An Evaluation of the Impact of the Student-Teacher Relationship on Student Achievement and Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have documented the importance and value of the teacher-student relationship for over 20 years. The purpose of my study was to determine if teachers who had a positive and highly effective relationship with their students, as documented with informal and formal observations, also had higher student achievement and a lower discipline referral rate when compared to their non-highly effective peers. The context of this inquiry was kindergarten through eighth grade teachers in one public school district. In my study, I demonstrated both quantitative and qualitative data which matched current research to support teachers who are highly effective with building relationships have superior student achievement, lower discipline referral rates, and use research-based strategies weekly in their classrooms. I made a policy recommendation to implement an optional professional development program that focuses on improving a teacher’s ability to build relationships with students and increases the administrator observations in teacher’s classrooms.
I began my career in education as a teacher at the elementary level. I learned quickly during this first year of teaching that the students I developed relationships with were the most responsive to my requests and commands in the classroom. As I progressed in my educational career, as a teacher, administrator, and now owner of an early education institution, the importance of building relationships with students has been continuously reinforced throughout my years in education.

As an administrator, I saw many teachers struggle to see success in building relationships with their students and in turn saw a student achievement rate that was often disappointing and lower than they had hoped for. In addition, these teachers often experienced continuous behavior problems in the classroom setting which detracted from the overall learning experience for all students in the classroom. At the onset of this doctoral program, I felt compelled to study this concept. I wanted to determine if what I had observed was indeed fact; those teachers who developed relationships with students were in fact more successful with improving student achievement and decreasing student discipline in the classroom setting.

The leadership lessons that I have gained from the work in this dissertation are immediately applicable to my work in early education with my staff. I have already implemented these relationship building strategies into my early education classrooms and can see the impact in both student learning and behavior. I believe that I can continue to implement these strategies throughout my early education center and throughout early education in my community and beyond.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge a variety of people who have supported me throughout this doctoral journey. First, I want to thank my husband, Danny, who has supported me throughout this journey. Your willingness to give me countless hours away from our home and children so that I could write is deeply appreciated. I also want to thank both my parents, Dave and Shanon, for your educational guidance and support throughout the journey. Finally, I want to thank my in-laws, Diane and Danny who have allowed our children to sleep-over countless nights, providing me a quiet morning to write. I am forever grateful for all of your support.

I would also like to thank my chair, Dr. Lorrie Butler, and co-chair, Dr. Carla Sparks, for their support throughout this journey. You both have been available whenever I needed you to support me in this writing process. I am grateful to have access to your knowledge and expertise.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who has supported me through this journey. I am beyond grateful for my entire family for providing me the time and space required to complete this three-year journey. I am forever grateful.
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Chapter One: Introduction

During the 2018-2019 school year, the public school district highlighted in this study was home to over 43,000 students, over 2,500 teachers, and 47 schools. The majority of the student population, 51%, was made-up of minority races including African American (19%) and Hispanic (24%) as the two largest minority sub-groups. Just over 75% of the students were economically disadvantaged making many of the schools in the district Title 1 qualified. In addition, students with disabilities made up 15% of the population and the English Language Learners made up almost 5% of the population.

The strategic plan for the district noted both the vision and mission. The vision statement was “Developing successful citizens – every student, every day.” In addition, the mission statement included “…expect all students to graduate from high school possessing the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their post-secondary path” (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). District leaders also had five primary areas of focus noted in the strategic plan including:

- Support safe, secure, and respectful schools.
- Maximize federal, sale, and local resources to ensure the most effective and efficient use of revenues.
- Hire, develop, retain, and support the most highly qualified teachers, administrators, and support personnel.
- Improve the quality, integrity, and delivery of our communication to meet the needs of all stakeholders.
- Improve academic achievement for all students and increase the percentage of students graduating, equipped for post-secondary education and work through
rigorous integrated curricula with a multi-tiered system of support.

As a team, district leaders developed this strategic plan with a heightened focus on what students could accomplish to become successful members of society. District leaders wanted to create a focus on what the students would do in the post-secondary setting; what they would do after their high school experience was complete to contribute to society. The goals set out by the district focused on developing learners who would graduate from the school district with a path to post-secondary success, whether it was in the military, work force, or college or technical school. If the students could go on to one of these post-secondary paths, the hope was that they would stay and/or return to the area to plant their roots and add value to the community in the future. Investing in the success of the students and their return to the area would increase the success of the county and the future students of this district.

It is important to note also that the district landmass was as large as some small states. Many students resided in rural, outlying communities and had limited accessibility to resources including internet and WIFI, computers, and cell phone service, making their ability to participate in the learning experience challenging at times. In addition, the zoning lines for some of the outlying high schools included large areas and students living in these areas could spend up to two hours a day traveling to and from school.

The demographics of this district changed between 2010-2020 causing a need for a shift in the focus of the educators. Between 2013-2020, the population of economically disadvantaged students changed at many schools. To highlight this, below are demographic descriptions of four of the larger high schools in the district. These four
high schools represented the four largest communities in the county, representing, geographically, all four corners of the district.

Table 1

*Demographic Changes in Four Large High Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
<th>2019-2020</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free &amp; Reduced Price Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School A</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School B</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School C</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School D</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School A</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School B</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School C</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School D</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School B</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School C</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School D</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</table>
In addition to a change in the student demographics, parent engagement, and participation in the learning experience was also higher in the previous decade. Since 2015, many of the school administrators had developed a parent involvement plan due to their Title 1 status. The purpose of the parental involvement plan was to assist the parents in their students’ educational experience and help them understand what the Title 1 funding can do for their student. The goal of the plan was to develop a system that addressed these needs and affected change in school sites with the end goal to be an improvement in the student achievement on the school sites.

At the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, the school district leaders adopted a new teacher evaluation tool based on the Danielson framework (Danielson & Axtell, 2009). Site administrators throughout the school year used the evaluation tool which addresses four domains of teaching: (1) planning and preparation, (2) classroom environment, (3) instruction, and (4) professional responsibilities. In the 2018-2019 school year, each instructional employee received two informal observations and one formal observation from site administrators. The administrators used the informal observations to observe and rate solely Domains 2 and 3 while in the formal observation all four domains received a rating. Teachers also received walkthrough or informal feedback throughout the school year from their site administrators that was structured similarly to the formal observations, highlighting one or two specific skills on which the teacher may be able to improve.

Administrators found using the Danielson evaluation tool made it possible to provide feedback to teachers on ways they could improve their instructional expertise. However, there was not specific professional development to support the needs of
teachers who taught varying student populations, for example, students who needed acceleration, remediation, and so on or support the needs of teachers who struggled with classroom management or had stagnant or declining student achievement. In my experience, the results of these informal and formal observations, and conversations in both the pre and post-conference supported the concept that the teachers needed and wanted to improve in these two areas specifically of Domains 2 and 3 of the rubric.

Teachers faced challenging tasks as they juggled mandates from the state all while educating the next generation to the best of their ability. As school leaders have a responsibility to help teachers evolve and grow to meet the needs of the ever-changing student demographics in their classrooms. In her book, the *Reign of Error*, Diane Ravitch (2014) stated

> Schools need stability, adequate resources, well-prepared and experienced educators, community support, and a clear vision of what good education is. The purpose of elementary and secondary education is to develop the minds and character of young children and adolescents and help them grown up to become healthy, knowledgeable, and competent citizens (pg. xii).

If leaders can identify teachers’ areas in need of improvement, and if teachers are willing to improve their craft, a professional development program targeted at building quality relationships with students could be the training teachers need to see a true change in their students’ performance in the classroom.

**Purpose of the Program Evaluation**

The purpose of my program evaluation was to identify the behaviors of teachers who are rated highly effective on the Danielson framework in both the classroom.
environment and instructional practice. After identifying the behaviors, I created a professional development program with the intention of supporting the development of positive teacher-student relationships in the classroom and school setting.

The teacher-student relationship is a dynamic concept that many researchers have studied over time. In their work on teacher-student relationships and interpersonal behavior, Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) developed a theoretical framework titled *Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior*. This model maps teacher behaviors into two dimensions, influence, and proximity, that further divide into eight sections, as outlined below (see Figure 1). The sections intend to describe diverse types of interpersonal teacher behavior.

**Figure 1**

*Types of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior Theoretical Framework*

*Note.* Theoretical framework from Wubbels and Brekelmans, *Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior* (2005)
Researchers, including Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005), found a connection between the teacher’s behavior and the student’s engagement, behavior, and achievement in the classroom setting. Observation data from school administrators in the district under study, year after year, identified many teachers not rated highly effective in both engaging students in learning and the varying aspects of the classroom environment. Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) suggested that there is a need for a professional development program to assist teachers in the development and nurturing of teacher-student relationships in their classrooms.

I developed a professional development program, which focused on the development and maintenance of the teacher-student relationship and as a tool to support teachers who have yet to receive a rating of highly effective but strive to improve their teaching practice. Teachers will electively choose to participate in the professional development program that will shape their ability to create and maintain relationships with their students. The program will also work to help teachers be reflective and identify their strengths and weaknesses with relationship building to maximize the effectiveness of the program.

**Rationale**

In 2011, I began my teaching career in an inner-city elementary school in a large school district. I was 21 and a recent graduate of a state university. I had a bachelor’s degree in English with a minor in education and was ready to change the lives of students. I held a teaching certification in both secondary English as well as general education for Kindergarten – sixth grade. I accepted a job at the first school where I interviewed, a Title 1, urban, inner-city elementary school. In hindsight, I should have
noticed the desperation in the principal’s eyes when she interviewed me. I did not, though, because I was young, naïve, and hungry for the opportunity. I thought that I was ready to tackle the challenge ahead of me.

That first year of teaching was my hardest by far. I barely survived. My redeeming quality was my ability to build relationships with the more than 20 kindergarten students I taught. They knew that I cared genuinely for them, and they would perform, most days, because their fear of disappointing me outweighed any consequence I could inflict on them. My students consistently showed up to school, engaged in the learning experiences, and knew that I loved and cared for their well-being. There were days when we would stop instruction to take a dance break, because that was what they needed, developmentally and academically. My actions and reactions then and now were determined by what the students needed to be successful. I walked away from that teaching experience at the end of the year thankful for the growth that I had experienced and with a solid understanding that building relationships with students is by far the most valuable quality an educator can have.

I then became an administrator in a different public school district in the United States. What I saw in the classrooms at my school through observation, through conversations with students and teachers, and as I continued to build my own firsthand experiences with students and staff members confirmed for me that the value of relationships is more evident than ever. The adults on my campus who had relationships with students got those students to participate in the learning experience. Their students showed up, put in the work, and showed respect. These students’ presence and active
participation in the classroom also typically yielded fewer discipline referrals and higher student achievement.

When I began the process of determining my dissertation topic, I realized that what was most important to me, and what I wanted to explore with research, was whether quality relationships between students and their teachers had an impact on standards assessments. In addition, I wanted to explore whether there was a connection between discipline referral rates and student-teacher relationships.

The greater community of the district under study will benefit from this program evaluation. As a parent myself, I want to know that not only are my children receiving a quality education but also that they are learning how to and building quality relationships with their teachers and peers while at school. If our teachers in the schools can model appropriate ways to build quality relationships with our students, the students can in turn build quality relationships with each other and the community outside of the school setting. With a community of individuals who are skilled at building relationships with each other, we will develop a stronger field of workers, employees and community members who are committed to respecting one another.

Goals

There were three goals of my evaluation:

1. To determine if high-quality relationships between teachers and students yield increased student achievement and decreased discipline referrals.

2. To identify the strategies highly effective teachers in the targeted elements use to build quality relationships with students.
3. To develop a professional development plan that trains selected teachers on how to use the identified strategies in their classrooms.

The goals for this program evaluation relate directly to improved student learning. If the students in the classrooms where high-quality relationships are present performed better on standards assessments, creation of a professional development program will occur. This professional development program will improve teachers’ ability to build relationships with the students in their classroom.

**Definition of Terms**

I use the following content specific vocabulary terms throughout this dissertation. These terms are important to readers and provide specific content knowledge necessary to understand substantial portions of my dissertation.

- *Value Added Model (VAM)* is a statistical process that includes student achievement data from the current school year as well as students’ achievement from years past, following the student over time. VAM becomes an estimate of teacher quality in improving the achievement of students in their class compared to other teachers (Doran & Fleischman, 2005).

- *Look-Fors* is a term best defined by Mooney and Mausbach (2008) as

A look for is a clear statement that describes an observable teaching learning behavior, strategy, outcome, product, or procedure. Observers search for look fors when they visit a classroom or examine student work. Teachers can reflect on look fors to compare their teaching practices to established standards, define what they learn through professional development, and develop descriptors for classroom practice. School and
district leaders can use look fors to define standards for all classrooms, identify achievable and identifiable improvements, and unify a school around a common focus and set of practices. (p. 106)

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this study focused on the evaluation tool leaders in the district under study used to evaluate teachers (see Appendix A). For reference, Domain 2 highlights the classroom environment and Domain 3 highlights student engagement.

1. How does the student achievement data of teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool compare with the student achievement data of their peers?

2. How does the student discipline referral rate for teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool compare with the student discipline referral rate of their peers?

3. What are the specific strategies used by teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool to develop quality relationships with students?

   a. What types of strategies does the teacher use?

   b. How often are the strategies implemented in the classroom setting?

**Conclusion**

I researched the impact of a positive teacher-student relationship on student achievement and behavior in the classroom. I determined with this research that there is a connection between a teacher-student relationship and student achievement and behavior
in the classroom. I surveyed selected teachers on the strategies they use to develop these
relationships with students. I used the results of the survey to develop a professional
development plan that will help other teachers improve their ability to build relationships
with students.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Throughout this literature review, I highlighted the data analysis and findings from a variety of articles and other texts that focus on student achievement and the correlation between teacher and student relationships. Four main categories represent the collection of articles: the teacher-student relationship, professional development for developing the teacher-student relationship, teacher evaluation and the Danielson model, and the value-added model. The bodies of literature for this review are articles and books. They fit into my broader topic, to determine if a positive teacher/student relationship has an effect on student achievement and behavior in the classroom setting.

Most of the sources used in this literature review come from the Academic Search Complete database hosted by Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO). The publication years for the articles ranged from 1992 – 2019. Most of the searches contained the words student achievement and teacher relationships as well as student behavior, value-added model, and Danielson model. When reviewing search results, I looked for articles with varying data collection methods as well as findings to show diversity in the results. The books that I have chosen are supplemental to the articles that I found.

The Teacher-Student Relationship

An education system is rooted in teachers. The United Nations’ Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015) stated the following:

An education system is only as good as its teachers. Teachers are essential to universal quality education for all: They are central to shaping the minds and attitudes of the coming generations to deal with new global challenges and opportunities. Innovative, inclusive, and results-focused teaching is crucial for
2015 and beyond if we are to provide the best possible opportunities for millions of children, youth and adults worldwide. (p. 3)

The value of the teacher is evident and there is extensive research on the teacher-student relationship and the impact it has on student achievement and success in the classroom setting. These researchers include, but are not limited to, Cook et al., (2018), Hollo and Hirn, (2015), and McKinney De Royston et al., (2017). The quality of the relationship determines the level of achievement of the student. If a student has a positive relationship with their teacher, the following research supports that they will have higher achievement. Reversely, if that relationship is negative, teachers will see a slip in their student achievement.

McKinney De Royston et al., (2017) took an in-depth look at the teacher-student relationship between African American male students and African American male teachers. The researchers were looking specifically at the impact the relationship had on students in the academic setting. In their article, they noted that

Unfortunately, positive teacher-student relationships are the exception and not the rule for African American male students. … Of increasing concern is a failure to protect, nurture, or support African American male students in particular, such that African American male students are actually being harmed by the negative interactions they encounter in schools and the types of attitudes and behavior they may adopt in response. (p. 5)

The study conducted by McKinney De Royston et al. (2017) questioned whether instruction of the African American male students needed to take place by an African
American male teacher or if the students simply needed a teacher who understood the
social awareness required to build a positive relationship with them.

McKinney De Royston et al. (2017) argued in their conclusion that the teachers’
impact on the student is significant. If the teacher can establish a meaningful relationship
with the student, students will be more willing to not only show up to school but also
have an improved attitude regarding the academic institution. In addition, students who
have meaningful relationships with their teachers will adjust how they engage in school
activities and navigate through their years in school. The researchers found that all these
factors are a reaction to a powerful relationship with an adult, not necessarily an adult of
the same gender and ethnicity. These findings speak to the idea that students can build
relationships with all adults and the power of that relationship can change the scope of
the students’ academic career.

The grouping style the teacher uses in their instruction can play a part in the
students’ overall learning experience as well. Hollo and Hirn (2015) discovered that
grouping of students could affect student participation in the lesson and the overall
engagement in the lesson. In their study, the researchers found that independent seatwork
time increased by 13% from the elementary to high school classroom. This increase may
be because independent seatwork may not be developmentally appropriate for the
elementary age classroom. However, whole-group instruction was used more frequently
in the elementary classroom through activities like real aloud which allows for more
opportunities of passive engagement opposed to active engagement.

Hollo and Hirn (2015) also confirmed that as individual teacher-student
interactions and opportunities to respond increased, active engagement increased,
allowing passive engagement to decrease. In addition, as individual opportunities to respond and active engagement increased, positive feedback from the teacher also increased and negative feedback deceased. This opportunity to earn positive feedback from the teacher came as a reaction to the active engagement in the lesson that the student demonstrated. This active engagement was in part due to the grouping styles that the teacher used including small group and individual learning.

Martin and Collie (2019) studied the teacher-student relationship at the high school level to see if a positive relationship with teachers had a greater or lesser impact on a students’ overall engagement in the school environment than a negative relationship. In their research, they looked to determine how many positive and negative teacher-student relationships were present in a students’ daily educational experience. Researchers asked students to rate their teachers by three categories via a survey: interpersonal, substantive, and pedagogical. The researchers wanted to determine whether students’ academic engagement in the classroom setting and at the school site was comparable to the balance of negative to positive teacher-student relationships they had.

Martin and Collie (2019) determined the impact of a positive teacher-student relationship was stronger than a negative relationship. This meant that a positive teacher-student relationship was more powerful and impactful to students’ engagement and success than the impact of a negative relationship. They also found that each additional positive relationship a student can develop with a teacher was associated with greater academic engagement in their classes as demonstrated by participation, enjoyment, and aspirations.
The findings of Martin and Collie (2019) also suggested that the more positive teacher-student relationships a student had the more tolerable of a negative relationship the students were. The researchers concluded from their study:

Enhancing properties of positive teacher-student relationships seem to outweigh the limiting properties of negative teacher-student relationships … We also observe that although students’ negative engagement did not increase with an increasing preponderance of negative teacher-student relationships, it was evident as soon as the negative relationships outnumbered the positive relationships. Thus, students’ engagement seemed immediately sensitive to a shift in the relational balance from positive to negative. (p. 871)

For example, if students had positive interactions with five of their six teachers each day, they would be tolerable of the potential negative interactions with their sixth teacher. More relationships that are positive minimized the impact of the negative relationship on both the students’ engagement in school and achievement in the classroom setting.

Cook et al. (2018) studied the establish-maintain-restore (EMR) method for improving teacher-student relationships and students’ classroom behavior. They stated there were potential implications for practice from their findings that addressed teacher burnout and professional development. As Figure 2 outlines, teachers who use the EMR model exhibit intentional behaviors that build relationships with students. These teachers acknowledge students by name, recognize acknowledgements the student achieved, and create authentic conversation with the students about their interests. This genuine conversation creates a bridge of friendship with the student and teacher.
When teachers maintain this relationship, they continue to have unique and genuine conversation with the students and even send home praise notes to the parents or guardians. If relationships fall off track, the teacher takes it upon themselves to restore the relationship, trying to apologize when appropriate and reconnect with the student. Teachers who build quality relationships with students follow this model, even when they are not aware of it. Below is a graphic (p. 239) highlighting the three parts to the EMR method with specific look-fors, as noted in their research (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Appendix Outline of the Rationale and Specific Practices for Each Phase of the Establish-Maintain-Restore (EMR) Method*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMR Phase</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Intentional Relationship Practices</th>
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</table>
| **Establish** | The aim for the establish phase is to engage in intentional practices to cultivate a positive relationship with the student. When a teacher establishes relationships with all students, they feel connected, safe, and respected. When this is in place, students are most likely to learn, engage in desired behaviors, and respond to attempts to correct their behavior. A teacher cannot maintain a relationship she does not have, so it is essential to first establish relationships with all the students to build a sense of trust, connection, and understanding. | - Identify a window of time to spend individually with the student to inquire about interests and validate who they are as a person using open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and validation  
- Gather, review, and reference, when appropriate, information about the student  
- Positively greet at the door using the student’s name  
- Deliver wise feedback message  
- Find an opportunity to recognize/acknowledge the student through a second-hand compliment  
- Aim for a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions with students  
- Send a positive note home to parents via email or written note to acknowledge something the student said, did, or achieved in class  
- Positively greet at the door using the student’s name  
- Check in on the relationship (brief interaction to see how things are going or check in about something specific that you know is important to the student; e.g., sport, club, test in another class, birthday). |
| **Maintain** | The aim for the maintain phase is to sustain the quality of an established positive relationship with a student over time by intentionally striving for a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. Research has shown that the quality of a relationship can diminish over time because there is a tendency to take one another for granted (ignore good behavior or miss opportunities to positively interact and reinforce) and unintentionally engage in more negative interactions by paying more attention to problem behavior than positive behavior. Maintaining a relationship requires ongoing positive interactions with students. | |
| **Restore** | The aim for the restore phase is to intentionally repair any harm to the relationship once there has been a negative interaction between the teacher and student. This is important because negative interactions can weaken the relationship and correspondingly cause the student to be less engaged in class, less responsive to efforts to correct problem behavior, and more challenging to motivate to take on academic work that is perceived to be challenging or boring. As such, teachers must intentionally reconnect with the student to repair the harm and restore the relationship back to its previous positive state. | - Intentionally reconnect with the student to repair any harm that was done to restore the relationship back to its previous state  
- Attempt to repair harm using one or more of the effective communication techniques: (a) taking personal ownership for the negative interaction, (b) delivering an empathy statement, (c) letting go of the previous incident and starting fresh, (d) communicating your care for the student by showing the student what is important in the class, and/or (e) engaging in mutual problem-solving (seeking input from the student) to jointly figure out how to avoid similar negative interactions in the future. |

*Note.* Cook, Coco, Zhang, Fiat, Duong, Renshaw, Curby, 2018.
In their study, Kirk et al., (2016) discussed the importance of student empowerment in the classroom setting and the results empowerment can have on a students’ success in the classroom. The authors of this study stated that the process of student empowerment occurs in the following way:

… disempowered students gain the power needed to meet their individual needs (e.g., learning, social, relationships, diploma) and work with others (e.g., students, teachers, administrators) to achieve collective goals (e.g., a safe and positive school environment). (p. 589)

Empowerment processes differ in context, meaning that empowerment in the school setting will look different from empowerment at home. The value of empowerment does not change due to the contexts though.

In the classroom, empowerment comes from the teacher or educator. Adults can empower students by providing positive affirmations for correct answers, praise for good grades, and encouragement to share their unique ideas and thoughts in the group setting (McKinney De Royston et al., 2017). Brown (2015) shared in her parenting manifesto that empowerment at home traditionally comes from a parent or guardian. These adults work to empower their children to make safe and healthy decisions about who they spend time with, encourage them to do their part, for example chores, in the household, and develop quality and meaningful relationships with the members of their family. When an adult empowers a child or student in these contexts, the child will want to participate and be a part of the environment, adding value when appropriate without prompting from the adult (p. 244).
A study conducted in Korea by You et al. (2016) examined positive feedback from teachers to students. They found that teachers’ motivational techniques could affect a students’ performance. A teacher’s motivational behavior such as rewarding, praising encouraging participation in class activities, and/or challenging students, indirectly influences students’ academic achievements by boosting their motivation. Students’ perceptions of their teacher’s motivational behaviors had a significant impact on students’ self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Even when students worked on the same task, there can be a difference in their performance based on their initial levels of self-efficacy prior to the task beginning.

You et al. (2016) suggested teachers need to find ways to create a more motivational learning environment while encouraging students to try activities that are more challenging. In doing this, students will have a higher self-efficacy and feel more capable of meeting challenges. Empowered students are confident will produce more and feel more successful in the classroom setting.

In contrast to You et al. (2016), Kim et al. (2018) contradicted the concept of positive feedback yielding improvement in student learning. The researchers looked at teacher personality and teacher effectiveness in secondary schools, suggesting that teacher personality would later predict how supportive the teachers were and how much self-efficacy the student had, but not student achievement. They found a lack of correlation between student academic achievement and teacher personality. In fact, they suggested instead that the relationship of teacher personality with teacher support and student self-efficacy plays an influential role in a students’ socioemotional development instead of student achievement.
Kim et al. (2018) offered that teacher personality influences the social emotional learning and may have a long-term effect on student academic achievement. This suggested that the teacher’s personality would affect the student’s emotional outcomes in the classrooms, for example the ability of the student to make friends, interact appropriately in the classroom setting, and engage in the activities outside the classroom, and this affect could be longer lasting. Students with higher socio-emotional skills and better adjusted to the expectations in the school setting may have higher achievement in academic settings in the future.

Finally, Ullah and Wilson (2007) researched the impact of the teacher-student relationships in the post-secondary setting. Their study examined “undergraduate students’ academic achievement in association with students’ involvement with learning, students’ relationship with faculty, and students’ relationship with their peers” (p. 2). In their study, which included 2,160 undergraduate students enrolled at Midwestern Public University, the researchers found that students who were actively involved in the learning experience via classroom discussion had an increase in their academic achievement. This active involvement included activities like asking questions, contributing to discussions, and being present in class.

Ullah and Wilson (2007) found that in addition to active involvement, the relationship the student had with the faulty members influenced on their achievement. The student’s overall satisfaction with their relationship with the faculty as well as the faculty’s incorporation of activities that asked for student active involvement in the learning experience was important. The researchers suggested that universities should encourage faculty to explore more opportunities for fostering of students’ active
involvement. Examples would be service learning, collaborative assignments, or even unique ways to enhance student participation in the classroom.

**Professional Development for Developing the Teacher-Student Relationship**

A common underlying message in the research has been that teachers need appropriate professional development (PD) on how to create positive teacher-student relationships and improve their overall teaching craft. Researchers who cite this need include, but are not limited to, Cook et al., (2018), McKinney De Royston et al., (2017), and Khan and Irshadulah, (2018).

An effective teacher-training program can consist of a variety of qualities and characteristics. Khan and Irshadulah (2018) shared nine qualities, as part of their framework, which contribute to the development of an effective teacher. Khan and Irshadulah, (2018) argued that if teachers have the following characteristics, they would be better teachers, which has a direct effect on student performance. The characteristics include (p. 96):

- Energetic
- Create active learning
- Cooperative with students
- Create unity
- Involve students in different activities
- Have good future planning for students
- Have professionalism and skill
- Have command of their subject
• Provide a good environment in which students directly discuss their problem with their teacher

The authors argued that these nine qualities lead directly to increased student achievement in the classroom. When created from the outline of these effective teacher characteristics, and when instituted correctly, proper professional development can improve teaching craft which can better prepares students in the classroom and increase their overall student achievement.

Khan and Irshadulah (2018) summarized the purpose of their study to be an understanding of the importance of the relationship between student achievement and effective teacher training programs. A quality teacher-training program, where the educator receives appropriate training on classroom content and relationship building with students will yield positive student performance results. How well teachers educate students will determine the success of the community in the coming years, so having well trained teachers is indispensable.

In their study on post-secondary learning institutions, Rutz et al. (2012) researched the influence of proper professional development on student learning at three different college campuses. These researchers identified that leaders at these types of institutions have a pre-conceived notion that the professional development they offer their staff yields an improvement in teaching craft and further student learning in the classroom, regardless of the quality or relatability for the educators. The authors noted though that, similar to the leaders in public K-12 education, this assumption is not appropriate. The quality and relativity of the professional development affects the outcome.
Rutz et al. (2012) found that when college officials offered the professors professional development that presented them the opportunity to “learn, practice, and reflect upon a repertoire of teaching strategies and skills” (p. 41) there was a notable improvement in student work and culture on the campuses. The researchers also made specific note that even when the funding for targeted professional development (PD) was exhausted, the aftereffects of impactful professional development continued to penetrate the practices of the professors. When the PD offered to the staff was relative to the teaching practice of the participants, it was impactful, effected student learning, and created a shift in the overall culture of PD at the institutions.

When discussing PD on developing relationships, Cook et al., (2018) described the establish-maintain-restore (EMR) method for improving teacher-student relationships and students’ classroom behavior. They stated there are potential implications for practice from their findings that address teacher burnout and professional development. These researchers suggested that a “brief, small-group-formal model of professional development for EMR training may be effective in improving the quality of teachers’ relationships with students” (p.238). School based administrators would need to identify specific teachers, via observation both informally and formally, who struggle with relationship building in their classrooms. The teachers would then receive small group professional development geared to teaching EMR strategies.

Cook et al., (2018) suggested that small group EMR professional development would “proactively and responsively” (p.238) address teachers’ needs to develop relationship-building skills. If a teacher feels more confident in their development of relationships, their overall well-being will improve resulting in reduced stress and
burnout. Use of this small group EMR professional development to teach strategies to boost teacher-student relationship in a small group, intentional setting, would potentially lead to an improvement of students’ classroom behaviors as well.

Focusing on the importance of African American male teachers instructing African American male students, McKinney De Royston et al., (2017) introduced the idea that proper professional development could be the primary catalyst to improve relationship building between the teacher and the student. Both pre-service and in-service trainings on the “sociopolitical realities” (p. 34) of their students would allow teachers a more insightful view of their students and their needs without the cloud of judgement or fear regarding specific races and ethnicities. They also suggested that teachers in their pre-service should receive adequate PD on how to develop “strong interpersonal relationships with students in ways that make reciprocal growth and learning possible” (p. 35). These professional development opportunities are not always traditional in every public school setting but as the population of students served changes, the adaptation of professional development programs is appropriate.

As stated by these researchers, proper professional development (PD) is powerful. Creating PD that is relevant to the teaching practice of the educator is more impactful than PD that appears arbitrary or unconnected. The development of these types of professional development programs could allow teachers to be more equipped with strategies as they enter the classroom and allow for more student engagement and overall achievement with less classroom disruptions.
Teacher Evaluation and the Danielson Model

The formality of the teacher evaluation system has shifted over the years with most states and school districts adopting and/or reforming their evaluation systems to include elements of student performance, feedback from students and/or teachers, and formal, standards based observations (Steinberg & Donaldson, 2016). Through the evolution of the teacher evaluation model, many states used an existing framework developed from the work of Charlotte Danielson as the base for their evaluation tool. The district researched in this study developed a teacher evaluation tool from the Danielson framework. I focused the discussion in this section on that framework and the effects of implementation, both positive and negative.

The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument (Danielson, 2013) is an updated version from the 2011 edition and reflected the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that most states had adopted. These new state standards reflected the importance of active learning as well as creating opportunity for deep, conceptual learning on the part of the students. The standards indicated that teachers needed to allow students to be leaders in the learning experience and challenge the thinking of their peers, a shift that tested the traditional way of work in the teacher’s classrooms.

Embedded in the Danielson framework is language that reflected a shift from teacher-led learning to student-led learning. In a student-led learning environment, students have ownership in many aspects of the learning environment including conversation, engagement, relationships, and planning of instruction (Danielson, 2013). Creating an environment where students have this level of ownership required the teacher
to first create a culture where this level of student leadership is appropriate and accepted and then step-back as the teacher and become a facilitator of the learning experience.

Donaldson (2016) studied teacher evaluation reform over the course of eight years in Connecticut, conducting interviews and administering surveys to teachers, administration, and district officials. Throughout the study, the research team wanted to determine the impact of the evolved evaluation tool on the teachers and administrators. She found that many teachers had mixed emotions regarding the tool.

Teachers were appreciative of the quality and specific feedback the evaluation tool offered. Donaldson (2016) found that many teachers were hungry for more feedback, coming back to their administrator’s office multiple times throughout the school year, seeking ways to improve their teaching craft. The specific and immediate feedback that the new evaluation tool allowed administrators to give encouraged teachers to seek feedback rather than avoid it.

Another researcher who highlighted the value of the newer teacher evaluation models from 2010 and beyond is Almy (2011). Almy discussed in their study that observations should not be a once-a-year pop-in but a regular occurrence in a sequence of observations that track specific skills or teaching habits to improve overall teaching craft. The use of regular feedback and open discourse created opportunity for genuine conversation about what the administrator observed in the classroom, what went right, and what areas of the teachers’ craft could improve. The opportunity for regular observations allowed the teacher to be aware of both their strengths and weaknesses and work towards creating a learning environment that best fits the needs of the students served.
The evaluation tool also created a focus on accountability in the classroom. Teacher observations occurred multiple times throughout the school year and administrators used that data as a summative tool to determine re-appointment of teachers at the end of the school year. Donaldson (2016) pointed out that this use of observation data was new to many teachers and created a culture of fear for some teachers. Teachers saw their peers dismissed for deficient performance in the classroom and it made some educators question their own performance. Stress and anxiety began to develop over not only the observations but also the student achievement data that tied to the teacher’s performance. How well the students did on the end of year assessments was now a direct reflection of the teaching that occurred in that classroom throughout the school year.

Donaldson (2016) stated that to get the most out of a teacher evaluation tool, leaders needed to figure out “how to implement it in a way that challenges, supports, and motivates teachers” (pg. 76). If the administrators and observers of teachers could make the feedback from observations relevant and applicable to the craft of teaching in the classroom, it may be true that teachers are more receptive to the observation data. Shifts in teaching practices and opportunities for professional growth can allow teachers to create classroom environments that best serve students and their individual and unique needs (Almy, 2011).

The Value Added Model

The Value Added Model, more commonly referred to as VAM, is a statistical process that resulted from the development of the No Child Left Behind Act to help identify effective and ineffective teachers (Doran & Fleischman, 2005). VAM ties results from standardized student assessments to statistical procedures intended to “level the
playing field” between different schools and teachers who are serving potentially different populations of students. The result of the VAM calculation reflects the teacher quality in the classroom. This process and its’ downfalls, which I outlined in this section, includes research from Amrein-Beardsley et al. (2016), Doran & Fleischman (2005), and Briggs (2013).

One of the major complaints with VAM from both teachers and administrators is that the statistical configuration is too confusing for any single individual to understand. Many individuals feel that the system lacks transparency. Amrein-Beardsley et al. (2016) stated that both teachers and administrators lack understanding of the different VAM models used to evaluate them. This lack of understanding by teachers and administrators creates a dilemma with how the value of the VAM can improve or reform the education occurring in the classroom. If teachers do not understand what their VAM score means, how it reflects the learning that occurred in their classroom, or how to compare it to the VAM of other teachers in their school and throughout the district, they cannot use the data to improve or adjust the instruction that occurs in their classroom.

Teachers and administrators also question the “fairness” of VAM. Amrein-Beardsley et al. (2016) mentioned that generally math and ELA or reading teachers are held accountable by state standardized assessments and the VAM standard. That leaves approximately 70% of teachers in any district without a VAM score that stems from a state assessment. Teachers who are not assessed with student standardized achievement data are lower elementary teachers or teachers who teach subjects like social studies or high school electives. These teachers’ VAM score came from local assessments rather
than state assessments, calling into question the validity of the assessment tools when comparing them to each other (Briggs, 2013).

In their work, Briggs (2013) argued that if teachers have a part in the development of all assessments, both local and state, they may take more ownership over the process of teaching so that students are more successful on the assessment, i.e., teaching to the test. Instead, though, often those teachers see the implementation of “mandated” pre and post-tests as a compliance measure instead of a measure of what students know, what could be taught to show growth, and a summative assessment of what students learned throughout the year. The implementation of both of local and state assessments without the buy-in from the teacher has shown to yield a compliance mindset compared to a growth mindset.

While VAM is a complicated model to show teacher effectiveness, Doran and Fleischman (2005) mentioned that researchers have done work to help explain the model. Doran and Fleischman (2005) noted that research completed in 2004 outlined a variety of statistical models used for the calculation of VAM and the benefits and limitations of each model. Use of these models at school sites and district offices could help explain the VAM process to teachers and administrators.

**Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in this section covered concepts including the teacher-student relationship, professional development for developing the teacher-student relationship, teacher evaluation and the Danielson model, and the value-added model. The literature presented both supported and contradicted the concept that the teacher-student relationship has a positive impact on student achievement and discipline
occurrence rates in the classroom setting. Overall, the literature presented served to
provide perspective and understanding about the research already conducted on the
teacher-student relationship and helped to forecast what to do in the future to improve the
teacher-student relationship in the classroom setting.
Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology for this study used a research design that considered the impact that highly effective teachers have on their students’ achievement and behavior in the classroom setting. Throughout this section I reviewed the specifics of the participants, data gathering techniques, and data analysis techniques. I also touch on the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Research Design Overview

This program evaluation I considered the impact highly effective teachers have on student achievement when they develop quality relationships with students in their classrooms. To begin this study, I reviewed district teacher evaluation data from the 2018-2019 school year. The teacher evaluation data was a result of observations conducted by the school-based administrators. Teachers who had received a highly effective rating in all five elements of Domain 2 (classroom environment) and element 3C (student engagement) of the districts’ evaluation tool on either their informal or formal observation in the 2018-2019 school year qualified for the study. I also obtained the state VAM score for all teachers in the district, where applicable. I used the VAM score to summarize the level of achievement the students in these teacher’s classrooms achieved on state standardized assessments.

In addition to teacher evaluation ratings and VAM scores, I reviewed the number of referrals generated by each teacher in the 2018-2019 school year for all teachers in the school district under study. When looking at the discipline referral rate, I wanted to identify and compare the number of referrals generated by highly effective teacher and
those generated by their non-highly effective peers. I was analyzing this data to determine if there was a difference in the number of referrals between the two groups of teachers.

I used an impact evaluation for this study which allowed me to identify the direct and indirect impacts of professional development program on building the student-teacher relationships in the district of study (Patton, 2008, p. 345). I reviewed one-years’ worth of data for this study and used the results to create a professional development program. The impact of a professional development program is relevant for both the participants and the larger educational community within the district, over time. Leaders in the district under study will use the professional development program to develop stronger student-teacher relationships in the classrooms monitored through the teacher evaluations, student achievement, and discipline referral rates each year. In addition, an effectiveness focus allowed me to identify strengths and weakness in the program and identify areas for improvements (p. 345). The effectiveness focus created opportunity for me to compare the current quality of teacher-student relationships to the ideal quality exhibited in the Highly Effective classroom setting.

I implemented a mixed-methods design to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. For this program evaluation, the quantitative data included teacher VAM score, teacher discipline referral rate, and some of the questions on the teacher survey. The qualitative data included the short response, and open-ended questions on the teacher survey. Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data sets allowed me to determine the characteristics of highly effective teachers. An effectiveness focus for this program evaluation allowed me to use stakeholders’ responses to determine areas missing in the
program and develop and strengthen the program to make it more effective (Patton, 2008, p. 301).

Researchers looking to determine the direct and indirect program impacts over time use impact evaluations (Patton, 2008, p. 345). The focus with this program was to determine how I could develop a professional development system geared toward the improvement of teacher’s abilities to develop relationships with students who were not already highly effective in this skill. The impact of increasing the number of teachers who were highly effective, specifically in developing the teacher-student relationships, could lead to an increase in student performance on standardized assessments as well as the student’s behavior in the classroom setting.

Participants

Throughout this study, there was one main stakeholder group, teachers identified as highly effective. I identified teachers as highly effective teacher for this study when the individual had received a highly effective rating in all five elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the district’s evaluation tool in the 2018-2019 school year on either/or their informal/formal observations (See Appendix A). Of the more than 2,500 teachers in the school district, I identified 86 teachers as potential participants for this research study.

I contacted the principals of the school sites where the identified teachers were working. Of the 31 schools identified, 11 school principals provided consent to conduct research on their campus. I contacted the identified teachers at the eleven school sites for consent as well. After collecting all signed consents, a total of eighteen teachers participated in the remainder of the research study.
Data Gathering Techniques

My research consisted of three data sets; teacher Value Added Model (VAM) scores, teacher discipline referral rates from the 2018-2019 school year, and results from surveys completed by the participants. The school district under study provided the quantitative VAM scores and teacher discipline referral rate data for the 2018-2019 school year. The participants completed a brief survey that provided qualitative data.

Surveys

The survey, found in Appendix B, began with five demographic questions. I was looking to find demographic information about the teachers that would specify their individual experiences in education. I wanted to be able to differentiate and identify the uniqueness of the experiences of each participating teacher.

The survey included six questions using a Likert scale, a question with a drop-down response, a multi-selection question, and two questions with short responses. The drop-down question was a single response question with ranges as potential answers. The multi-selection question allowed the participant to select all answers that applied to them. The short response questions on the survey identified specific strategies the teachers used in their classroom to develop relationships with their students.

Extant Data

Value Added Model (VAM). The district under study provided state VAM score data for the 2018-2019 school year for all teachers in the district. Among the teachers in the district under study, 817 had a state VAM score for this school year. This state VAM score used a four-point system: 1 – Unsatisfactory, 2 – Needs Improvement, 3 – Effective, 4 – Highly Effective. The rating was a statistical formula developed by the
state under study (Doran & Fleischman, 2005). For this study, I determined the average VAM score for teachers who qualified for the study (highly effective in every element of Domain 2 and element 3C) and those who did not qualify for the study. I chose to use VAM data to measure student achievement unilaterally without looking at specific assessments.

**Teacher Discipline Data.** The district under study provided discipline data for the students of all teachers who qualified for the study. The data provided was quantitative data that identified the number of discipline referrals each teacher wrote during the 2018-2019 school year. I did not identify any variables regarding the referrals such as offense level of the referral or how frequently the referral type occurred. My focus was to identify the number of referrals the teachers wrote in their classrooms during the school year. Research showed that teachers with fewer classroom referrals have students who successfully achieve in the classroom setting and may create less classroom interruptions (Kirk et al., 2016).

**Data Analysis Techniques**

At the beginning of the data analysis, I first sorted and organized the teacher VAM scores. I identified both the mean and median for both sets of data, the highly effective teachers, and their non-highly effective peers. Secondly, I analyzed the teacher referral rate for each set of teachers. I determined the mean and median for the referral rate data. After reviewing these two data sets, I determined if there was a difference between the referral rate and VAM score of the set of highly effective teachers vs. that of the non-highly effective teachers.
To analyze the survey data, I coded the responses to be single or multiple-choice. I coded these responses to determine themes in the answers. I analyzed the short response questions for themes in the responses as well. I created an initial set of codes and as I reviewed the responses, I placed the codes into a code set. If the response did not fit any of the initial codes, I created a new code.

**Ethical Considerations**

The initial data I collected for my research was publicly available teacher evaluation data and VAM scores. The state of the district under study annually publishes teacher evaluation data identifiable by teacher name from the previous year. I kept all teachers’ names confidential in my publication to protect their individual identity. I also used data that was not publicly available. I obtained this information from the school district in this study and kept the information confidential.

Each principal and teacher who participated in my study completed an informed consent prior to participating. In the consent, I explained the purpose of my research and how I would be using the data collected in my study. I first received consent of school site principals and then later the teachers at those school sites. The consent from the participants completed allowed me to provide them with a brief, anonymous survey. By maintaining anonymity throughout my research, I was hopeful that I would receive transparent responses from the teachers on the survey.

In taking all these steps, the participants were protected, and their identity remained confidential throughout the research process, minimizing any harm they could experience. Due to this confidentiality, the participants were able to participate fully and maximize the quality of their responses. This maximized the benefits of the study.
Limitations

There were multiple limitations with this study. The primary limitation was the sample size. Two main factors impacted this study: the COVID-19 pandemic and the qualifications each teacher needed to participate in the study.

I obtained permission to conduct the study at the varying school sites during a period when the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting education on a global basis. School leaders were not willing to let me contact the teachers at their schools about the possibility of participating in a dissertation study. School leaders conveyed the effects of the pandemic on their professional duties overwhelmed their teachers. The leaders did not want to add anything extra to their professional responsibilities.

I impacted the sample size for my dissertation by my decision to only include teachers who had VAM scores resulting from state standardized testing. There were over 200 teachers who met the first criteria for my study with their evaluation scores. However, they did not have a state assigned VAM score. Therefore, I no longer considered those teachers as potential participants in my study. Because I only included teachers with a state VAM score, I created a limitation in my data set that would not allow my data to generalize to the general population of teachers who may not teach a state assessed subject area.

Conclusion

The data collection for this study was a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative data provided by the district under study and via teacher surveys. In the next chapter, I provided an analysis of the results of my data collection. I also provided an interpretation, judgements and recommendations for the district based upon the results.
The analysis of the data showed a connection between how teachers perform on their observations and the student achievement and discipline occurrence rate in their classroom settings.
Chapter Four: Results

I collected data for this study that was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The data collected included teacher evaluation ratings, state Value Added Model, discipline referral rate occurrences, and survey responses. I presented the findings, the AS IS contexts, culture, competencies, and conditions in the following sections.

Findings: Teacher Evaluation Ratings

The data collected for this study was from the 2018-2019 school year. The data included teacher evaluation ratings, state Value Added Model (VAM) scores, discipline referral rate occurrences, and survey responses from selected Highly Effective teachers. I used the teacher evaluation data to divide the teachers in two groups. The first group (group 1) were teachers in the district rated Highly Effective on the teacher evaluation tool in elements 2A – 2E and element 3C in either a formal or informal observation. The second group (group 2) were the remaining teachers in the district who did not qualify for group 1.

To begin, it is important for the reader to understand the quantity of teacher informal and formal observations within each group of teachers. As notated in table two, 256 observations were Highly Effective for this study versus 2,414 observations that were not Highly Effective. It is important to note that the number of observations did reflect some duplicate teachers who had ratings for both informal and formal observations.
Table 2

Teacher Observation Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Number of observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Highly Effective</td>
<td>2414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. State’s Value Added Model (VAM) scores for 2018-2019 school year data that included teacher evaluation ratings. [citation withheld for reasons of anonymity]*

Once I identified the grouping of teachers, I analyzed the State VAM score for all qualifying teachers in each group. The State VAM score represented the student achievement, as evaluated by the Value-Added Model and assigned to the teacher for their final evaluation. *Value Added Model (VAM)* is a statistical process that includes student achievement data from the current school year as well as students’ achievement from years past, following the student over time. VAM becomes an estimate of teacher quality in improving the achievement of students in their class compared to other teachers (Doran and Fleischman, 2005). There were 74 teachers who were deemed Highly Effective for my study and had a state VAM score. Their average state VAM score was 3.121. There were 750 Non-Highly Effective teachers who had a state VAM score, and their average state VAM score was 2.776. The teachers who were Highly Effective for my study had an average state VAM score that was .345 higher than their Non-Highly Effective peers. See Table 3 below.
**Table 3**

*Average VAM Score for Teachers by Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Teacher</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Average State VAM Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective with a State VAM Score</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Highly Effective with a State VAM score</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>2.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective Had Higher Average Score</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ .345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* State’s Value Added Model (VAM) scores for 2018-2019 school year data that included teacher evaluation ratings. [citation withheld for reasons of anonymity]

**Findings: Surveys**

The next set of data I analyzed were the discipline referral rates for all teachers for the 2018-2019 school year. The data that I reported in Table 4 below outlines how many referrals, on average, the teachers in each group wrote in the 2018-2019 school year. The data represents the frequency of discipline referrals written in each set of teachers, not the offenses or consequences assigned. The Highly Effective teachers had an average discipline referral rate of 12.02 referrals per year. The Non-Highly Effective teachers had a discipline referral rate of 12.23 referrals per year; a difference of referral rates of 0.21.

**Table 4**

*Average Discipline Referral Rate for Teachers by Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Teacher</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Average Discipline Referral Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective with a State VAM Score</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Highly Effective with a State VAM score</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>12.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I used survey results for the final source of data for my study. There were 74 teachers who qualified to receive the survey (both Highly Effective and had a State VAM score for the 2018-2019 school year). Of the 74 who qualified, 18 teachers agreed to participate. I outlined the findings from the survey below.

I began the survey with demographic questions to learn more about the participants. Of the 18 survey participants, 50% had taught for 15+ years. Furthermore, 27.8% of the participants had taught for 11-14 years and 22.2% for 4-10 years. None of the participants were new teachers with three or less years of experience. The majority of participants, 83.3%, reported teaching in the grades 6 – 8 middle school setting. The remainder of the participants, 16.7%, reported teaching in the K - 5 elementary setting. None of the participants were in the grades 9 – 12 high school setting.

Additionally, 77.8% of the survey participants responded true when presented with statement B, “I participated in a traditional teacher preparation program through my college or university to attain my teaching certificate.” When posed statement C, “I earned my teaching certificate through a professional teacher-training program after I gained employment with a school district,” 94.4% of the participants responded false. A majority of the participants, 61.1%, responded true when presented with statement D, “Becoming a teacher was my primary/first career choice after college graduation,” with 38.9% of the participants responding with false.

The remaining questions I asked on the survey were about the research-based strategies the teachers used to build relationships with students in their classroom setting. (See Appendix B). All respondents to the survey selected almost always or always when
answering question 1, “How likely are you to greet students at your door on any given school day?” Of all respondents, 100% indicated that they always or almost always greet students at the door on any given school day (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Survey Question One: How Likely Are You to Greet Students at Your Door on Any Given School Day?*

![Survey Question One: How Likely Are You to Greet Students at Your Door on Any Given School Day?](image)

*Note.* N = 18

When responding to question 2, “How likely are you to greet the majority of your students by their name within the first five minutes of class on any given school day?”, 77.8% of participants indicated that they almost always or always do. The remaining 22.2% of participants indicated that they sometimes do. (Figure 4)
Figure 4

Survey Question Two: How Likely are You to Greet Your Students by Their Name within the First Five Minutes of Class on Any Given School Day?

Note. N = 18

Of the teachers who participated in the study, 88% responded almost always or always when responding to question 3, “In regard to students in your classroom, how likely are you to learn about their life outside of school on any given day?” Only 12% of respondents indicated that they sometimes would learn things about their student’s life outside of school. (Figure 5)
Figure 5

Survey Question Three: How Likely are You to Learn about Their Life Outside of School on Any Given Day?

Note. N = 18

Questions 4-6 of the survey focused on the instructional delivery in the classroom setting. When presented question 4, “During any given class period, how likely are you to ‘chunk your instruction into 15–20-minute segments?’”, 77.8% of the participants said they almost always or always do so. The remaining 22.2% of participants stated that they sometimes chunk their instruction. (Figure 6)
Figure 6

Survey Question Four: How Likely are You to “Chunk” Your Instruction into 15-20 Minute Segments?

Note. N = 18

When presented question 5, “How likely are you to seek out relevant classroom instructional materials in your weekly lessons to promote student engagement?”, again 77.8% of the participants said they almost always or always do so with 22.2% of participants stating that they sometimes do (Figure 7).
Figure 7

Survey Question Five: How Likely are You to Seek Out Relevant Classroom Instructional Materials in Your Weekly Lessons to Promote Student Engagement?

Note. N = 18

Finally, when responding to question 6, “How likely are you to practice flexible classroom furniture arrangement for students including, but not limited to, alternative seating (couches), podium standing, personal square for pacing, etc.?”, Of the 17 responders, 44% stated that the almost always or always use flexible arrangement, while thirty-three percent selected the responses never use or almost never use flexible arrangement (Figure 8).
Figure 8

Survey Question Six: How Likely are You to Practice Flexible Classroom Furniture Arrangement for Students?

Note. N = 17

Questions 7 and 8 of the survey referenced classroom behavior and disruptions. When presented question 7, “How many major classroom disruptions do you have in a year?”, 55.6% of the participants responded zero disruptions. The remaining 44.4% of participants had between 1 to 10 major classroom disruptions during any given school year with the majority of those participants reporting between one to five disruptions. (Figure 9)
Figure 9

Survey Questions Seven: How Many Major Classroom Disruptions Do You Have a Year?

![Pie chart showing distribution of major classroom disruptions per year.]

Note. N = 18. The number of major classroom disruptions per year.

In addition, I asked in question 8 for the respondents to “Think of a time when you dealt with a student who had majorly disrupted your classroom. How did you handle the situation?” The responses showed that 77.8% of teachers would speak with the student outside and/or redirect the student in the classroom setting. When reporting removing the student from the classroom setting, 55.5% of participants said they would send the student to the discipline office and 38% said they would send the student to a fellow teacher’s classroom (Figure 10).
Teachers responded to two short response statements in the last section of the survey. The first statement was, “Please identify research-based strategies for student engagement you use in your classroom on a weekly basis.” The survey respondents shared a total of 35 different strategies that they used on a weekly basis. Of the 35 strategies, 20% were mentioned by more than one respondent. The strategies teachers mentioned multiple times included:

- Focused Note Taking
- Collaboration
- Hands on / Manipulatives
- AVID
- KAGAN
- Graphic organizers
- Thick-Pair-Share

The second statement presented to the respondents in this section stated, “Please share any additional information regarding student engagement in your classroom here.” The respondents shared additional thoughts they had on the topic in this short response. There was a total of 15 different strategies for engagement listed by the respondents. Of
the 15 strategies, five of the strategies encompass the importance of building relationships. The qualities shared included:

- Listening
- Caring
- Making students feel safe
- Knowing students outside of the classroom
- Putting relationships first

Multiple respondents also shared students were more engaged when the teachers used technology, such as YouTube videos, to activate their memory and prior knowledge.

**Contexts**

I reviewed the data collected for teachers who were Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool (referred to as Highly Effective) and their Non-Highly Effective peers. I determined that 14% of teachers in the district under study qualified as Highly Effective, leaving 86% of teachers in the category of Non-Highly Effective. In addition, none of the teachers who qualified for my study were inexperienced, meaning they had three or fewer years of teaching experience.

When I took a more in-depth look into this data, I found that of the 2,523 teachers in the district under study for the 2018-2019 school year, 615 were inexperienced, representing 26.2% of the total teacher population (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). In addition, when I reviewed the data for teachers who were teaching out-of-field, the district under study had 2,724 or 10.2% of teachers out-of-field for the 2018-2019 school year. A teacher designated as out-of-field is teaching a subject area without the appropriate area of certification.

When I reflected on my role as an administrator in education, I realized filling vacancies consistently has been an issue. During the 2019-2020 school year, the
administrators in the district under study began the school year with 72 vacancies to fill in the classrooms (roughly 2% of instructional positions). One month into the school year, the district administrators still had 38 vacancies left (roughly 1% of instructional positions). In my professional experience, administrators were desperate to fill the classroom vacancies and would often fill the vacancy with a teacher who was under-qualified and inadequately prepared for the role. The desperation for a warm-body to be in the classroom stifled the importance of hiring highly qualified staff on the campuses.

The National Council on Teacher Quality (2018) shared that there was in fact not a teacher shortage but, rather, a misalignment of teachers and jobs. Due to a discrepancy in pay between different areas of the work force, individuals who graduated with degrees in math, science, and other related fields could make an average salary of $76,000 in those respected fields (in 2015) compared to the average teacher salary of $58,016 (in 2015). This discrepancy was leading to a shortage of teachers to work in the math and science content areas.

This information is impactful to the context of this study because it represents a deep void in the qualification of teachers in the classroom setting for the district under study. The district under study not only had a vast majority of teachers who were not highly effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool, but also had a substantial number of novice teachers in classrooms, some educators who were teaching out-of-field for their subject area, and many vacancies throughout the campuses.
Culture

In my first research question I addressed student achievement and whether there was a connection to the teacher evaluation tool for the district under study. I asked the question, “How does the student achievement data of teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool compare with the student achievement data of their peers?” I collected data that demonstrated teachers who were Highly Effective did have a higher average state VAM score than their Non-Highly Effective peers.

The teachers who were Highly Effective reported habits and behaviors like greeting students at the classroom door, using the student’s name when addressing them, and asking students about their life outside of school. The strategies reported by the participants suggested that teachers should take the extra time to teach the hidden curriculum; that they build relationships with students and designate time to develop their classroom environment. These are part of the hidden curriculum because taking time for these tasks does not relate to any teaching standard or directly shown to increase student achievement. However, from the survey responses and student achievement data I collected, I determined a cultural importance in building relationships with students that the Highly Effective teachers are doing daily and weekly in their classrooms.

As an experienced administrator who completed thousands of classroom walk-throughs and informal/formal observations, I noted similar trends in the classrooms on my campuses. There were always a handful of teachers who took time to greet students at the door and build personal connections with their students. However, the majority of teachers would not find the time to build these personal connections. From my
observations, teachers often seemed too overwhelmed with completing the other day-to-day activities like attendance, data collection, and basic content delivery to take the time to develop those intimate and personal relationships with students. These behaviors, which represent a lack of relationship building with students, were the dominant culture across school campuses. There was an apparent lack of importance with implementation of the highly effective behaviors and a displaced priority with managerial tasks being more important than relationship building activities.

When reviewing data reported by the state under study about teacher turn-over, I noted that leaders in the district under study consistently reported 22-27% of the teachers were inexperienced between the years 2018 – 2021. This data reflects a high turnover of the educators within the district because the number of actual teaching positions was not increasing each year. In fact, teachers exiting the profession each year created the vacancies. Administrators filled the vacancies with mostly novice educators with three or fewer years of experience (citation withheld for confidentiality).

Inflated teacher evaluation ratings can influence the connection between highly effective teachers and the academic outcomes of students. Kyra Shafte (2020) in a study “The Impact of a Revised Teacher Evaluation Instrument on Teaching and Learning” detailed data that reflected the potential of over-rating by administrators. She reported that within her data set from the 2018-2019 school year, administrators rated 257 teachers Highly Effective for their overall instructional practice score but only 112 teachers had a student achievement score that rated Highly Effective. Furthermore, the district in Shafte’s study had zero teachers who were rated unsatisfactory for their overall instructional practice score but 21 teachers throughout the district who had student
achievement scores that were rated unsatisfactory (p. 67). She inferred those administrators may have inflated the scores because the ratings of the teachers did not support the student achievement scores.

**Conditions**

I reviewed the professional development learning catalog for the district under study and found that not a single component directly addressed the development of the teacher-student relationship (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The district leaders offered some training on the evaluation tool itself, focusing on both Domain 2 and 3, but from my experience as an administrator, these trainings typically reviewed the language of the rubric and the look-fors for each of the elements. The professional learning opportunities did not include any direct instruction on how to build relationships with students.

In addition, for the 2018-2019 school year, the bargaining unit negotiated with the district under study and limited the number of observations for experienced teachers to one informal and one formal observation and to two informal observations and one formal observation for teachers in their first year of teaching in the district. Previously, all teachers in the district received at minimum two informal and one formal observation annually (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). As a result, administrators gave less formal feedback to their teachers throughout the school year. Inadvertently, due to lack of time for all activities, my experience as an administrator supports that the educational leaders on campuses were in classrooms less frequently and provided less structured feedback than in the previous school years.

Regarding the discipline occurrences in the classroom setting, my second research
question addressed some of the conditions that were present in the district under study. I asked, “How does the student discipline referral rate for teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool compare with the student discipline referral rate of their peers?” While the data collected reflected just a slightly lower average of discipline referral rates for the Highly Effective teachers, I offer a potential explanation for that data set.

When calculating the average referral rate for each teacher, the denominator for the Highly Effective teachers was much lower than that of the Non-Highly Effective teachers. Of the teachers in the Highly Effective group, there were three teachers who wrote greater than 75 referrals. I concluded that this was an anomaly and my experience as an administrator led me to the conclusion that these teachers were writing a high number of referrals for the purpose of behavior tracking as it relates to documentation required to justify additional support for the student. In addition to my experience as an administrator, I ascertain that this is an anomaly based on the survey information reported by the teachers. Most teachers reported between zero and five major classroom disruptions in a given school year. Additionally, when I asked how they chose to manage the disturbance, 77.8% of the teachers said they would step outside to have a conversation with the student.

**Competencies**

In their work, Wagner et al. (2006) referred to competencies as how well the organization thinks strategically, collaborates, gives, and receives critiques, and identifies student learning needs. My research question that addressed the competencies was: “What are the specific strategies used by teachers who are Highly
Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool to develop quality relationships with students?” I asked the participants in my study to share research-based strategies they used for student engagement and additional information regarding student engagement. As reported by the participants, there were a variety of strategies that the Highly Effective teachers were using on a daily and weekly basis to engage their students in learning. In addition, these strategies reported also helped to build relationships with students. The strategies cited by the teachers included:

- Focused Note Taking
- Collaboration
- Hands on / Manipulatives
- AVID
- KAGAN
- Graphic organizers
- Thick-Pair-Share

When responding to the question “How long have you been a classroom teacher?” 50% of the participants reported teaching 15 or more years. I inferred that their ability to perform at the Highly Effective level came in a large part from their years of experience in the field. Many of these teachers cited strategies in their survey that were formally trained at school sites (Kagan or AVID) and often to teachers who were more tenured and experienced. My experience as an administrator supported the understanding administrators did not often provide newer teachers with opportunities for trainings like Kagan and AVID because leaders perceived that the teachers were still learning to master the basics of teaching.
With the lack of formal training and professional development opportunities, leaders often left novice teachers to their own devices to develop these highly effective habits and behaviors. Novice teachers, who represented 25% or more of the teacher population for the district under study, consistently needed structured feedback from their administrators so they could improve their practice. As an administrator, I noticed that often the feedback novice teachers received was on the basics of the classroom environment like time management and content delivery opposed to the development of relationships with students.

In addition, in my experience as an administrator, administrators had limited opportunities to practice writing feedback and having constructive conversations with teachers about areas of improvement. During the monthly administrator professional development meetings, there were occasional opportunities to script observation results in a classroom walk-through. However, often, administrators used this practice in giving feedback to document occurrences in the classroom environment like how often students teachers call on students, how frequently the teacher reference the learning goal, and the time and structure of the content delivery. My experiences reinforced the perspective that procedural tasks and teacher behaviors held a higher importance than a focus on the relationship the teacher had with students or the impact that relationship could have on the academic achievement.

**Interpretation**

To qualify as a Highly Effective teacher for this study, I identified teachers who were Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool used by the leaders in the district under study. Domain 2 and element 3C were tied to
classroom environment and student engagement. The data from this research indicated that the teachers identified as Highly Effective via observations had higher average student achievement and a lower discipline referral rate.

The teachers who were Highly Effective at building and maintaining student engagement also had students who performed better on the end of year state assessments. These teachers were going above and beyond to engage their students and build relationships with them, and the result was an increase in student achievement when compared to their non-highly effective peers. Furthermore, the teachers who were Highly Effective were writing fewer discipline referrals than their peers and arguably were not removing the students from the learning environment as often due to misbehavior.

I found these results to be significant and illustrated the need for a professional development program geared directly to the development of the teacher-student relationship. It was evident that most of the teachers in the district under study were struggling to build connections with their students because they were scoring below Highly Effective on their observations and had a lower overall student achievement score. Under the state accountability system, the district under study consistently received an overall district grade of either a low B or high C. District leaders could potentially increase the performance of students across all grade levels if there were a focus on the development of the teacher-student relationship (Cook et al., 2018).

If I had broadened my survey participants to include the administrators at school sites that had the Highly Effective teachers, I would have discovered an even deeper understanding as to why this small group of teachers was outperforming the majority of teachers across the district. As an administrator, I know these leaders would have shared
that many of the teachers who excelled in building relationships with students were also the teachers who took time to individualize their instruction, making it relatable and engaging to all students.

**Judgments**

My first research question was “How does the student achievement data of teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool compare with the student achievement data of their peers?” The data I collected and outlined earlier in this chapter demonstrated that the teachers who were Highly Effective had a higher average State VAM score than their non-highly effective peers. These results were positive and demonstrated that the strategies the surveyed teachers mentioned would be appropriate and acceptable use for a professional development program.

My second research question was “How does the student discipline referral rate for teachers who are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool compare with the student discipline referral rate of their peers?” As documented earlier in this chapter, the Highly Effective teachers had a slightly lower discipline referral rate than their non-highly effective peers. I found these results to lack significance but did also acknowledge that the Highly Effective teachers had a lower average rate with a difference of .21 referrals per year. The strategies that the Highly Effective teachers shared in their survey responses would contribute to the content of a professional development program.

My final research question addressed the strategies the teachers reported using in the classroom. The question was, “What are the specific strategies used by teachers who
are Highly Effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the districts’ evaluation tool to develop quality relationships with students?” In the extended response portion of my survey the participants listed strategies they used in their classroom to engage students and build relationships on a daily or weekly basis. Many of the strategies were well known research-based strategies, including Kagan, AVID, and graphic organizers. Some participants also shared lesser known strategies as well. The sharing of this knowledge was provoking and became the backbone for the professional development program that I developed from this research.

In response to the statement “Please share any additional information regarding student engagement” one participant shared:

I feel that it is important to get to know your students as human beings – to take an interest in what they are doing, show them you really care about them as a person. I still have students come back to me and say thank you for loving me the way you do. No other teacher took the time to get to know me and help me the way you did. That is what makes this job worth it!

I recognize that this is, in terms of the profession of teaching and my inquiry, as the most important response of all the data I collected. It spoke to the value of building the relationship with students as complex human beings and to the need to know students for who they are. The teachers who participated in my survey shared that when they get to know students as individuals, the quality of relationship and students’ eagerness to be an active learner in the classroom setting improves.
Recommendations

After I collected my initial data set, I was surprised and disappointed to find that for my study, only 14% of the teachers in the district under study were Highly Effective. The teachers who were Highly Effective also had higher State VAM scores and a lower discipline referral rate than their Non-Highly Effective peers during the 2018-2019 school year. I recognized that district leaders needed to address why 86% of teachers were not performing at the rating level of *Highly Effective* on these observation elements.

To address the issue of a lack of Highly Effective teachers, I contend the district needs to develop a professional development program targeted at helping teachers develop the skills to build relationships with students and engage students in the learning experience. Leaders could use the information I collected in the survey data from the Highly Effective teachers to create this professional development program. The teacher input from the surveys on strategies they used daily and weekly in their classrooms would be an appropriate starting place to develop an effective professional development program targeting these skills.

Conclusion

Based on my findings, I concluded that teachers who had a strength in building relationships with students, documented by their observation in the 2018-2019 school year in the district under study, also had higher student achievement and a lower discipline occurrence rate. District leaders should place an importance on training for teachers on how to develop relationships with their students in the classroom setting. If district leaders can improve a teacher’s ability to develop relationships with their
students, they should find an overall increase in student achievement and decrease in student referral occurrences.
Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

Through my program evaluation focusing on the importance of the teacher-student relationship, I discovered that the majority of the teachers in the district under study were Non-Highly Effective and had a lower student achievement and higher discipline occurrence rate than their Highly Effective peers. By addressing the issues surrounding the development of teacher-student relationships through my change leadership plan, the district under study will see both an increase in student achievement and engagement in learning and a decrease in discipline occurrences throughout the district. My change leadership plan intends to address the development of the teacher-student relationship (Cook et al., 2018) while also addressing organizational structure to allow for proper and appropriate feedback from school site administrators to teachers.

Qualitative data collected during my research via survey results from the participating highly effective teachers demonstrated there were both strengths and weaknesses in the district’s current program. I used specific feedback these participating teachers provided on strategies they used in their classrooms to build relationships with students to develop the specifics of the program. In this chapter, I identify the future contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies for the district.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

My vision of the To-Be for the school district regarding the development and reinforcement of the teacher-student relationship includes the ideal contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies (To-Be organizational chart, Appendix D). In my To-Be organizational analysis, the school district leaders will place importance on the development of teacher-student relationships through professional development.
addition, school district leaders will address teacher retention and recruitment practices. Finally, opportunity and practice for structured feedback from school administrators to staff members will focus on the teacher-student relationship building practices on school sites.

**Future Contexts**

Historically, the district under study had not placed an importance in the development of the teacher-student relationship. As of 2020, there was no documented professional development at the district level addressing how to build quality relationships with students in the classroom setting. Teachers who were showing strengths in this skill did so from years of experience and their prior knowledge and without much, if any, formal training by school or district leaders. With the influx of new teachers annually across the district, district leaders need to create a structured professional development program to help teachers learn and master the best strategies for building relationships with students in their classrooms (citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

As of the 2020-2021 school year, the district under study had multiple district professional development days built into the school calendar. In addition, there were numerous instructional days that were shortened (referred to as half days) and intended to be used for school site professional development. Following the publication of this study, the district under study will use these district professional development training days to allow teachers choice in the sessions they attend, with guidance given from their school staff members as to what would best meet their needs. The offerings at the district
professional development days will include structured training on how to build relationships with students, highlighting strategies reported by participants of my study.

Additionally, the district professional development staff members will train select lead teachers and administrators at school sites who wish to participate in an intensive relationship building training. The school site trainers will then deliver a teacher-student relationship training over multiple one-half day professional development opportunities at their schools’ sites, providing 1-1 support as needed in the classroom setting for teachers who are interested. Rutz et al. (2021) supported this concept of structured professional development. Rutz et al. noted that impactful professional development geared toward the needs of teachers can be long lasting, even after the structured professional development has ended.

Along with district and school site professional development, the leaders at the district under study will also fund and support book studies at both the district and school site level that focus on building positive relationships. As an economic factor, funding for this program will come from the district level through the department of professional learning. Leaders will have structured book studies delivered by “experts” in person at the school and district sites. Book study leaders will highlight the practices addressed in each text that support the development of positive teacher-student relationships and the impact they can have on student achievement and engagement in the classroom setting.

In an article for Scholastic, author Evan Robb (2018) shared administrators should “continually encourage staff to take some of what they have learned and integrate it into their teaching practices” (para. 19). Robb stated that when a staff shares best practices with each other and continuously implement the strategies they have learned about, a
book study can and will be more impactful than a traditional staff meeting. Within the
district under study, school site administrators will document the effectiveness of the
book studies through classroom observations of the effective implementation of the
strategies.

The final item to I addressed in the context of this change leadership plan
is a social factor relating to teacher recruitment and retention practices. As noted
previously, this district under study has a teacher turn-over rate of about 25% annually
(citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Leaders in the district under study in will
address the recruitment and retention practices within the district to ensure a decrease in
the turn-over rate. When teachers receiving the professional development are leaving the
district at an alarming rate, it reduces the impact of quality professional development on
student achievement.

To combat this, the leaders for the district under study will strengthen an existing
department that focuses on recruitment and retention practices, and work towards finding
and hiring quality candidates throughout the district to fill vacancies at school sites.
District leaders will hire strong recruitment leaders to lead this department. Recruitment
and hiring practices will focus on finding candidates that are highly qualified to teach the
positions available with a focus on hiring for qualifications and experience and not based
on years in the field, gender, race, or age. This department will also develop a recruitment
practice that participates in all hiring events at universities across the state to encourage
teachers, new to the field, to begin their career with the district under study.

**Future Conditions**
The research collected during this study highlighted the need for a professional development program for teachers, focused specifically on the development of high-quality relationships with students. Historically, the district under study did not have a specific professional development program with this focus at the school site or district level. A professional development program developed by the district under study will have multiple strategic steps to allow for the implementation to be effective and efficient.

Professional development implementation at the district level typically occurs on the scheduled professional development days at the beginning of each semester. Leaders schedule these professional development opportunities so that classroom substitutes are not required for instructional staff to attend and participate. In addition to the financial cost of substitute coverage, there has historically been a continuing shortage of individuals who are qualified and willing to substitute in the classroom setting.

This professional development program will require participating teachers to not only join a structured and formal professional development seminar but also participate in on-site observations of their highly effective peers. For this type of implementation to be effective, on-site leadership staff at each school will be willing and able to cover classrooms as needed to allow for teachers to observe their peers. The onsite leaders will include the principal, assistant principal, deans, content area specialists, and guidance counselors. This type of teacher coverage plan will require an elevated level of planning and organization to work around both the schedules of the leadership team and teachers. Scheduling of this coverage will be the responsibility of the school site leaders, but the district leaders can help when needed with coverage by sending district individuals to school sites as needed.
The principal and assistant principal on each site will receive training in the summer on the professional development program, so they will understand the importance and value of its implementation at their school site the following school year. In addition to training on this professional development program, administrators will work as a team and develop a structure to their informal feedback schedules on their school sites. My experience as an administrator showed me that administrators at most school sites struggle to find the time to provide consistent feedback to teachers. Often, teachers receive feedback twice, maybe three times a year, for their informal and formal observations.

Donaldson (2016) shared teachers appreciate and benefit from feedback on their teaching practice. The administrators throughout the district school sites will have a more structured schedule for teacher feedback that outlines the frequency and length they are in each teacher’s classroom on their school site. This schedule will include weekly and monthly goals for each school site. At a minimum, every teacher, on every campus will have an administrator walk through their room and provide structured feedback once a week. In addition, once a month each teacher will have an opportunity for a formal or informal conversation with an administrator about the feedback they received.

School based administrators will maintain a copy of the feedback report and will make it available to district leaders. As administrators complete this documentation, it will create accountability for school site administrators to be in classrooms with structured frequency, providing, and documenting individual feedback to improve teaching practices. District leaders will be looking for feedback that focuses not only on
the teacher-student relationship, but also student engagement in the learning process and any specific goals on which the teacher has decided to focus.

**Future Competencies**

Historically, in the district under study, district-wide school sites implemented programs like *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* (PBIS). When the district leadership team changed due to a change in superintendent, historically there has been a change in the use of programs like PBIS. During the year 2018-2019 school year, PBIS was not a program implemented district-wide but used at select school sites. Upon publication of this study, school and district leaders will implement PBIS district-wide, at all school-sites.

PBIS is “an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day. PBIS creates schools where all students succeed” (Center on PBIS, para. 2). As a teacher and administrator, I have implemented PBIS at all school levels from elementary through high school. Educators have an ability, by using the program, to not only support positive behavior interventions but also works to bolster the teacher-student relationship. My experience with the PBIS program has shown me that PBIS creates this relationship foundation because the program supports the development of trusting, positive relationships between students and teachers.

District-wide implementation will require training on all school sites and at the district level to ensure fidelity of implementation. Also, as with any change leadership plan, the district level administrators will clearly communicate the motive behind the implementation of PBIS to all school leaders and appropriate and necessary resources
will be available at all school sites to support the implementation. These appropriate resources will include collateral and material to support the messaging across all school sites to include posters, workbooks, and digital media content. District leaders will develop a position to support the implementation of PBIS. The district leader for PBIS will create content associated with the program implementation. Funding for the PBIS program and implementation will come from the budget of professional learning and leadership which covers all professional development as well as the exceptional student education department as the implementation of this program will be inclusive for all students including those with exceptional needs.

In addition to the implementation of the PBIS program across the district, the documented habits of Highly Effective teachers will used by all teachers across the district. The strategies cited by the teachers in my study included:

- Greeting students at the door daily
- Greeting students by name
- Asking students about their life outside of school
- Chunking instruction into 15–20-minute segments
- Implementing relevant classroom instructional materials

This initiative will begin with all teachers, across the district, greeting every student at the door daily by their name. This habit, shared by participants in this study as effective, will be the goal of the district for the first year of implementation. When school site administrators walk their campuses, the goal will be to see each teacher greeting students at the door during every transition. In addition, district leaders will not only expect this of teachers but also school site leaders and administrators.
At the conclusion of the first school year with PBIS implementation, along with the implementation of effective habits like greeting students at the door, I predict it will be evident across all school sites that building relationships with students is a priority. First, the teachers across all campuses in the district under study will, overall, have an increased score in their Domain 2 of the evaluation tool with the majority of teachers having at least one Highly Effective rating in Domain 2. In addition, the discipline referral rate across the district, per pupil, will decrease by 5% within the first year of implementation. Finally, leaders will note the practice of greeting students at the door by name across all school sites during transitions at least 80% of the time.

**Future Culture**

The culture related to teacher observations in the district under study in the 2018-2019 school year was lackluster and perceived by many teachers and administrators as a requirement, not a tool for improving instruction. For years prior, teachers throughout the district would get two or three observations a year based on their years of experience. Due to the increasing expectations on administrators, many administrators, including myself, would share that there was not enough time throughout the day to get into classrooms more frequently than the bare minimum requirement.

Upon the implementation of this change leadership plan, a cultural shift in the expectations of administrators will occur. The district leaders will first shift their expectations of administrators in the district to being instructional leaders again. As an instructional leader, administrators will spend no less than a quarter of each day in classrooms on their campuses. These classrooms walk throughs will be both unannounced and announced and will be mostly informal with the intention to provide
structured and regular feedback to teachers. Administrators will consistently log and submit the accountability reports documenting the classroom walk throughs and submit them to the district office for documentation.

The focus of the feedback across all campuses will be in a few areas. First, there will be a district-wide focus on improving the teacher-student relationship in the classroom. When administrators are in classrooms, they will be looking for qualities noted in Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool in addition to the research-based strategies shared by the participants in this study. In addition, administrators will be looking to observe and address the specific needs of the teacher previously discussed or communicated to the administrator throughout the school year. Finally, all administrators will be looking to see that teachers are greeting students at the door, by name. This will be a district-wide initiative for the first year of implementation.

The initiative to greet students at the door, by name, will be the first initiative that focus on developing the teacher-student relationship across the district. In addition to this district-wide initiative, teachers will be afforded the opportunity to electively participate in the professional development program developed because of this study which will help them focus on how to improve their relationships with students in their classroom as well. Together, both the district-wide initiatives and elective professional development will begin to develop a culture that places priority in the importance of the development of the teacher-student relationship.

Finally, after the staff members at the district office develop a stronger recruitment department that focuses on recruiting qualified teachers, leaders will have a heightened focus on creating a culture of consistency within the workplace across all
school sites. This culture of consistency will stem from the development of workplace standards that support a culture and environment where teachers want to not only come to work each day but also continue to work within the district for years to come. Leaders throughout the district and at all school sites will receive training from an outside agency on how to develop appropriate relationships with their staff members based in trust and appreciation. The training will also include strategies on how to have constructive criticism conversations and provide feedback in ways that teachers receive well and implement quickly and effectively.

The department of Professional Learning and Leadership will fund the training. The Superintendent will require all leaders to attend. This training will help develop strategies for leaders that will address the teacher turn-over rate within the district under study. When leaders address and improve the turn-over rate, the primary initiatives that focus on building the teacher-student relationship will be more impactful because the staff who participated in the trainings and initiatives will still be employed by the school district.

**Conclusion**

My To-Be organizational analysis has outlined that the school district will place an importance on the development of the teacher-student relationship through professional development. In addition, my organization analysis addressed teacher retention and recruitment practices. Finally, opportunity and practice for structured feedback from school administrators to staff members will focus on the teacher-student relationship building practices on school sites.
Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

When I envision the steps required to accomplish the transformation from my As-Is to my vision of what is To-Be, or vision for success, it is important to reflect on the work of many professionals in the change leadership field of study (Wagner et al., 2006). The work that all individuals in the district under study will accomplish is not complicated work; but it is not easy. The work will require many individuals to take steps towards making a stronger and more positive change. To complete these steps, leaders in the district under study will follow the ten rules from *The Energy Bus* (Gordon, 2007). I outlined these steps in the next sections (see Appendix E).

**Strategies and Action**

John Gordon in his book, *The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy* (2007), shared his ten rules to “fuel your life, work, and team with positivity” (cover page). I took these ten rules and applied them to the change leadership plan for the district under study. Outlined below are Gordon’s ten strategic rules applied and the actions required to cause the necessary change in the district under study.

*Rule 1 - You’re the Driver of Your Bus*

To begin this change leadership plan, I will meet with the top leaders in the district under study to discuss how the majority of the teachers in the district under study were Non-Highly Effective and had a lower student achievement and higher discipline occurrence rates than their Highly Effective peers. I will discuss the importance and value of the implementation of a change leadership plan for the district under study. Gordon (2015) shared that “every journey and ride begins with a desire to go somewhere and do
something and if you have a desire then you also have the power to make it happen” (p. 30). I will use the input from these district leaders on the vision and how to develop a successful implementation plan to develop the road map and team for the plan’s implementation.

I will develop an implementation team to include key stakeholders like district leaders, a leader from the office of Recruitment and Retention, the leaders for the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team, district leaders including those involved in staff development, school principals, key parents and community leaders, and specific teachers who are highly effective in building relationships with students. These individuals selected for the implementation team will believe in the power of a positive teacher-student relationship and want to see an improvement across all school sites in the development of these teacher-student relationships. When developing this implementation team of individuals, the district leaders will be clear and specific about what our purpose is and the outcomes that we are seeking to accomplish at the end of the school year.

**Rule 2 – Desire, Vision, and Focus Move Your Bus in The Right Direction**

I will meet with the implementation team and together we will develop a vision statement for this change leadership process. This vision statement will be the leading message delivered to all teachers, staff, and students within the district under study. During these initial meetings, the implementation team will discuss and develop a plan tied to the vision statement that will include all the expected outcomes and how to achieve those outcomes. Some of the expected outcomes will include the administrators spending 25% of the instructional day in classrooms, the implementation of PBIS district
wide, teachers greeting all students at the door every day, and teachers’ participation in
the professional development program. After discussion, the implementation team may
determine that more expected outcomes are necessary.

In his text, Gordon (2007) discussed the concept of being winners, not whiners (p. 43). The implementation team will understand that they are leading the change leadership
movement in the district and are responsible for the delivery of the vision and
implementing the plan to the district’s school sites. They will also understand that with
the delivery of the message, they are sharing that this change leadership plan will lead to
winning for all students, teachers, and leaders throughout the district. As a member of the
implementation team, they will feel empowered to represent the positivity of the
movement and spread the vision and message throughout their school.

**Rule 3 – Fuel Your Ride with Positive Energy**

The focus of the implementation team will be to work with individuals,
throughout the district, who are ready and willing to transition to an environment that
supports a positive teacher-student relationship. The implementation team will spotlight
school sites and leaders throughout the district who are implementing the strategies
highlighted in the change leadership plan through district-wide emails, the district
website, and district led meetings. These spotlights will be used to shine a positive light
on high quality implementation and the impact that is shown on students and teachers
across the district.

These district highlights will include data from the school sites that are excelling
with the implementation of the change leadership plan strategies. The data collected will
include student attendance, student tardy rates, student performance grades, and student
discipline referral rates. School district leaders will collect data for both schools and classrooms that are implementing the change leadership plan with fidelity as well as those schools and classrooms that are not. The data will offer a comparative look into the effectiveness of the change leadership plan.

In addition, administrators will ask the teachers who are participating in the professional development program to share with their peers what they have learned throughout the program. This opportunity to share will come during formal staff meetings at school sites. The participating teachers will offer strategies they have learned to better develop relationships with students in the classroom setting, what they have changed in their classroom since the beginning of the professional development program, and the changes or improvements they have seen in their students’ performance in the classroom setting. At the end of the school year, the implementation team members will ask the teachers who participated in the professional development program if their evaluation data can be shared with their peers to validate the improvements, they were able to make in their classroom in regards to building relationships with students.

Rule 4 – Invite People on Your Bus and Share Your Vision for the Road Ahead

During the summer months, the implementation team will develop the vision statement, formally print, and distribute it to all office and school sites throughout the district. The implementation team will communicate the message with their peers using the data and research collected from this study as a premise for the change leadership plan. Also, during the summer months, all individuals in a position of leadership or administration will attend a professional development training that will include the details of the change leadership plan, the premise of the professional development program, and
will outline the expectations of the school and district leaders for the following school year.

The district staff development team will create professional development focused on the improvement of the teacher-student relationship. The professional development will occur at the beginning of the school year during the pre-planning week. This week generally has a district professional development offering and teachers will have the option to participate in this professional development program that focuses on how to build the teacher-student relationship. The implementation team will use this initial launch of the professional development program on the district-wide professional development day to share the details of the year long program, what will be included, what will be learned, and the impact the program will have on the teachers who participate. After this initial professional development day, the teachers who choose to participate in the year-long program will become a part of the implementation team for the following year as well and will spread awareness for what they are learning at their school and district sites.

In addition, each school site administrator will call upon teachers who are already implementing the PBIS strategies, either formerly or informally, to help share with the teachers on their campus the value of the PBIS program. These teachers will informally share their best practices with their peers at staff meetings and other school-based teacher trainings. In addition to PBIS, the administrators at each school site will ask teachers who are already greeting students at the door each day to share about the benefits of this habit and how they find time to consistently implement it in their classroom. The teachers who
implement these highly effective strategies with fidelity already will lead from the front of this change action plan at each school site.

Members of the implementation team will call upon administrators who are already effectively time managing to prioritize being in classrooms at their school site to share how they are balancing all their responsibilities and share best practices. Administrators throughout the district who are already making a conscious effort to spend at least a quarter of the instructional day in teacher classrooms will share some of their strategies and best practices to accomplish this task. These administrators will share their best practices at monthly administrator meetings formally and among school administrators informally.

Rule 5 – Don’t Waste Your Energy on Those Who Don’t Get on the Bus

The implementation team will lead the momentum of this change leadership plan. In his book, Gordon (2007) shared “The more energy you spend worrying about the people who didn’t get on your bus, the less you will have for the people who are on your bus. And if you are worrying about the people who didn’t get on your bus you won’t have the energy to keep on asking new people to get on.” (p. 71)

For the first year of implementation, the change leadership plan only requires teachers who choose to participate to take part. This allows for a bus full of teachers who are wanting and seeking change. The teachers who are not interested in getting on the bus will simply not get on the bus. They will have the option to sit out the first year of implementation and watch to see how the implementation goes.
Administrators and district leaders’ participation in the change leadership plan will be required and necessary for the implementation to be effective. Members of the implementation team will take time monthly to meet with school-based administrators to help them combat any areas of frustration or confusion surrounding the change leadership plan. School-based administrators will need to get on the bus for the change leadership plan to be effectively implemented at each school site.

**Rule 6 – Post a Sign That Says “No Energy Vampires Allowed”**

As with any change leadership plan, the implementation team will be aware that there are individuals who are not willing or ready to participate in the change leadership plan, or worse, have negative energy towards the plan. Gordon (2007) calls these individuals Energy Vampires. These Energy Vampires “will suck the life out of you and your goals and vision if you let them” (p. 73). For this specific change leadership plan, the Energy Vampires may present in the form of the administrators across the school sites and at the district level who must participate in the change leadership plan. To combat the inevitable Energy Vampires who are against this change leadership plan, the members of the implementation team who are district leaders will take time each month to meet with school-based leaders and work with them on implementation at their school site.

Members of the implementation team will be aware that the school site leaders may themselves be the leading Energy Vampires for their schools. The implementation team members will try to help solve problems that are arising with the change leadership plan to minimize the negative energy on the school site. The implementation team will work collaboratively to turn this negative energy into positive by reinforcing the positive impacts the change leadership plan can have on any school site through the district
spotlights. It will be the responsibility of the school-based administrators to positively implement this change leadership plan at their school site.

Rule 7 – Enthusiasm Attracts More Passengers and Energizes Them During the Ride

The implementation team will develop a survey and administer it at the mid-point of the school year. The purpose of conducting the survey will be to ask teachers, students, administrators, and district staff members how they feel about specific aspects of the plan including teachers greeting students at the door, the use of PBIS, and administrators being in classrooms one quarter of the instructional day. The implementation team will develop the surveys specifically for the intended audience with questions geared to and appropriate for each participant. The students will receive a survey about interactions and relationships with their teachers.

Once the implementation team has collected the surveys, individual students, teachers, and administrators who have recorded seeing a positive change from implementing this change leadership plan will be a part of a short video series. This video series will highlight these individuals and their thoughts about the implementation of the change leadership plan. In these video testimonials, students and teachers will share about the relationships they have with each other, administrators will share about the positive changes they have seen on their campuses, and district leaders will address some of the positive shifts in the data that have occurred since the implementation of the change leadership plan. Administrators will share these video testimonials on school sites through their school news system, on school and district websites, and on social media platforms.
Rule 8 – Love Your Passengers

As the implementation team executes the change leadership plan through the school year, it will be incredibly important for the implementation team to continue to show appreciation to the participants in the program. Gordon (2007) refers to this as loving your passengers. He stated, “To really, really, and I mean really, tap the power of your heart and lead with positive, contagious energy you must love your passengers” (p. 114). To show this love to the participants of this change leadership plan, school and district leaders will take time weekly to spotlight students, teachers, and administrators who are implementing the change leadership plan with fidelity. These spotlights will come in the form of email blasts, shout-outs on morning news shows, highlights on the district websites, and personal phone calls. This demonstration of love for participants of the change leadership plan will follow Gordon’s five steps to showing love which include:

1. Make time for them
2. Listen to them
3. Recognize them
4. Serve them
5. Bring out the best in them (p. 122-124)

In addition, the implementation team will offer the teachers who participated in the professional development program the opportunity to become train the trainers for their school sites for the following school year. These teachers who were a part of the initial professional development program will have an opportunity to share what they learned and the impact it had in their classroom with other teachers on their school site
the following school year. As a train the trainer, these teachers will deliver similar content to a select group of volunteer participants who are looking to improve their ability to build relationships with students in their classrooms.

**Rule 9 – Drive With Purpose**

As the implementation of the change leadership plan continues throughout the school year, the implementation team will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss the implementation efforts and their observations. During these meetings, the implementation team will discuss any areas of needed growth they observed at school sites and ways to address and improve these shortfalls. In addition, these meetings will serve as an opportunity for the implementation team to readdress the vision statement and realign the change leadership plan to the vision if needed.

**Rule 10 – Have Fun and Enjoy the Ride**

The purpose of this change leadership plan is to improve the teacher-student relationships across the school district with an end goal of improving student achievement and reducing discipline occurrences in the classroom setting. The goal of the implementation team will be to implement the plan and spread the change leadership plan vision in a way that not only is effective but also creates a positive environment for teachers, students, and administrators. To foster this environment going forward, the implementation team will collect data at the end of the school year to assess how effective the change leadership plan implementation was throughout the district. After assessing this data, the implementation team will meet to discuss ways to address areas of improvement, bolster areas of strength, and continue implementation into the next school year. The implementation team will know that when implementation occurs with fidelity,
teachers create new highly effective habits and introduce the new habits throughout the district. The energy tied to increased student achievement, better student behavior in the classroom, and an overall positive environment is contagious and will offer encouragement for future success within the district. The school sites and district offices in the district under study will be more fun and enjoyable under these new and improved conditions.

**Assessing the Effectiveness of the Strategies and Actions**

Upon the conclusion of year one of the change leadership plan, the implementation team will meet as a group to review all accomplishments and detail the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation. To determine the effectiveness of the intended strategies and actions of leadership plan, the implementation team will analyze the survey results from the participants. In addition, the implementation team will review each step of the change leadership plan, as outlined by John Gordon’s (2007) ten rules and determine what needs to change for year two implementation. The results from these meetings and review will shared with all stakeholders via the public relations department for the district under study via an email and press release.

Regarding the effectiveness of the program, the implementation team will review all data including teacher evaluation scores, student discipline rates, and student achievement and VAM scores after each year of implementation. Successful implementation will be demonstrated by 5% or more of teachers throughout the district qualifying as highly effective as defined by this study. In additional, the average referral rate for teachers throughout the district will decrease by one referral each year of
implementation. Finally, student performance on state assessments will continue to improve by 3% district wide each year.

**Involving Community Partners in Decision Making**

At the onset of development of the implementation team, district officials will send invitations to parents and other key community members to be participating members for the change leadership plan. Parents, along with community members, will be able to share their thoughts on the development of the vision, the expected outcomes of the plan, specific strategies, and actions for implementation, and then be a part of the reflection process to make effective changes for year two of the change leadership plan. My experience working in public education has shown me that involvement of these community partners will allow the implementation team to have equal representation from all stakeholders throughout the district under study.

**Conclusion**

To properly implement this change leadership plan, the implementation team will use the ten rules from John Gordon’s book, *The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy* (2007). These ten rules are an outline for the strategies and actions that the implementation team will take to achieve this change leadership plan within the district under study. When properly applied and implemented, these ten rules will lead to an effective implementation of the change leadership plan which will lead to an effective policy change in the district under study.
Chapter Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

I propose a new policy for the district under study which improves teacher participation in a professional development focused on the development of the teacher-student relationship and administrator feedback to teachers. This policy will require district leaders to offer a professional development program to all teachers who are interested and require administrators to provide structured and specific feedback to teachers on their practice at least four times every nine weeks. This policy will allow for teachers to continue to improve their relationships with students through a structured professional development program while also receiving timely and appropriate feedback from their administrators on a regular basis.

Policy Statement

District leaders will implement a new policy to include the use of a specific professional development program focused on the development and improvement of the relationship between teachers and students as well as structured feedback from administrators on criteria related to relationship building. The professional development (PD) program that is developed as a result of this research will be offered annually to all teachers who choose to participate. The PD program will be a year-long program and will focus solely on the development of the teacher-student relationship in the classroom and school setting. This PD program will be free to all teachers who choose to participate. As reinforcers to participation in the PD program, district leaders will require all school administrators to perform a non-evaluative observation of every teacher every other week. This increase in observations will allow administrators to provide non-evaluative,
structured, and specific feedback to teachers, specifically on the Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool.

I collected data throughout this study that demonstrated teachers who have a strong relationship with their students, as documented by their highly effective ratings in all of Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool, also have higher student achievement and less discipline occurrences in their classroom. I recommend that teachers participate in this PD program annually as to improve their abilities to build relationships with students and their ratings on the evaluation tool for the district under study. In addition, I recommend administrators in the district spend more time in each teacher’s classroom performing non-evaluative observations so that they can give specific feedback to teachers on their interactions with students.

When implemented with fidelity, this policy will effectively increase the number of teachers who are highly effective in developing relationships with students in the classroom setting. In addition, student achievement on standardized assessments will increase due to the improvement of the teacher-student relationship. Finally, the number of discipline occurrences in the classroom setting will decrease as well.

**Analysis of Needs**

In the following six subsections, I will analyze my policy recommendations through six distinct disciplinary areas to provide a deeper understanding of the problems involved. I will review my policy recommendations through educational, economic, social, political, legal, and moral and ethical lenses. Through this analysis I will provide stakeholders a broader understanding of the impact of improving the teacher-student relationship in the district under study.
**Educational Analysis**

Many researchers, including Cook et al. (2018), Hollo and Hirn (2015), and McKinney De Royston et al. (2017), noted the importance and value of the teacher-student relationship on student performance in the classroom. Students who can develop a positive relationship with their teachers are typically more engaged in the learning experience and have better overall achievement. In their research, McKinney De Royston et al. (2017) discovered that students build relationships with adults with whom they have rapport. In addition, students adjust how they engage in school activities and navigate through their years in school based on those positive and negative relationships. McKinney De Royston et al. found that all these factors are a reaction to a powerful relationship with an adult, not necessarily an adult of the same gender and ethnicity.

The premise for this policy is to develop a culture across the district under study where leaders place an importance on the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Leaders will structure the professional development program and teacher observations around developing relationships with students and include focused and structured feedback on Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool. The research completed for this study demonstrates that when the teacher-student relationships can improve throughout the district, the student learning experience and overall achievement will improve.

**Economic Analysis**

The economic impact of this policy proposal focused on a professional development program throughout the district will not cause significant changes to the overall budget for the district under study. The 2018-2019 adopted budget for the district
under study earmarked $608,450.00 to “provide professional learning opportunities aligned with the state’s accomplished practices for educators and Danielson Framework for Teaching to positively affect instructional practice to improve student achievement” (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The professional development offered during paid instructional days for teachers will not require additional funds to pay them for their attendance. Some funding will be spent for the purchase of substitutes, but this classroom coverage will also be provided by onsite administrators acting as substitutes as needed. School sites should not feel an economic impact of this policy.

As participation grows with the professional development program and more teachers elect to participate annually, there may be a need for increased professional development funds. District officials will share this increased funding amount and reasoning for the increase with the school board. It will be the responsibility of the district office to convey the importance of the program, the value it has for teachers and students, and the outcomes directly tied to the teacher’s participation like increased student achievement and decreased discipline occurrences to ensure that the school board is willing and able to allocate more funds to the program.

There is the potential for an increase in overall revenue at multiple school sites because of this policy change. It has been documented by many researchers, including Cook et al. (2018), documented that when teachers establish, maintain, and restore relationships with students, the student’s behavior improves in the classrooms setting. Additionally, the students improve their overall academic performance. If overall student performance improves across entire school sites, the school may see an increase in their school grade which will afford teachers and other support staff members a one-time
bonus for this school grade accomplishment.

Finally, as a result of the policy, the district will produce students who are higher achievers and better behaved. These students may have more opportunity to secure jobs or enroll in post-secondary education after graduating from the district under study. In addition, these students may be able to interact more appropriately in social environments in the community, creating a new workforce of younger workers who can contribute to the local economy.

**Social Analysis**

Teachers in the district under study are unaccustomed to administrators having a bi-weekly presence in their classrooms in the district under study. Teachers in the district under study expect their administrators to be in classrooms to provide feedback on their practice two to three times a year for their informal and formal observations directly tied to their annual evaluation. This policy change will require administrators to have an increased presence in classrooms where they provide feedback to teachers about their practice bi-weekly. This shift in the quantity of administrator presence in the classroom will be a major culture shift for teachers and there will be hesitation and mistrust among some teachers (Donaldson, 2016).

In her research, Donaldson (2016) stated that to get the most out of a teacher evaluation tool, administrators and district officials need to figure out “how to implement it in a way that challenges, supports, and motivates teachers” (p. 76). If the administrators and other observers of teachers can make the feedback from observations relevant and applicable to the craft of teaching in the classroom, teachers might be more receptive to the observation data. Observers will provide structured feedback specific to a teacher’s
individual needs tied to the evaluation tool with a focus on Domain 2 and element 3C. While this increase in administrator presence may be initially uncomfortable for teachers, the goal is for the feedback to improve teacher practice and student achievement.

**Political Analysis**

The governing body for the district under study is the school board which has five school board members, all elected to four-year terms. The school board is responsible for determining the distribution of funding by approving and adopting the budget each year. The professional development budget for the district under study should suffice for the efforts required for this policy change. However, if it does not, the board will have to vote to allocate more funds to the professional development part of the budget. Earning this vote for an increase in funding will be the responsibility of the implementation team and district officials.

If the efforts of district leaders enacting this policy prove to be impactful in improving the teacher-student relationship, student achievement in the classroom, and decrease overall discipline occurrences, this district under study may begin to set a precedent for surrounding counties on how to develop these successful relationships. Awareness of the policy by educators could spread throughout the state under study and affect change on school board funding and policy in multiple counties. The leaders in the state under study may find value in supporting and implementing actions, similar to those mentioned in this policy change, to make global improvements across districts throughout the state.
**Legal Analysis**

There is an indirect legal implication related to this policy proposal for the district under study. Teacher union leaders in the district under study are very prominent and vocal regarding teacher evaluation, observations, and pay for performance. In the summer of 2019, union leaders negotiated with district leaders to remove one of the documented and evaluative informal observations from the teacher evaluation sequence for all teachers (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The removal of this documented informal observation left all teachers with either one informal observation and one to two formal observations dependent on their years of experience.

This shift in the number of documented evaluative observations created a culture among many school sites were the presence of administrators in teacher classrooms decreased. With this policy proposal, administrators will perform an observation in every teacher’s classroom bi-weekly and will leave the teacher structured and specific feedback on their teaching practice. While these observations required in my policy are non-evaluative and not documented, the union in the district under study may feel hesitant to support this increased administrator presence in classrooms. It will be the responsibility of the implementation team to convey the value of the policy proposal to the union leaders and other members of the bargaining unit so that there is unanimous support.

**Moral and Ethical Analysis**

Teacher participation in the professional development program is optional. Only teachers who choose to participate each year in the program will benefit from the structured PD program that focuses on improving the teacher-student relationship in the classroom setting. Because there is no requirement to participate, only some teachers will
benefit from the knowledge that the program offers. The teachers who participate in the program will see an improvement in their relationships with students, the student discipline in the classroom, and overall student achievement. Due to the voluntary nature of the PD program, there will be teachers who do not choose to participate, and as a result, their students will not benefit from the same improvements. It is a morally and unethical that some students will benefit while others will not.

One of the goals of the policy will be that the increased frequency of the administrator observations will provide structured feedback to all teachers in an effort to improve all teachers’ ability to develop relationships with their students, even those who do not participate in the PD program. The hope is that all teachers will see an improvement in their teaching practice, even if they do not directly participate in the professional development program.

**Implications for Staff and Community Relationships**

This policy has implications for teachers and administrators in the district under study. The teachers who choose to participate in the PD program will see an improvement in their relationships with students and their student achievement data as well as student discipline occurrences. Also, as teachers improve their ability to build relationships with students, this may cross-over to their relationships with their fellow teachers. Teachers will also see an increased presence of their administrators in their classroom and will receive structured and relevant feedback bi-weekly. Administrators will have to time manage and structure their days and weeks to accommodate and schedule which allows for an increase presence in teacher’s classrooms. In addition, administrators will see an increase in student achievement school wide.
The community will benefit from the improved teacher-student relationships. Both parents and students will feel more satisfied with the learning environments on the school sites in the district under study. Students will enjoy their time in class and will begin building genuine relationships with teachers on school campuses. With an increase in student achievement, parents will appreciate the efforts the school is taking to provide a high-quality education to their students. The community will also benefit from this policy because students will be more academically prepared to enter the workforce and local post-secondary institutions.

**Conclusion**

This policy recommendation, which will require the annual offering of the PD program to teachers and for administrators to perform bi-weekly non-evaluative observations of teachers, will produce a documented improvement of the teacher-student relationship, student achievement, and a decrease in discipline occurrences. This policy will allow for teachers to continue to improve their relationship with students across the district under study. In the next chapter I discussed my leadership lessons learned as a result of this study.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

As the research for this study began, I was interested in determining whether teachers who developed a relationship with their students, as documented by scoring highly effective on their teacher evaluation in the 2018-2019 school year in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C, in turn had students who performed better on end of year state assessments and had less discipline occurrences in the classroom setting. Through the collection of student assessment and discipline data, teacher evaluation data, and surveys, I was able to determine teachers in my study who develop those quality relationships with students do have higher student achievement and less discipline occurrences than their peers who do not develop quality relationships with students. Using the strategies and habits reported on the surveys, district leaders will create a professional development program. I wrote a policy change to for the district under study to implement. In the chapter, I provide a final discussion and an overview of the leadership lessons I learned.

Discussion

The purpose of my program evaluation was to identify the behaviors of teachers who were rated highly effective in all elements of Domain 2 (classroom environment) and element 3C (engaging students in learning) on the Danielson framework (Danielson, 2013) during the 2018-2019 school year. After identifying the behaviors, I created a professional development program with the intention of supporting the development of positive teacher-student relationships in the classroom and school setting. Through the process of this program evaluation I was able to not only identify these behaviors of the highly effective teachers through a survey but also determine that these teachers have
higher student achievement and fewer discipline occurrences than their non-highly
effective peers through a data collection from the district under study. In addition, I also
studied Gordon’s (2007) change leadership strategies, the 10 rules, and developed a
change leadership plan that involved voluntary teacher participation in a professional
development program and a heightened presence of administrators in all teacher’s
classrooms.

The goals that I set for this program evaluation were:

1. To determine if high-quality relationships between teachers and students
   yield increased student achievement and decreased discipline referrals.
2. To identify the strategies highly effective teachers in the targeted elements
   use to build quality relationships with students.
3. To develop a professional development plan that trains select teachers on
   how to use the identified strategies in their classrooms.

This program evaluation accomplished all three of these goals. The program evaluation
determined that teachers who do develop high-quality relationships with students do have
higher student achievement and fewer discipline occurrences in their classroom. In
addition, the selected highly effective teachers shared the strategies and habits they used
to develop the high-quality relationships with their students. Finally, my policy change
will create an environment where this professional development program is implemented
annually and supported by classroom observations.

I determined through this program evaluation that the vast majority (86%) of
teachers in the district under study during the 2018-2019 school year were not highly
effective in all elements of Domain 2 and element 3C of the evaluation tool. The optional
professional development program, created because of this research, will be offered annually to all teachers in the district. It is my expectation that participation in the professional development program will help teachers improve their relationships with students which will in turn improve the student achievement and decrease the student discipline occurrences in the classroom setting.

The policy that district and school leaders will implement in the district under study addresses the implementation of a professional development program and an increase in administrator observations that provide structured feedback to teachers. Leaders will offer the professional development program will annually to teachers who elect to participate. In addition, administrators will make time bi-weekly to perform an observation in every teacher’s classroom and provide structured feedback focused on growth areas in domain 2 and 3 for each individual teacher. When implemented with fidelity, these action items will lead to an increase in student achievement and decrease in student discipline occurrences in the teacher’s classrooms.

**Leadership Lessons**

Through the work that I completed during this research process and my in-depth reading of John Gordon’s *The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team With Positive Energy* (2007), I realized an especially important truth about change leadership. It is the duty as an effective leader to create an energy bus of momentum and invite as many colleagues onto the bus as possible. Leaders should feel empowered to share their message and good word with as many stakeholders as possible, always encouraging people to join their change leadership plan. Sharing the energy and positive message while encouraging participation should be leaders’ constant focus.
What I cannot concern myself with is forcing people onto my bus who are not ready or willing to participate. I cannot be responsible for making Energy Vampires choose to be active participants on my energy bus. I cannot force individuals to change their vision and plan to match my energy. Instead, I simply must share my positive message and vision and focus on helping the individuals who are ready to receive help. It is extremely hard to fix problems that other people do not want fixed and my positive energy is better spent focused on those who are ready to receive my help and direction.

As a leader, I feel as though I have grown into Gordon’s (2007) definition of a change leader who is driving an energy bus that is headed in a positive direction and prospered from it. I feel empowered to spread my research and passion for improving the teacher-student relationship among my professional colleagues and others in the education. I believe that as a leader I have become more patient, understanding, and willing to listen to concerns my team has with our direction and how we could change course. In addition, I now am better able to articulate my vision, to gain input from others, and to direct our energy bus to a positive and goal driven destination.

**Conclusion**

As an educator, I believe wholeheartedly that when the time comes for the focus to be more on the relationship with the student than the outcomes of their educational performance, collectively all educators will have won. You see, it is then that their educational outcomes will be inherently positive. Students who have a relationship with their teacher will perform better in the classroom, will behave better in the classroom, and will ultimately have a more positive learning experience in the classroom because of the
positive relationships they are able to develop with their teachers. The power lies in the hands of educators and the relationships they develop with their students.
References


UNESCO. (2015). *The right to education and the teaching profession: Overview of the measures supporting the rights, status and working conditions of the teaching profession reported on by members states.*

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002348/234820E.pdf


Appendices

Appendix A: Evaluation Tool for the District of Study
Appendix B: Survey
Appendix C: As-Is Chart
Appendix D: To-Be Chart
Appendix E: Strategies and Action Chart
### Domain 2: The Classroom Environment (Domain weight 30%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2a. Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom interactions between the teacher and students and/or among students are negative, inappropriate, or insincere to students' cultural backgrounds and are characterized by put-downs or conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom interactions between the teacher and students, and among students, are generally developmentally appropriate and free from conflict; but may be characterized by frequent behaviors and/or language that compromise learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom interactions between the teacher and students, and among students, are respectful. These interactions reflect general warmth and care and are appropriate to the cultural and developmental differences among groups of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom interactions among the teacher and individual students are respectful, reflecting genuine warmth and care. These interactions show sensitivity to students' cultures and levels of development. Students monitor one another's treatment of peers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interaction with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student interactions with other students</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence:</th>
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#### 2b. Establishing a Culture for Learning

| The classroom environment conveys a negative culture for learning, characterized by low teacher commitment to the learning goals of the lesson, low expectations for student achievement, and no evidence that students believe they can succeed if they work hard. |
| The teacher's attempt to create a culture for learning is partially successful, with some commitment to the learning goals and modest expectations for student achievement. |
| The classroom culture is characterized by high expectations for most students and the belief that students can succeed when they work hard. There is a genuine commitment to the subject by the teacher and students. |
| Teacher and student enthusiasm for the subject create a culture of learning, in which students demonstrate through active participation, the value of the content and working hard. Students hold themselves to high standards of performance. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of the content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for learning and achievement</td>
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<tr>
<th>Evidence:</th>
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#### 2c. Managing Classroom Procedures

| There is little or no evidence of the teacher managing instructional groups, transitions, and/or handling of materials/supplies effectively. There is little evidence students know or follow established routines. |
| The teacher's management of instructional groups, transitions, and/or handling of materials/supplies is inconsistent, leading to some disruption of learning. With regular guidance and prompting, students follow established routines. |
| Efficient classroom routines and procedures have been established. The teacher's management of instructional groups, transitions, and/or handling of materials/supplies is consistently successful. With minimal guidance and prompting, students follow established classroom routines. |
| Instructional time is maximized due to seamless classroom routines and procedures. Students take initiative in the management of instructional groups, transitions, and/or handling of materials/supplies. Routines are well understood and may be initiated by students. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of instructional groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of materials and supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance of non-instructional duties</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2d. Managing Student Behavior</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>There is no evidence that standards of conduct have been established for students. There is little or no teacher monitoring of student behavior. Response to student misbehavior is repressive or disrespectful of student dignity. The teacher does not reinforce positive behavior. The teacher does not address off-task, inappropriate, or challenging behavior efficiently. Inappropriate and off-task student behavior has a significant negative impact on the learning of students in the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher has made an effort to establish standards of conduct for students. He or she tries to monitor student behavior and respond to student misbehavior although efforts may not always be successful. The teacher reinforces positive behavior. The teacher addresses some off-task, inappropriate, or challenging behavior efficiently. Inappropriate and off-task student behavior has some negative impact on the learning of students in the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of conduct appear to be clear to students. The teacher monitors student behavior against those standards. The teacher's response to student misbehavior is appropriate and respectful to students. The teacher strategically reinforces positive behavior. The teacher addresses most off-task, inappropriate, or challenging behavior efficiently. Inappropriate and off-task student behavior has little negative impact on the learning of students in the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of conduct are clear. The teacher and students' monitoring of behavior is preventive. Responses to misbehavior are respectful and sensitive to individual needs. The teacher and students reinforce positive behavior. The teacher addresses almost all off-task, inappropriate, or challenging behavior efficiently and strategically. Inappropriate and off-task behavior has no impact on the learning of other students.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2e. Organizing Physical Space</th>
<th>Elements include:</th>
<th>Evidence:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety and accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical environment is unsafe, or many students don't have access to learning. Alignment between the physical arrangement and lesson activities is poor.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The classroom is safe, and learning is accessible to most students. The teacher may attempt to modify the physical arrangement to suit learning activities with partial success.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The classroom is safe, and learning is accessible to all students. The teacher ensures the physical arrangement supports the learning activities. The teacher makes effective use of physical resources.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The classroom is safe, and the physical environment is conducive to the learning of all students. Students contribute (when appropriate) to the use or adaptation of the physical environment to advance learning. The teacher uses physical resources skillfully, as appropriate to the lesson.</td>
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</table>
### 3c. Engaging Students in Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements include:</th>
<th>Activities and assignments</th>
<th>Grouping of students</th>
<th>Instructional materials and resources</th>
<th>Structure and pacing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence:</td>
<td></td>
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The learning activities and assignments are poorly aligned with the instructional outcomes or require only rote responses. The pace of the lesson is too slow or rushed. Few students are intellectually engaged or interested.

The learning activities and assignments are partially aligned with the instructional outcomes but require only minimal thinking by students, allowing most students to be passive or merely compliant. Learning activities are not sufficiently challenging and lack the rigor to promote intellectual engagement. The pacing of the lesson may not provide students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.

The learning activities and assignments are designed and aligned with instructional outcomes to challenge student thinking, resulting in active intellectual engagement by most students with rigorous content, and with teacher scaffolding to support that engagement. The pacing of the lesson is appropriate, providing most students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.

Well-designed learning activities and assignments, aligned to instructional outcomes with suitable scaffolding by the teacher, intellectually engage and challenge nearly all students in rigorous content. The pacing of the lesson provides students the time needed to intellectually engage and reflect upon their learning. Students may have some choice in how they complete tasks and serve as resources for one another.
Appendix B

Survey

Teacher Behaviors to Effectively Engage Students in Learning

*Please answer the following demographic questions as related to your career.*

A) How long have you been a classroom teacher?

B) I participated in a traditional teacher preparation program through my college or university to attain my teacher certificate.

C) I earned my teacher certificate through a professional teacher-training program after I gained employment with a school district.

D) Becoming a teacher was my primary/first career choice after college graduation.

E) Select the level you are currently teaching:

*Please read the following questions and rate them from 1 – never occurs to 5 – always occurs.*

1. How likely are you to greet students at your door on any given school day?

2. How likely are you to greet the majority of your students by their name within the first 5 minutes of class on any given school day?

3. In regards to students in your classroom, how likely are you to learn about their life outside of school on any given day. Ex: student scored 5 points at the basketball game last night, student got a new job, students brother moved away.

4. During any given class period, how likely are you to “chunk” your instruction into 15-20 minute segments?
5. How likely are you to seek out relevant classroom instructional materials in your weekly lessons to promote student engagement?

6. How likely are you to practice flexible classroom furniture arrangement for students including, but not limited to, alternative seating (couches), podium standing, personal square for pacing, etc.?

*From the drop down, choose the answer that best fits your classroom.*

Using the drop down below, on average, how many major classroom disruptions do you have a year? For the purpose of this question, a major classroom disruption is considered a fight, loud verbal altercation, or another similar disturbance.

*In the following multi-select questions, select all that apply.*

Think of a time when you dealt with a student who had majorly disrupted your classroom (see definition in previous question). How did you handle the situation? For the purpose of this question, a major classroom disruption is considered a fight, loud verbal altercation, or another similar disturbance.

- Sent the student to discipline and wrote a referral
- Asked the student to step outside my classroom door where I spoke with them before returning to my classroom
- Sent the student to another teacher’s classroom to calm down before returning to my classroom
- Redirected the student in my classroom and spoke with them after class regarding their behavior
- I have never experienced a classroom disruption
In the following open response questions, be as specific as possible.

Please identify specific research-based strategies for student engagement you use in your classroom on a weekly basis.

Please share any additional information regarding student engagement in your classroom here:
Appendix C

As-Is Chart

As-Is 4Cs Analysis for Sarah James

Context
- Only 14% of teachers in the district are highly effective on the evaluation rubric in all of Domain 2 and element 3C, which highlights building relationships with students.
- More than 25% of the teaching staff is inexperienced with less than 4 years of experience.
- High number of vacancies to fill each school year.

Culture
- Not a clear priority in building relationship with students
- High turnover throughout the district increases the amount of new teachers
- Overrating on the evaluation rubric does not provide accurate feedback to teachers on their practice and doesn’t reflect student achievement

Conditions
- Lack of professional development on building relationships with students
- Lack of time and structure for administration to provide formative feedback on practice
- Frequency of discipline occurrences in the classroom setting

Problem Statement
Lack of implementation of highly effective teaching practices when building relationships between teachers and students

Competencies
- Highly effective habits are not known by all teachers.
- Administrators lack time and scripted practice to provide feedback on building relationships
- The importance of building relationships is not highlighted in schools or at the district level.
Appendix D

To-Be Chart

To-Be 4Cs Analysis for Sarah James

Context
- Develop optional professional development on developing relationships with students
- District and school site book studies on texts that address relationship building
- Teacher retention and recruitment program development

Conditions
- Structured time for professional development on building relationships with students during work day
- Implementation of a schedule and structure for administration to provide formative feedback on practice

Culture
- Create a priority in building relationship with students
- Develop a culture of consistency in workforce
- Accurate and frequent teacher observation, feedback, and evaluations structured to address relationship building

Solution Statement
Implementation of highly effective teaching practices when building relationships between teachers and students

Competencies
- Highly effective habits are used by all teachers.
- The importance of building relationships is highlighted in schools and at the district level.
- Focus on PBS strategies district wide.
## Appendix E

### Strategies and Action Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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</table>
| You’re the driver of your bus | - I will meet with top district leadership to discuss the contexts of this change leadership plan and importance of implementation.  
- I will develop the implementation team which includes key stakeholders including PBIS district leader, leader from recruitment and retention dept., and school principals. |
| Desire, vision, and focus move your bus in the right direction | - The implementation team will develop a vision statement for this change process and deliver it to everyone in the district  
- The implementation team will discuss the implementation plan and expected outcomes for the year including but not limited to:  
  o Administrators spending ¼ of their day in classrooms providing feedback  
  o Implementation of PBIS  
  o All students greeted at classroom door  
  o Teacher participation in professional development program on school sites |
| Fuel your ride with positive energy | - A focus will be put on school sites and leaders who are implementing the strategies from the change leadership plan  
- The data from the schools with true implementation will be highlighted and shared with other schools throughout the year to spotlight success.  
- Teachers who participate in the professional development program will share what they have learned and implemented with their school site  
- When granted permission, the team will share teacher evaluation data for those who participate in the professional development program. |
| Invite people on your bus and share your vision for the road ahead | Professional development offerings will begin in the beginning of the school year and will be optional as a way to deliver and spread the message.  
- Teachers who are already implementing PBIS and greeting students at the door will share on their campuses why these are strategies that work.  
- Administrators who are already in classrooms ¼ of the day or more will share with their peers how they make that happen on a daily basis. |
|---|---|
| Don’t waste your energy on those who don’t get on the bus | Implementation in year one only requires participation by teachers who are interested and ready to participate.  
- All administrators must participate. Implementation team will meet with admin monthly to address concerns. |
| Post a sign that says no energy vampires allowed | District leadership will take time monthly to meet with school leadership to discuss implementation issues and hold problem solving meetings.  
- The implementation team will work on their school and district sites to minimize energy vampires and encourage participation. |
| Enthusiasm attracts more passengers and energizes them during the ride | At the mid-year, the team will survey teachers and students as to how they feel about the implementation of the change leadership plan.  
- This survey will include a video testimonial from students and teachers about the positive changes they have seen because of the change leadership plan. |
| Love your passengers | Teacher and student spotlights for implementation shared school and district wide.  
- Teachers who participated in the professional development program will be offered opportunity to become train the trainers for their school sites.  
- Follow the five ways to love which include:  
  - Make time for them  
  - Listen to them  
  - Recognize them  
  - Serve them  
  - Bring out the best in them |
| Drive with purpose | - The implementation team will meet quarterly to discuss implementation efforts and redirect the plan as needed.  
- The vision and purpose will be redefined as needed |
| Have fun and enjoy the ride. | - Data collection will occur at the end of the school year to assess how the implementation went.  
- Course correction will happen as needed to refocus the implementation.  
- When implementation has occurred with fidelity, a new highly effective habit will be introduced to implemented school and district wide. |