationship in the classroom?” and, “Do students have a positive attitude towards completing a dialogue journal with their teacher?” The research was conducted via a six question survey given to 18 fourth graders after the completion of a dialogue journal during the fall semester. The findings were analyzed through a chi-square analysis using ASP statistical software. Findings indicate that dialogue journals do build strong student-teacher relationships. In addition, the findings show that students have a positive attitude towards completing dialogue journals with their teacher.
Dialogue Journals in the Classroom-3

Introduction

Background, Issues and Concerns

A rural elementary school located in the Midwest, has experienced not meeting the annual proficiency target of Communication Arts MAP test scores for the last two years. The elementary school met AYP last year, but did not meet the state AYP. In addition, the school's enrollment rate has gradually decreased over the last five years. The enrollment for 2011 for the elementary school was 85 students. Due to this school having such a low enrollment, each student counts tremendously when dealing with school MAP scores and meeting targets. In order to get students to succeed, teachers need to motivate students to perform well on the MAP test. In order to get performance up, teachers need to improve attitudes of students and build student-teacher relationships. Dialogue journals have been used in the past to increase writing attitudes and student-teacher relationships. The project will involve conducting dialogue journals in a fourth grade classroom over one school semester. A six question survey will be given to all students after completing a dialogue journal. The survey will analyze the opinions of boys and girls on the attitudes of dialogue journals and building student-teacher relationships through dialogue journals.

Practice under Investigation

The practice under investigation is how to increase students' attitudes of writing and build student-teacher relationships. Dialogue journals could be a way to increase students’ attitudes of writing and build student-teacher relationships. Having a
strong student-teacher relationship in the classroom is detrimental in order for students to have the most successful educational experience. Dialogue journals could be a way for teachers to build a stronger student-teacher relationship with their students, which could then help increase test scores and education success.

**School Policy to be Informed by Study**

In the school district studied, writing is a major part of the language arts program implemented in the school. Students have to complete many writing activities in order to meet the Missouri GLE's and prepare for the MAP test. When students get into the older grades, writing is no longer an activity that students enjoy. In addition, student-teacher relationships are also very important in the school district due to it being a rural school and having a high free and reduced lunch percentage. Most students do not have a home life that supports education. The school district pushes teachers to get involved with students and attend all school functions in order to build stronger student-teacher relationships. Past studies show that dialogue journals can increase student-teacher relationships, so implementing dialogue journals could support the idea of increasing student-teacher relationships.

**Conceptual Underpinning**

In order for students to be successful in school, they need to want to learn and enjoy building their education. In order to do so, students have to have a strong connection with their teachers. Students will want to succeed and do well in school if
they have someone to succeed for. Many students do not have strong role models at home, so their teachers are the individuals that they look up to. If teachers connect with their students, then the students will want to strive and become strong students to impress their teachers. Also, building trust with students is vital in having a strong student-teacher relationship. If students trust their teacher, they will be more willing to try new things in the classroom and feel more confident in themselves. Building student-teacher relationships can promote student achievement. If students trust and admire their teacher, then they will want to perform at their best in the classroom and on the annual MAP test. This could help raise the MAP scores, along with other test scores.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of strong positive student-teacher relationships in the classroom. There is also a lack of students' positive attitudes towards writing activities in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to see if student-teacher relationships could be increased by using dialogue journals. Students and teachers should have a strong relationship in order to have a successful school year. This study showed if dialogue journals could create stronger student-teacher relationships. Stronger student-teacher relationships could promote student achievement, raising the annual MAP test scores. In addition, this study was also conducted to see if dialogue journals could increase students'
attitudes about writing activities. Many students do not enjoy writing, and the study showed if dialogue journals could help students' have a more positive attitude towards writing. Lastly, this study was conducted in order to see if the attitudes and views of dialogue journals differed between boys and girls. This is important to see how dialogue journals are viewed by the different sexes.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the overall opinion of attitudes when using dialogue journals in the fourth grade classroom?

RQ 2: What is the overall opinion of building student-teacher relationships with dialogue journals?

RQ 3: Is there a difference of opinion between boys and girls about the attitudes of using dialogue journals in the fourth grade classroom?

RQ 4: Is there a difference of opinion between boys and girls about building student-teacher relationships with dialogue journals?

Null Hypotheses

H₀. There is no difference of opinion between boys and girls about the attitudes of using dialogue journals in the classroom.

H₀. There is no difference of opinion between boys and girls about building student-teacher relationships using dialogue journals.
Anticipated Benefits of the Study

The result of this study will inform fellow teachers if dialogue journals can increase student-teacher relationships and students' attitudes of writing in the classroom.

Definition of Terms

DESE: Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education

GLE: Grade Level Expectations for the state of Missouri

MAP: Missouri Assessment Program

AYP: Annual Yearly Percentage

Summary

The elementary school in this study is the only elementary school located in a small rural school district in the Midwest. The school practices a strong language arts program that meets the Missouri GLE's. In this program, writing is an important component in order to prepare students for the Communication Arts MAP test given in the spring of every school year. In addition, the school practices building strong student-teacher relationships with each student, in order for all students to succeed. This research investigates the use of dialogue journals in the classroom to increase students' attitudes towards writing and to build stronger student-teacher relationships. The research looks at the opinions of fourth grade students in completing dialogue journals with a teacher. The
research also looks at the difference of opinion between fourth grade boys and girls on dialogue journals.
Review of Literature

Two sources of literature support the research conducted here. Literature pertaining to implementing dialogue journals in the classroom to build attitudes of writing, as well as literature related to building student-teacher relationships. Both sources of literature have been researched to see if there is a connection to building student-teacher relationships by conducting dialogue journals in the classroom.

“Dialogue journals are public documents shared between a learner and a teacher/mentor/coach” (Killion 2004, p.57). Dialogue journals are a way to have a conversation with a student through writing. Journal writing is a means of expression for students. Teachers can use dialogue journals to enhance critical thinking or to express personal feelings. Journal writing is used for two reasons, to teach students to write and to share experiences (Hettich, 1990). Dialogue journals are also a way to model correct grammar, spelling and prose. When teachers reply to a student’s entry, they model correct spelling and grammar to show students how to correctly write (Regan, 2003).

In order to conduct a dialogue journal with a student, the follow characteristics must be met when implementing dialogue journaling in a classroom.

1. Teacher and students write to each other on a regular basis. This could be daily or weekly depending on amount of time teacher has to respond to all entries.
2. Teachers spend 10-15 minutes to read and respond to each student’s journal entry.
3. Entries may be written like a letter, including the date, a greeting, body, and a
closing. Entries do not have to be written in letter form.

4. Each entry written by students must be at least five sentences. For older grades, students may be required to write more.

5. Journal entries are not graded. They are simply used as a conversation means between a student and teacher.

6. Teachers may put stickers or compliments on the journal entries to provide positive feedback.

All of these characteristics are important when conducting dialogue journals with students (Regan, 2003). Dialogue journals are not only a means for communication, but can be used to improve attitudes towards writing.

Studies have shown that dialogue journals can improve the students’ attitudes towards writing. As students get older, writing can become boring and time consuming to students. Dialogue journals are a way to increase students’ attitudes towards writing. When completing dialogue journals versus other writing assignments, students have less anxiety because they are encouraged to write on a topic of their choice, rather than an assigned topic that may not be of interest of some students. In addition, dialogue journals are not graded, which lessens the stress of using correct grammar and spelling. This informal type of writing is also more relevant to the students’ lives than other writing activities such as research based reports and essays (Grande, 2008).

Kelley S. Regan’s (2003) study on dialogue journals showed that students’ attitudes of writing were very positive after completing dialogue journals. Regan stated, “After writing in the dialogue journals, students’ perceptions of themselves as writers improved. In addition, students were motivated to write about their thoughts and
feelings” (p.37). This shows that dialogue journals can improve the attitudes of writing. Students enjoy writing on a subject of their choice and expressing personal feelings to their teacher. Not only is increasing students’ attitudes towards writing important, building student-teacher relationships is also vital when running a successful learning environment.

Building relationships with students is another important aspect of being a strong teacher. Studies have shown that students are more willing to learn and put forth effort when they can trust their teacher and connect with him/her. Building relationships with students is not the easiest task of a teacher. “Preparing lessons and activities is not that difficult, but establishing relationships takes a bit more time and effort” (Moye, 2010, pg.8). There are different ways to build relationships with students. One study discusses using social perspectives to increase student-teacher relationships. Students and teachers read each other (appearance, actions, etc.), giving personal perspectives to each other. Then, students and teacher absorb these perspectives, making connections with each other. This study shows that this is more successful way of building relationships with older students (Gehlbach, Brinkworth, Harris, 2011).

Another study explains the importance of building student-teacher relationships in the classroom. “Effective teachers build positive relationships with students. Respect fosters respect. Barriers are removed once a student realizes that a teacher has the student’s best interest in mind” (Moye, 2010, p.8). If students feel comfortable with their teacher, then they will feel comfortable in their surroundings. Students learn best with they have that feeling of comfort in their classroom. Moye (2010) suggests that finding common interests with students, such as sports, hobbies, and families, is a good way to
build relationships with students. Moye (2010) also suggests that if students are involved in sports and clubs, teachers should attend those functions. Then, teachers should discuss these events with the students the following day at school. This will show that the teacher genuinely cares about a student’s personal interests. Building student-teacher relationships also promotes student achievement.

Research has shown that students are more willing to succeed and put forth effort in a classroom where they feel a special bond with their teacher. Student-teacher relationships need to start being built starting the first day of school. “…the initial student/teacher encounter often determines how well or poorly a child will perform throughout the school year. Likewise, a positive teacher/student relationship creates the classroom atmosphere necessary to maximize a student’s mental state of readiness” (McWhinney, Sagan, 2007, p.461). Mcwhinney and Sagan (2007) state several ways to build student/teacher relationship, such as; actively and empathetically listening to students, allowing students to know you, reestablishing contact with students and making high expectations, being involved in extracurricular activities, and showing students respect, fairness, and courtesy. Another approach of building student/teacher relationships is through dialogue journals.

Research has shown that keeping dialogue journals can promote student-teacher relationships. Listening to students, asking questions, and connecting to students’ personal interests are all ways to build student-teacher relationships. These can all be done when implementing dialogue journals. When students keep a dialogue journal with their teachers over a long period of time, students can express “…a sense of connection with the responding adult, a feeling of freedom…”(Regan, 2003, p.40). “In addition to
the academic benefits for students, because of the personal relationships that are often
developed from this frequent informal dialogue, there are many benefits to both of the
dialogue journal participants (Grande, 2008, pg.57).

There have only been a few studies conducted on if dialogue journals can build
student-teacher relationships. None of the studies were conducted in a regular fourth
grade classroom. Research will prove is dialogue journals can be used in a regular
elementary classroom to build student-teacher relationships. Student teacher
relationships are a key component of a successful working classroom. Previous studies
have shown that, along with dialogue journals improving attitudes of writing. Research
will make a connection between dialogue journals and building student-teacher
relationships.
Research Methods

Research Design

A one-time survey served as the research design. The survey was completed after dialogue journals were implemented for one school semester. The alpha level was set at 0.25 for all tests with this research. The independent variable was the boys and girls in a fourth grade classroom. The survey will measure the results of several dependent variables. The dependent variables are the six questions from the survey: “Did you enjoy completing the dialogue journal?”, “Would you like to complete a dialogue journal with you teacher next year?”, “Do you feel that writing in the dialogue journal made you a stronger writer?”, “Do you feel that you became close to your teacher after completing the dialogue journal?”, Did you enjoy being about to talk to your teacher through a private journal?”, and “Do you think that you have a positive and trusting relationship with you teacher after completing the dialogue journal?”. Test run will include a Chi-Square descriptive analysis.

Study Group Description

The study group for this research consisted of 18 students, 9 girls and 9 boys, in a fourth grade classroom at a small rural school district. There were a total of 85 students enrolled in the elementary school (K-5) in 2011. 95.3% of the students in the elementary school are white, 2.4% are Hispanic, and 2.4% are Black. In addition, 48.9% of the elementary students are on Free/Reduced Lunch. Dialogue journals were conducted each week throughout the fall semester of the school year. Each student completed the
writing activity. Then, a six-question survey was completed about dialogue journals by each of the fourth grade students at the end of the semester.

*Data Collection and Instrumentation*

An anonymous survey was distributed by a volunteer staff member to the 18 fourth grade students. The questionnaire was the same for all fourth grade students and consisted of six questions. Three questions were about the opinion of dialogue journals. This information was used to see if the students enjoyed the dialogue journals, would want to do dialogue journals in the future, and if the dialogue journals increased the students' writing skills. The other three questions involved student-teacher relationships, and if the students' believed the relationship with their teacher increased after the completion of the dialogue journals. Questions were answered with “Yes” or “No”. Responses were posted to an Excel spreadsheet. Words were recoded as numbers in answers so that the statistical analysis could be completed. (Appendix A)

*Statistical Analysis Methods*

A Statistical Package (ASP) software was used to complete the statistical calculations in this study. A Chi-Square descriptive analysis was calculated. Additionally, Microsoft Excel was used to compile some totals used in the research.
RQ 1: What is the overall opinion of attitudes when using dialogue journals in the fourth grade classroom?

Status

The frequency plot above displays the two different statuses that were surveyed about dialogue journals. The two different statuses are girls (1) and boys (2). This plot shows that 9 of the people surveyed were girls (50%) and 9 of the people were boys (50%). The total number of people that were surveyed is 18.

Question #1 Did you enjoy completing the dialogue journal?

The frequency plot above displays the two different statuses that were surveyed about dialogue journals. The two different statuses are girls (1) and boys (2). This plot shows that 9 of the people surveyed were girls (50%) and 9 of the people were boys (50%). The total number of people that were surveyed is 18.
The frequency plot above displays how many girls and boys enjoyed completing the dialogue journal. Answer choices were either yes (x=1) or no (x=2). The plot shows that 100% (18) of students enjoyed completing the dialogue journals, and 0% (0) students did not enjoy completing the dialogue journals. The total number of students surveyed on this issue was 18. Based on this frequency plot, all of students enjoyed completing the dialogue journal.

Question #2 Would you like to complete a dialogue journal with your teacher next year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE: Q2</th>
<th>FRQ.</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>FREQUENCY PLOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>94.4</td>
<td>********************</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.6</td>
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<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x &gt; 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The frequency plot above displays how many girls and boys would like to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year. Answer choices were either yes (x=1) or no (x=2). The plot shows that 94.4% (17) of students would like to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year, and 5.6% (1) student would not like to keep a dialogue journal with his/her teacher next year. The total number of students surveyed on this issue was 18. Based on this frequency plot, the majority of students would like to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year.
Question #3 Do you feel that writing in the dialogue journal made you a stronger writer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE: Q3</th>
<th>FRQ.</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>FREQUENCY PLOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>x = 1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>*****</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency plot above displays how many girls and boys felt they became a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal. Answer choices were either yes (x=1) or no (x=2). The plot shows that 83.3% (15) of students believed that they became a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal, and 16.7% (3) students did not believe they became a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journals. The total number of students surveyed on this issue was 18. Based on this frequency plot, the majority of students believed that they became a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal.

Each of the three frequency plots over the first three questions in the survey displayed a positive attitude of writing towards dialogue journals. The majority of students enjoyed completing the dialogue journal, would want to keep a dialogue journal with their future teacher, and felt the dialogue journal made them stronger writers. These charts prove that dialogue journals do create a positive attitude towards writing.
RQ 2: What is the overall opinion of building student-teacher relationships with dialogue journals?

Question #4 Do you feel that you became closer to your teacher after completing the dialogue journal?

The frequency plot above displays how many girls and boys felt they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. Answer choices were either yes (x=1) or no (x=2). The plot shows that 88.9% (16) of students believed that they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal, and 11.1% (2) students did not believe they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journals. The total number of students surveyed on this issue was 18. Based on this frequency plot, the majority of students believed that they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journals.
Question #5 Did you enjoy being able to talk to your teacher through a private journal?

VARIABLE: Q5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRQ.</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>FREQUENCY PLOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x &lt; 1</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x = 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>******************</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x &gt; 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency plot above displays how many girls and boys enjoyed being able to talk to their teacher through a dialogue journal. Answer choices were either yes (x=1) or no (x=2). The plot shows that 100% (18) of students enjoyed being able to talk to their teacher through a private journal, and 0% (0) students did not enjoy talking to their teacher through a private journal. The total number of students surveyed on this issue was 18. Based on this frequency plot, all students enjoyed talking to their teacher through a private journal.

Question #6 Do you think that you have a positive and trusting relationship with your teacher after completing the dialogue journal?

VARIABLE: Q6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRQ.</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
<th>FREQUENCY PLOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x &lt; 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x = 1</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>x = 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x &gt; 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequency plot above displays how many girls and boys thought they had a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. Answer choices were either yes (x=1) or no (x=2). The plot shows that 94.4% (17) of students thought they had a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal, and 5.6% (1) student did not think that he/she had a positive relationship with the teacher after completing the dialogue journal. The total number of students surveyed on this issue was 18. Based on this frequency plot, the majority of students though they had a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal.

The last three frequency plots that displayed the results of survey questions #4-6 show that dialogue journals do create a strong student-teacher relationship. The majority of students believed that they became closer to the students after keeping the private journal with their teacher. Also, students enjoyed communication with their teacher through a journal. Lastly, the majority of students believed that they have a more positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journals. In conclusions, the frequency plots prove that dialogue journals do build stronger student-teacher relationships.
The graph located above shows how many students chose “yes” and how many chose “no” in each of the six questions given in the survey. There were 18 students surveyed. The graph displays a majority of yes answers in each of the six questions. Questions #1-3 represent the overall attitudes of dialogue journals, and questions #4-6 represent the overall opinion of student-teacher relationships when using dialogue journals. As displayed above, students had a strong positive attitude towards dialogue journals and felt that student-teacher relationships were stronger after completing the dialogue journals.
RQ 3: Is there a difference of opinion between boys and girls about the attitudes of using dialogue journals in the fourth grade classroom?

In order to display if there is a significant or insignificant difference between the opinions of girls and boys on the attitudes of dialogue journals, a crosstab/contingency was created with each of the three questions.

**Question #1 Did you enjoy completing the dialogue journal?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sign = or < 0.25*

The table displayed above shows both the opinions of the girls and the boys on if they enjoyed completing the dialogue journal. Table 1 shows that 100% (9) of the girls enjoyed completing the dialogue journal and 0% (0) of the girls did not enjoy completing the dialogue journal. The table also shows that 100% (9) of the boys enjoyed completing the dialogue journal, and 0% (0) of the boys did not enjoy completing the dialogue
journal. The chi-square of Table 1 is 0, due to all of the students enjoying completing the
dialogue journal. The df is 1. The alpha level is set at 0.25. The p-value of this table is
N/A since there is not any students who did not enjoy completing the dialogue journal.

Question #2 Would you like to complete a dialogue journal with your teacher next year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chi Square Analysis by Column</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.25

The table displayed above shows both the opinions of the girls and the boys on if they would want to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year. Table 2 shows that 88.9% (8) of the girls would want to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year and 11.1% (1) of the girls does not want to keep a dialogue journal with her teacher next year. The table also shows that 100% (9) of the boys want to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year and 0% (0) of the boys does not want to keep a dialogue journal with their teacher next year. The chi-square of Table 2 is 1.06. The df is 1. The
alpha level is set at 0.25. The p-value of this table is 0.30. Since the p-value (0.30) is greater than the set alpha level (0.25) the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no difference between the girls and boys on keeping dialogue journals with their teacher next year.

Question #3 Do you feel that writing in the dialogue journal made you a stronger writer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chi Square Analysis by Column</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.25

The table displayed above shows both the opinions of the girls and the boys on if they felt they became stronger writers after completing the dialogue journal. Table 3 shows that 77.8% (7) of the girls believed they became stronger writers after completing the dialogue journal and 22.2% (2) of the girls believed that they did not become a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal. The table also shows that 88.9%
(8) of the boys felt they became a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal and 11.1% (1) of the boys does not believe that they became a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal. The chi-square of Table 3 is 0.40. The df is 1. The alpha level is set at 0.25. The p-value of this table is 0.53. Since the p-value (0.53) is greater than the set alpha level (0.25) the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no difference between the girls and boys on becoming a stronger writer after completing the dialogue journal.

The three tables shown above prove that there is no different of the opinions of dialogue journals between boys and girls. The null hypothesis, there is no difference of opinion between boys and girls about the attitudes of using dialogue journals in the classroom, is not rejected.

RQ 4: Is there a difference of opinion between boys and girls about building student-teacher relationships with dialogue journals?

In order to display if there is a significant or insignificant difference between the opinions of girls and boys on the attitudes of dialogue journals, a crosstab/contingency was created with each of the three questions.
Question #4 Do you feel that you became closer to your teacher after completing the dialogue journal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Summary of Chi Square Analysis by Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100%(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.25

The table displayed above shows both the opinions of the girls and the boys on if they felt if they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal.

Table 4 shows that 100% (9) of the girls do feel that they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal and 0% (0) of the girls do not feel they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. The table also shows that 77.8% (7) of the boys do feel that they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal and 22.2% (2) of the boys do not feel they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. The chi-square of Table 4 is 2.25. The df is 1. The alpha level is set at 0.25. The p-value of this table is 0.13. Since the p-value (0.13) is less than the set alpha level (0.25) the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there
is a difference of opinion between the girls and boys on if dialogue journals caused them to become closer to their teachers.

**Question #5 Do you enjoy being able to talk to your teacher through a private journal?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.25

The table displayed above shows both the opinions of the girls and the boys on if they enjoyed talking to their teacher through a private journal. Table 5 shows that 100% (9) of the girls did enjoy keeping a private journal with their teacher and 0% (0) of the girls did not enjoy keeping a private journal with their teacher. The table also shows that 100% (9) of the boys enjoyed keeping a private journal with their teacher and 0% (0) of the boys did not enjoy keeping the private journal with their teacher. The chi-square of Table 5 is 0 due to all students choosing the answer “Yes”. The df is 1. The alpha level is set at 0.25. The p-value of this table is N/A due to all of the students choosing the answer “Yes” on the survey.
Question #6 Do you think that you have a positive and trusting relationship with your teacher after completing the dialogue journal?

Table 4
Summary of Chi Square Analysis by Column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
<td>88.9% (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>11.1% (1)</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.25

The table displayed above shows both the opinions of the girls and the boys on if they felt they had a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. Table 6 shows that 100% (9) of the girls do feel they have a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal and 0% (0) of the girls do not feel they have a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. The table also shows that 88.9% (8) of the boys do feel they have a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal and 11.1% (1) of the boys does not feel he has a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. The chi-square of Table 6 is 1.06. The df is 1. The alpha level is set at 0.25. The p-value of this table is
0.30. Since the p-value (0.30) is greater than the set alpha level (0.25) the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is not a difference between the opinion of girls and boys on building student-teacher relationships.

The three tables shown above display if there is a difference between girls and boys about building student-teacher relationships using dialogue journals. The null hypothesis, there is no difference of opinion between boys and girls about building student-teacher relationships using dialogue journals, is not rejected for question 5 and 6 (Table 5 and 6), showing that there is no difference of opinion between boys and girls enjoying keeping a private journal with their teacher and feeling they had a positive and trusting relationship with their teacher after completing the dialogue journal. The null hypothesis is rejected for question 4, showing that there is a difference of opinion of boys and girls about becoming closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journal.

Frequency plots for survey questions #1-3, and their descriptive data support research question #1, “What is the overall opinion of attitudes when using dialogue journals in the fourth grade classroom?” From the surveys received it appears that the majority of students had a positive attitude towards completing the dialogue journal. Research question #2, “What is the overall opinion of building student-teacher relationships with dialogue journals?” is answered in the frequency plots for survey questions #4-6. The frequency plots for questions #4-6 display that the students believed the dialogue journals built a strong teacher-student relationship. Tables 1-3 answer research question #3, “Is there a difference of opinion between boys and girls about the attitudes of using dialogue journals in the fourth grade classroom?” Tables 1-3 show that
there is no difference between the opinions of girls and boys about the attitudes of using dialogue journals. Tables 4-6 answer research question #4, “Is there a difference of opinion between boys and girls about building student-teacher relationships with dialogue journals?” Tables 5 and 6 show that there is no difference between the opinions of boys and girls on building a strong student-teacher relationship. Table 4 displays that there is a difference of opinion on boys and girls on if they felt they became closer to their teacher after completing the dialogue journals. The girls felt they became closer to the teacher after completing the dialogue journal more than the boys felt.
Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings from this study demonstrate the need of building strong student-teacher relationships in the classroom. Building strong student-teacher relationships can promote student achievement and increase annual MAP scores. In addition, this study shows that dialogue journals can help build strong student-teacher relationship because students can have a private, one-on-one conversation with their teacher through writing. In addition, the findings show that students have a positive attitude towards completing dialogue journals. Lastly, the findings display that there is no significant difference in the opinions of boys and girls on the attitudes of completing the dialogue journal and the opinion of boys and girls on the building of student-teacher relationships through completing dialogue journals.

This study demonstrates that dialogue journals can be used to build student-teacher relationships. Dialogue journals are a way to have a private conversation through writing with each student. These journals are not seen by any other individual, allowing students to write their personal thoughts and feelings. By completing a dialogue journal, students build trust with their teacher and get to know their teacher on a more personal basis. If trust is built between a student and a teacher, students are more willing to put forth their best effort in the classroom. If students are trying their best to learn, then this will promote student achievement. In addition, if students build a bond with their teacher, they will enjoy school, making them want to be there every day, which will also promote student achievement through a positive attendance rate. Students’ test scores and attitude towards school can increase. In addition, this study shows that students have
a positive attitude towards completing dialogue journals. Students are allowed to write in journals about any subject they choose. This gives students a sense of freedom in their writing. Keeping a dialogue journal is a good way to get students to enjoy writing, which is detrimental in an education.

Based on the findings of this study there are recommendations to be made to classroom teachers in order to improve student-teacher relationships. The first recommendation to be made is to have an individual relationship with each student. Many students do not have an individual at home who will listen to their problems, feelings, and positive news. A teacher should always be willing to be that person. Students need to be able to trust their teacher and feel comfortable in the classroom setting. Having an individual relationship with each student will help build a student’s confidence which can promote student achievement. Increasing academic achievement is constantly on a teacher’s mind. If teachers can increase that by building student-teacher relationships, then they should do so. One way to create an individual relationship with a student is to complete a dialogue journal with the students.

Keeping a dialogue journal with a student is a good way to build individual relationships with each student. I recommend having students write in their dialogue journal once or twice a week. Dialogue journals are very time consuming for teachers, due to responding to around 20 journals, each in a personal way. Also, let the students write about what they choose. This will give students more freedom and increase their attitude towards writing. Teachers may give students ideas on what to write on, but let the students make the final decision. Also, when responding to the students’ journals, ask
them questions about what they wrote about. This shows that you are interested and keeps the conversation going between teacher and student. In addition to having individual relationships with students, there are other ways to build student-teacher relationships.

Attending out of school events where students are involved could also build stronger student-teacher relationships. A further study on this could be implemented in order to see if attending these events does increase student-teacher relationships. When students see teachers out of school, they are very excited. If teachers attend students’ sporting events, plays, concerts, etc., students will see how much their teacher cares, which can build the bond between student and teacher. Building that special bond will change a student for the rest of their lives. They will feel that they are cared about and are important. This will increase their confidence and positive attitude, which will make them want to be successful in school. Students will put forth more effort for teachers they have a relationship with versus teachers they do not. This could help increase student achievement, such as MAP test scores.

These recommendations are given in order to help teachers build stronger relationships with their students. Overall, students will work harder in a class where they feel comfortable, confident, and trusted. Keeping a dialogue journal is just one way to build student-teacher relationships. Also, a recommendation of a further study on attending students’ events outside of the classroom would also be beneficial to teachers. Teachers could see if attending these events could also help build student-teacher relationships. In conclusion, teachers need to build student-teacher relationships with
each of their students in order to have a successful classroom and to promote student achievement.
References


Killion, J. Dialogue journal. *Journal of Staff Development* v. 27 no. 3 (Summer2006) p. 57


Appendix A

Dialogue Journal Survey

Please circle either yes or no for each question below.

1. Did you enjoy completing the dialogue journal? Yes No

2. Would you like to complete a dialogue journal with your teacher next year? Yes No

3. Do you feel that writing in the dialogue journal made you a stronger writer? Yes No

4. Do you feel that you became closer to your teacher after completing the dialogue journal? Yes No

5. Did you enjoy being able to talk to your teacher through a private journal? Yes No

6. Do you think that you have a positive and trusting relationship with your teacher after completing the dialogue journal? Yes No