

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND ITS EFFECTS ON
MOTIVATION, LEARNING, AND TEACHER WELL-BEING

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

By

KYLIE GIBBONS

Norman, Oklahoma

2019

POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND ITS EFFECTS ON
MOTIVATION, LEARNING, AND TEACHER WELL-BEING

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

BY

Dr. Crag Hill, Chair

Dr. Lawrence Baines

Dr. Heidi Torres

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	vi
Abstract	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
The Problem.....	4
The Purpose.....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	9
What is a positive teacher-student relationship?.....	9
Getting Teachers Well.....	13
Getting Students to Care.....	20
Getting Students to Understand.....	29
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	32
Setting and Participants.....	32
Research Context.....	32
Participants.....	33
Data Collection.....	34
Obtaining Permission.....	34
Recruitment of Participants.....	34
Stage One Data Collection.....	35
Stage Two Data Collection.....	36
Stage Three Data Collection.....	38

Data Analysis.....	39
Ethical Assurances.....	40
Chapter 4: Findings.....	42
Teacher-Student Relationship Survey.....	43
Teacher Interviews.....	56
Observations.....	76
Discussion of Themes.....	83
Recommendations.....	90
Concluding Thoughts.....	91
References.....	93
Appendices.....	96
Appendix A: Interview Transcript- Chet.....	96
Appendix B: Interview Transcript- Turi.....	115
Appendix C: Interview Transcript- Sylvia.....	140
Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter.....	155
Appendix E: District Approval Email.....	156
Appendix F: Teacher-Student Relationship Survey.....	157

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all my professors and my thesis committee, in particular Dr. Crag Hill for being my advisor and always being available to answer my questions. Thank you, Dr. Hill, for not only advising me with this research, but for being there to reassure me when I had numerous moments where I didn't believe I would be able to finish. I also want to thank Dr. Lawrence Baines and Dr. Heidi Torres for being a part of my committee and offering guidance on how to always be improving my writing. These three people, and many other instructors and professors at the University of Oklahoma, made learning a joy.

I would also like to thank my colleagues, friends, and family for encouraging me to keep going and continually telling me I could get through it. I especially want to thank my fiancé, Brayden, for all that he did to support me through this process. Brayden not only lifted me up every time I was convinced I would fail, but he was there to coax, motivate, and occasionally bribe me into writing this paper until it was complete. I am thankful to have such wonderful people in my life that not only promote the importance of education and learning but model their love for it as well.

Abstract

This study investigates the ways in which teachers in secondary education settings build positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships (TSRs) and how those relationships may affect student motivation, learning, and teacher well-being. There have been studies on teacher well-being in the context of how their well-being serves students, on how students can be motivated to participate and learn in class through classroom management, however, this study explores these topics through the lens of the relationships formed between teacher and student for the benefit of both the teacher and the student. To discover how secondary educators build these positive teacher-student relationships, and what affects the teachers believe that they have, teachers completed a Likert scale and short answer survey. Following that survey, three teachers were selected, interviewed for their perceptions on teacher-student relationships, and observed in order to support the data collected from their interviews.

Keywords: Teacher-student Interpersonal Relationship, Teacher Well-being, Student Motivation, Secondary Education

Chapter One: Introduction

Growing up, I had very few non-academic interactions with my teachers. I enjoyed school overall, and there were some teachers I liked more than others, but it is not until my high school and college years that I can truly remember making positive personal connections with my teachers. A few teachers, though, some positive and some negative, stand out in my mind throughout all my years of school.

In seventh grade, which is particularly poignant for me as I am now a seventh grade English teacher, I had a teacher that I was ambivalent about until a day part way through the year when I got in trouble—and I never got into trouble. This teacher had this rule about talking in class when you weren't supposed to, as many teachers do, but this one had a rather interesting consequence. You had three strikes, and then you were out. When you were out, you got an extra homework assignment. That homework assignment involved copying a rather extensive paragraph about not talking in class. However, that was not the real kicker. The part that stung was you had to copy it one hundred times.

So, I was sitting in class, and normally I was an extremely silent student, but a lot of my friends were in this class and the new seating chart had me sitting next to a few of them. Naturally, I talked a little more than was normal for me which resulted in my getting a warning. After my warning, the teacher was off helping another group, and my friend Sarah leaned over to talk to me. A student sitting near us told us to be quiet or shut up, something along those lines, but after a moment of quiet she started talking to a friend of ours on her other side while I tried to concentrate on my work as I did not want to get into trouble. It is at this point that the teacher hears the voice of someone talking again, and to my surprise she starts telling me in a raised voice that I had better stop talking and this is my second warning, but wait no, Brantley had told me to be quiet too earlier

so that is my last strike and to come see her after class to collect my extra assignment to be completed by the next time I came to class. I was so confused, and she would not listen to me when I tried to tell her it wasn't me after class. I ended up spending hours that night writing these paragraphs over and over and I missed out on going to dinner with my grandparents from out of town because I had to finish these sentences. To this day, I get angry thinking about this teacher, and for the rest of the year I was cooperative but disengaged from everything she had to say.

That poor interaction with that teacher, took me from liking her on a basic level, she was never a favorite teacher, to being set against her forever as she never tried to reconcile that with me and never tried to communicate with me about the incident further. She just accepted the paragraphs I had spent hours on while sobbing my heart out, that I knew she wouldn't read, and went on about her business. I did not matter. That incident is one of the only things I remember clearly from her class, and that is something that sometimes haunts me as a teacher. Is this interaction, this one moment, where this student is mad at me, the only thing that they will remember from my class? It is one of the reasons why I do not typically hand out a consequence without witnessing an incident myself or having multiple reliable witness accounts of the problem.

However, there were plenty of positive relationships that my teachers built with me. One of the most significant was my high school drama teacher. I have a hard time picking just one moment to describe here the ways in which she was always supportive, encouraging, and caring. From the moment I met her, she was kind and helpful. I had initially not been placed in a drama class, but rather a home economics class because Drama I classes were full. When I went to speak to her about being able to get into a drama class I was terrified, picture a tiny, quivering mouse tentatively poking out its nose from its hole in search of a meal, but she acted so excited that I was interested that she put my quivering nerves to rest. She signed my transfer of class form and

promised to personally go talk to my counselor to make sure I got placed in a drama class as soon as possible. She ended up giving me permission to skip Drama I and go directly into Drama II since all the Drama I classes were overflowing and the counselor couldn't place anymore people in there. That was the first time I felt like a teacher had gone above and beyond for me, and she continued to do so for the next three years as I moved up through the drama courses to Drama IV (the highest-level drama class offered). Her belief in me gave me the confidence to try harder, do better, and attempt new and challenging things.

I give a lot of the credit to her and her classes for my being able to stand in front of a group of people and coherently express myself. I went from just wanting to do backstage crew where I could hide, to striving for, and earning, a part, even if it was small, in every production until I graduated. At my senior banquet for drama club she awarded me what was basically the equivalent of a Most Valuable Player award for all the assistance I had given her, leadership I had shown, and hard work I had put in. Before drama class I was painfully, almost debilitatingly shy—a past teacher once heard me speak in a parent-teacher conference and expressed surprise that I knew how to talk—and now I am confident enough to do a job that basically involves public speaking every day in front of arguably some of the most judgmental people ever. This teacher not only made me feel like I mattered, she helped me accomplish things I never thought possible. She is what I aim to be as a teacher; someone who knows the importance of positive relationships and works to build and maintain them in order to do what is best for their students.

This is because I remember that with the teachers I had those connections with I was more inclined to make sure I got everything “perfect” for them. I did not want to turn in poor work and I would pay more attention to what they said than other teachers. This was because I would be embarrassed, I would be disappointing them, I would be damaging that positive relationship if I

did otherwise. I was always a “good” student for whatever teacher I had, as I mentioned with that seventh-grade teacher, I was always cooperative even if I didn’t like a teacher, but with those special teachers I connected with I was a phenomenal student. I went above and beyond.

The Problem

Those special teachers were at the forefront of my mind when I became a teacher myself; however, I did not think about why or how they became special to me as I began teaching. I just did my job on its most basic level for the most part. Being the “special” teacher, the teacher I think all beginner teachers have in their mind’s eye when they decide to be teacher, was harder than I initially thought. It is not enough to walk in a classroom and try to be “nice” or “understanding.” A general level of niceness or care or understanding is not enough to create the kind of positive relationships I remember having with my teachers in high school.

As a first-year teacher I learned that simply being “nice” just got you walked all over; it did not improve my relationships with my students, it did not miraculously make them love me and hang on every word that I said. In fact, it made them worse. Repeated warnings and, “Okay, that was funny, now settle down,” or “I know you’re tired, and you had other things to do last night, so it will be late, but of course you can turn that in when you can” with no real consequences did not, as I thought in my mind at the time, make them appreciate my concern for them or my kindness. Rather it turned my classroom into an unmanageable circus of incessant, boisterous talking, with students not listening during lessons, ten people always wanting to go to the bathroom at a given time, a teetering stack of missing and late work, and me feeling like that trembling, frightened mouse from the beginning of high school again. I had to quickly stop being nice. I had to shift into survival mode where I did not connect with many students at all, but rather spent most

of my time trying to control situations that never should have started in the first place while desperately attempting to get some actual learning to happen as well. This existence became stressful, exhausting, and overwhelming to the point of frequently dreaming of quitting.

Looking at other teachers, some of them much more experienced than me, and some of them not, with similar kids I was seeing them have more success with their students than me. The students that I saw sleeping in my class or who would talk back or be failing or any number of other issues, would be doing better in this other teacher's class. Yes, there were several students whose behavior was the same everywhere, but for many these other teachers were getting much more out of the same kids than I was. I wanted to know why. I started asking other teachers how this student or that was in their class. Sometimes, they would have similar issues, but in others they would not. They would say things like, "Oh, I used to have that problem, but I talked with him and the counselors, and he really just wants to have some choice. He doesn't respond well to something if it sounds like an order. Try giving him two or three options that you can live with and have him choose one. Then, it seems more like his idea, even though all of them were your ideas." After having several similar conversations, I had to wonder how I didn't know all this information about these students while my coworkers did. What were they doing differently than me?

I concluded that they somehow got to know their students on a more personal level than I did. I had been "nice," but I had kept my students at arms length, thinking to be more professional and to cover for the fact that I was so young. I did not know how to be the "teacher" or authority figure and get to know my students personally. I have improved with this skill, but I still am not sure of how to do both of those things successfully, and I think a lot of teachers, especially new teachers, feel the same way. We become teachers because we want to connect with students and

help them become successful in whatever they choose to do, but how to go about that is a lot easier in theory than in practice. How do teachers build positive relationships with their students and use them to help their students be successful? Do those relationships also help teachers stay motivated and happy with their jobs and work environment?

The Purpose

As I began to research how to create positive teacher-student relationships, I found very little on the actual “how to.” I discovered many articles dedicated to the importance of getting to know students as individuals and building teacher-student relationships in order to increase student motivation to convince students to stay in school, and I found some information on how building relationships with students can reduce teacher job dissatisfaction and stress. However, most articles did not focus on the actual creation of those relationships in great detail nor were there any collections of strategies presented for the sole purpose of creating and sustaining positive relationships with students, and they did not seem as concerned as I was with actually defining what a positive teacher-student relationship even is.

Wubbels (2014) defines a teacher-student relationship as “the generalized interpersonal meaning students and teachers attach to their interactions with each other” (p. 364). However, there is not a recognized definition for what a positive teacher-student relationship is made up of. I will piece together a working definition of a positive teacher-student relationship (TSR) in this research and strive to discover how other secondary teachers build those positive TSRs in their classrooms to help students care about, and understand, their subjects better.

My original question was just to figure out how to build the relationships and how those relationships could help students in school; however, another question also came up while doing the initial research into the topic. How do these positive TSRs affect teachers? While I found

several articles on how TSRs can impact teacher well-being, most of the research is focused on the negatives such as teacher burnout. This is interesting because in the state of Oklahoma right now we are in a teacher crisis. Many teachers are choosing to leave the state, work in private or charter schools, or leave the profession all together; half of the English department at my school is new this year for these reasons.

Positive teacher-student relationships could assist in keeping more teachers in public schools in Oklahoma with their potential to improve teacher well-being and satisfaction with their jobs. While it most certainly is not the final or only solution to a huge issue, new teachers having more of an idea of how to create relationships with students, and the benefits of doing so, could help keep them from deciding to leave the profession after just a year or two, which increased my interest in the topic as a new teacher.

Along with the possible benefits to teachers, in the initial research I found articles indicating that teacher-student relationships could have an impact on the motivation of students to stay in school. As a teacher at a school where many seventh graders talk about how they can't wait to be sixteen so they can drop out of school, finding ways of motivating my students to do well in school is important.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to inquire as to whether there are specific, best practices with which to build positive relationships with students, and to develop an idea of what effect those relationships have on student motivation and learning, and the well-being of the teachers.

Research Questions

1. What strategies do secondary teachers employ in order to develop and foster positive interpersonal relationships with their students?
2. How do positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships, once formed, affect student motivation?

3. How do positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships affect student learning?
4. In what ways, if any, does having a personal connection to students affect teachers' resilience and well-being?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The idea of teacher-student relationships is something that has been around for years, however, there have not been deep examinations of the types of strategies with which teachers work to create those relationships. There is literature on the importance of having teacher-student relationships, but not a lot on what a positive TSR is made up of or how to go about forming one. This research will be attempting to fill that gap and provide a grouping of different strategies that teachers of all different levels of experience use successfully in their classrooms in order to build positive TSRs with their students while also looking at what makes those relationships successful. This literature review will be looking at how those positive teacher-student relationships affect teacher wellbeing, student learning, student motivation, and some strategies for how to begin building a positive teacher-student relationship. However, the first thing that must be done is to establish a definition, or a standard, for what a positive teacher-student relationship (TSR) is.

What is a positive teacher-student relationship?

A definition for teacher-student relationship used by Wubbels et al. (2014) and Claessens (2016) does not seem to be controversial and could be included with many of the varying views on what a positive relationship between teachers and students should look like. For the purposes of this review, a teacher-student relationship will be defined “as the generalized interpersonal meaning students and teachers attach to their interactions with each other” (Wubbels p. 364). What makes those interactions positive, though, is much more complicated because each teacher and student interprets the actions and reactions involved differently.

In Wilkins’s study of teacher perspectives on teacher-student relationships they identified four different themes, or behaviors that teachers interpret as indicators of good relationships with

students (2014). Wilkins, through coding teacher interviews, found that the teachers she interviewed looked for: “having a sense of humor, showing respect, trying hard in class, and talking to teachers” as a sign that they would have, or do have, a good relationship with a student (p.60). These four student behaviors are not universally agreed on, as not even all the teachers in these interviews mentioned all these factors when discussing the topic. Some valued shared humor more, while others valued participation, and what the teachers defined as respect in their classrooms varied. From listening and being quiet in class to participation in discussions or good treatment of the classroom environment, teachers all had different, but overall valid, viewpoints on what students should do to show respect. However, it is clear that in order to have a positive TSR there needs to be some form of respect between the teacher and the student, whatever that may look like.

Beyond respect, “agency” and “communion” are words that came up several times in different articles. In particular, these words were used to describe types of interactions between teachers and students. According to Claessens (2017), “agency” is defined as “the degree to which one controls the interaction, exuberates power or behaves independently from the other,” and “communion” means “the level of affiliation or friendliness one shows toward the other person” (page number Citation here). Both have to do with communication, but agency is more about exerting power in a relationship and communion is more about getting to know the other person. Claessens found that for there to be a positive relationship between a teacher and a student there needed to be out of classroom interactions and that those interactions had to have a high level of communion. This does not necessarily mean that agency is a negative thing to have in a TSR. A teacher with a complete lack of agency, or power, that operates solely on communion may find themselves in a power struggle with their students which does not bode well for a creating a positive TSR. This is the situation that I originally got myself into as a first-year teacher before

going to the complete opposite end where I tried to operate solely on agency. The key would be to find a good balance of agency and communion; one without the other is what could lead to negative TSRs.

Mainhard (2018) elaborated on agency and communion even further when he explained some actions that would fall into each type of communication. Speaking loudly and with confidence, standing with strong posture, and so forth could constitute agency. There is nothing wrong with either of those things, however, when used without at least equal displays of communion Mainhard found that high agency can produce anxiety in students which would not promote positive relationships with them. Actions that Mainhard listed as high in communion included speaking with students about their hobbies and extracurriculars, showing interest, and speaking to them calmly rather than yelling or using sarcasm. When high communion is present along with high agency more positive student responses occur. So, high agency is not a bad thing as long as teachers are also showing students that they care.

Caring is another important term that needs to be defined here. There are two types of caring as defined by Nodding (1992) and used by Cooper and Mines (2014): caring as relation and caring as virtue. Caring as relation means “a mutual exchange in which the cared-for accepts the offer of care from the carer,” (p.268). Caring as virtue is defined as “the characteristic of ‘being caring’ being given to a person even in the absence of seeing the exchange of care or the relationship of care” (p.268). In other words, relational care is an actual act of care whereas virtual care is someone being perceived as caring. Cooper and Mines (2014) describe relational caring as the more desirable form of caring in developing a positive TSR. Actions speak louder than words.

Cooper and Miness (2014) took the definitions of relational and virtual care provided by Nodding and applied them to the term understanding. They thought it was important to distinguish between caring and understanding in TSRs because they have different impacts on those relationships, but they also found Nodding's relational and virtual distinctions applicable to the different types of understanding. According to Cooper and Miness it is important to distinguish between caring and understanding because understanding is what leads to a caring TSR, so simply understanding should not be the end product a teacher is working toward, but rather they should be looking to gain understanding with a student in order to foster a caring TSR. Further, the type of understanding matters. As with caring, there are two types that they recognize and define: relational understanding and virtual understanding. Relational understanding is "defined as where the student perceives the teacher knows them as an individual based on a relational exchange between teacher and student" (p.268) and virtual understanding is "where students consider a teacher to be 'understanding by nature' even if they have not experienced an exchange where the teacher appears to know them as individuals" (p.268).

The definition of a positive teacher-student relationship, for the purposes of this literature review, then, is an interpersonal relationship between a teacher and a student that contains whatever level of respect, understanding, and care that both require to make the relationship work for them. Creating a positive relationship with students is not a simple task, so what is the benefit of putting in all the effort to form one? There are multiple benefits, and those benefits seem to build on each other. One benefit is the way that a positive teacher-student relationship can promote teacher wellness.

Getting Teachers Well

There has not been a lot of research done on teacher wellness itself. Meaning most research is focused solely on students, or on the things that make teachers more likely to be unwell, rather than on what would help them get well and stay well in their professional environment. Teacher wellness is discussed a lot in terms of what causes teacher “burnout,” or when a teacher loses the drive to teach, gets worn out, and either chooses to find another profession, or stays a teacher but is stuck perpetually in “survival mode” rather than continuing to strive for better practices and learning with their students.

However, while looking for articles and research on the topic, I did find a few that addressed teacher wellness and teacher-student relationships in a new way. Wilkins (2014) conducted a study where she surveyed and interviewed teachers about relationships with their students. The teachers were selected for interviews based on a poll of students asking them which teachers they believed they had the best relationships with. When interviewing these teachers several behaviors came up that they seemed to cite as helping to make up a good relationship with students (focusing on the student behaviors), but when asked the teachers basically said that they could “have good relationships with any student who showed effort” (p.66) and that the teachers found that their own enthusiasm and responsiveness in their work was tied to the enthusiasm and responsiveness of their students in class (Wilkins 2014).

This is a unique study in that it is asking teachers for their opinions on what behaviors that students need to exhibit in order to facilitate a relationship with their teachers rather than the other way around. It also looks more at how those relationships affect the teacher rather than just at the benefits of the relationship for the student, which is what most research on the topic of teacher-student relationships is about. The study argues that it is not solely the responsibility of the teacher

to create and foster the relationship between them and their students, but that students need to recognize that teachers are, in simple terms, human beings too and that the relationship needs to involve the “fulfillment of needs of both parties involved” (p.66-67) in order for a positive relationship to truly occur (Wilkins 2014). What this means for my research is that this shows that a positive teacher-student relationship could not only be affecting student motivation, but it could be a key component to the well-being of teachers in the workplace with their self-efficacy and enthusiasm for the job as the study showed that a teacher who did not perceive a positive relationship with a student was less likely to provide extra help to the student in question and they considered their students’ behavior as a reflection of themselves. So, if a student behaved badly, they took it either as a personal slight or that they were not doing a good enough job in the classroom.

Hagenauer et al. (2015) did a study looking into how the emotions of teachers are tied to the behavior of, and interactions with, their students. It was a quantitative study where they surveyed one hundred and thirty-two secondary teachers and had them reflect on their emotions and why they felt that way with one class that they had rather than all of them. They found indicators of teachers experiencing joy, anxiety, and anger and what was associated with those emotions. This study is significant, like Wilkins’, because unlike so many studies it is focusing on teacher emotions and its effects on them and their happiness in their job rather than on the emotions of students or how the teacher’s emotions affect students.

The study (Hagenauer, et al. 2015) found that “closeness”—the interpersonal part of a teacher-student relationship—with a student, or classroom of students, had a positive correlation to teacher joy as did student engagement. Student achievement did not positively correlate strongly with any powerful teacher emotions, while lack of discipline had a positive correlation to teacher

anxiety and anger. They also found that while self-efficacy in teachers does correlate to teachers experiencing joy when teaching, there was not a strong correlation between efficacy beliefs and anger or anxiety (2015). So, while a teacher's belief that they are doing well may help create joy, it does not necessarily create undue anxiety or stress, and the most important thing for a teacher to feel good about their job is to have engaged students that they feel a certain amount of closeness with. This is significant to my study as it shows support for my thesis that positive teacher-student relationships can help improve teacher well-being, not only student motivation and learning, and it points to a component of building a positive teacher-student relationship—closeness.

There is a statement at the end of the discussion portion of the article (Hagenauer et al. 2015), where they are interpreting the significance of their results, that I took an idea for an interview question from. While discussing the result of their study Hagenauer et al. put forth the idea that “teachers’ ability to connect well with students can be regarded as an important skill to target in professional development” (p.398) they say that things like classroom management and student motivation are already addressed well in teacher preparation, but that “instructional strategies that aim at fostering the interpersonal TSR have largely been overlooked in teacher education curricula” (p.398). This is an extremely intriguing statement as my whole study is based around trying to figure out how to create positive interpersonal TSRs.

I do not know if there needs to be a class or an entire focus on this topic in teacher preparatory curriculum as this statement implies, because I am not sure how it would be accomplished. However, I will explore this statement through a question or two in the interview portion of my data collection by asking teachers what they think about the idea. Whether there needs to be more focused attention to this skill in teacher preparation or not it is something that needs to be explored more in research in order to figure out how to create those positive

relationships, as this study, while stating that they are significant, like many others does not delve into the actual process, or how, of building the closeness and TSRs that it discusses. I do not know if there is an exact “formula” for creating closeness with a student or class of students, but there must be a way to make the process feel less like walking blindfolded through a minefield.

Spilt et al. (2011) created a literature review of studies that address the idea of teacher well-being for the sake of teacher wellness, but even they state that the topic is not one that has been given expansive attention except in terms of teachers being unwell. They attempt to give a good overview of what is out there and offer their suggestions for further research. This is of interest to this study as it gives a good idea of what has been done, what hasn’t, and gave ideas as to how to move forward with my own research.

One of the initial things from this literature review that was important was finding how people react to stress from the Lazarus (1991) “Transactional Model of Stress and Coping” and how the authors of the review interpreted how it could apply to teachers and how they cope with their jobs and their relationships with students. This model states that “an individual’s reaction to stress is guided by the subjective interpretation or appraisal of an external stressor which subsequently triggers an emotional response” and that subjective appraisal rests on whether the individual interprets a stressor as both “relevant” and “goal congruent.” Relevant means that it is judged that it will affect the person’s goals, and whether it is goal congruent is whether it will be in line with the individual’s goals. If they are not, then the action or stressor would be incongruent with the goal. Only something judged relevant will elicit an emotion. If it is goal congruent it causes positive emotions and if it is incongruent it causes more negative emotions. Spilt et al (2011) apply this to teachers because in the education profession they obviously have goals and beliefs about/for both their students and themselves, so the way in which teachers interpret student

behavior could very well affect what type of relationship they are building with their students. If they interpret a student's behavior as frequently goal incongruent, then it is likely that they are attaching emotions of anger, frustration, stress, and even failure to the student which would make for a negative and toxic relationship that would lead to teacher burnout, and likely a student who is unmotivated to improve.

There are two theories of motivation that are discussed in terms of explaining how teachers need positive relationships with students in the Spilt et al. literature review: Self-determination theory of motivation (SDT) and Attachment theory. SDT posits that there are three natural psychological needs: autonomy, belongingness, and competence, and that the fulfillment of those needs most positively correlate in a job where someone is working with intrinsic regulation, or they are doing something for the enjoyment and interest of it. Most research, as Spilt et al. say, in this area is focused on teacher relationships with colleagues (other teachers, administration, etc.) and the motivation and fulfillment of those needs that those relationships provide, but as Spilt et al. points out teachers spend the majority of their work days, and of their year, with their students, not their colleagues. While the research on the topic is limited, it makes more sense that teacher motivation and the fulfillment of their natural psychological needs would occur within teacher-student relationships since they spend more time with their students.

Competence and belongingness especially seem as if they could be highly influenced by teacher-student relationships, because if a teacher feels as though they have created strong bonds with students that bond could create belongingness and if that belongingness led to students being more cooperative and motivated in class that could improve a teacher's feeling of competence. If interpersonal relationships with students do create feelings of belongingness and competence then they could be a major factor in teacher well-being because if those needs are not met, they can

cause a bevy of negative emotions that, since those relationships occur on a daily basis, are constantly wearing a teacher down.

Attachment theory is focused on the motivation of belonging and the “attachment behavior of individuals” (p. 463 Spilt et al. 2011) as they strive to create or “maintain emotional security.” These attachments such as parent-child, or teacher-student, have long-term implications as those involved create mental representations of the relationships and those mental representations make a generalized road map for how to react in social situations and relationships in the future. These ideas that are carried forward hold expectations not only for the self, or how the individual should act and react, but expectations of how the other person, or people, should behave as well.

This applies to teachers in that teachers are creating mental representations of their relationships with their students (Pianta et al 2013). Whether those expectations are met or not by a student, class of students, determines what type of emotions or ideas get “attached” to that student or group of students. The thing that is so important about this, not even going into how these attachments of emotions affect students, is that if an emotion is attached to a student then every time that student walks into that teacher’s classroom, raises their hand, or interacts with that teacher, the teacher begins to have that emotional response. Teachers see their students approximately an hour a day, five days a week, ten months out of a year depending on the state and school district. That is a lot of time for either negative emotions to fester in a person or for positive emotions to lift them up. If these mental representations and emotional responses are happening daily within a teacher’s mind, it follows that teacher-student relationships, and the emotions that go with them, could be greatly affecting teacher well-being. Though, as Spilt et al (2011) pointed out in their article, these emotions would only occur if the teacher felt that their relationships with these students was relevant to their own goals and beliefs, and not all teachers

believe that relationships with their students is an important part of their job. So, maybe the amount of effect interpersonal teacher-student relationships would have on a teacher's well-being is dependent on how much the teacher even cares to have one in the first place.

Looking at Spilt et al's discussion section of their literature review validated my idea to look into the positive effects of teacher-student relationships in that they say that there is a lot of research on the negative outcomes of stress and burnout in teaching, but there is not enough research into the "positive indicators" of teacher well-being and that there are indicators in self-determination theory that could point toward how positive teacher-student relationships motivate teachers and that they "contribute to a basic need for relatedness" for teachers.

Milatz et al (2015) make a similar assumption in their article. They cite self-determination theory as an indicator that teacher relatedness to students could be crucial to promoting teacher wellness, or as they are approaching it, preventing or reducing teacher burnout. They define burnout as a "human worker syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment" (p. and they postulate that burnout increases in teachers when they have low levels of connectedness and attachment with their students, or when they are unable to connect with students because they interpret student behavior negatively. While the Milatz research took place with elementary school teachers and students, it is applicable at the secondary level as well. Which is why I based some of my survey and interview questions off the Pianta Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; 2001; Pianta et al. 2003) that they used and which they state is used widely. The scale is used to reflect a teacher's emotions and thoughts about either students as a whole, or adjusted to see how they reflect on an individual student. I used ideas from this for my survey because I wanted to ensure that I selected teachers to interview and observe that would best demonstrate positive relationships with students and that would have insight into how they believe

they achieved those relationships, and as this scale is widely accepted as reliably reflecting a person's internalized feelings toward a group of students it seemed logical to adapt part of my survey to it.

Overall, the literature on teacher well-being, or how to get teachers well and stay that way, is slim. I hope to gain more insight into this gap through talking with teachers directly about what they believe helps them stay, or get, well in a profession that many acknowledge to be a job with one of the highest levels of stress. This is because of its demand for personal and emotional interactions on a daily basis (Johnson et al., 2005; O'Connor, 2008; Pyhältö et al., 2011).

The importance of teacher well-being goes beyond just the need for them to be able to teach well. It is about the ability of teachers to be able to get their students to care and be motivated and engaged in learning, and how does someone get others to care when they can't care themselves? They can't. Teachers first must find their own wellbeing in order to help their students.

Getting Students to Care

The research on student motivation and engagement is more extensive than on teacher wellness. Part of this may be that people assume that teachers already know how to deal with their own problems and issues. Society tends to incorrectly expect adults to have it all together and have all of the answers, so the need to focus on student issues may have seemed greater or more logical. This section of the literature review will be going through the research on student motivation and engagement; in particular I will be focusing on the ways in which teacher-student relationships may be affecting student motivation. I believe that a positive relationship with a teacher, or teachers, could help motivate a student, especially one that wouldn't normally have the inclination, or care, to do well in class.

When considering how to approach discussing student motivation with teachers, and how they observe their students' motivation in relation to how they learn and behave in their classrooms, I realized I needed to have a good idea of what I meant by student motivation. While there are many facets of engagement and motivation, and therefore many definitions, the ones used by van Uden et al. (2014) were straightforward, and since they were studying how teacher beliefs affect student engagement the definitions they found for their research tied in well with my own.

Van Uden et al. (2014) defined three separate types of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive, on two levels: school and classroom—though they were looking mostly at the classroom level since their research dealt with individual teacher beliefs and the learning environments that those beliefs created. Behavioral engagement is where a student is showing up to class on time, paying attention, and putting forth effort when completing assignments. Emotional engagement manifests as a student being interested in being in class, has enthusiasm for what they are learning, and generally has a positive demeanor when it comes to learning. Finally, cognitive engagement, which would be the ultimate goal and dream for any teacher, is when a student truly understands the importance of their learning and education. Meaning they can comprehend the importance of not only the big picture, but the individual assignments as well. The cognitively engaged student can self-regulate, forms their own educational goals, and wants to be high achieving.

In my research I will be mostly focusing on the behavioral engagement of students with some emotional engagement as well within the classroom level because I will be getting my data through surveying and interviewing individual teachers. The only time I will be in the same room as students for this study will be for observations. I will have no communications with students about their thought processes, so it would be difficult for me, or the teachers whom I speak with,

to know for sure what level of cognitive engagement a student has. Trying to judge student engagement at a school level does not make sense for the approach I am taking with my research as I am not talking to every teacher within a certain school but rather a few individual from varying schools. However, as van Uden et al., (2014) state none of these forms of engagement is necessarily independent of the other, if one is occurring then it is likely that another could be as well and so even though I may be asking about and discussing just one or two types of motivation and engagement, indicators of other types of engagement could come up in my interviews with teachers.

Engagement and motivation of students is important for without it students, especially those who come from less privileged backgrounds, are less likely to do well in school and are even more likely to drop out of school. Linda Liebenburg et al. (2016) investigated how empowering and respectful interactions with school teachers, administration, and peers helped to bolster student resilience (2016). While resilience is different than engagement and motivation, I believe they are connected because if a student does not have resilience, “a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (p.3 McCubbin 2001), or the resources to build resilience, they are too focused on their problems to be motivated to complete school, let alone care about doing well.

The significance of Liebenburg et al.’s (2016) study to my research questions is that Liebenburg et al. found a connection between positive, empowering and respectful, experiences within a school context, that in many cases included teachers, and the ability of students to recognize the support and resilience resources available to them, which in turn may help them be more able and motivated to complete their education.

While this research was directed toward school psychologists, the idea was to provide information to school psychologists for them to assist schools and teachers to foster those empowering and respectful experiences. Empowering meaning making ensures lessons and teachers are relevant and accessible to students and their goals, and respectful in that students perceive that their teachers, and the school, respect their cultures, backgrounds, and communicate in ways that the students can comprehend rather than talking down to them or using language that they cannot understand, but expecting them to “get it” anyway (Liebenburg et al 2016). This also indicates that teacher-student relationships could be a significant factor in student motivation and engagement in school if these types of interactions are what assist students from adverse backgrounds to build their metaphorical resilience toolbox and have the strength to be motivated enough to finish school.

Furrer, Skinner, and Pitzer (2014) connect engagement and *motivational* resilience by showing how teacher-student and peer-student relationships affect engagement in class and in turn a student’s motivational resilience, or their ability to remain dedicated to their work despite difficulty. In other words, the ability to cope with adversity in the classroom. In the paper they explore not only the effects of these relationships on engagement and motivational resilience, but which relationships work, and which ones do not. I will focus mainly on what does not work, and the effects of relationships that do not work in this section of this literature review, but I will come back to Furrer et al. and address what does work in another section of this literature review called “Cultivating Positive Teacher-Student Relationships.”

Furrer et al (2014) break down types of relationships that do not work into three types of interactions. All three of these interactions, especially when in combination with each other, increase the likelihood of a student being unsuccessful in, or dropping out of, school because they

decrease a student's resources for coping and building motivational resilience; they keep a student from becoming engaged in school.

The first of these interactions is a *rejecting* interaction with or action toward a student or students. This is where the teacher, or peers, are either disinterested or critical of a student. This could be forgetting a student's name, not learning about them, ignoring them, making sarcastic or critical comments about the student, or treating them with impatience. These types of actions can make a student feel unwanted and disliked.

The second is a *chaotic* interaction, or where reactions, consequences, and behaviors are inconsistent and possibly even unpredictable. It makes the teacher, or peer, someone unreliable and untrustworthy. For teachers this can look like not giving helpful feedback, grading or handing out consequences without regular follow through, not explaining a task in an understandable manner, and for peers it could be anything from spreading lies about a student to leaving them out of something when the student has not done anything to warrant the new hostile behavior.

The third category of interaction that Furrer et al. defines is a *coercive* interaction. With both teachers and peers this involves some sort of punishment or threat of punishment in order to get the other person to do what they want. With teachers these come across when they use incentives to make students do something or they don't get "X, Y, or Z", language that devalues a student's feelings or experiences, and generally taking away choices. With peers it is very similar. They have interactions where they are forced to act outside of their own preference or ideas of right and wrong, but instead of the consequences of not obeying being detentions or loss of a treat they are threatened with social ostracization, getting bullied, or beat up. With both teachers and peers, a coercive relationship is a situation in which a student finds themselves stripped of their autonomy.

While I agree, and have seen examples of, all these types of poor, “non-working” relationships within a school setting there are some issues that need to be addressed. The first of which is the peer relationship factor regarding my own research. Since my research questions focus on how teachers can create positive relationships and how those teacher-student relationships affect different aspects of both student and teacher, I will not spend much, if any, time investigating how peers’ relationships work. However, I think it is worth mentioning that peer relationships within a classroom may affect how a teacher is able to create relationships and that a teacher only has so much control over how peers interact with one another. They can certainly promote better peer relationship practices in their classroom, but a teacher can never make a student do, or not do, something. So, the peer relationships in a classroom may be something I will need to factor into my data analysis at the end of this process as they can affect the classroom climate which may at a certain point be outside of a teacher’s control.

The second point that is worth a further look is certain points in which a teacher could technically be considered coercive in the terms of Furrer et al’s (2014) description of a coercive interaction, but that are not necessarily bad practices depending on how they are being used. For example, with incentives, I know teachers who use incentives all the time to get reluctant students to at least try, and they are creating poor relationships with their students because of it. There is a way to incentivize something in a positive way and a way to incentivize something negatively. If there is a reward at the end of completing a challenging project, that is a positive thing. If the incentive is a punishment if the project is not finished, then that would be negative.

In fact, incentives, working from the apparent Furrer et al. definition of the word, are already in place whether the teacher adds more on or not. Teachers are required to attach grades to a student’s work in most cases in the United States, and those grades either pass or fail a student

in the end, which is a powerful bit of coercive incentive if ever there was one. However, I have always contextualized the word “incentive” as positive in my mind; it is a reward someone gets after working hard to accomplish a goal or simply to gain the reward. Having extra negative *consequences* that do not need to be in place, or that do not fit what the teacher is trying to accomplish with a student, seems to be a better way to word what Furrer et al. were describing in their discussion of coercive relationships.

In their article, Furrer et al. (2014) make a solid connection between these three negative types of interactions in teacher-student and peer-student relationships and poor grades and/or dropout rates. The combination of these types of relationships, extended out over time, result in students not having the positive coping resources they would have gained through positive interactions with their teachers or peers, and so when faced with challenges, they use poor coping strategies that lead to failure and giving up (Furrer 2014).

The Furrer et al. paper and the other articles discussed in this section connect in a way to the research conducted by Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton (2016). They researched whether encouraging empathic discipline, especially regarding students who are already at risk for getting suspended, rather than punitive discipline would reduce suspension rates. This connects to student motivation and engagement, and teacher-student relationships, in that this study shows that a more respectful relationship between teachers and these “trouble” students motivated these students to behave better in class and therefore be less likely to be suspended and possibly eventually drop out of school since repeated suspensions do increase the likelihood of a student to drop out of school altogether because they are being separated from the academic environment and so have no opportunity to gain the skills needed to succeed (Christle 2007).

Okonofua et al. (2016) had a three step, or three experiment, process to their research. The first was to see if teachers were capable of making an empathic change through having them watch videos about how positive interactions with students were essential to classroom management and positive student outcomes or how harsh discipline was necessary to control a classroom, and then having them respond to a series of student discipline scenarios and assessing their responses.

The second was to see how students may respond when faced with the new process of discipline by having college students pretend to be troublesome middle school students in a class and have their instructor react in different ways, some empathetic and some punitive. Afterward they were asked how they would have felt in each situation had it been real. In both cases it seemed as if teachers could be influenced to change and that changing to be more empathic regarding discipline could help students react better to discipline in those situations. With that in mind, they began their third experiment.

This third part of the experiment involved two brief interventions with a series of middle school math teachers and then following them throughout an academic year looking at the percentages of suspension rates at each of the schools comparing the suspension rates of students who had teachers who had participated in the intervention and those who did not. The interventions were simple. Two short sessions, no more than forty-five minutes, where teachers participated in online modules that put the teachers in the mindset of being expert professionals that were being asked how they would show respect for students when it comes to discipline, for future and other teachers, after watching a video that showed a few examples of that respect. The study found that over the course of an academic year it cut suspension rates about in half for students in classes where the teacher was a participant in the research. It was particularly effective with students with previous suspensions but was also effective in reducing the rates of suspension in groups that

typically have the highest rates of suspension: boys, African Americans, and Latino students. Students reported a higher level of respect for their teachers because they felt more respected by their teachers.

It is important to note that the researchers made clear that having an empathetic mindset in regard to discipline did not mean letting students get away with misbehavior or agreeing with the students' mindset, in fact they posited that doing so would make matters worse by causing the teacher to lose control of their classroom. The empathetic approach to discipline is simply politely allowing the student to explain their thinking, and then going about coming up with a consequence that makes sense for what they did and why they did it while making sure the student understands how that thinking got them into trouble. Doing so lets the student know that the teacher respects where they are coming from even if they do not agree with them.

This whole experiment, and its apparent results, interest me greatly for my study and for my own practice as a teacher as I work in a school with a larger than average population of Latino and African American students for my district. As mentioned in my introduction, when I first began teaching I let too many students get away with poor behavior because I understood where they came from, and instead of also following that empathy through with useful consequences I looked the other way until it felt too late to fix it. I then went in the opposite direction and came down punitively on many things that had reached a boiling point over the school year. Looking at how successful simply allowing a student to explain their thought process, and then working to a consequence they understand, is for reducing suspension rates all around, but especially for my students' demographic, is inspiring.

Being able to get students to care about learning, their behavior, and even simply showing up to school is an important step for teachers to take when trying to make positive relationships

with students and to ushering them toward improving academically. Once they care, then they are more likely to be motivated to try and put forth effort. Once the effort and care are being put in, then it is the teacher's job to guide that effort into a deeper understanding of their subject matter for the student.

Getting Students to Understand

Research on how teacher-student relationships affect student learning, or understanding, of any subject in school is not abundant. As discussed in the previous section of this literature review, there is quite a bit on student motivation in relation to teacher-student relationships, and some of those imply that further research could show effects on student learning and understanding within school, but I have not seen many at all that actually address the possibility that teacher-student relationships could be a cause for improvement, or worsening, of a students' learning. Those that do address it do not seem to have solid statistical data either, but rather are discussing, or parsing through, theory or the idea that these relationships may affect learning is an afterthought. I really had not planned on taking a look at the actual student learning myself until later in developing my research, and as my research is designed and approved to be teacher-based it probably will not address this topic to satisfaction, but this is definitely a topic that could, and should, be looked into in more depth in the future.

Some of what I was able to find doesn't stand on its own as just covering student learning, but rather connects closely as a byproduct of some of the previous topics covered already. One such article by Roffey (2012) discusses how teachers and/or students being unwell may affect student learning through either the teachers' abilities to educate being hindered by whatever stresses or problems cause them to be unwell or through the students' abilities to take anything in being obstructed by whatever factors are making them not well. The article reviews research that

has been conducted on the issues, interprets it, and makes suggestions for how certain aspects of the research indicate what should be done moving forward.

One of the important things shown in this article's research (Roffey 2012) is that if a person is under chronic stress then it can lead to the "degradation of the hippocampus" (p. 10) which deals with memory. So, the more stressed a teacher is, the longer they are under that extreme stress, the more likely they are to be forgetful as well as be giving a poorer performance with their work. The article basically asserts here that if we want our students taught to the best of their teachers' abilities we need to start focusing more on teacher wellbeing which falls in line with what I have been finding in other research while conducting this literature review. It also lines up with the problems that I see with my own eyes as an educator every day with both myself and my colleagues.

Roffey (2012) also, as mentioned before, reviews student well-being. While this is not directly a focus of my study, student well-being definitely could be a by-product of teacher-student relationships as one of the studies Roffey covers in her research lists the following as "pathways to wellbeing in school" for students: "building a respectful and supportive school community, developing pro-social values, providing a safe learning environment, enhancing social-emotional learning, using strengths based approaches, fostering a sense of meaning and purpose, and encouraging a healthy lifestyle" (pg. 9). Many of the pathways listed here connect in some way to teacher-student relationships (TSR).

The first on the list is one of the most obvious, in that at the core of a positive teacher-student relationship there should be respect and support. When defining a positive teacher-student relationship at the beginning of this literature review, respect, and the implied support that goes with that, was one of the key components of a TSR. Providing a safe learning environment should

also be at the center of TSRs, for both teachers and students, for if someone feels unsafe then their basic needs are not being met and they will not have the mental room to create positive relationships with anyone.

Many of the other actions or requirements listed are interrelated. Fostering meaning and purpose should follow naturally after helping students to use their strengths and connect and develop social and emotional skills. If a teacher has assisted in guiding a student through recognizing and using their strengths, or even develops lessons based off of their students' strengths, and has facilitated the development of social and emotional skills so that students can effectively identify their emotions, those of others, and communicate accordingly, then they have created meaning and purpose in school and students will be more likely to be well. Therefore, as has already been pointed out, they are more likely to be less stressed, which would mean less strain on the hippocampus.

This means that, like teachers, students would perform to the best of their ability, or in other words be able to learn and perform at a higher level, in school if many or all these pathways are followed. As many of these pathways connect to teacher-student relationships and interactions, it would also follow that teacher-student relationships could have the capability to not only affect student motivations, but also their ability to understand a topic and learn.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Setting and Participants

I chose to study how to build positive relationships with students because of my own experiences as a teacher and my struggle to balance being a teacher and creating a relationship, so when moving forward with my research it made sense to use teachers in similar environments to my own. In order to figure out how to create relationships with my own students it was logical to look to teachers in my own district, and even at my own school, to see how they created their relationships with students, and how those relationships may improve their own well-being and the motivation and learning of their students because the types of environments of the schools and backgrounds of the students would be similar to my own environment and my own students' backgrounds. This convenience sampling of participants does have the potential for bias to occur when analyzing data results as the researcher knows and works with a few of the participants, and that issue will be addressed later in this paper.

Research Context

The school district in question is a suburban community that serves, according to the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, 134,781 students of which 6.5% are Black, 15.9% Hispanic, 4.7% Native American, 5.2% Asian, 49.1% Caucasian, 18.6% identify as two or more races, and 45.3% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunches. While at my specific school, 8.4% are Black, 25.9% Hispanic, 4.8% Native American, 7.3% Asian, 39.4% Caucasian, and 14.2% identify as more than one race. 62.8% of the student population is eligible for free and reduced lunch (2017). This choice of setting was chosen for convenience, as I am the only researcher and surveyed, interviewed, and observed all participants myself, but also because I wanted to hear from a group of teachers working with groups of students with as close of a

demographic to my own as possible because the original reason for wanting to research this topic was wanting to help my own students.

Participants

The teachers selected for participation in this study were chosen for their willingness to participate, they chose to participate in an optional survey, because they are teaching in a demographically similar environment, and because of the researcher's need for a convenient sample. Those chosen for further interview and observation were chosen for their willingness to provide their contact information, the length of their teaching career, I attempted to choose one participant from each time range of the survey, and the content of their short answer responses to the initial survey. I also tried to select teachers from a variety of departments and grade levels when available as I selected one eighth grade Language Arts teacher, a seventh-grade science teacher, and a high school social studies teacher that teaches multiple grade levels. I wanted a variety of teachers to see if the length of time teaching changes anything with the quality of teacher-student relationships, or the way they are built; to see if teachers of different subject matter approach building relationships with students differently or if there are strategies to building their relationships with students that they use that are content specific.

I did not include a math teacher only because of the limitation of productive, detailed answers from math teachers who provided their emails to be contacted in the initial survey. The only math teachers who filled out the short answer section to a satisfactory degree in the survey did not leave their emails. Those that left their emails either did not fill out the short answer section and/or the amount of years they had been educators fell into a bracket that had been filled by a participant already selected.

Data Collection

Data collection was mixed-methods as the first round of data collection was a survey which is associated with more quantitative research while later methods included face-to-face interviews and observations of classroom interactions with students which falls more into the realm of qualitative research. The primary reason for using the survey initially was to get a wide range of responses from teachers in order to find solid candidates for interviews and observations. The types of questions asked were aimed at assessing whether a teacher both valued and had positive relationships with their students. Subsequent interviews and observations were aimed at gathering data on how teachers viewed and built their relationships with students and how they interpreted how those relationships affected their students and themselves.

Obtaining Permission

Whenever conducting research involving people the local IRB has to approve the research for the safety of the participants. So, I went about the process obtaining IRB approval and after a round of corrections my research was approved and exempted from full IRB review as it was determined to be a minimal risk study (see appendix for the included document). After gaining approval from the IRB, since I had decided on a convenient sample of participants, I needed to gain the approval of my district to send out my survey to all of the secondary faculty. I contacted my district and received an email telling me I had permission to send out the email to staff within about a week and a half.

Recruitment of Participants

After obtaining permission to begin my research from both the IRB and my district, I sent out my survey to all secondary schools in my district (see appendix where survey is included). An issue with conducting a research study using a convenient sample of participants is that some of

the potential participants could be friends, family, or even colleagues from my own school. In order to reduce the amount of pressure or obligation that those who know me personally may have felt to participate, I made sure the surveys would remain anonymous unless the participant chose to provide their email for later contact for interviews and observation. That way if they did not take the survey, there would be no way for me know and cause undue pressure.

I did not ask or approach any of my colleagues or family members that work within the district about whether they had seen or answered my survey when it was sent out. Several friends and colleagues within the district reached out to me and told me they participated. I thanked them but did not ask them if they had provided their emails for later contact or not, and I did not initiate any further contact unless one of them was selected for further interview based on the merit of their short answer responses during the survey.

Stage One Data Collection

The first round of data collection took place through survey. The survey was designed to be made up of mostly Likert Scale type questions where participants were asked to select their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement, or the amount of times an event or action mentioned in a statement occurred with them (Never to Always).

This style of question was chosen because when researching this topic, a lot of the other surveys referenced in other articles used similar questions, and several of the questions asked in the survey are modeled and based off those questions (Gasser et al. 2018, Liebenberg et al. 2016, Mainard et al. 2018, and Okonofua et. al 2016). Another reason for the Likert Scale questions was because I am the sole researcher on this project and the data provided from that style of question allowed me to more quickly assess which teachers would be more likely candidates for interviews and observations.

However, the survey did have one short answer question where participants could elaborate on ways in which they allow their students voice and choice within their classroom. This short answer question allowed teachers to provide more detail on classroom strategies and discussions for analysis, and it also showed me which teachers would be most likely to not only give rich, detailed answers in an interview and provide me with information on strategies I may want to observe, but showed me who may be more willing to give me more of their time later on in the research.

The survey was conducted through the website Survey Monkey. Of the several hundred teachers (I do not know the exact count as it was not provided to me as it was sent out via link in an email that was addressed to each secondary school—not the individual teachers) who received the email containing the link to the survey, 68 teachers completed the survey.

Stage Two Data Collection

Stage two of data collection began about a week after the survey was sent out when I reviewed participants' answers as they came in, and after it had been about a week it was clear I was not going to get any further participation as no one new had completed the survey in two days. At that time, I went through each response again looking for which participants had left their emails, giving permission for further contact.

Of the 68 participants, twenty had left their emails. I went through all the survey responses of the twenty and selected four participants to interview and possibly observe. I selected these four based on the following things in their responses: the amount of time they had been teaching, the subject that they taught, the quality of their short answer response (did they answer that question, did they say more than just a couple of words, was what they wrote about something that would

be worth observing, did their response make sense), and the trend of their answers to the Likert Scale questions.

I only selected one teacher from each of the time options (1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-10 years, and 10+ years), and I attempted to only choose one teacher from each of the core subjects. I tried to select one teacher from each period of experience because I wanted to see if teachers of different levels of experience had different opinions and processes on building positive teacher-student relationships, and I only chose one from each category because I am the only researcher on this project and logistically I could only manage so many interviews and observations by myself. I also wanted a teacher from all the main content areas because content might affect how a teacher builds relationships with their students.

I did not get a teacher from the last experience category (10+ years) because the two that I attempted to contact from the survey over a period of about three to four weeks never answered the emails that were sent to them. I sent three emails to each teacher over those three weeks and never got an answer from either one. I was unable to choose a math teacher as the only ones who left their email gave poor, to no, short answer responses and did not meet a still open slot in one of the teaching time scales.

After selecting the four participants from the twenty, I sent out the recruiting email approved by the IRB reminding them of the survey they completed and asking them if they would still be interested in being interviewed and possibly observed. They were asked to email me back either to let me know days and times that would work for them, or to let me know they were no longer available and to select someone else. The two Language Arts teachers that I chose either did not respond to my emails (I sent out three over the span of about a week and a half), or on the last email responded saying they were no longer interested in participating. These two were on

opposite ends of the teaching experience scale. The one that finally responded that they were no longer interested was a new high school teacher (1-3 years) and the one that never responded was a junior high teacher, and the most experienced of the teachers that I contacted (10+ years). I believe that my emails, sent from my University of Oklahoma account, may have been going into the trash, or spam, folders of some of the teachers' emails which could account for the late responses, and the non-response, of some teachers, so I changed the email address with which I was sending out the emails.

After that, I reviewed the responses on the surveys again and chose two new potential participants. One a junior high language arts teacher with 1-3 years of experience, and the other a high school vocal music teacher with 10+ years of experience. I tried, again, to choose participants who gave solid responses to the short answer question and that made my pool of teachers diverse in experience and subject matter. The Language Arts teacher with 1-3 years of experience answered my second email, and agreed to participate in the study; however, the experienced Vocal Music teacher never answered me. So, I decided, with permission from my thesis advisor, to complete my study with three participants for interviews and observations as I still had a variety of teaching experience ranges and subjects. With those participants, I collected data from a Language Arts teacher, a Social Studies teacher, and a Science teacher.

Stage Three Data Collection

Stage three of data collection was the observation of the teachers that I interviewed. All observations occurred post-interview with each teacher, but as I interviewed all of them at different times the amount of time that lapsed between when I interviewed a teacher (stage two of data collection) and observed them varied. The amount of time between when I interviewed the Social Studies participant and when I observed them was about three weeks because of my own

responsibilities as a teacher the week following the interview, Spring Break was the week after that, and my wanting to have interviews completed before conducting observations if possible. I observed the Science teacher two days after the interview because they were immediately available, and I observed the Language Arts teacher about two days, not including the weekend, after their interview as well.

Data Analysis

As I read through the transcripts of the interviews and went over my notes from observations, I first tried to group sections of observations and specific statements from interviews into broad categories so that I could better make sense of smaller and more individual codes and themes later. Categories that I marked were “definitions of positive teacher-student relationships (TSRs),” “process of building positive relationships with students,” “process of building positive TSRs with more difficult students,” “teacher observations of student behavior/motivation” “teacher observations of student learning/self-efficacy,” “teacher reflections on personal emotions,” “advice,” “changes in relationships with students over years,” and “description of best day as a teacher.”

These larger categories helped me to organize my thoughts and start coding the responses in each category. The themes that emerged from that coding were: be personal, comfort, barriers, communication, showing interest, common ground/respect, teacher buyin, humor, patience—both for students and with themselves as educators, keep trying, and emotion/caring. There were even more than that, but these were the major ones that appeared with all three subjects in some way or another that contributed to the building of a positive relationship between teacher and student and the benefits that the participants described as coming with that relationship. To pare that down even further, a couple of these were able to be connected very closely with each other, and those

combined themes will be the ones discussed and defined in the Themes section of the final chapter of this paper

Ethical Assurances

As discussed earlier in this chapter, before conducting any research, permission was obtained from the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (IRB) and since I was sending out a mass email to recruit participants within my school district, I also obtained permission from district administrators to contact their faculty in that manner. Ethical assurances regarding each of the participants included ensuring that all potential participants were provided informed consent, that consent was acquired from them before proceeding further, making sure that all rights to privacy, confidentiality, and transparency were met in order to protect participants from foreseeable harm.

To give informed consent, I provided a consent form detailing all expectations and risks to each potential participant at two stages of the data collection; once, with an online, unsigned form, when the survey was sent out and second, when I contacted participants further about possible interviews and observations. If they gave consent, they signed before the interview and observation process began. In order to provide data security, or privacy and confidentiality, all data collected was stored on a secure, password protected computer. Names of the teachers participating, or students' names heard during observations, were not recorded during the interview and observation process unless a participant happened to mention them during the recorded interview process. If any actual names were used by participants, then they were replaced with a given pseudonym and the actual name was deleted from the transcript of the interview. However, some names were attached to the online surveys, as participants were given the option of leaving their email for the researcher to contact them for further data collection. Surveys were collected and kept on a secure

survey program protected by a password only the researcher knows. All paper and online data will be destroyed by either deletion or shredding at the conclusion of this study.

Chapter Four: Findings

The overall purpose when conducting this qualitative study was to see if there were common, intentional ways in which teachers develop and maintain positive relationships with students. How those teachers observe those relationships affecting the motivation and learning of their students, and how they feel those relationships influence their own well-being was also investigated. This chapter will be covering the results of the surveys, interviews, and observations conducted and the themes and common threads that appeared as the data was collected. More in-depth discussion of the individual interviews and observations, and the possible conclusions that are indicated by them, will occur in the chapter following this one. The findings are organized into three sections: surveys, interviews, and observations. Each of those sections are a product of research into these questions:

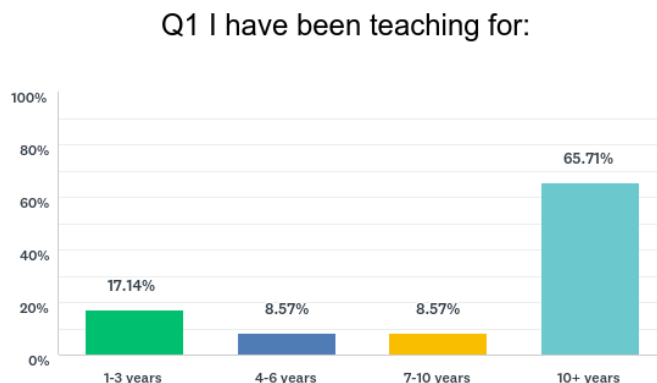
1. What strategies do secondary teachers employ in order to develop and foster positive interpersonal relationships with their students?
2. How do positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships, once formed, affect student motivation?
3. How do positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships affect student learning?
4. In what ways, if any, does having a personal connection to students affect teachers' resilience and well-being?

The first section begins to address these questions by reviewing the teacher responses to the teacher-student relationship survey where teachers assessed themselves on certain components of teacher-student relationships and shared thoughts on how they bring or allow student voice into the classroom. The second section discusses the interviews with the three teachers who are the focuses of this study and their perspectives on positive teacher-student relationships and how they have observed and reflected on the ways in which those relationships affect both themselves and their students. This section will explore the ways in which teachers approach building relationships

with students, but it will also discuss teacher perceptions of student motivation and learning in relation to those teacher-student relationships, teacher reflections on their own emotions and wellbeing in connection to their relationships with students, and their suggestions for future, or even current, teachers trying to interact more positively with their students. The final section analyzes the researcher's observations of the interviewees through an hour or two of instruction time, their interactions with students, and how those observations support the two previous sets of data or inspire more questions that would require further inquiry. I will also discuss in further depth the themes that emerge throughout the interviews and observations and their meanings.

Teacher-Student Relationship Survey

Teacher participants responded to a series of multiple choice and Likert scale questions along with one short answer question. They all started the survey with identifying how long they had been teaching because I knew that I wanted to get the perspectives of teachers from a range of experiences to see if the process or quality of teacher-student relationships changed based off of that factor when I selected participants for interview and observation. Of the 70 participants, 12 identified as having 1-3 years of experience (17.4%), 6 identified as having 4-6 years of experience (8.57%), equally, 6 identified as having 7-10 years (8.57%), and 46 identified as having 10+ years of experience (65.71%). I am not sure as to why there were so many more experienced teachers who took the survey than teachers with less experience or mid-range experience, but my two hypotheses are that either my district has a high level of experienced teachers working there, or the more likely scenario, that experienced teachers feel more comfortable responding to research surveys than less experienced teachers do.

Figure 1

The next two questions on the survey had to do with the teachers' education level or qualifications and the method of their qualification. 20 participants identified as alternatively certified (28.57%) and 50 identified as traditionally certified (71.43%). 40 (57.14%) identified as having a bachelor's degree, 33 (47.14%) identified as having a master's degree, and only 2 (2.86%) identified as having a doctorate.

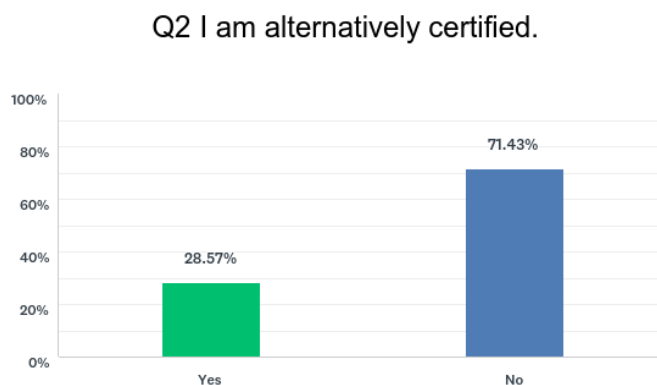
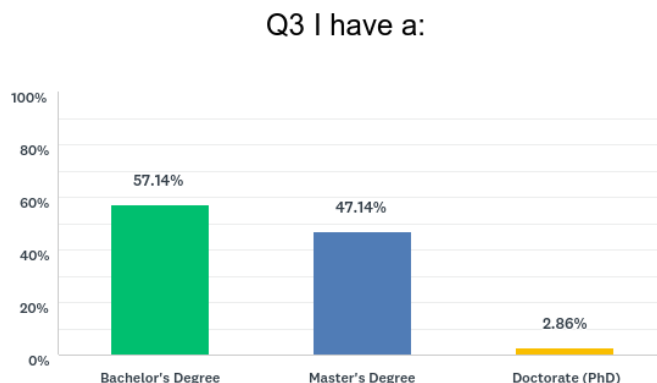
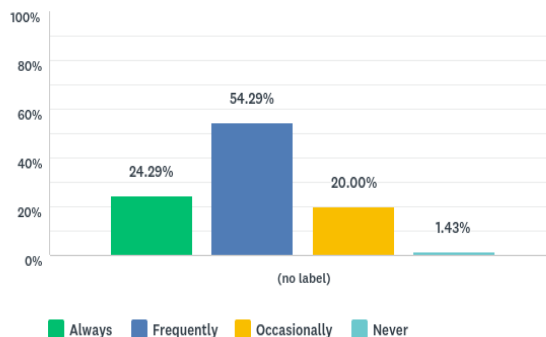
Figure 2

Figure 3

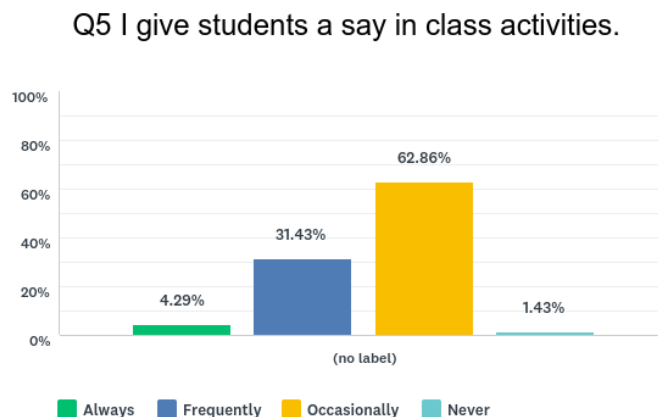
The rest of the questions in the survey had to do with different elements of positive teacher-student relationships. These elements and questions were chosen because of similar questions asked in surveys of students and teachers given in previous studies. In the first of these questions, teachers chose an option from a Likert scale measuring the amount of times they give voice to their students in the classroom from Always, Frequently, Occasionally, or Never. Voice in this sense was defined for teachers as allowing students choice in how to complete projects and/or giving opportunities to express relevant opinions and concerns. 17 teachers responded that they always give students a voice in the classroom (24.29%), 38 teachers said that they frequently give students a voice in the classroom (54.29%), 14 said that they occasionally give students a voice in the classroom (20%), and only 1 teacher responded that they never give their students voice in the classroom (1.43%).

Figure 4

Q4 I give my students voice in my classroom (example: choice in how to complete a project, or opportunities to express relevant opinions and/or concerns).



Similar to the previous question, teachers then identified how often they give students a say in class activities, interestingly only 3 teachers (4.29%) identified as always giving students a say in class activities, 22 responded (31.43%) that they frequently give students a say, and 44 (62.86%) said that they occasionally give students a say in class activities. Only one teacher (1.43%), the same one from the previous question, said that they never give students a say in class activities. I found it intriguing that there was such a difference in the percentages between these two questions because they are so similar in nature, but after reflecting on the questions I believe it has to do with the fact that the first question was addressing more of allowing students to express their feelings and opinions in class and both were qualified with the word “relevant” and in the second question it implies allowing them more control over the actual lessons or maybe even lesson planning rather than just listening to them or hearing them out.

Figure 5

The next portion of the survey was the short answer question. Rather than going into all 70 responses to this question I will present the answers of the three teachers that were chosen for interviews and observations as their responses to this question were part of the reason for why they were chosen in the first place. I will however include a word cloud created from the short answer question on the survey, as some key words do seem to appear. The short answer prompt asked teachers to elaborate on their previous responses by specifically stating how they give students voice and/or choice in the classroom.

Table 1. *Teacher Responses to How They Give Voice and Choice to Students in Their Classrooms*

Participant	Written Response
Chet	during assignments, particularly analysis, the students are given options on what they want to read so it might peak their interest a little more. For projects, I let the kids have free reign on what they want to do besides a couple examples from from me—If they have a sweet idea, I'll let them do it as long as it's good for the projects' sake.
Turi	I will often provide a choice in whether we

	work in groups/partners or solo. I also give opportunity for students to choose how they are going to complete an assignment (writing, drawing, etc.)
Sylvia	When teaching a skill, I try to provide different reading materials that students can choose from. When possible, I let students form their own groups for group activities, and I sometimes let students choose other things like whether or not we should play music during independent work time.

Figure 6

Q6 If applicable, please elaborate on how you give students voice and/or choice in your classroom.

always taking teach good discussion give option will options give sometimes group
way class try choice students choose assignments want
students whether projects topic work opportunity
activities allow students choose choose reading opinions different also things
ask make

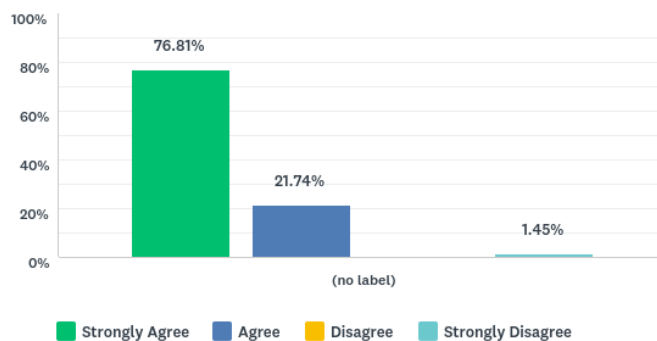
Some of the words that appear in the word cloud are not all that important, but words like “group,” “choice,” “opinions,” “choose,” and “give” are significant and could indicate the types of interactions these teachers have with their students in class.

The rest of the survey questions were written to try get an idea of what type of relationships the teacher participants have with their students by asking them to rate on a Likert scale of either the amount that an item occurs in their classrooms or the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement. The items chosen for questions were selected because they are all things that in one way or another appeared in the literature as important for creating relationships with students or in some cases possibly even detrimental to them.

For example, the next question in the survey states, “I know all of my students’ names and how to pronounce them.” That seems like a no brainer, but using students’ names, and using them correctly, in class helps to show students that the teacher knows who they are and cares enough to use their names and say them properly. I have seen instances where a teacher has been mispronouncing a student’s name all year long and the kid was too scared to let the teacher know. Most of the teachers who completed the survey felt confident in their knowledge of their students’ names and pronunciations with 53 saying that they strongly agreed with the statement, 15 stating that they agreed, and only 1 saying that they identify as strongly disagreeing. Note that the 1 teacher is the same one who said they did not give students voice or say in the classroom.

Figure 7

Q7 I know all of my students' names and how to pronounce them.



Questions eight and twelve go very closely with each other as they are both about interests. However, eight is about the teacher knowing the students’ interests while number twelve is about the teacher sharing their own interests with their students. A large portion of the teachers participating in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that they knew about their students’ individual interests while only 8 disagreed. Many teachers also shared their own interests with their students, with 54 of them saying they either always or frequently share with their students.

However, there was a surprisingly large number (18) of teachers who said they only occasionally shared their personal interests with students. I say surprisingly because I would have expected the numbers to be like those of the ones who knew about their students' interests, because people are more willing to share about themselves once the other person has opened up about their interests and lives.

Figure 8

Q8 I know about my students' individual interests. (example: hobbies, likes/dislikes, sports, etc.)

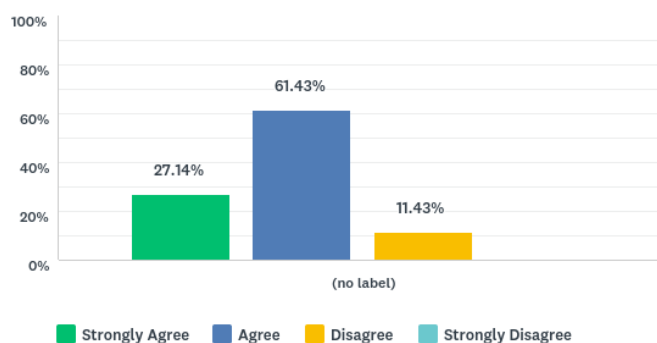
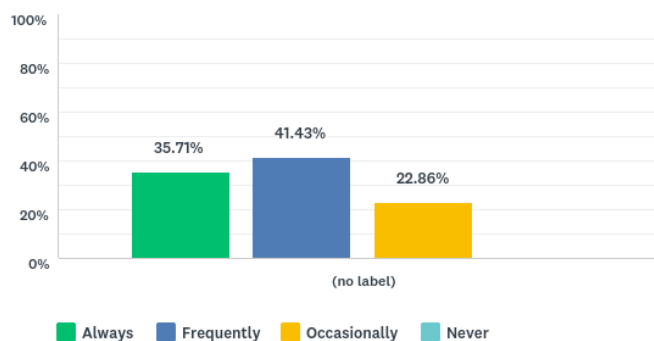


Figure 9

Q12 I share my interests with my students when appropriate.



Connected to the sharing and knowing of interests are the two questions about individual interactions or conversations with students both inside and outside of the classroom. The numbers on these two questions were fairly close to each other, however 26 said that they always have

individual interactions during class while 29 say they always speak to students outside of class when appropriate while 41 identified as frequently having in-class interactions with students and 35 said they frequently speak to students outside of class. The number for teachers who have interactions with students occasionally increased from 3 in-class to 6 outside of class. That increase was expected, as I believed there would be more teacher-student interactions in class than out of class, but the “always” category for interactions with students increased from in-class to out of class and that was unexpected.

Figure 10

Q9 I have individual interactions with my students in class.

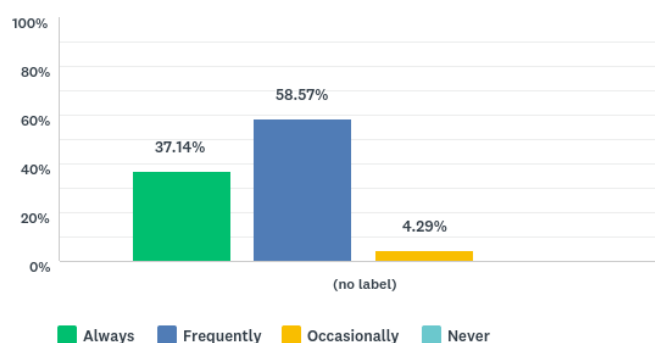
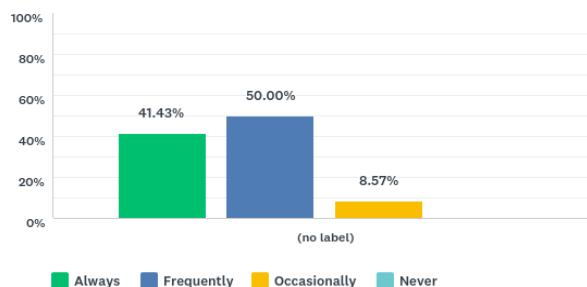


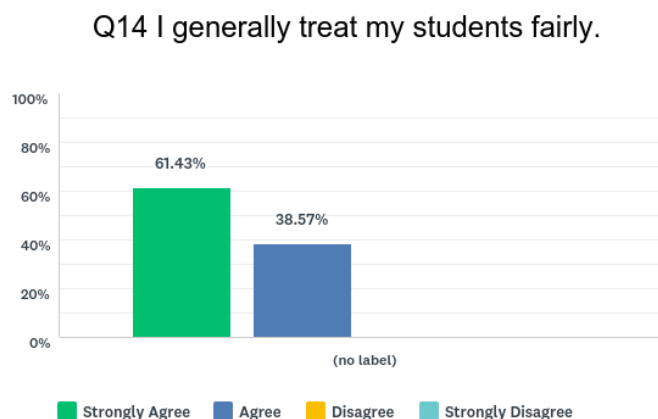
Figure 11

Q10 I speak to my students outside of class time when appropriate. (example: passing periods, school sporting events, etc.)

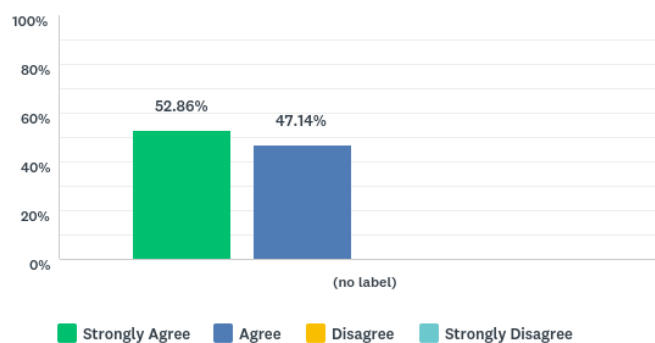


The next set of questions on the survey all have to do with understanding and fairness, which both came up in the literature on relationships. Though there was more of an emphasis on understanding, I believe understanding and fairness go well in hand together. It is difficult to be fair toward someone if you do not first understand them. With that in mind, I wanted to see at what level these teachers believed themselves “fair” toward their students while also looking at how often they saw themselves as putting effort into understanding their students and in some respects the effort they put into helping students understand them. All the teachers participating in the survey believed themselves to “generally treat” their students fairly with either identifying as strongly agree (43) or agree (27). 37 strongly agreed that they attempt to understand their students and their students’ actions, 33 agreed, and no one disagreed with that statement. Teachers were then asked to identify how often they try to make sure their students understand the reasons for the consequences of their actions and 47 said they always do this, 21 stated that they frequently do this, and only 2 said that they only occasionally make sure students understand the reasons.

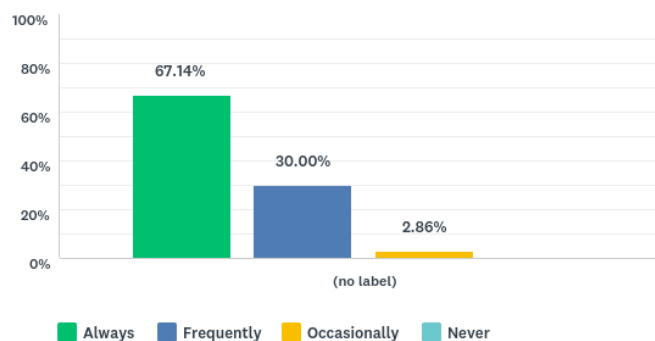
I did not ask for examples of how teachers do these things or why they believe they are fair, so I do not have a way of knowing how accurate their interpretations of “fair” or “understanding” were in comparison to my own when the teachers were choosing these responses. If I were to have done another round of surveys or questions I may have wanted to ask them to define fair and understanding and explain how they go about attempting to understand their students’ actions or helping students to understand consequences in order to get a better idea of where they were coming from with their responses.

Figure 12**Figure 13**

Q11 I attempt to understand my students and their actions.

**Figure 14**

Q15 I make sure students understand the reason(s) for the consequences to their actions.



The last grouping of questions that teachers were asked to answer are focused on environment and the way that teachers view both their students and perceive how their students view them and their environment, or the classroom. The first of this type of question asked teachers to decide how much they agreed with the statement “Students feel comfortable coming to me with their problems.” Most teachers answered either strongly agree (20) or agree (45), and 5 said that they disagreed. 38 teachers strongly agreed that their classroom is generally a positive environment, 31 agreed, and only 1 disagreed.

Figure 15

Q13 Students feel comfortable coming to me with their problems.

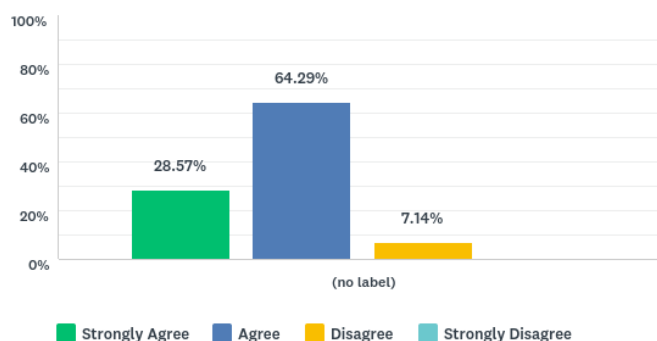
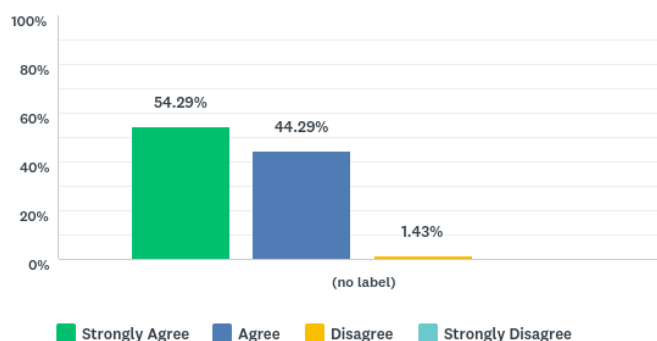


Figure 16

Q16 My classroom is a generally positive environment



So, it was interesting to see that on the last two questions 6 said that students pick on each other frequently in their room and 9 identified as feeling that there are frequently student-caused learning disruptions in the classroom. However, 18 said that students never pick on each other in their classroom and 3 said there are never student-caused disruptions. The majority of teachers said that both of these things happened only occasionally in their classrooms, which was expected.

Figure 17

Q17 Students pick on each other in my classroom

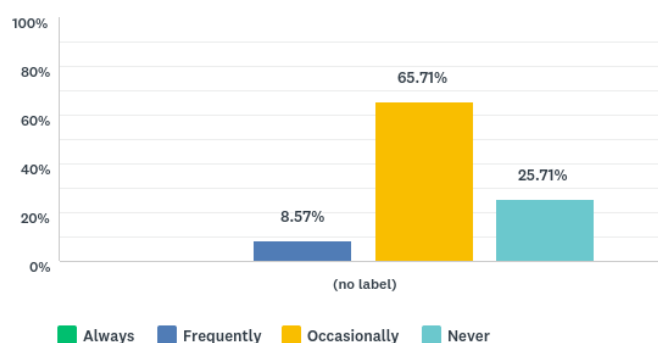
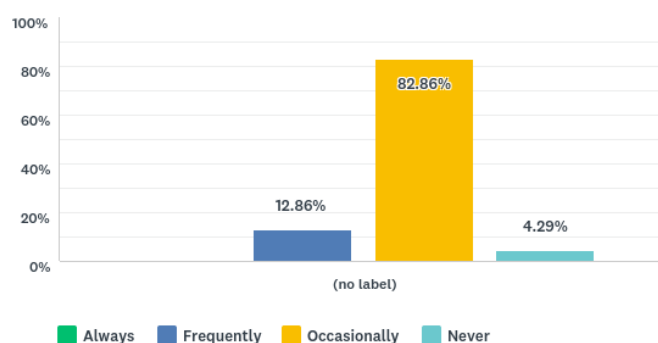


Figure 18

Q18 There are student-caused learning disruptions in my classroom.



Based off these survey results, at least for these indicators, most of the teachers who participated in the survey seem to believe they have fairly good relationships with their students.

However, I am operating under the assumption that each of these teachers answered honestly to each Likert scale question. Since the majority of the teachers completing the survey were more experienced (10+ years) it is plausible that they, because of their experience, do have more of a grasp on how to build and maintain relationships with their students, but it is also possible that some of the participating teachers simply selected the answers that they believed to be the researcher's desired response rather than what they believed to most accurately describe their opinions or situations.

Teacher Interviews

This section will address the individual interviews of the three teacher participants and their responses to questions about what they believe a positive teacher-student relationship is, what that looks like in their experience as a teacher, lessons or strategies they use to attempt to create those positive relationships, how they see those relationships affect their students and reflect on how they affect themselves, and finally give insight into what other teachers, in particular new teachers, can do moving forward with creating positive relationships in their own classrooms. Each teacher's approach and teaching style is different, as is their subject matter, but there are some key themes that appear in what all of them do regarding building and fostering positive relationships with students.

Chet

Chet was the most laid back and informal of all the teachers that I interviewed, and he was confident in his teacher-student relationships and what he described as a very "natural" process building them. Chet is a high school history teacher that also teaches an elective class, so he teaches a wide range of students from 10th to 12th grade, in other words 15-year-olds to 18-year-olds.

After covering the subject and grade levels that each participant teaches, the first question I asked each of them was how they would define a positive teacher-student relationship. Chet described this relationship as personal or getting to know each student beyond just what their name is. He seemed to emphasize humor and being able to “joke around with them” while at the same time keeping an appropriate “barrier of...I’m an educator, but I’m not your friend.” He thought there should be a healthy balance between knowing the students, having personal conversations with them, and being their teacher.

When asked about what he thought a key component was to building those positive relationships Chet replied that the relationships he builds come fairly naturally. He described them as organic and natural, and that they seemed to just unfold that way many times. He attributed some of that to the fact that he is “still relatively young,” but he described things like walking around the room and checking in on them while they are working, “catching them in class, in the halls” and just asking them questions about their lives, interests or picking up on conversations in class and not just redirecting them back to the assignment, but also expressing interest in what they were talking about. He says these things help show that he is interested in what they “have to say as a person.”

While Chet says these things are natural, and they certainly may seem to be to him, when examining the transcript, it seemed to me as if he had strategies that he was using unconsciously or instinctively. Everything he does is with the purpose of showing and convincing the students that he is interested in knowing them as people. He asks personal questions and genuinely listens to the answers, he seeks them out both in class and out of class, he redirects students back to their work when they are off task, but not before first showing that he believes their conversations still matter by inquiring about what’s going on and involving himself in their conversation as well; he

does not just shut them down. So, while Chet may be doing these things naturally, there appears to still be a method to what he is doing.

When I inquired as to whether he had any assignments that he purposely assigned or did in a certain way in order to facilitate relationships and to get to know students Chet again said that he didn't think about building relationships that way, "We just have assignments...but a lot of that stuff is kind of just organic in the way that it just unfolds and happened like that." Again, while he says he does not plan for relationship building assignments, that does not mean that some of the assignments or projects that he assigns do not do just that. At the end of the interview I asked about an interesting flag that I had noticed hanging behind his desk, and it turned out to be attached to one of the most fascinating and engaging projects that I have ever heard of. It also provides for lots of positive teacher-student, and student-student, relationship interactions if a teacher is willing to put in the work and deal with a little bit of chaos.

It is a project that Chet does with his students while teaching about the World Wars and its purpose is "to teach the kids like about espionage, spying, countries being in alliances with other countries, and how that makes wars way more messy than it really is and it makes them way bigger than they really need to be. And so like, they design their own countries...create their own pledge of allegiances, their own national anthems, their own flags, their own constitutions." And each group does different things to earn points in order to gain more "power" for when they go to war at the end of the project. Not only does this create buyin with students and the topic, but the social and interactive features of the project allow for students and the teacher to interact with each other in a positive and motivational way that I will get into further in the observation section of this chapter as I was lucky enough to get to observe this project in action during this study.

When talking about students that the relationship doesn't necessarily come as naturally, or as Chet says the students that are "harder to crack than others." He says that he purposely acts awkward with them in order to get them talking, or to start any form of dialogue with them. The point is to keep trying even if it doesn't always work at first.

When we transitioned into talking about student motivation I asked him if he noticed a difference in effort between students who he had positive relationships with in class and those that are more resistant or closed off and we also discussed how he has observed student motivation shifting when they are interacting with teachers they may not have as good of a relationship with. Chet had a complicated answer to this question. He said that with his regular level world history students he did notice a difference in grades between those who were comfortable speaking with adults and their teachers and having that relationship and those that were not. He said that the students who were not engaging in conversation with him tended to have lower grades, but now that he teaches AP, he does not see that pattern as much with AP students because even if they are not engaging in conversations, they are still high achieving.

This complicated my data and my theory a little because I was expecting, and had found with the other teachers interviewed, that there was a strong correlation between student motivation and learning and positive teacher-student relationships. However, this could be showing that a positive teacher-student relationship is not necessarily needed for those things to occur. Chet said he wasn't sure what it necessarily meant, but that maybe if a student is already self-motivated, like AP students tend to be, they may not need the teacher-student relationship for that kind of motivation. This topic would warrant further research, but I feel as though Chet's hypothesis is correct. If a student is already highly motivated, and their emotional, personal, and social needs are being met elsewhere then a positive teacher-student relationship may not be as essential to a

student's success. According to Furrer et al (2014) it is students who do not have the personal and social resources to cope with the difficulties of life and education that need the positive interactions with their teachers and peers in order to overcome those disadvantages and be motivated and successful in school rather than becoming "disaffected" and possibly even dropping out of school. So, if students already possess those personal and social resources outside of the classroom, as many AP students seem to, they may not need a positive teacher-student relationship because they already have an internal or external motivation to try hard and do well in school. However, that is making a huge assumption that AP students are receiving those resources at home, or through peers, when it may be something else entirely that allows them to move beyond the need for extra support from their teachers.

What Chet did notice was a difference in behavior and motivation with students in his regular classes, and in classes where they did not necessarily get along with their teachers for whatever reason. He built a dialogue with those students and reached a mutual understanding, common ground and communication; he expressed his need for them and his investment in their success, and so saw improvement in work and motivation that sometimes hadn't happened yet in other classrooms. Chet said that speaking to other teachers they had a "negative outlook" or view of those students and those students were still not turning work in for those other teachers. So, I think that goes back to one of Chet's statements or words that he used when describing how he approaches his students which is trying and to keep trying until you get something from the students instead of giving up and placing a negative emotion onto them.

In regard to the actual improvement of learning in a subject based on a positive teacher-student relationship, which was kind of addressed with motivation what with the reference to the improvement of grades, Chet had an interesting insight, which was echoed by Turi in my interview

with her to be detailed later in this interview section. He said he saw an improvement in his own class, but that did not necessarily translate into future success with the subject matter. Some students come back to him and they are struggling later because they don't have the same relationship with their new social studies teacher.

He says it is not that he has suddenly “sparked their interest in social studies for forever now,” but rather that they “captivated interest in one another” and that is why they buy in to what he teaches them, and they are learning more. So, when more learning occurs and the student feels more confident in the subject with a specific teacher, it does not necessarily mean it will be carried forward in the future unless the next teacher also gets the student to buy in to them; the buyin for the subject matter comes after and seems secondary. This is interesting because I had assumed that once a teacher built a relationship with a student and gotten them to improve and willing to learn more about their subject that the interest and improvement would continue onward, but that does not appear to be the case. Rather, at least curriculum-wise, it is dependent on their buyin with the teacher. There may be other skills and resources that do carry onward, but the idea of that only appears in one interview, so that would require further discussion and study for a definitive answer.

The last major topics of discussion from the interview with Chet are the difference he sees with how he approached his relationships with students his first year of teaching to now, and some of the implications of that and what his own feelings are in regard to how his relationships with students affect him, and what his best day of teaching was and the emotions that come with that.

When asked about the differences in his relationships with students his first year of teaching and his relationships now, at the end of his 5th year, the reaction was immediate that they were drastically different. He listed off a lot of things that he was taught in undergrad that he said he was constantly so focused on and constantly “eagle eyeing” that it was very “tactical.” Now,

his “classroom experiences like is so less formal” and “laid back” where he communicates many of the same ideas about rules and things from his first year but in a way that will get a better reaction from students. Chet said there are two ways in which a student will react: “rigidity or like they’re looking out for me.” And that reaction seems to come from the way a teacher approaches the problem. For him, it seemed all about moving away from logistics and how things should work, and toward student-centered thinking.

When describing his perfect day of teaching, that student-centered approach was clear. We had talked earlier in the interview about how he views his classes as having one of two feels or approaches, friends and family. He said when it is “friend” approach that the students get along in class and they all function together, but it does not extend beyond the classroom. With a family feel or approach, he describes the students transcending high school “clickiness” and genuinely enjoying one another both inside and outside of the classroom. He describes his best day of teaching as one with a class that had the family feel to it, and the students all banded together and surprised him with decorating his classroom before he got to school and silly gifts simply because they wanted to show him how much they all appreciated him and what he did for them. He described the feeling he got as validation and said that he was trying not to cry in front of them and I think that is because he saw how much they cared about him and appreciated him and not only that, but that they cared about each other too and he had helped make that happen.

Turi

Turi was enthusiastic, energetic, and very plainly in love with her job and with her students during the interview, which considering it was at the end of a full day of teaching, says a lot. She is a junior high science teacher and teaches both 7th and 8th grade because she not only teaches 7th grade general science, but also a STEM elective course.

Turi defined a positive teacher-student relationship as one that has “open communication both ways. Both student and the teacher feel comfortable sharing thoughts with each other and speaking to each other respectfully, but also not, not like on the most level of playing fields because you still need to have that teacher and student distinction and separation and the respect that comes with that.” When asked to elaborate on that further she brought up being able to bring humor into the classroom and be able to joke around with students while at the same time being able to communicate when it is time to “switch gears” and work and also being able to recognize when they are ready for that switching of gears as well; being able to be upfront with them about where “the line” is between her being their teacher and their friend. She described this as having a friendly relationship without being friends with students and said that teaching the students the difference can be very “delicate.”

Again, a teacher is describing humor and joking around and communicating, but still having a barrier or a line or separation between teacher and student when conducting a positive teacher-student relationship. I will discuss this even further after detailing the last teacher participant’s response and definition, but the distinction between being a friend and being a teacher is an interesting one even just based off these two responses. According to both of these teachers’ communication, humor, getting to know one another, and a certain level of respect seem to be necessary in order to have positive teacher-student relationships. These are all things that should be present in a friendship, yet both teachers specified that there is, and needs to be, a barrier or line between them and the student that keeps them from being friends. I think this is because if we are friends with our students then we lose the authority to step up and be the adult in the room when there are issues. Friends should be on equal footing, but a teacher and a student should not so that if there is a problem not only can the teacher switch gears and deal with it, but the students can

trust them to do so and feel safe in their classrooms, which is where I think this idea of “friendly” but not “friends” comes from.

Moving on from what Turi believes makes a positive teacher-student relationship, I asked her if there were any things that she did in order to sort of begin to set those relationships up. She responded that from the beginning of the year, the first day of class, she makes an effort to share about herself and show that she is willing to be open with them so that they might be willing to be more open with her because she’s shown she will listen to them as well. She says she shares about a lot in her life from her family and kids to what she did over her weekend or breaks, but also tries to make it clear that just because she is open does not mean that she will force them to be open as well, but just letting them know that they can be if they want to. However, it does not seem to just be about sharing about herself. She also talked about noticing. Noticing how a student normally behaves, dresses, talks, etc. so that when there is a difference she notices and can approach them quietly and let them know she noticed and offer them help if they want it. She said that many times, especially initially, the students brush it off and say they are okay, but that this shows them, and other students around them, that she is paying attention, she cares, and is willing to be there for them if they need her and ask for her help.

Those things seemed to be the most important for the beginnings of the relationship building process, but there were other strategies and actions that Turi brought up as well. She brought back up the idea of humor in the classroom. Cracking really bad jokes and allowing them to do so as well seemed to be something she felt was important for the classroom environment and she also said that having a greeting that she says at the beginning of each hour really helps her to set the tone for the class for the kids and for her. She also tries to use inclusive words like “we” and “our” rather than “you” or “my” so that students are beginning to think of the classroom as all

of theirs rather than just hers. Finally, she likes to incorporate art or creativity like writing into her curriculum as much as a possible throughout the year because she says it gives her an opportunity to get to know her quieter students, though she admits there's not always a lot of opportunity for that since her subject is science and so she also tries not to shut down the crazy, weird questions and comments that seventh grade students come up with unless time forces her to.

Making sure that she doesn't shut them down can create some fun and important moments with students. She told me a story about a kid who would always come to her and have her guess what was in his pocket. Every day it was a spoon. She would guess strange things, but it would always be a spoon, until one day the student came in and did not ask her to guess what was in their pocket, so she was able to recognize something was wrong with him. She said she didn't know what to do with herself when he didn't ask her what was in his pocket and so she went over to him and asked him. She said that the student loved that she asked and that it cheered him up because his dog had died, or something along those lines. This shows that these relationships with students assist teachers in helping students, but with Turi's comment about how she herself didn't know what to do without this child asking her about the spoon in his pocket indicates that these relationships affect teacher emotions as well.

After having discussed what a positive relationship between teacher and student means and some of the things Turi does to facilitate that, I asked her about the differences she's observed in student behavior and motivation both from before she created a relationship with them and after and maybe between a student in her class versus that same student in other teachers' classes. She said that those differences can happen a lot and it is not necessarily something a teacher is doing wrong, but rather what they have been doing just hasn't clicked with particular kids for whatever reason, saying, "you just never know what it is that's going to meet that kid." However, she says

that when it is her that is on the other side of that, where she just can't reach them and they continue to behave “like a total turd,” or they continue failing, that it hurts her, she thinks about what she could be doing wrong, and that it “really just ends up being really disappointing.” Not that she gives up, she says she talks to the students’ other teachers to see how they are with them, and if they are not behaving the same way for them, she asks them what they do that works for them with that student and keeps trying all of the different things that they do to see if they work for her. She says it is too discouraging to stop trying or to give up as a teacher, that you just have to “keep going until you at least get a little something out of them. Even if it’s just one half smile at a really bad joke.”

The way that she describes it though, it doesn't seem like once you have a positive relationship with a kid that it just naturally stays wonderful and perfect all the time. Student grades still slip sometimes, or they make mistakes, but the difference is that the teacher then has more influence on them to encourage students to fix the problem. She says you can be upfront with them and “use the disappointed word” and it impacts them. She says that she likes to think that the motivation she helps them find in her class “translates into other classes or into future grades” but that she doesn’t know if it does. However, letting them know that someone is rooting for them can get a kid to try harder in order to make that person happy.

To get them to the point where they are motivated and they are trying and even succeeding in class though, Turi says students need to feel comfortable asking questions and in order to do that they need to meet her in the middle. Students will not get there all on their own, the teacher needs to meet them somewhere in the middle and make it comfortable for the student to ask questions so that the teacher and student respect each other and learning can happen. In order to do that, to help a student learn more, a positive relationship needs to be formed.

Turi, though, seems to be of the same mind as Chet that these relationships and this learning does not always continue beyond her class and the year that these students have her, however, she does not discount that it can. When asked about this topic, about if students' self-efficacy and opinions on science change based on their relationships with her and their experiences in her classroom, she replied that many times it is half and half. She is not sure whether the students enjoy the actual science or if they just enjoy their time with her, but she has had in some cases, students come back or run into her and say they are now in some field of science or that they are studying it. One story stood out. She said the student told her that she, Mrs. Turi, made her want to listen, even though she didn't necessarily like the content in Turi's class, and that because of that ability to listen to her teachers that she got from her relationship with Turi she was able to come across her interest in nursing through another science teacher later on. This led to Turi's point that she didn't know if she ever taught anyone to love her subject in particular through her relationships with them, but that she can maybe at least teach them that they can trust their teachers and get them to like learning even a bit more than before her class.

Finally, we talked about what positive teacher-student relationships do for Turi as a teacher, differences between her past relationships with students and the ones now, what her best day as a teacher looks like, and her advice for new teachers coming into the profession in regard to building relationships with their students. Turi was probably the most articulate when it came to describing relationships with students and how they affect her as a teacher out of all three participants in the study, and you could tell that those relationships meant something to her.

She says that when she is able to make those positive relationships with a student, or with a whole class of students, she feels that she is doing "what I was meant to do, like with my whole life." She said teaching was not even what she originally wanted to do, but that when at the end

of a year, even if they never fully got the “science,” students say they are going to miss her and she can tell that they mean it she is “done” and that it is “cool” and that it is “all I ever need every day...ultimate job fulfillment.”

On the flip side, when I asked her to describe how it felt when no matter what she did she couldn't reach a kid, she said it's sometimes just “ultimately defeating.” That with one individual student sometimes it doesn't hurt her as much, but when it is a large portion or all a class it hurts her feelings and she can take it personally. It makes her sad especially to think about how if certain classes, the ones where the relationships have been established successfully, described her as a teacher to the classes where they have not as a whole made good relationships, that they wouldn't recognize it as her. She says that if both classes were asked to describe her, they would not be describing the same person at all and it kills her when she feels like a class doesn't give her the opportunity to show them the teacher that she could be to them. Though she does say that every year she takes it less to heart, sometimes it is hard to not take things personally.

She goes on to recount a story of a student that she had built a positive relationship with, a student that did not appear to have a positive relationship with any other teacher, and how personally she felt that relationship even after the student did some things in her classroom that ultimately got her expelled for the rest of the year. She said that she had never felt such betrayal from a child, because even though she didn't disrespect her directly, she ruined the comfortable place that she had built for her. She feels as if she may not have done those things if she hadn't been so comfortable in her room. Turi describes herself as so upset, but that she still misses the student and that she hates not being able to know how this student is, that it “eats at” her every day.

With both the positive and the negative emotions that relationships cause in teachers, I asked if there were ever times Turi felt more or less motivated to be at work or to do more or less while on the job because of her relationships with students and the emotions they create. She had answers in regard to both the positive and the negative, saying that sometimes with those classes that she couldn't form a positive relationship with she sometimes found herself thinking about changing lesson plans for them because she couldn't imagine it being able to work with them, but she says that she usually goes forward with it anyway. Then there are the students that she described as wanting to be there for them no matter what, describing how she once came to work sick—fever, chills and all—because she knew a student she loved that was obsessed with Stephen Hawking was going to be distraught by his death and would need her. Going on, she said that the kids are the only reason we do this job and if you're not building relationships with the kids, what are you doing there? "Why do this job?"

With that sentiment in mind, I asked what she wish she had known or done differently during her first year of teaching regarding building relationships with students and what she thought would best prepare teachers about to enter the profession or whom are just entering. The first thing she said was to remember that "it takes time" that no matter what you do a group of kids aren't going to automatically love you by throwing "on a little charm." That you, as the teacher, have to be consistent every day because they, the students, are not going to be consistent because they are still developing their brains. Be consistent, understand it will take time, and it will be tough, but "that does not mean anything is bad with you."

The way that translates, is do not panic if something stops working, or doesn't work at first, that does not necessarily mean you are doing anything wrong; it is just a product of students not having enough consistency yet. Keep going. A lot of new teachers, myself included, think there is

some magic moment where everything falls together and it will be perfect from then on, and that we should have that moment early on, but as has been indicated in both interviews so far, it is about continual effort and not everything works the first time, or every time, for every student.

So, Turi says, even though she never went through traditional “teaching college”, that she thinks a lot of observations of a lot of different kinds of teachers on both good and bad days, maybe even watching recordings of those classes if possible. This, in combination with the development of good communication skills, could help to more prepare teachers to come into the profession. However, Turi specifies that she does not mean “academic” communication skills, but rather more like active listening skills and being able to think on your feet. The final, and possibly one of the most important things she said teachers should always keep in mind is their “So What?” In other words, always keep in mind why you are a teacher. This is incredibly important, because if you have this idea in mind it may make it easier to be consistent and patient and understanding through all the tough moments when working as a teacher to build relationships with students.

Turi believed that her best days as a teacher are the ones in which the students “are fully themselves in the best way that they can be themselves because them doing that allows me to be exactly who I am ...where I feel like they trust me because I trust them...they’re going to reach higher than I would’ve imagined..and I have a sign on my desk that says ‘Do whatever, be weird. It’s okay’ and my favorite days are the days that they are the weirdest...and it makes me leave at the end of the day less tired than when I got there.” This is the ideal that a lot of teachers go into the profession aiming for, but the idea that we miss is that this is not necessarily the every day or what happens naturally, this is the end product of a long game of legos where a teacher and their students have been adding block by block to this creation. Sometimes the legos topple, or have a piece taken away every once in awhile, and occasionally everyone gets to stand back and

enjoy what they've made together, but it is always being built upon and changing, and it never just comes ready-made.

Sylvia

Sylvia is the newest teacher I interviewed, as she is still over a month away from completing her first year of teaching, yet she seemed poised and excited. She is an eighth grade on level and pre-AP reading teacher, so she teaches thirteen to fourteen-year-olds.

Sylvia defined a positive teacher-student relationship as one where the students "feel comfortable talking to you, whether they're okay with asking for help. And just that when they see you in the hallway, you know they say hi, you say hi to them, not that you're best friends or anything, but that they're comfortable talking to you both about academic stuff and they're like, 'oh, guess what I did this weekend?' they want to share like share part of their lives with you too."

For the third time, a teacher specifies that they are not friends with their students or that there is a barrier or line between them and the students, while still making sure to stress that there needs to be something more personal about the relationship that goes beyond just talking about school and class things. Having a balance between establishing authority, or being the "teacher," and having a personal, friendly relationship with the students seems key. The word "comfortable" was also seen in the previous interview with Turi, so I think this must be important as well. A relationship should have balance, it should be personal, and it should be comfortable for both parties. Comfort in this sense seems to mean a lack of fear, or a certain amount of trust when speaking to the teacher and being able to say what they are thinking or share parts of themselves, as both times it was brought up it had to do with talking or with communication of some sort.

Having established her definition of a positive relationship between students and teachers, I asked her what she did at the beginning of the year, considering it was her first year, to kind of

help start off those relationships with her students. She listed off a couple of strategies that she has used like a student survey where she asked about their favorite things and what they like to do or don't like to do in order to try and get one initial information about them, and she said that she did not call roll the first day of class, but rather went around the class having them say their names for her and making notes for herself on how to say them in order to avoid starting off their relationship mispronouncing their names. I thought this was a brilliant idea because I believe this shows the students that you care and you are willing to put in effort for them. Rather than rushing through roll and only taking a few minutes, probably butchering several names in the process, you are doing it the long way to make sure everyone feels important and it shows that you think their names, they as individuals, matter and are worth your time.

When asked if she had any lesson plans or routines that she does that help her build those relationships with her students she talked about weekly reading logs and reading log checks. So, she goes around and while she checks on their reading log she tries to make a comment to each student or ask them questions about it to show she's interested in the books they choose to read, since it is one of the few things they actually get to choose to read for school. She also makes a point to try to be out in the hallway not just to monitor the halls, but to talk to students using their names as they walk by or come into her room. She says she makes even more effort with the students she doesn't necessarily have the best relationships with because sometimes "that little positive bit of interaction in the hallway...helps sometimes just making up for maybe some of the negative." She says she does this because she wants them to know that she doesn't hate them and she's not mad at them; that they can have a "pleasant conversation" even if they weren't necessarily at their best in class.

The way she described how her relationships with students affect behavior and motivation in class was unique from the other teachers that I interviewed, saying that sometimes it is the students that she views as having the best relationships with her that can be the ones that can sometimes interrupt class and cause problems just because they want to talk to her, share something with her, at an inappropriate time in class and cause an interruption. However, on the flip side of that, she says the positive side of this is that if they are comfortable talking with her and sharing with her, then they are probably more likely to participate in class because they know she won't say "no, that's the wrong answer" they know that she is open to them sharing things and that this encourages them to participate more. With the students that she does not necessarily have those positive teacher-student relationships with she says they are "reluctant to ask for help" and that she has to take the initiative to check on them and make sure they are getting help and be proactive, because she knows they will not raise their hands and ask. So, with her she views relationships as affecting their willingness to participate and engage in class and ask for help.

Observing how students behave between her class and other teachers' classrooms based on the types of relationships they have with them, Sylvia says that with one student in particular she has noticed that even though her relationship isn't necessarily the best with the student she gets better results out of her than other teachers that share this student with her because even when the student is acting up she is purposely nice to the student and doesn't let them visibly bother her. Apparently, the student was initially extremely upset simply because she couldn't get a visibly poor, drawn out reaction from her, and they had to have a discussion with the counselor to work out that issue, but now they are doing much better.

When discussing ability, and understanding rather than motivation and behavior after having developed relationships, Sylvia says from the beginning of the year to now, students are

much more willing to find out why or how they did something wrong or made a mistake so that they can correct it rather than just complaining about losing the points or missing the question. She also gave the example of how certain students who came in hating reading have been willing to find things that they do enjoy and participate that way. While they have also begun to enjoy reading more, even the book they are reading together, *The Giver*, because they like to discuss predictions and that they get very passionate about the dystopian elements of the book.

While on the topic of breakthroughs and finding new interest, I shifted the conversation toward Sylvia's feelings and how those interactions affect her. Sylvia responded that positive interventions with her students can turn her whole day around, like how a student who never initiates conversations with her made a comment about *The Giver* and how wouldn't it be interesting if everyone in that society had a secret twin that was "released" and Sylvia said she was so excited that she had talked to her and she immediately responded with enthusiasm and that she always looks for those positive things so she can appreciate something about each of her students, even the difficult ones. When she does have difficult or negative interactions, she says she likes to make a plan for how to address it in the future. She reflects on it in the car on the way home, makes a plan, and then tries to forget about it because she feels if she dwells on it then she'll just "react more harshly to them" than she should.

I then asked her how she feels after an average day of teaching, and she said something pretty striking that I think in a way was echoed by both of the other teacher that I interview in some way or another. She said, "I don't have average days." She said that there's always something good or something bad happening, and even when nothing super exciting happens, she goes home feeling "just like, yeah, that was good. I feel like I am in the right career."

To end off the interview, we discussed the differences she feels as her first year ends, her best day as a teacher so far, and her advice to first year teachers when it comes to building relationships. She, when asked about how she feels her emotions have changed throughout the year, responded that she felt more confident, that at the beginning of the year she didn't feel like "a real teacher" and so she had difficulty dealing with misbehavior, in the hallways in particular, and now she feels like she can relax a bit more and joke around with her students because she is more in control and confident. I think this goes back to being able to find a balance between being a teacher and being friendly, and until you find that balance for yourself it is hard to feel confident and if the teacher does not feel confident it is hard to manage a classroom and build relationships in the first place.

With that in mind though, her advice for first year teachers and the thing she wished she had done or known at the beginning of the year is to "not be afraid to look like a dork in front of them (the students)" because you aren't going to be "cool" anyway and it is a good thing to show them that you aren't afraid to be silly and laugh because that will help them feel like they can talk to you about their interests and things too. She says her best day or days of her first year of teaching were when her classes did debates because she got to learn things about her students, both positive and sad, and she saw students participating that wouldn't normally and had students sharing things with her that she wouldn't expect them to share. The students had actually come up with the idea of debates because they had heard the pre-AP kids had gotten to the semester before and then they got to debate a topic based off of their interests. I think this fits in with what some of the things the other teachers said in that there is engagement and seeing students not only interact with you, but with each other, and being able to not only engage them in class work but personally as well by letting them be themselves.

Observations

The final stage of data collection was the observation of each of the three teachers that were interviewed. I observed each teacher for at least an hour of instruction time. I was unable to observe them for full days due to both time constraints with my own leave time from my teaching position, and because of the amount of time I had to collect the data then begin analyzing it and finding results and writing up those results here. This section will detail those observations and discuss how they relate to the interviews with each teacher here.

Chet

As I mentioned previously in the interview section, I was lucky enough to be able to observe the project that Chet uses to teach his students about the messiness of World Wars. During the observation of this project I was able to see how Chet interacted with his students firsthand, and it certainly seemed as natural as he described in his interview. Students came in and immediately were getting into their projects while Chet was still outside in the hallway. As soon as class was starting, Chet came into the room and standing by the door started making announcements about the expectations for that day and explaining who I was because a few students had asked and thought I was a substitute at first. With one student he even made it into a joke where the student was pretending to be paranoid because he had asked if I was watching Chet or if I was watching them, and Chet would not answer straight out.

This was a good example of the humor Chet talked about in our interview and I certainly could see how his humor came out periodically throughout the class with different students as well. Announcements took a total of about three minutes and by 9:23, he was wandering around the classroom from group to group checking on their progress as a whole and talking to individuals.

By 9:30 he had talked to each group at least once. I was shocked when I checked the time and so little time had passed because he seemed to take his time, sometimes even sitting down with a group to speak with them about something. He never looked rushed, and he never rushed a student through what they were trying to tell him.

After he has talked with each group, he goes to his desk and computer for the first time to take roll and check his email, but he does not stay there for very long. By 9:37, he is back to walking around the room moving in a wide circle, unless someone attracts his attention either by calling, or in some cases singing, his name or appearing to be off task or lost. At 9:49 a student shouts across the room at him asking if they will get extra credit if their group creates a Wikipedia page over their fake country. Chet just laughs and replies, “If you have it published by Monday and it’s more than just you”—here he strikes a pose in imitation of a young person taking a photo while making a peace sign. The students in the group laugh good-naturedly and respond with what has become an overused teenage sign of acceptance of a challenge, “bet.”

One of the things about this project that I was able to see in just one or two hours of observation is that it creates a lot of opportunity for students to be creative, be themselves, and take initiative and be rewarded for it while also allowing the teacher, in this case Chet, to interact with everyone, joke around, and only have to really monitor what is going on and check in. There were only a few times when he had to actually approve something directly or redirect people because they were way off topic; for the most part he got to let the students run class and he was just there as the guideline or safety net for if they had questions or some people seemed like they were going too far, or in some cases not going far enough.

I am sure some people would have walked into his room and simply seen chaos that day, but observing all of it, I really only noticed two groups who were ever off task, and one of them

wasn't necessarily completely off task, they were just talking about gossip while they were also working. The other group that occasionally appeared off task was working the majority of the time, and it was only one or two of the students that needed to be redirected off their phones and onto the project. Everyone else appeared intensely into the project and their competition all hour. By the end of the hour, Chet had spoken individually with students over 70 times, and those are just the tallies I was able to keep up with, I am sure there were more as at a few points he had to step out into the hallway to monitor negotiations and "secret meetings" where I was unable to follow him out the door for because I was trying to be as unobtrusive as possible, and he was able to speak individually with each student at least once.

I can not be sure if his classes are always this way, since this was a special project, but based off of the interactions that I saw and the way Chet described his classroom in our interview, I think that it is safe to say that this comfortable, organized chaos is fairly normal and present in some way, shape, or form every day.

Turi

When I went to observe Turi, the bell had already rung to send students to their next class, so I was out in the hallway still as students were coming in and I got to see some of Turi's interactions in the hallway between class. Turi was out in the hallway standing with another teacher and greeting kids as they entered the room. A student was about two feet away from the door with the teachers kind of in the way when the bell rang and they looked at Turi with kind of this deer in the headlights look, and Turi calmly just says don't worry about it, that's on me. The student nods and scurries into the room.

After the bell rings, Turi works her way into the room and about one minute after the bell starts speaking loudly near the door starting out with "Ladies and Gents" to get their attention

before starting announcements, explaining why I am there, and then she asks them a question about something that I assume they learned earlier in the week or recently. Students immediately shout out answers and one student asks her if she knows some bizarre fact that they, somehow, related to the topic of her question. Turi simply answers in a sincere voice, “I did not, that’s interesting” and moves into instructions. As she is finishing up instructions a student says, “we talked about this yesterday” and she says “yes” and finishes up saying they need to open their notebooks to the table of contents and add in today’s notes they are about to do.

There is a lot of shuffling as students follow instructions, and while they do that Turi works her way around the room to a student sitting in a far corner and quietly tells a student to put their phone away “please.” The student tucks the phone under the desk as Turi makes her way back toward the front of the room and the other students have finished up with their task. They are watching a short video and at this point Turi reminds them to “just watch” as she starts the video. The students start freaking out because there is a weird issue with the SmartBoard lighting, but as she moves to fix the problem Turi explains why it was an issue and assures them she is fixing it. She does not just tell them to quiet down or that it’ll be fine, she explains the issue to them and then tells them she’s fixing it. This shows a level of care and a desire to help students understand a problem rather than just trying to control them, even though the effect is still having control of them. It is just a more respectful form of control.

The lesson goes on with two more repetitions of the video, but each time before she starts the video again, Turi gives the students another piece of the instructions. For the second showing, she gives them a transcript of the video and tells them to highlight, underline, and otherwise make note of the parts they think are most important. The next time, she gives them a notecard and tells them to fill it with only the most essential information as they watch the video and look at their

transcripts they've marked on. At the end of the last viewing she asked the students for feedback on how difficult or easy they thought it was and why with mixed answers. She did not repeat the video again, but the students repeated the note taking on index cards two more times, each time on a smaller and smaller card.

As they did this Turi walked around checking in on everyone and answering questions and after each time was up asked them their opinions on how they felt about the process. This habit Turi has of explaining why she does things, and asking students how they feel about what they are doing, shows the students that she cares what they think and takes them into consideration when she does things. This gets them to do things and participate more in things like these notes that they probably wouldn't normally buy into.

At the end of the class, she had traveled the entire room multiple times and made some sort of contact with each student, even if it was not directly speaking to them, though she spoke to many students, and had made about 50 individual interactions throughout the hour. Again, keep in mind, with only me watching and trying to mark down responses and interactions, I probably missed a few interactions what with all that was going on and how quickly things occur in a class period. Also, the type of lesson this was did not necessarily lend itself to a lot of individual interaction, so it may be different during a more interactive lesson.

At the end of the class she instructs the students to tape or glue in all three notecards from biggest to smallest into the page they prepared at the beginning of class in their notebooks, and as they do so she tells them what they did today was not easy and she gets it. She goes on to compare what they did in class today to choosing between friends and deciding which ones matter more to them from a list and how they had to do the same thing with this assignment. She thanks them for being awesome and being willing to be her guinea pigs because she has never used this strategy

before. Then, when they are all done and there are a few minutes left, she and the students joke around and talk with each other as they pack up and get ready to go. As the bell rings, she shouts to everyone, “Bye guys! See you on Monday!” and still talks to a student quietly as they exit, checking on them.

Turi seemed to have a positive and joking relationship with most of her students but knew how to get them serious when need be. It was clear that many of the students adored her and were willing to cooperate with her, because it was her and the topic was interesting, even if they were not one hundred percent pleased with having to think while taking notes.

Sylvia

With Sylvia I was able to observe two different lessons with two different levels of students, one on level and one pre-AP. I observed the on-level students first, and it involved a lot more movement on Sylvia’s part than did the pre-AP lesson, but there appears to be a fairly good reason for this when we get there.

To start out both classes though, Sylvia was out in the hallway near her door greeting every student she could as they entered her room, by name, and in the case of the on-level students, when the students initiated it, having individual personal interactions. For example, one student commented on how she wears heels every day and another asked her if she got into trouble because they saw her talking to the principal that morning. In both cases, she responded with a joke or with a laugh and an explanation. In other words, the interactions are lighthearted and fun.

When the on-level class bell rang for class to start at 8:45 she stood by the door and announced, “Alrighty, take a seat and be doing bell work and then we will discuss.” The on-level class is reading *The Giver* and their bell work is to make a list of things they dislike about Jonas’s community. At 8:47, Sylvia is at the front of the room asking students to share out the things that

they do not like and making a group list up on the board for everyone to see. Once the list is created, she tells the students they will be choosing one of these things, or something off of their own list, and sharing a memory with Jonas to try to convince him to influence the community to change that issue or thing that they dislike. The students. Kind of continue to discuss the things they view as problems with the society among themselves while Sylvia passes around the papers they need for the assignment. The papers are due at the end of the hour and they get bonus points if they choose to create an illustration to go with their memory.

Most of the students immediately get to work, though some sit and talk, and start asking questions as Sylvia begins to walk around the room answering questions and checking in with different students. It is a little chaotic as students are talking as they work, and a few appeared to be moving to different areas of the room beyond their assigned seats to work elsewhere, but for most students it seemed to function well for them and most of them were engaged and constantly writing and asking Sylvia questions or looking for her approval. By the end of the hour, not including the greetings at the door, Sylvia had individually interacted or talked with students about 75 times and had spoken to most students at least once, though a few students had monopolized some of her time, with one student totally 17 interactions because they had about 10-15 questions throughout the hour and Sylvia always seemed calm and patient and encouraging with that student, and with all of them. Sylvia even said she would like to display some of these memories on the wall, so if anyone did not want their memory displayed to say so on the top of the paper so she would know and at the end of the hour when she had them packing up and cleaning the room she was chatting with the students and having casual conversation before they left her room.

The pre-AP lesson was less teacher-student interactive, but more student-student interactive for a chunk of the class, so there were fewer individual interactions between Sylvia and

those students on the day of my observation, though from watching her with the previous lesson, I would guess that she normally has a higher level of interaction than was viewed on this day. The pre-AP class was reading the book *Ender's Game* and that day was more of a note taking and preparation lesson in anticipation of the next chapters that they were going to read. In other words, they were building background information. She had students pairing up to fill out a paper with what they knew so far about certain aspects of the society from previous chapters, and then the rest of the class was a whole class discussion and mass note taking over different part of the society's hierarchy so that they could understand some of the politics about to occur in the next part of the book. Sylvia still managed to squeeze in about 35-40 individual interactions here and make 2-3 circuits around the whole room during the hour, and while the class was a lot quieter and subdued, they still seemed engaged in the content of the book.

Sylvia, though the newest teacher of all three participants, still seemed to move around the room and interact with students in a positive and constructive way that encouraged them to be working and be interested in what they were doing. She allowed them room to talk and express themselves, but still make sure they were learning and participating.

Discussion of Themes

Having discussed each participant's interview and observations, it is important to discuss the themes and ideas that emerged from them in greater detail. Each of these themes is a building block to the larger picture of building positive teacher-student relationships and the answers to my research questions.

Personal Interaction

This comes from all of the teacher participants making sure to speak to each and every student individually as much as possible, their emphasis on asking students about their interests, and in one teacher's case sharing their own interests, allowing yourself on a certain level to truly care about them as people, and be able to form connections with them in order to find common ground with them. This theme combines personalization of a relationship, emotion/caring, and common ground because these things were all linked very closely.

All these teachers asked personal questions of their students, spoke to them personally and individually, reacted to the answers and showed care toward, and built care for, their students through these interactions. Care meaning both showing the students they matter as individuals to you, the teacher, and feeling the emotion of "I care what happens to this student moving forward." Doing those things, having those interactions and caring, builds common ground with students and all the participants in one way or another described that common ground as helping them to encourage students to be more highly motivated and therefore learn more in their classes.

The theme of personal interaction connects with several of my research questions. This theme is not only a strategy for how these teachers build positive relationships with their students, which was my original and initial research question, but it also moderately addresses student motivation and learning as well because the teachers all cited these personal interactions as key pieces that got their students motivated to try and that trying led to them being more successful in their class.

Sticktoitiveness

While the word sticktoitiveness never appears in any of the transcripts, it is the best word I could come up with to describe the way in which these teachers discussed patiently continuing to try, and try, and try with their students; especially the ones who were resistant, or as Chet put them “harder to crack.” Merriam-Webster defines sticktoitiveness as “dogged perseverance; tenacity,” and synonyms include words like resolve and determination.

These teachers were not passively patient, they did not sit there and wait for something to eventually happen. They kept going, trying different things, or being consistent, with students and instead of getting too frustrated they patiently, but determinedly, kept trying until something worked. This applied not only with students, but also with themselves. All three subjects described differences between when they started as teachers to now and how they just had to keep going and learn from mistakes and be patient with themselves until they started to figure things out. Being good at building relationships with students and creating positive relationships with students does not happen overnight; it requires dogged perseverance.

Sticktoitiveness and its definition fit well with and answer several research questions, but the one I want to focus on most is how this theme applies to the ways in which teacher-student relationships affect teacher wellbeing. While this idea of perseverance is a tool for building those relationships, I think it also and perhaps most importantly reveals how these relationships impact teacher emotions and wellbeing. It can be both a positive and a negative impact. This dogged pursuit of reaching students can give immense satisfaction and comfort to teachers that they are doing the right thing with their lives if they ever get to see a positive result of it. It can make them excited for each new day, and encourage them to go further, be better, do more, and keep going. However, it can also be disappointing, disheartening, and frustrating if that effort and patience seemingly comes to nothing. It can follow teachers home if they are not diligent. And even if there

is payoff, and the student is successful or the relationship is successful, sometimes this causes teachers to push themselves to a level that is not healthy in order to be there for that student they know needs them such as when Turi recounted going to work with a high fever, feeling like death, simply because she knew a student was going to need her to comfort them over the loss of their idol and role model.

Humor

Whether the teachers mentioned it specifically in their interviews, or I observed it in their classrooms, humor appeared in all cases. This seemed important to all the participants because they felt if they were able to get students to laugh or be silly with them it opened up so many more possibilities. Whether that was their way of opening up more personal interactions, or facilitating positive and open communication, or they thought it just lightened the atmosphere, humor was a tool to build, and a result of, a positive teacher-student relationship. It is a tool to break down certain barriers, but shared humor and jokes are also a possible sign of a positive relationship when used appropriately because it shows a certain level of comfort and communication between the teacher and the student or students.

Humor is a strategy that teachers use to build positive relationships with their students. In fact, two of the three brought up the need for being able to be silly and make jokes and have a sense of humor with students within minutes of starting our interview. It was also referenced as something that some of them used to reach students that were more difficult to build relationships with. I also think that this answers part of a second research question, in that humor showed an effect on teacher wellbeing. The way that they described the humor and jokes they got to share with their students, it was as if sometimes that was kept them going and brought them joy; how silly and strange students could be and how no day would be the same.

Comfortable Communication

I combined comfort and communication because the way they were both discussed it seemed as if one could not happen without the other. Comfort meaning the level of which a student feels confident in approaching a teacher with questions, problems, or even just a casual comment or even the teacher's confidence in being able to respond to or approach students and communication is the ability, and the way in which, the teacher and student actually convey ideas and thoughts to each other. Without being comfortable with each other, there is no way to positively communicate which would be being able to ask questions, being open with each other, and working together.

Chet showed this through his interactions with students during observations and his descriptions of "family" and "friend" feeling classrooms, Turi talked about this through stories of interactions with students in our interview and her definition of a positive teacher-student relationship, and it showed up in Sylvia's interview where she defined a positive TSR as well and in the way she described her own transformation from the beginning of the year to now. Positive communication is a strategy that is used to create positive teacher-student relationships as all three teachers described and demonstrated their own forms of communication with students; you cannot build a relationship with anyone without talking and communicating in a way that works for both parties. However, though the comfort part of communication needs to be built up to, and it improves communication, there is also another element or two to its significance.

The feeling of comfort that a teacher can get from being positively communicated with can make them enjoy their students more, as Turi described in the comparison of her being able to communicate that a she didn't know something to one student and the positive feelings for both her and the student involved, and the students who sneer or question her ability to teach if she

communicates that she doesn't know everything and the frustration that comes with that. On the other end of that, from what was communicated to me, students are more motivated and able to learn and understand things in class if they are comfortable enough with their teachers to communicate when they don't understand and are able to ask questions. If they are not comfortable asking questions, for whatever reason, they are likely to perform more poorly than the students with the comfort level to do so. Which addresses almost all four of my research questions on one level or another.

Barriers Between Teacher and Student

This was a very intriguing concept and I am putting it here, even though it was not a focus necessarily, because it was mentioned in each teacher's definition of a positive TSR. Based on how each teacher described it, I am defining "barrier" as the distinction between being a student's friend and their teacher. The amount, or thickness, of that barrier varies from teacher to teacher, but all the participants believe it needs to be there because they all felt the need to specify in some way that they were not friends with their students.

This seems important to explore, because they all described qualities of friendship in their definitions from having respect for each other, knowing each other, caring about each other, having fun, etc. and yet they were insistent that they were not friends. The explanation that comes to mind is that in order to be able to "switch" or be able to "step up" if there are issues or problems or emergencies in class they need to be able to be seen as the leader and authority, not an equal, in order to enforce consequences, ensure safety, and do their job properly. The reason I reach this conclusion is that in my own experience I have heard students say they wish their teacher had

stepped in or that they would have taken control in situations that they needed that, and not necessarily a friend.

While this is not exactly a strategy for building positive teacher-student relationships or any sort of effect caused by them, it is important to note and remember when enacting the other strategies discussed in this study because this barrier seems significant to a successful TSR. Without this barrier the relationship could be too comfortable, and not functional for student motivation and learning, or teacher, or even student, wellbeing. However, I did not notice this theme until after all data had been collected, so I was unable to investigate as to why the teachers in this study believed this barrier to be so important to them individually.

Buy into the Teacher

With both student motivation and student learning the teacher participants described these things as coming after, and sometimes even being reliant upon, the students buying into the teacher and who they are and what they are about rather than the teacher trying to get students to buy into the topic or subject matter. They talked about how those things were secondary or followed after.

If they bought into who the teacher was, and had built a relationship with them, many times the motivation and learning came after. However, the two more experienced teachers did say this motivation and learning did not necessarily carry on or forward. If there is no buyin later, with other teachers of that subject, then that improvement can go away, though the impact that you can have on them as individuals and the impact they can have on you, is lasting. Students buying into their teachers addresses about three of my research questions. It addresses strategy because knowing they need to buy into who a teacher is and how they treat them is an important thing to keep in mind while interacting with students and could change the way that teachers approach their

subject matter. Rather than insisting on trying to get kids to love math or science or reading or history, they can explain and show why they love it and then focus on getting kids to be comfortable and enjoy their classroom and them.

If they do that, then we get into how this buyin addresses student motivation and student learning. If a student learns to love, and develops buyin for, a teacher, then they are more likely to work harder to make that teacher happy or at least avoid making them disappointed with them. If they are working to please the teacher, and therefore trying in class, it follows that they will most likely begin understanding more of the material and learning more as the teachers participating in my study have observed over the course of their careers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are both pieces of advice from the teacher participants in this study for other teachers and this researcher's recommendations for further study of this topic based on the limitations of this one.

Teacher Recommendations

Chet discussed in length the difference between his relationships from his first year to his relationships with students now. The main bit of advice I got from this was while all of the things you learn in undergrad about being a teacher are great, you need to be less tactical about your approach to classroom management and relationships and learn to relax and enjoy your students and teaching; treat them as people rather than with rigidity.

Turi said be patient with yourself, with students—remember that they and you need time to learn—, be consistent, and remember your “So What?” Remember why you wanted to teach in the first place and that will help get you through the hard times and help you build relationships.

Sylvia recommended remembering you don't have to try to look cool in front of the students, so don't be afraid to be silly in front of them. You are never going to really be cool to them and trying to doesn't really win anyone over. Being willing to look like a dork in front of them shows them that is okay to be themselves with you.

Researcher Recommendations

My study, while it brought forward some fascinating ideas and perspectives, was limited by time constraints and by my own inability as an individual researcher to collect and process larger sums of data. If further research were to be done, I would want a larger pool of teachers to survey, interview, and observe, and for all of the above to be more detailed in order to both confirm my findings and to learn more; particularly where the idea of making sure there is a line or barrier between teacher and students to make sure they are not “friends”. I would also recommend getting permission to investigate student perspectives through being able to survey and interview them, possibly over time, on how they see their relationships with teachers affect them, and what they think a positive teacher-student relationship is so that we could get a more holistic and balanced view of the subject and compare their responses with those of teachers.

Concluding Thoughts

I have been using the word “building” since the beginning of this project, but I do not think I fully realized its significance and accuracy until I was deep into the research involved. I believe that I went into this thinking I would find some magical cure-all lesson or strategy that teachers used to create relationships that worked with their students and I just had not been let in on the secret yet, but that cure-all does not exist. There is no moment where the effort and work of building relationships ends and you can say, “this is perfect now, I’m done.” Relationships are constantly changing and growing, which is why I used the game of legos analogy earlier on. Both

teacher and student are always adding and taking away pieces, shifting them as they go. I think a lot of young or new teachers feel, even unconsciously, that there should be some magic moment where it all clicks permanently into place, and that magic haunts us. The biggest lesson I took from this is learning to let go, find joy in the little blocks I get to place in the lego pile, and realizing that the work of relationships never ends.

References

- Bondy, E., Ross, D.D., Gallingane, C., Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience culturally responsive classroom management and more. *Urban Education*. 42(4), 326-348.
- Cefai, C. (2008). *Promoting Resilience in the Classroom: A Guide to Developing Pupils' Emotional and Cognitive Skills*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Christle, C., Jolivette, K., Nelson, C.M. (2007). School characteristics related to high school dropout rates. *Remedial and Special Education*., 28(6), 325-339.
- Claessens, L., van Tartwijk, J., van der Want, A.C., Pennings, H.J.M., Verloop, N., den Brok, P.J., Wubbels, T. (2017). Positive teacher–student relationships go beyond the classroom, problematic ones stay inside. *The Journal of Educational Research*., 110(5), 478-493.
- Cooper, K. S., Miness, A. (2014). The co-creation of caring student-teacher relationships: Does teacher understanding matter? *High School Journal*, 97(4), 264-290.
- Doll, B., Brehm, K., Zucker, S. (2014). *Resilient Classrooms: Creating Healthy Environments for Learning 2nd Edition*. New York/London: The Guilford Press.
- Downey, J. (2008). Recommendations for fostering educational resilience in the classroom. *Preventing School Failure*., 53(1), 56-64
- Furrer, C.J., Skinner, E.A., Pitzer, J.R. (2014). The influence of teacher and peer relationships on students' classroom engagement and everyday motivational resilience. *National Society for the Study of Education*., 113(1), 101-123.
- Gasser, L., Grutter, J., Buholzer, A., Wettstein, A. (2018). Emotionally supportive classroom

interactions and students' perceptions of their teacher as caring and just. *Learning and instruction: A publication of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction.*, 59(1), 82-92.

Gehlbach, H., Brinkworth, M.E., King, A., Hsu, L.M., McIntyre, J., Rogers, T. (2016). Creating birds of similar feathers: Leveraging similarity to improve teacher–student relationships and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology.*, 108(3), 342-352.

Hagenauer, G., Hascher, T., Volet, S. (2015). Teacher emotions in the classroom: Associations with students' engagement, classroom discipline and the interpersonal teacher-student relationship. *European Journal of Psychology of Education = Journal Européen De Psychologie De L'éducation.*, 30(4), 385-403.

Liebenberg, L., Theron, L., Sanders, J., Munford, R., van Rensburg, A., Rothman, S., Ungar, M. (2016). Bolstering resilience through teacher-student interaction: Lessons for school psychologists. *School Psychology International.*, 37(2), 140-154.

Mainhard, T., Oudman, S., Hornstra, L., Bosker, R., Goetz, T. (2018). Student emotions in class: The relative importance of teachers and their interpersonal relationships with students. *Learning and instruction : A publication of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction.*, 53, 109-119.

McGrath, K., Van Bergen, P. (2015). Who, when, why and to what end? Students at risk of negative student–teacher relationships and their outcomes. *Educational Research Review.*, 14, 1-17.

Milatz, A., Luftenegger, M., Schober, B. (2015). Teachers' relationship closeness with students as a resource for teacher wellbeing: A response surface analytical approach. *Frontiers in Psychology.* 6, 1-16.

- Okonofua, J.A., Paunesku, D., Walton, G.M. (2016). Brief intervention to encourage empathic discipline cuts suspensions rates in half among adolescents. *Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 113(19), 5221-5226.
- Roffey, S. (2012). Pupil wellbeing—Teacher wellbeing: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational and Child Psychology*., 29(4), 8-17.
- Spilt, J.L., Koomen, H.M.Y., Thijs, J.T. (2011). Teacher-wellbeing: The importance of teacher-student relationships. *Education Psychology Review*, 23, 457-477.
- Van Uden, J., Ritzen, H., Pieters, J.M. (2014). Engaging students: The role of teacher beliefs and interpersonal teacher behavior in fostering student engagement in vocational education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*., 37, 21-32.
- Wilkins, J. (2014). Good teacher-student relationships: Perspectives of teachers in urban high schools. *American Secondary Education*, 43(1), 52-68.

Appendix A

Interview Transcription: Chet

Interviewer: Kylie Gibbons

Teacher Participant: Chet

- K: [00:00](#) And we're good.
- K: [00:02](#) So what, let's start off with kind of some background stuff. What grade levels and subject do you teach?
- C: Um, I teach two classes. I teach AP world history. So sophomores those are 10th graders and then also have a leadership class and that's 10, 11 and 12. So yeah, 15 through 18.
- K: That's an interesting mixture.
- C: Yeah. I mean like leadership's different. It's really cool. But I'm with my AP World kids all the time, so.
- K: [00:36](#) Okay.
- K: [00:38](#) How would you define a positive teacher student relationship?
- C: I would define a positive teacher student relationship as me knowing them on more of a personal basis as far as like what are their likes, dislikes, um, things they're interested in, things that intrigue them other than just like knowing their names. Um, so a positive relationship looks like I can joke around with them, but at the same time, like they know, like that barrier of like, yes, I'm an educator but I'm not your friend, sort of, you know. So finding a balance, like more of a mentor, but I just like knowing them well, knowing, um, being able to have conversations with them that aren't about classwork.

- K: [01:34](#) Nice. Um,
- K: [01:37](#) what would you say would be a key component or moment to build up getting to know them or how do you do that?
- C: I think that's an interesting question. Um, because to me sometimes it's just like a natural thing and it might be awkward for some other teachers. Uh, it might help that, you know, I'm relatively still young, like, so that might just help in my self, but just like walking around the room, monitoring them while they're working or reading something or when they're discussing a topic, um, or when we're just having, you know, group discussion days, I'm just catching them around like the class in the halls. Like, Hey, what's up, how's life? Like, do you have a job? What do you do? What do you like? Just like picking up on the conversations in class. Like if they're having group work like yeah, they may not be on completely on task but like going and redirecting to tasks but also asking them what they are talking about really helps like A. get to know them but also B. have them understand that like I'm interested in like what you have to say as a person.
- K: [03:02](#) Are there any, cause you said it's fairly natural for you, are there any times when you purposefully choose to do an assignment in a certain way or assign something so that you can get to know a class or group of people?
- C: [03:15](#) Uh uh, No, I would say like, like, or we just have assignments and like analysis and critical analysis, but a lot of that stuff is kind of just organic in the way that it just unfolds and happened like that.
- C: [03:28](#) Just finding times when you can stop and talk to them.
- K: Okay, nice. When you are, uh, have built it or are in the process of building a, one of those positive relationships with the student or if there's a student that it doesn't come as naturally, what is something that you notice with their behavior in comparison to a student who you do have that positive relationship that came naturally?

- C: [03:57](#) It, and that's some, one of my things is I try to have a positive relationship with a lot of, like, of all my, with all my students of course it, but there's some students that are so to speak, like harder to crack than others. Um, that they're more self reserved that really want to talk and um, so sometimes like
- I'll be awkward with them and I'll be like, hey, so and so, you never talk, why not? You seem pretty cool. And like, like, what are you interested in? Like you just never talked to me, you just turn in papers. So like just to get any sort of dialogue flowing is what I would do to try to like get them to open up. And sometimes it works. And of course, sometimes it doesn't, but I'm still trying.
- K: [04:48](#) Um, going back to, I'm losing my train of thought. But with the students who you have to keep trying and keep trying hard to crack, do you notice a difference in how they, the effort they put in for you in class versus those who will talk to you? Or is it just a, they just don't want to talk to you and they'll do their work and it's not a an effort thing?
- C: [05:16](#) Actually, the students that like, so when I taught regular world history, the students that didn't really talk to me, um, that didn't really want that relationship or maybe they just felt uncomfortable by like just talking to an adult. I don't know. It's, I found that their grades weren't as high, but I have been teaching AP for the last few years and I find that like for the most part, their grades for students that are still pretty self reserved, they're pretty high. Um, so I don't know what the correlation is there. Maybe like if you're not as, if they're not motivated and in a regular class between you might just be ultra motivated and self, uh, self reflecting on everything in AP class. I don't know what the core of what correlation is, but I definitely know that those have been my experiences.
- K: [06:19](#) Okay.
- K: [06:23](#) Have you ever, with the students that you kind of mentioned that tended to score lower if they did not engage

in that relationship with you very easily, were you ever able to reach one of those students eventually, and if you were, did you see a change in how they...in their grade in your

K: [06:41](#) class?

C: Yeah. Um, and

C: [06:49](#) it's, it's kind of odd. Um, something like that at all. It actually just eventually like, cause at the beginning of the year you have students that are like in our shells and others do have their shields up and there's one kid that like, you know, we, we, we taught, we like at the very beginning of the year, I have them stand up cause I'm like awkward with them just to make it funny. And I'm like all right, stand up. Say Your name. What's a super p, what's a superhero power you'd like to have? Your favorite color? Yeah cause it's just um, it's like, it's awkward but it's funny for me it's funny for them to like, especially at the end of the year, cause I like the social growth we do have. Um, but the kids that maybe were pretty close at first, but as the year goes on like keep like not, I don't like the word nudging but I keep like, you know, trying to make that relationship.

C: [07:47](#) Um, if they were struggling cause I'm like going to my non AP world history, there's a dialogue there. I'm more able to communicate with them regarding their grades because what I like to do is what we did at the university level and like midterms are around, you know, it's almost spring break and I pulled them up to you know, my computer, I told them what their grades are and what they can do. And then so for students that I would just like finally being able to get a relationship with them somehow. Or like, um, being a, a mutual understanding, maybe not necessarily like an open relationship. Um, I can communicate to them like that I need them like, like not necessarily that like, Yo, I need you to pay attention in class. Like, Bro, I don't want you to fail. I need you to pass because like you don't want to be doing this again and I just need you to work on your stuff and we'll get you through it and you need to communicate with me that way I can help you because I

don't want you to be with behind just because you couldn't ask for or, didn't want to ask for help.

- C: [09:03](#) So just like opening up that dialogue, really telling them like investing yourself into that student saying like, I need you not, I need you to pass now. I need you to do this work. Like I just need you and we'll take care of the rest.
- K: [09:23](#) I like that. The concept of them knowing that they're needed, not just in the context of their papers, and their work.
- C: [09:35](#) Right. They want to like you, they want to know that you care about them. And I do, and then I want them to be successful. So I need them to, I just, I just, I need
- C: [09:46](#) them. [inaudible]
- K: I like that. Can you think of a time when you've had that relationship with that student, but you knew you were the only one that had that relationship with that student. How did they behave differently with you than with other teachers? If you can think of a time when that has happened. Like what was the difference in their behavior that you are hearing from other teachers or seeing with other teachers versus how they were with you?
- C: [10:11](#) Like a student that I was able to like finally get an answer to that nobody else had gotten to? So, yeah. Um, the other is an example, uh, just a couple of years ago, whereas, you know, this kid, he seemed pretty closed off. Um, he would at the beginning of the semester, he would hardly turn in his work. Um, but like I, he likes, he likes rock music. I saw a t shirt he would wear. And I was like, Hey, I listen to those kids. I also listened to those people when I was your age, I really liked that music. Um, and like eventually creating that dialogue. So then like the kid, you know, he starts to do better in class because I've, because we've developed a dialogue and he's taking interest in me and of course, I've

always had interest in like knowing my students. So there's that buy in. But then like I talk about, you know, with mutual students and how they might be doing in our classes with other colleagues of mine and they have like a, they had like a negative outlook.

C: [11:16](#) Like I'll bring, I'll talk about, oh so and so it was like, I love that kid. I'm like, really? Cause they do nothing in my class. I'm like, oh. And like, oh and they s when they do this in my class, I'm like, that's not been my experience. Like that's really weird because I think this kid's awesome. Um, so yeah, like I found that like some other teachers would have maybe have negative connotations to the student. Maybe their grades are probably suffering. If they're not turning in work for them. Uh, but for me, uh, they did really well

K: [11:51](#) What I heard there. You found something in common and used it. Is that something that you do a lot with, especially with the ones that you do not interact with you right off the bat? Other than just the being awkward and trying to make them,

C: [12:04](#) yeah, cause being awkward with students. Like I'm not, like I'm not an awkward person, but if I'm like purposely awkward with them, like we just like ended up laughing about it. It's like, it's uh, it's just like, then I was here like humor and like being laid back so like they're not stressed. Um, so like the students that organically just kind of like, we just buy a buy in to each other that's just there. But students that are more, you know, wallflower kids that they kind of just sort of there in the, you know, they don't really branch out. They're not the ones to like joke with you first or say something, finding something in common as good or just like saying I've seen her just saying like seeing a t shirt and like that. They were like, hey, I like that. Like where'd you get it? Uh, more um, have you been there? Have you seen them? Have you, you know, stuff like that. Funny. Something common for that common ground is pretty important I think.

- K: [13:01](#) Do you think after, or have you observed after having built those relationships, if they didn't have that relationship with another social studies teacher before, had you, did you ever notice that their view of their own ability ever changed talking with you throughout a year? Like from the beginning to the end of the year, like where they came in and like, I just suck at social studies, but after building a relationship with you and they put in the effort and they've become motivated and engaged, that their own self efficacy and in your subjects changed
- K: [13:37](#) or shifted in any way. I don't know if you've had those conversations with them.
- C: No, I do, but I get a lot of kids that come back that are juniors and are seniors, they come back from the various social studies teachers and they're like, hey, can you teach like us history or hey, can you teach like government, like the grades up the rent currently because um, they're like, they talk about how the teacher, like they don't have a good relationship with them. They don't like really make class fun. Um, you know, they're, they don't do a lot of classroom activities. So it's not necessarily the fact that like I've sparked their interest in social studies for forever now. They're all going to be a social studies teacher. Uh, it's, I feel like it's, we've captivated interested in one another. We've built a strong relationship to where they are like, please come teach this class because we really appreciate you as a person and as a teacher. And we would probably be more willing to buy into what you would be teaching us because we will be a learning but at the same time having a good time instead of like maybe another teacher that's vocab all day or rigid or something like that. So to me it's was more based upon the person instead of the subject.
- K: [15:12](#) So buying into the teacher and what they're about rather than and in that buying into the subject follows after.
- C: [15:19](#) I would say that that's been my experience because I let them know like straight up at the very beginning of the year. Like I respect all of them. Um, uh, that I don't even

know them yet, but I appreciate them and I'm going to get to know you guys and if I don't get to know you and I haven't been doing my job very well. Um, so immediately from the beginning of the year, they know that I want to know them and like, so I can teach them better instead of just not knowing them and just like throwing stuff at a wall and seeing what sticks. So students come back just because they miss me and the way I taught class, not necessarily the content of the class and social studies. Yeah.

K: [16:04](#) (Deleted portion of transcript where I bring up a personal, identifying piece of information).. I'm moving, shifting a little bit from the students to you. How do you, let's kind of start on an average day. How do you feel at the end of an average day of teaching? Just like reflecting on your own emotions at the end of the day?

C: [16:35](#) Um, it depends because like, you know, for example, um, I sponsor STUCO and leadership, so there's a lot of work that goes into assemblies.

K: I loved the dance moves, by the way.

C: Thank you. I tried really hard. Um, but as a lot of work that goes into organizing assemblies and fundraisers and stuff like that. So there are days that, you know, in the month of February we had a month of philanthropy that you're familiar with in the district and there were days I got here at 6:00 AM and didn't leave till nine o'clock at night. So, of course you're, you're overwhelmed, but at the same time, like you just take a deep breath and you're like, alright, I gotta get back. I gotta get back here again tomorrow. And I found that creating lists helped with stress. Um, but if it's not, if I'm not worrying about assemblies at the end of a day, um, uh, typically in order to uh just debrief, uh, put on some music. There's typically students in here after school, like just finishing a quiz that they didn't finish in class, but I'm just like hanging out, staying in class for a little bit, getting a couple of things done and just like reflecting on the day, uh, what went right, what I enjoyed. What maybe I didn't enjoy in ways

we can like figure that out. Um, but uh, for the most part, just like

- C: [18:18](#) I just reflecting on the day, trying to be positive,
- K: what you said, kind of like to get back here tomorrow, what gets you out of bed in the morning and actually gets you here every day in the morning? Like what is the thought process if you have one?
- C: [18:36](#) So if it's not like, again, if it's not like a blood drive or an assembly, cause I've got to be here at 6:00 AM right, but if it's just an average school day, um,
- C: [18:47](#) what I think it's really cool about teaching is that every day's different. And of course, like, just like any other job that you know, like you're going to have bad days, that's any job. Uh, but I have, you know what, like 140 something total students in every, each and every day, they will be not always in the same mood and they'll have different things to say. So every day is different as far as like my social interactions as far as my colleagues, but also my social interactions with my students. So like it provides like this new kind of adventure, if you will, of like what you, you're about to embark on today. Like just getting to see my students, talk to them, um, keep on forming that relationship. Um, that's what, you know. That's what makes it fun for me. Uh, I mean, I have a lot of fun at my job.
- C: [19:48](#) That's why like, you know, people ask if I want to be an administrator and there's like, there's no way we would want to be an administrator because like, um, you know, they deal with it, which is stuff that kind of frankly sucks. And like to me like being a teacher, like do we deal with stuff that sucks? Yes. But do we also deal with things that are pretty cool in the classroom? Yeah. I enjoy being around, you know, with 33, 15 year olds because there's so many things that go on at the same time and they're so funny. Um, being great, just yell and they're weird. Yeah. But uh, it is creating a, just getting out of bed in the

morning is easy to come to work because I know I'm going to have a good day and that if I'm having a good day, I'm trying to make my students also have a good day and if we're all having a good day, just things go over pretty well.

K: [20:42](#) Is there a particular class you can think of this year or really any year that like they were like great. They were what you looked forward to every day?

C: [20:54](#) Oh yeah, definitely

K: Can you describe what that looks like to me?

C: Um, this year is one of them a couple of years ago was super, one of them were just like, it wasn't even just the relationship I had built with the class. It's like the class, the classes themselves were almost like the entire class where like they were like more family approach than friend approached. Okay. Um, like I knew heading into second and third and fourth and fifth and sixth hour that I was going to have a good day because of how the classes reacted, how the kids reacted towards one another and then just like throwing me in the mix. Also just me being a part of the class in general. Um, because I'm not a, you know, I'm not like a rigid teacher as far as like, hey, you know, the, I've worked out of that textbook. It's like really like relaxed and laid back to where that we can talk about things in like if their work takes 45 minutes because we were talking about something that's really cool about the topic. Then we're going to spend our time doing that because that is going to be much more beneficial then, you know, transitioning to five documents. Um, but it things like get you out of the bed that like, there's like your best class ever. It's just the kids cared about each other. They cared about me. I of course cared about them and it made life so much easier just like you want to be there.

K: [22:35](#) The only question I have is because I want to, um, you mentioned a friend versus family. What is the difference

between a class that's like a friend and one that feels like family?

C: It feels like family,

C: [22:48](#) um, classes that like, that they had their friends like that they have like their friend approach is that, you know, we have your small pockets of friends and they communicate occasionally, you know, across their clicks and their classes. And then like, I pulled them together like as one class and we all, you know, I slept a good relationships with all the other students and their small cliques of friends in classes that, you know, they have a seating chart, but you know, it's whatever. Um, whereas, uh, and that's still fine, but this whole family approach is like the kids genuinely cared about one another. There's really no clickiness have like friends in the classroom. Like they all just pretty much got along and understood each other and understood that each of them were like a part of something. And, um,

C: [23:43](#) I was the, I also just got to be a part of that as well. So like I could say this year um definitely two of my classes. There's like a family approach to where like the kids, they care about one another. Um, of course they care about me. I reciprocate that, you know, and they know that. And uh, it's just a very welcoming atmosphere to where, you know, their classes that they have, they're more like cliquey friend approach that, um, you know, we still have a good time. It's still laid back. We're still learning. But you could definitely tell that group A probably wouldn't converse with group B outside of class.

K: [24:28](#) Gotcha. And trying to have a good way to put this, the feeling you have now as a teacher. You said in the survey, it's been 4 to 6 years, is that what it was? What is the difference between your relationships now with students versus maybe your first year of teaching? How have they changed?

C: [24:48](#) Oh gosh, because they teach you all these things in Undergrad about like, do you need to set the tone at the

very beginning of the year? Don't smile for six weeks. And I'm like, so, oh my gosh. Okay. And like in the, and they hammer into your brain in Undergrad, classroom management, classroom management, classroom management. I'm not saying that's negative that, yeah. But my first year I was like, so focused on like, is everybody quiet? Is everybody doing what they're supposed to be doing? Um, so like, you know, like eagle eyeing, things that could be going wrong in class and immediately calling it out and like having, what are the disciplinary actions for this thing that I need to have posted in my room? Uh, so it was like, it seems like very like, like, uh, just like tactical, it's like, oh my gosh, like this is what I was taught a Harry Wong said so and uh, yeah, yeah, it's pretty great. Um, and um, my administrator said I need to be focused on this to, like being in my fifth year and going into my sixth year after this May. Um, classroom experiences like is so less formal because if I'm so focused on the rules

C:

[26:24](#)

and I'm so focused on like, hey, you better have your id on, or I'm going to flip out and I know it's district policy, but instead of flipping on a student, just like you make that relationship with them and be like, hey dude, can you just like, well you should put your ID on real quick. Yup. And then they'll say, okay, instead of like first year teacher, like put your id on or you'll get suspended. Like, yeah, because you're communicating the same idea. But the recipient will get it one of two ways. Rigidity or like they're looking out for me. Yeah. Um, so my fifth year, it's like more laid back than it was my first year. But that doesn't mean the expectations are any lower. It just means that I'm A. I've gotten to learn more as you go. Yeah. But B, um, you've kind of gotten into a groove as far as what are the do's, what are the don'ts, um, how to smooth things over and how to really just a, build a relationship with the suits and, and not just worry about grades because again, like an Undergrad, they'll teach you like, hey, you know, there's a great book and you need to be follow the core curriculum.

C:

[27:57](#)

You need to follow the curriculum calendar. Um, let's make our own curriculum calendars as a, as a project. That way

you're staying on task because teachers never need to spend more than two days on something that the curriculum calendar says it needs to spend one day. Um, so like they teach in the undergraduate they teach you logistics. So like first year your so focused on the logistics and and then, you know, by your fifth year, sixth year or whatever, just more, the more you teach, the more relaxed you can be because you feel more comfortable with where you're at. Like my first year teaching would I have shaved my head and at assembly, no. And as I say,

K: is that why the hair's gone?

C: Yes. But like by my fifth year, I'm like, dude, the kids love it.

PART TWO of INTERVIEW. HAD TO PAUSE WHEN STUDENTS CAME IN ROOM
UNEXPECTEDLY

K: [00:00](#) And we're going again. Okay. I think I'm making a separate recording, but it's fine. All right.

C: Yeah,

C: [00:05](#) but it's just for me, uh,

C: [00:10](#) it's all about the kids. It's student centered sort of stuff. So your first year you're scrambling like to put your classroom together, especially, oh my gosh. Especially if you're a traveling teacher, you are really scrambling.

K: Were you a traveling teacher for awhile?

C: Yes.

K: Oh No.

- C: Uh, so like you're scrambling to get things together for your lessons plans. Good. Did they even work? Um, and then like, so you're worried about your lesson plans working more so than the student will be and then, you know, the year by years going forward, progressive, progressing your, you did, you've changed your lessons of force over the years, you know, good teachers, you, you need to change your lessons anyways. Um, so just changing lessons, but it's like maybe it's minor tweaks by this time. Um, so you can focus more on the students and their experience rather than like me just trying to figure out what I'm doing as a first year teacher.
- K: [01:09](#) You've brought up undergrad stuff and it's a lot of stuff that I agree with actually. But, um, do you think they should have a class or two or parts of classes where they focus more on,
- K: [01:19](#) on [inaudible]
- K: [01:21](#) how to build relationships and what that looks like and what do you think would be the most important thing that would need to be included in that? If they did?
- K: [01:35](#) That was kind of a big question
- C: no, I, I understand your question. No. Um, no, I don't, I don't think there needs to be a class on it. And because like, even, even though like, literally like second year teacher, first year teacher, they, they'll have to figure it out. They'll have, they'll, they'll, they'll have like a, somebody that happens in class or something will happen. Not like big and like, like for example, today I had a crying young woman in my class. She came into class and her Mascara was like running down her face and you know, we're talking about imperialism and King Leopold's ghost and Leopold in Belgium, uh, and in the Congo. And, um, my first year I would've been like, like we stopped, you know, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say that, but my first year I probably wouldn't

know what to do. Um, and I probably would just like, I dunno, like walk around like, Hey, have you like, do you go to the bathroom?

C: [02:39](#) Like chill out a or something like that. Um, and then at the end of the day, like you might tell somebody like, tell a colleague or my tell your significant other, like, you had a situation in class today, uh, from, you know, a student that, uh, they were upset and I would say, and like, you know, these are things they don't really prepare you for in college, but can you prepare teachers for these social interactions? Like really good you can like, Oh yes, we've got a textbook about how you can prepare for each is as these situations. And I really don't think there's a, and I really don't think there should be a class that it cannot be able to a legitimate proper class. Yeah. Hey, students are robots. Let's focus on what happens if Timmy starts crying in class. What should you do? Um, and again, that's a progression of you as a teacher.

C: [03:36](#) It's a progression of you understanding your awareness. Um, it's a progression of just like being molding yourself from the teacher and educator you want to be and having a civil and it's a progression of you and your relationship with that student. Like for example, that student that came in crying today, uh, she's one of the ones that's hard to break card crack. Um, but you uh, you know, for Moore for Christmas, you know, when you ask students to come out shop to help shop for families that you've adopted for charity to shop for them for gifts, they surprise you and say they want to come shopping with you. And like, okay, so you talked to them while you're shopping and then there's a student that comes in crying, same one and you kind of pause class and say, keep talking about king Leopold, the imperialization of the Congo.

C: [04:32](#) I'll be back in a sec and you just go outside and you sit down with a student on a bench and say, are you okay? Is there anything wrong? Is there anything I can do for you? And just like getting on a personal level and not, it's important not to like look down on them, like while they're

sitting down and just like sitting down with them, know, letting them know that you're there for them if they need you. And if of course if he got becomes something more serious than that's when you would let other people know, like principals, counselors, etc. Uh, but, uh, just, I don't think a class could prepare you for me saying, Hey, I know your boyfriend trouble is rough. Go to the bathroom, wash your face with Mascara, running down your face, splash of cold water in your face. Chill out for a second. Come to class when you're ready. When you can operate a class will not prepare you for that.

K: [05:35](#) Yeah. And kind of to end all of this on a good note, describe, can you describe the best day you've ever had as a teacher? If you can pick a day and what made it the best day? If you can think of a best day.

C: [06:02](#) Let's go with, I was talking about this today. Um,

C: [06:09](#) one of my classes a few years back. Um, it was my fourth hour and I had a lot of awesome kids in that class and they all got along. I was one of those family classes and like, and I'm talking like all these kids are from way different backgrounds, but they all like, we're in it together with me like a and m at the end of the year, it's April, I randomly get like, so I walk into my room and there's like random things like hanging from my ceiling with fishing line. I'm like, what is going on? And it's like Super Mario, like chocolate coins. And I was like, what the heck is going on? And then fourth hour comes along and like, hey, did you like, our, like our coin set? Like it was like a trail of coins hanging from the ceiling. I learned from my door to my desk and I was like, Oh, uh, I was like, uh, sure.

C: [07:10](#) Who let you in my room. Oh, so and so. cool. I'll talk to them later. Um, and then, uh, like the class like was like, hold up, hey, we have something for you. And like they have like four kids, they bring in like a box full of beings that's wrapped. And Dale, I got pitched in and got me like random gifts and I was like, why? And like always wanting to let you know that like, we really appreciate you. We

think you're really cool. And I so like I was like, I'm like sitting like on the edge of my desk, like about to cry, but I'm not going to cry in front of kids. Um, yeah, I don't like sitting on the edge of my desk because there's just kids like again from like you have, you have kids that are super interested in anime. You have your kids that are jocks, you have your kids are in Pom, you have the super nerdy kids that are awesome.

C: [08:13](#) It's all get some different backgrounds just like as one, uh, really excited to like celebrate, you know, like something in like they hand you some gifts and like we all love you. We think you're cool. Really appreciate you. Thanks for being our teacher this year. We went to, went on, we wouldn't want it any other way. I'm like, I'm about to start crying on my desk. Yeah. Um, so that was probably one of the best is ad because uh, that really established that like 4th hour when we still talk about it, like they've graduated since then and we still talk about that fourth hour and the kids like, you know, we'll, we'll go to dinner occasionally, still be like, hey, how's college? Um, and uh, we'll still talk about like fourth hour and how much we love being in that class and how much they miss. Just like random distractions and bellwork and just talking about stuff and then getting onto class material.

C: [09:08](#) So that was probably the best day I had it because like definitely like validated and felt like the low of that class being reciprocated. MMM. Towards like what, how I felt towards it now. [inaudible] so that's how I would say yes.

K: And this is random, but I need to know what is that flag behind your desk.

C: Oh, okay. Like the bed sheet looking at not the American one.

K: I know what that is.

C: Um, so every year I do a project during the world wars and it's to teach the kids like about like espionage, spying, uh,

countries, um, countries being in alliances with other countries and how that makes wars way more messy than it really is. And it makes them way bigger than they really need to be. And so like, they designed their own countries, they grade their own countries, it create their own pledge of allegiances, their own national anthems, their own flags, their own constitutions.

C: [10:20](#) And it's like this really big project and there's like, you know, eight groups of eight circles in the classroom where like, they're working on their projects for the country to earn more points to see how powerful their country is or whatever. And uh, is there a really cool project that sounds really fun. It's fun. Sometimes it could get nasty because it's like kids like, you know, like, yeah, because like if so and so wrote a treaty with this other country and they broke it with this other country, sometimes kids get angry and yell at each other across the room. So sometimes I feared for my life.

K: Uh, but awesome. Buyin in there.

C: Yeah. Oh my gosh. I have English teachers like yeah.

K: You know, I might, I'm honestly thinking about stealing some of that and using it with my seventh graders.

C: That's awesome. Like you had student teaching with Jacks, Jacks

C: [11:10](#) I had Jacks come up to me and be like, Yo, you just stopped that project cause the kids won't stop talking about it in my class. So it's really fun. The kids like kids from like that have graduated kids or seniors, kids that are juniors are like, let me know when you're doing that project because I want to be in the class just to see what happens because it's a fun, it's a fun activity. Like where they get like really fun. Like I show them like here are the rules here, the outlines, here are the projects you can do [inaudible] you gone do what you want and they literally run class for two and a half weeks.

- K: That's awesome. In the, do you like it a lot? I would like it. I'm glad I asked about that cause that's awesome.
- C: Yeah. If you want it, I can
- C: [11:54](#) just give you the stuff.
- K: I would like that if you could email me, because I might, I would definitely probably pare it down a lot because I'm working with 12 year olds, but, um, that's something that I know that they would enjoy and enough of them are competitive enough that it would definitely, they always want to win everything.
- C: Definitely.
- K: But thank you so much. And we're done. Unless there's anything you want to add.

Appendix B

Interview Transcription: Turi

Interviewer: Kylie Gibbons

Teacher Participant: Turi

- K: [00:00](#) All right. There we go. For my record. What grade levels and subject or subjects do you teach?
- T: I teach seventh grade general and pre AP science and an eighth grade stem elective.
- K: Okay. And this whole project is about investigating what makes up, or how teachers work to build, positive relationships with students and what their perspective is on why they do that and why it's important. Um, so let's first start off with what would you define as a positive teacher student relationship?
- T: Um, I think a positive teacher student relationship is one that first has open communication both ways. Both the student and the teacher feel comfortable sharing thoughts with each other and speaking to each other respectfully, but also not, not like on the most level of playing fields because you still need to have that teacher and student distinction and separation and the respect that comes with that.
- T: [01:04](#) So I think in a nutshell, that would be
- K there are two key things I want to ask you about and that with one is what would you, could you describe what you would recognize as a real respectful communication between you and a student or how you would respect was definitely addressed them or how you would
- T: like, what's acceptable?

K: to you.

T: For me personally, I speak, I s I try to bring humor into like a lot of things like in with peers and whatnot. So I think being able to joke with each other tease is a really, is a harder word than what I mean. But you know, like joke and jest kind of, you know, um, be silly with each other. I think because for me personally as the, the biggest thing, being able to joke and then being able to okay the silly times over, let's bring it back and then respond to when it's time for me to switch gears.

T: [02:04](#) And also for me to recognize when they need to switch gears. Like when they're done, they're done joking there, they're ready to, to be serious or they're ready to talk about something hard. Being able to recognize those things. And you can only do that when you take the time to get to know them as individual people and not just, Oh, all seventh and eighth graders respond to this way to this kind of conversation. You know what I mean? Stuff like,

K: okay.

K: And the second thing I wanted to ask you about what you said was, you said knowing where the line is, how do you go about setting that line between making sure they're comfortable with you and making sure they also know that you are the authority figure you are the teacher.

T: Uh, I mean sometimes it comes right out to actually like saying it out loud.

T: [02:52](#) Like, I have a student this year, real funny. We definitely get along and we speak to each other very openly and the student is just a, is just a funny kid. Um, but there are times where I have said the student like, all right, you need to remember that I really am your teacher. And even though we can chat and be silly together, we are, we're not establishing that friendship relationship where we can have a friendly relationship without being friends and, and teaching, teaching students, especially at this age, the

difference between a friendly relationship and being friends is very delicate. So it takes, like I said in the beginning, very open communication and saying yes, this is acceptable or no, this is not acceptable.

K: Being direct?

T: to be very direct.

K: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that. Um, are there any, you had said a positive teacher, student relationship, respect, requires comfort and respect between, for both the teacher and the student.

K: [03:53](#) Are there any things besides what we've already talked about that you do, especially at the beginning of the year that you try to do to set the tone for that or to set that up for yourself?

T: Sure. Um, I liked at the beginning of the year I like to share about myself because I want, I want them to know that I'm fairly an open book, fairly big quotes within reason for sure. If like I will share with my students about my family and about my kids and about my pets and like what I did over the weekend, you know, within reason and um, because I want them to know that if I'm willing to share that I'm willing to listen and accept what they have to say as well. Um, whether it's in front of the class or whether they'd want to talk to me privately. That's my first thing is to set, I'm open because I want you to know that you can be open with me if you feel like it and being very clear that just because I'm a very sharing open person, I don't, you don't have to be that person either and then, and that that's okay.

T: [04:49](#) And that I respect the way that they handle their own personal lives and letting kids know, noticing kids, especially in the first few weeks, you know, you notice kids come in and they're already nervous so it's kind of hard to get a read on them. Then they get a little more comfortable in the first few days, first few weeks, and you always end

up with a kid or more that suddenly is not having a good day and being able to go to them quietly and say, hey buddy, I noticed you're not quite yourself. Is there anything I can do to help you? 90% of the time they'll say no I'm fine. But I think them knowing and you're doing that pretty regularly and with more than just one kid. Any kid that you can see to be able to do that. I think it only communicates to the kid that you're talking to, but to other kids around them cause they notice like, oh what Mrs. _____ cares?

T: [05:38](#) Or Miss _____ like really wants to, Miss _____ wants to know why I'm acting this way so maybe I can tell her next time if she asks me and I think that's been the easiest thing.

K: Good. Is there anything that you do throughout the year? Not necessarily at the beginning, that you do regularly, that they recognize or that you just, or a type of thing that you tried to do throughout the year to continue building that or to maintain it?

T: Um, well that's a great question. Maintaining the, the joking kind of atmosphere, the funny atmosphere, cracking really bad, bad jokes. Um, letting them crack really bad jokes, um, and can continuing throughout the year to try to show as much interest in their personal lives as I can or um, um, pretty much every day. And this is so silly and little, but it helps, it helps me set a tone even for myself when I walk in the door, most days I start with "hello, hello everybody."

T: [06:44](#) And it's still like I, I start every hour with a greeting. They don't respond ever, but it, for some kids they, that's their cue. Not only that, okay, classes getting started, but it's their cue that like, hopefully what I hope they get is that I'm here for them. Like I'm greeting them because we are starting something together and that we do a lot of things and I also try to use that word we and us and that it's not, it's not just this is my classroom, we are doing my thing, you are following my rules. Even though we are giving them that kind of buy in to what we do as a whole class and

as a whole environment as a class. Okay. I hope that answered it. If I'm making sense. I'm not sure where I went on that

K: you made perfect sense. I get what you're saying.

K: [07:34](#) Are there any, and we're getting to the end of the process questions, but are there any lesson plans that you specifically put in place that allow them to bring themselves in so that you can get to know them or that they can get to know you better and to foster relationships?

T: Sure.

K: And you would describe those to me?

T: It kind of throughout the year. I like to incorporate, um, art, not art art, I am zero artistic, but like giving them an opportunity to show me something that they know or something that they think through drawing or writing or whatever. I mean I teach science so there's not always a lot of opportunity for that. But when I give them the chance, I see more out of these kids then than I do other, any other kind of writing assignment, especially in my super quiet kids, super quiet kids most often tend to be pretty artsy and pretty artistic.

T: [08:23](#) Um, I am not a quiet person so they tend to like kind of just chill out in the back and just kind of absorb things cause it's, there's just the class is a lot of a lot. Um, and so being able to get those little glimpses of those quieter kids through those quieter activities. Um, and also like I don't, I don't often shut down like the weird what if questions, unless it's just taking too long. Like unless we do like time wise and we have got to move on. Oh yes. Student this year is just full of really fantastic questions and he or she student, um, comes up to me almost every day to ask me a very wild out there question. I don't know the answer most of the time that's usually science, usually science. Uh, today was about if energy is neither created or destroyed,

then then something, something, something Big Bang theory and not the show.

- K: [09:22](#) And I was like, but I don't know. I don't know man and the student says well. Okay. And like I don't know, just that he knows that he can ask me questions all day long and I am perfectly comfortable saying, ah, I don't know what you're asking. I don't know what you are saying to me right now. Um, but I think he and I have a really great relationship because he knows he can ask me a question. I can say I know that I can say I don't know to him and I know that he'll say, okay. Whereas I have other students who will ask me a question and I don't know
- T: [09:56](#) [inaudible]
- K: [09:58](#) and they out loud question my ability to be a teacher that is not a positive relationship and I don't know how to fix that aside from suddenly knowing everything about everything for that particular kid. But, um, or like kids would come up and they're like, hey, Mrs._____ I got spoon in my pocket. Oh for real. I, I had a kid a couple of years ago, different school, every single day this kid came up to me, Hey Mrs._____, guess what I got in my pocket? Uhhhh, a rocket ship? It's a spoon. every day. This kid had a spoon in his pocket. And it became just kind of part of our every day, every day. And one, one day he came in and he sat down and he didn't ask me what I thought it was in his pocket and I didn't know what to do with myself. It turns out he like his, his dog died or there was some like real sad thing that happened. Yeah. And it like, it really meant something to him that I was like, buddy, what do you have in your pocket today?
- K: So I like that. Um, so transitioning out of what you actually do and into what it does for the students and to yourself eventually when we get to it. What do you think in general, do you think that, um, building positive relationships, why do they matter in the classroom? Other than what we've already talked about

- T: I think it, it gives them,
- T: [11:24](#) I think it makes them feel comfortable because more, more than anything, I don't care if they learn any of my content as long as I know that they came into my classroom every day and they were comfortable. That's first and foremost because if they're not comfortable, they're guaranteed not going to learn anything. But if you're comfortable, I can, I can get something in there as far as content, you know, as far as I'm learning something. But, um, and even if it's that they learn that they can be comfortable around adults, a lot of these kids don't have good relationships at home. So if they know that they can come into this classroom and feel more like themselves or feel comfortable enough to cry or feel comfortable enough to be weird and ask me what I think is in their pocket, then that then I've done my job.
- T: [12:12](#) And that's, that's it. That's all that matters.
- K: I like that. When you have had a positive relationship with a student, have you noticed or over the years recognized that their behavior changes from your class to another class where they don't necessarily have a positive relationship? And can you describe what that looks like?
- T: Absolutely. That, uh, I think that happens a lot because you'll have those kids that are just good kids all around, like, and they'll, they're easy to build those relationships with. But sometimes those kids that are harder to build those relationships with and like, let's say that, I finally meet them in the middle somewhere and we're suddenly good, but then I hear from three of their other teachers that they're an absolute nightmare and they're in ISD and I don't, I can't even fathom that kid being in ISD. Um, I don't, I don't know why they behave differently because a lot of times the teachers that they, for whatever reason,

don't have a good relationship with it's not because like that teacher is not trying.

- T: [13:15](#) It's not because the teachers don't do it using all the same tools or like doing all the good things. It's not that that's a bad teacher or a bad relationship builder as an adult. It just, you never know what it is it's going to meet that kid. And this year, more than any other year that I've taught, I've had more of those like me and this kid, we're not good. We butt heads all the time. I said something, I could not tell you what that is. And now suddenly we're golden and they high five me in the hallway. And I'm like, I don't understand. I don't, I don't know what I did. I don't even know, like, tell me what I did. So I can use that later for another kid that comes along and that's like you. Um, and I, and then on the other end where I know that there are kids that are gems for other teachers and there were total Turd for me and I'm like, what am I not doing?
- T: [14:06](#) What can I do better? And it hurts. And it's really ends up being really disappointing when you're like, man, not that I need to be a kid's favorite or even be liked, but chuh I am way cool. I don't understand.
- K: Well, I'm actually that when you are on the other end of it and you are on the negative side of it, what are some things that you have tried or that you try to do with that student? I know it probably changes based off of, from what you're saying, student to student, but what are some things that you tried when you're on the other side of it?
- T: Well, I talked to all the teachers first and if I find that okay, he's not, he's only a Turkey in my class. What, what do you do that work so well. I'm going to try that next time. Okay. That did not work.
- T: [14:47](#) What do you do that work so well and I'm going to try that and I, I try all the things that all yoga teachers say worked for them and then if it doesn't work then I just, I mean you just keep trying. It's like, it's, it's too discouraging as a teacher to just give up and say, well sometimes you lose

even though at some point you have for you. I mean like as a human being at some point you have to go, I've done it all. I've done everything I can. Um, but I think what you do for one answer is you just, you don't stop trying. You just keep, you keep going until you at least get a little just to a little something out of them. Even if it's just one half smile at a really bad joke. Okay, good. I will stop bugging you kid. I will stop bugging you and we are fine now.

K: Gotcha.

K: [15:33](#) When you have, cause it sounds like you've have in some cases been successful when you're talking about a negative relationship that is somehow happened with a student. Can you describe, you described a little bit, but a regular behavior, how it changes in the classroom and how you think that's changing their motivation in your classroom when it goes from negative to positive, like if you, what it looked like, what their motivation looked like in your class before the positive relationship and what that motivation or their behavior looked like afterward?

T: Um, do you want like a specific example or like a general kind of thing?

K: As general or specific as you want to get.

T: [16:11](#) In gener, I'll go with general in general. You know, once, once the relationship has been repaired or created, sometimes it's just that it was never there in the first place. But once, once that good relationship is there, it's almost like it's something that you can, I hate to say hold against them, but like use as a motivator. [inaudible] I got a kid right now. Again, I don't know what I said to him, but suddenly we're besties and he's we're golden and everything's cool. Super Cool, and it's great. Dropped, like significantly dropped, uh, because he doesn't need him to do his work. He just wasn't doing. And so when we talked about grades today. he comes up to me and he's very defeated. He's like, what do I do? How do I fix this? And because he and I have such a great open communication

type relationship, I can say, well, you can do anything, anything, literally do anything and it's going to get better. And he just looks at me and he's like, oh, she means it. With those kids that you have good relationships with. You don't have to. For me personally, I don't have to like beat around the bush with them. For some kids I do because that's how they, that's how they need to receive things and that's fine. Um, but for a lot of those kids, I'm, I'm able to be more direct. And when I have a kid that

T: [17:31](#) they're, they usually perform really well for me. Their grades are fine or the behavior is really fine or whatever and things slip. You can use the disappointed word and it really is so impactful and you can say, man, I just am so disappointed in how you've been lately or so disappointed that you didn't actually do this assignment. You didn't try your hardest or whatever. They, they take it personally and they're like, oh I really let her down. I need to fix that. So then they find like another their own version of an internal motivator and I'd like to think that translates into other classes or into future grades or whatever. I don't know if it does, but it can at least sustain them through my class or it can sustain them through seventh grade or or whatever. So finding, if they're not motivated on their own, like they don't, they don't get disappointed in themselves. If they know that other people are rooting for them and other people are in their corner, then a lot of kids are just going to want to do what makes other people happy. And so I think letting them know what they're doing is or is not making you happy, I feel like can, can help carry them on and like translate into other aspects.

K: [18:34](#) Okay.

K: [18:36](#) So moving from student motivation results from having a relationship with them, how do you notice once you get beyond the motivation and they're actually listening and they're participating, have you noticed a change in their actual understanding?

T: Yeah, for sure.

- K: Can you describe if you can think of this particular kid and a topic that they didn't get and then when they actually started communicating with you and having that open relationship?
- T: Yeah, if that's the Aha moment, like the, the actual like context, like they're finally understanding the things that we're doing.
- T: Um, yeah, that it happens. It happens a lot actually like it when, trying to think of an example, but I think it comes more from like them getting to that Aha moment is them being comfortable asking questions because I'll have,
- T: [19:34](#) I'll have those kids that like they kind of, they kind of butt against your or whatever because they don't understand because they don't want to be the dumb one in their own words. They don't want to seem unintelligent, so they don't ask the questions, well then they're definitely not understanding if they're not asking questions. So when they get comfortable to be able to at least come up to me and quietly say, hey, I don't understand this. Then I'm able to do the teacher thing and meet them at their academic level, which is, which is totally separate from their emotional level. But once, once I've gotten to the point where they'll meet me in the middle of emotionally let themselves be a little vulnerable, then I can rise up like a, like a knight on a horse and be like, let me teach you the science and things, and then they, then I'm able to do that.
- T: [20:26](#) The teaching part of my job is way easier. So then they are able to better understand their being more respectful of our space and of our time as well. Like if they've been a behavior issue when they're no longer behavior issue, they're going to learn more because I don't have to, I don't have to talk to them about the way they're acting because we already have built this good relationship of mutual respect and an open communication that I can say, Hey, are you done today? Oh yeah, I'm done. And now the

learning can begin and it's just a, I mean big sweeping terms. Yeah. If they, if they respect you then they'll listen to you. And if they listened to you then they learn more but done a duh .

K: So before we go on, I just kind of like, there seems like a process that's coming out. So comfort, respect, learning.

T: [21:11](#) Yeah, definitely, definitely. And sometimes those things happen really, really fast and sometimes it happens, you know, today, the second day of the fourth nine weeks, like I think, I think I had that moment with a kid today where she and I had had conversations, many many many many, many many conversations. But then today, I don't know what it was, but at least for today I was able to say, Hey, remember when we talked about and she said, oh yeah, she learned things today. That's cool. It may not happen that way tomorrow, but it happened today and that's, that's what I can take.

K: And this is a little bit separate, but beyond the learning, have you ever gotten past the comfort they got past the respect they're starting to learn. How, have you ever noticed that there, I don't know if it's self efficacy, but more of their like enjoyment of your subject changes once they've gone all through that.

K: [22:05](#) Do you like they start out, I hate signing science, I suck at this, I can't do this. And then once you've gone through all of that, it does that change or is it still kind of like, I'll do it for you?

T: I think for some it's kind of, I think it's kind of half and half. It's, you know, I got, I have, you know, I hear every year and I really don't like science, but I really liked Miss _____'s class. So I don't know if that means they like the time that we spend together or if they actually like my science class, I think it's kind of half and half for kids. But I have had kids, like former students that are now like in college and stuff that have like that I've seen or you know, around town or whatever and ask 'em, so what are

you going to school for? I'm actually like in chemistry or in pharmacy or whatever. Like Oh, that's neat. You know, I'm trying not to ask now. Who inspired you to do that one? But I do know one student for sure. She's in a nursing program and she straight up told me, she said, I hated science. You made me.

- T: [23:09](#) I'm trying to, I can't remember her words specifically with it, but I made her want to listen. So she found something that she didn't know she'd be interested in. She never ever thought she would go into medicine of any kind, but for whatever reason, she and I had this excellent relationship and I made her want to listen. She hated all the things that we did in my class. Like she was not interested in our content, but she learned to listen to her teachers a little better. And there was a science teacher down the road that was like, hey, nursing is cool. And she's like, you're right, I'm going to be a nurse. And that was it. So even if it's, you know, I don't, I don't know if they like my subject much more
- T: [23:45](#) necessarily, but I hope that they at least like learning a little bit more because they learn how to trust their teachers.
- K: So, so we've gone through kind of what seems your whole process for actually creating and using those relationships for students? Where was it, um, we've gone through the process of how you create them and kind of why you do for students. Now I kind of want to talk about what these relationships do for you as a teacher.
- T: [24:13](#) Oh no, You're gonna make me cry. You're gonna make me cry ugly tears.
- K: [24:18](#) have a positive relationship with either a student or a class. It can be either or a combination. How do you feel when you're in the classroom with them?
- T: [24:27](#) Oh my gosh. Like I'm like, I'm doing what I was meant to do, like with my whole life. Um, especially because teaching was not what I ever wanted to do. I ended up, I got

into this profession and kind of a backwards way. Um, and when you get, when you get those kids, when he get like, or that class, I'm glad you brought up as a whole class cause you can have an entire class. Where like, these are my babies and I love you all. Um, every day. You know, when you get that, it's like, it's just very validating. Like it makes me feel like I'm doing my job right. Even if they don't understand the science, I feel like I'm at least able to get to that point better. But you know, when the kids are leaving at the end of the year and they're like, Mrs. _____ I'm going to miss you a lot and they mean it and I'm like, done. That's, that's cool. That's all I, that's all I ever need everyday. So ultimate job fulfillment

K: is it, so

K: [25:20](#) I had you describe how you feel when you have a positive classroom and a positive student. What are the feelings you get when there's, you've tried everything, you've worked hard and you still have either with a class as a whole or a single student who kind of brings down, sometimes you're feeling and mood about a whole class as I know.

K: Um,

K: [25:43](#)

T: well we all know that one.

K: What are those feelings? Can you describe them to me? And I'm sorry to do this to you.

T: Sometimes. Sometimes it's just ultimately defeating. Like, yeah, look what I got the class. Everybody has the class, right? I don't like thinking I have to see this hour today. Never, never. I would rather feel totally neutral then. Oh, I don't want to do that class today. Um, and it, it hurts my feelings. It's so stupid. But like if her like it hurts my feelings. I take it really personally, especially if it's a whole class. If it's one kid in the, I don't got enough room in my feelings for one, the one kid to hurt my feelings that way

but like a whole class, it just is. And what makes me really sad is like, cause you know you got one class then the super stupendous and they're all your babies and you love them all and then the very next hour is not them and the complete opposite. And these two classes talk to each other. They would not know who the other classes talking about sometimes like am I allowed to talk about like ours this year, like disclose that kind of stuff without kids names.

K: Yeah.

T: My

T: [26:58](#) fifth hour

T: [27:01](#) would not describe me the same way that my sixth hour does. Six hours. Relationship is way more positive. I'm able to be more my style of teaching, my personality and my kind of person with them were carefree and open and joking and like, you know, we're fifth hour gets total 100% stick in the mud, zero humor, zero room for any of that because they have proven over and over again that we are not going to have that kind of relationship. And if those two classes described in words me as their teacher, they would not describe the same person and it kills me that my fifth hour, if they knew that I was that person, it would be so much different. But I won't feel like they've given me the opportunity to show them that. Like we, we haven't been able to get to that point.

T: [27:50](#) It's gotten better throughout the year with 5th hour, but we're still not, I mean like we won't ever get to that, that six hour point, you know? Um, and that it just, it just bugs me and bugs me so much that it's like, man, you guys don't even know how cool I am. You have no idea how much fun you could be having in this class. Like all of my other classes, and it just is, I'm doing this for eight years and little by little, every year I take less. I take it less to heart. Like I don't beat myself up about it as much every year. as much. It still, it still hurts my feelings. Um, and the same kind of

thing happens when you have a kid that you had worked really hard to build this beautiful relationship. Like

T: [28:45](#) this one is gonna make me cry because they have this, this year

K: oh, sorry.

T: No, it's okay. Um, this is why we do it, right? Like this is where, this is our reason for what we do. Um, I worked really hard with this, with this girl really hard. You got to a really good point. She was a terror everywhere else. And she told me, she asked me one day, can I just stay in here all day? And I was like, no ma'am. And she said, this is the only class I don't get mad in. And she means it. Like she really meant it. And I was like, oh, I did not realize I was that person for this kid and I need to, I'm not going to hold onto this and this is, this is it. I mean this girl called me mom and means, means it like not just, not just because she thinks she's getting away with something, but, and then she did really bad things.

T: [29:30](#) She made really poor choices and She, She in my classroom when I was in doing hall duty to the point that you've got her suspended and expelled and all the things. I have never felt such like betrayal from a child because now that relationship is totally broken. She didn't do it to me, right. She didn't, she wasn't disrespectful to me directly, but what she did totally ruined

K: it was in your space and

T: it oh yeah, and at what kills me more is that I'm sure she did that because she felt comfortable in here. Like how, how twisted is that? Like I built this beautiful comfortable place for her to feel comfortable to do what she did and I'm just, yeah, stupid. It makes me so upset because then in the same breath breath, I miss her. Like I hate not seeing her every day that I don't know how she's doing.

- T: [30:24](#) I know that she doesn't feel angry in my room, but she's not even in my building anymore. Yeah. I don't know what, I don't know how she is out in the world and it eats at me every day that I don't see her to know how she is because even though I'm so mad at her, even though our relationship she did come back to school was totally broken, I would still care for her very, very much because of what we built. So
- K: Um, looking at both those positive feelings and those negative feelings and thinking about it in context with your practice as a teacher, do you notice times when you are more motivated to either come to school because of those or just to do more for those kids that you have the positive relationship with or that you feel yourself thinking, I don't want to do this because,
- T: oh yeah, there's, there's days.
- T: [31:25](#) You know that there's days where like, I want to change my lesson plan because I don't, I can't imagine doing it with my fifth hour. They will not let everybody enjoy it and learn from it and get the "so what" from it that other classes, well, yeah, I still do it. I'm not going to, I'm not going to take it all as planned for them, but you know, but I do it in hopes that maybe this will give them, maybe this time it doesn't always, rarely does, but you know, um, but then there's those times where like, there's those kids, right? Like so silly. Last year I had this kid who was obsessed with Stephen Hawking. I mean like truly fan boyed over Stephen Hawking. Stephen Hawking died.
- K: Yeah, I remember that.
- T: I was not feeling well like I was, I was ill, like sick, but I couldn't not go to school because I knew that my young Steven Hawking was going to be devastated.

- T: [32:25](#) And Man, I felt awful. I had this, I had a fever, like I was really not well, and he walks into class and he is just the most deflated balloon I'd ever seen. And I said, hey buddy. And he looks at me and he's crying and he's like, did you hear? I'm sorry I did. That's why I'm at school today, man. I need to like hug you and make sure you're okay with the Stephen Hawking died. And he's like, I'm really glad you're here today. And we both cried and he was fine. It was like really dumb. But yeah, you do find those of it, you know? I mean, we don't do this job for anything but the kids like this is, that's the only reason we do this job. I don't do it because I love Talking about water cycle, you know, you know, and there's always the joke, you don't do it for the money.
- K: Yeah.
- T: [33:04](#) But like, you don't want to do it. Um, but you know, you only do this job for those kids. And if you're not building relationships with those relationships with those kids, what are you doing here? Why, why do this job? So, yeah.
- T: [33:22](#) Did I answer the question?
- K: You did. . You're the same as me. I just keep talking.
- T: Yes. You'll find something in there
- K: [33:33](#) with those motivations. Cause we talked about student motivation and their learning and now we've talked about your feelings with those relationships as well and your motivation and kind of your learning a little bit too um, you said you've been doing this for eight years. I'm talking to a series of teachers that have been teaching for different periods of time. What have you noticed? You've mentioned it a little bit, you'd feel less personal about things over the years, but what would be the most important thing from your first year of teaching to now with teachers? Teacher relationships that like you wish you could go back and like, I needed to have done this and it would've made my life x amount better.

T: I wish.

T: [34:18](#) I wish that me as a brand new teacher and all new teachers knew that it takes time. You're not gonna walk in, throw on a little charm and all of the kids are going to love you. Like, it's just not going to happen. And I wish that I knew the, and I slept remind myself of this. Their children, their brains are doing weird, horrible, devious things to them and they are not the same kid everyday when they walk in the door. We're more consistent because we're adults and our brains are fully developed. But like they're, they're not, they are not consistent creatures. And just because today was a beautiful, awesome, we did all the great things day does not mean tomorrow's that day. And just because tomorrow is not that day, it doesn't mean that you did anything wrong. If you are consistent every day, not just in like your classroom management and lessons and blah, blah, blah. Like if you're consistent in the way that you treat kids and the way that you allow kids to treat you, you will get more consistent results from them. And it takes time. I, so this was my first year, um, at a title one school people told me like, oh, that's going to be tough. It's going to be different kids or kids is really what I thought. I was like, it's not a big deal. And I came from not this type of school at all. The privilege at the school that I was at before

T: [35:54](#) I didn't realize was privileged. I didn't know until I came here. And building relationships with these kids has been way harder than building relationships with those kids. However, I've not felt, I've not felt this fulfilled in the relationships that I've built for the most part in the seven years before this year. So that's, that's something too, if you don't, if you don't feel like you're making those relationships, maybe you're not in the right type of place. That doesn't mean anything is bad with you. Right. As a teacher it's just your personality will or won't work with other personalities. You know, I think it just was hard. It was a really hard beginning of the year cause I was like, I don't know. I did the things I threw on the charm. I did this, the funny jokes, I did all the things. They are not impressed. That was that. It was a big learning curve in and

each year it's different. Each year you're funny, jokes will work differently on different kids and some kids will think it's funny or another kids don't think it's funny and they don't get gold stars.

K: [37:02](#) I like that. Um, the whole thing I kind of want to end with is you were kind of talking about

K: [37:15](#) building those things and patience is kind of what I got from what you were talking about. And I think first year teachers as you say, Panic, oh, I think that's the thing. If something doesn't work and so they are constantly changing things, which does the opposite of what they want to do, which is what I'm taking from what you were saying.

T: Yeah

K: Describe for me if you can, the best day you can think of as a teacher ever,

T: Ever?

K: And describe like describe it and why you think it was the best day for you. And I'm sorry if I make you cry again

T: I'm a crier, it's fine.

K: Um, and we'll end there.

T: The best day.

T: [37:52](#) Yeah.

T: [37:53](#) Is a day where I want to be there. Let me say this, let me say it this way, where the kids want to be here more than I do. Okay. Because when they want to be here, it makes me showing up totally worth it. Like, um, it makes me happy to, to have shit. Like you're welcome that I came today. Um, a perfect day is a day that they are engaged with what we're doing, not just because it's fun, like not just because the, the thing that we're doing is fun, but the material that we're learning has, has captured them in one way or

another. Um, a perfect day is the day that they are as seventh graders as they can possibly be. I love seventh. They are so weird. They're so quirky. They ask the most ridiculous questions and those are the best days when they are fully themselves in the best way that they can be themselves because them doing that allows me to be exactly who I am without any filter. Really like, I mean adult filters, but like without any um, hesitation where I feel like they trust me because I trust them. Like I know that they are going to do exactly the what I have set before them. They're going to reach higher than I could've imagined. They're gonna work harder than I expected. They're going to exceed my academic expectations because,

T: [39:25](#) because that's just what they know to do and um like, I have a sign on my desk that says "do whatever be weird. It's okay" and on my favorite days are the days that they are the weirdest that they just get to like that they remind me that their kids but that they're also really smart kids and they get to do weird dumb stuff and it makes me leave at the end of the day less tired than when I got here. That's, that's a perfect day where we act like fools and learn something along the way.

K: I know I promised that was the end, but you made me think of another question

K: [40:01](#) we are dealing with right now in our area, a very, with a very serious problem with keeping teachers and we've had a very important conversation here about what sounds like a motivation for wanting to stay a teacher. How would you think or what do you think needs to be done to prepare people coming into being a teacher that prepares them to be able to make these relationships so that they want to stay, because that is what seems to be coming across to me is that you want to stay in what you're doing because of the relationships that come with

T: that's true.

- K: The students.
- T: Yeah. So I know that's a big question to love that you do. So,
- T: [40:49](#) so like I said earlier, I didn't, I'm, I'm alt certified. I came in with a degree in forensic science with zero intention of ever doing this job ever. So I don't know. I don't know what they teach in teaching college, right? Like I don't know what they teach about building relationships or anything like that.
- K: [41:08](#) Um, I'll tell you right now, I'm sure they don't a lot. They talk about it, but they don't really, there's no how to build the relationship 101.
- T: [41:20](#) which does make sense.
- K: I mean,
- K: [41:24](#) if they could put something into a teacher prep program about relationships, what would you think the most important thing
- K: [41:34](#) they should practice or talk about or observe or look at or whatever of the options or combination of it that you think they should do?
- T: I think a lot of observation and like, like a lot of observation. I mean a lot of observations for different teachers at different types of buildings at different grade levels because even if, you know, like if you know you're getting elementary certified, right? Obviously observe as many elementary teachers as you possibly can, but also observe some secondary teachers. Observe how they're going to change as they grow, how the kids are going to change, how they're going to talk. Um, and like, um, observe on good days, observe on bad days. If you can watch video instead of just sitting in on a class, because I know if another adult comes in while we're into my class, they're going to be perfect. That's not how they are every

day. So if you're able to have it, if someone were able to have a teacher film an entire class period with all the ins and outs and the bugs and the uglies to be able to see how teachers work through those relationships. Also to look at like what not to do. Examples of how or how not to build relationships. Maybe information on like

T: [42:59](#)

different,

T: [43:00](#)

gosh, what's the, like what's, so we talked about love and logic, right? I don't know the term that goes with that is it, it's not pedagogy is it pedagogy, whatever. Like the teacher you weren't as, you know what I mean? Um, like different of those kinds of methods. Some people are very method learners, right? Like when I fell in love and logic to me as a system, it made sense. But I'm a system type learner. I'm not, I'm not as much of an organic type learner. So observing for me, and it may not have been all I needed, I think like good communication skills. Like if you had to, I probably like really, really basic teachers need to know good communication skills and not good academic communication skills. But they need to be active listeners. They need to be active learners. They need to be a little

K:

interesting

T:

oh, quicker on their feet because you aren't going to have those kids that are like perfect and then crazy and you don't know what happened because someone literally looked at them weird and being able to think on your toes on how things like how to navigate.

T: [44:09](#)

And I, I really what I see and I, I've done some mentoring for new teachers and it's like the coolest job ever. I love it. But I see for a lot of new teachers is they feel like they have to be perfect year one and I want, I want every new teacher I want every first, second and third year teacher to know you don't know what you're doing and it's okay because the rest of your building will be there to help you do things and if they're not, you need a new building. Um, but like I'm worried that there's so much pressure on the new

teachers because there is such a shortage and it's like, oh, you're here, you should stay like Hotel California. Like, you know, like, um, and we scare new teachers into this is how you're effective, this is how you were affected, this is how you're effective and you can't, you can't be all that in your first three years.

T: [45:04](#) I mean three it takes, they say it takes three years to get like you're get,

K: you're like, you don't want to quit,

T: like content kind of mastered, but it takes five years to your classroom management mastered. And I, someone told me that and I was like, whatever, I don't believe you. Yeah, I'm super good at this. I'm on like a super high horse until I, for real, mid fifth year I was like, oh they were right. Those crazy people knew what they were talking about. Now I feel like I could walk into my classroom any day, no lesson plan and be just fine. Don't do that. Bad advice. Don't do it. But like I don't know if I would want my first year teachers too, if they want to stay. Think about their "So what?" I went to a conference where they were like, what's your so what? why, why are you a teacher?

K: [45:56](#) No one said that it was content except many reading teachers read heaters are the only ones. And maybe math teachers that were like, I want to teach kids to love to read or I want to teach kids to not hate math. Right. Um, and so I get, I get that as they're so wet, the like, I dunno my, so what was I had a really horrendous junior high experience. Not because my teachers, my teachers were just stupendous, but like just, it was just horrible, right. You're 12 to 14 and nothing works in your life. I mean 12 to 14. Um, and I needed someone to tell me that I was going to be okay. So that's what I think of every day is how am I going to show a kid, any kid, that, whatever this is, it's going to be okay. You're gonna make it out. You're going to get out of this then it's not gonna last forever. Um, so like be who you needed when you were younger. I just rambled.

K: No, that was beautiful. That was like, like what I got out of it was be patient

T: with yourself first.

K: with them, with yourself, don't expect to be perfect , and keep in your mind your "so what".

T: Yeah. You're so good. You are an active listener.

End Recording

Appendix C

Interview Transcript: Sylvia

Interviewer: Kylie Gibbons

Teacher Participant: Sylvia

- K: [00:00](#) Okay. So for the record, what grade levels and subjects or subject do you teach?
- S: I teach eighth grade reading on level reading and then pre AP reading.
- K: Okay.
- S: So just eighth grade.
- K: [00:11](#) Nice. And before we move forward, let's just, what would you define as a positive teacher student relationship? What would that look
- K: [00:19](#) like?
- S: I would say a positive relationship is one where they feel comfortable talking to you, whether that's they're okay with asking for help if they need help. And just that when they see you in the hallway, you know like they say hi, you say hi to them, not that you're best friends or anything, but that they're comfortable talking to you both about academic stuff and they're like, oh guess what I did this weekend. Like if they want to share like part of their lives with you too.
- K: [00:43](#) Okay. And when they're first coming into your room first year and yet just to, how long have you been teaching, you marked the one to three year category.
- S: [00:53](#) This is my first year.

- K: Yay! You're still alive! What is something that you did at the beginning of the year, if you did anything, to kind of help start off those relationships?
- S: So I had them fill out a little questionnaire that was like, you know, name, preferred name. Um, what's your favorite book? What was your favorite subject last year? What's something that you would like me like to know about you? Like to help with the class? A lot of them put like, I just don't like reading. I'm really sorry. That's good information for me know. And I also, instead of like calling roll the first day I just had them say their names that I didn't start off by mispronouncing your name the very first day and I took notes on how to pronounce it and stuff.
- S: [01:38](#) I like that. And then after the first day, are there any things that you do, whether it's an everyday routine moment or even lesson plans that you plan on purpose in order to get to know your students better so that they get to know you or to build a relationship?
- K: [01:55](#) I, so one thing I do is that for reading, they have to do independent reading every week. They're supposed to be reading a hundred minutes a week. They keep track at home and their parents sign off to say that they did it. And I also have them put the titles of the books that they're reading on there. So especially for the first few weeks I tried to say something cause like I'll have them doing bell work or something like a red check reading logs. I tried to say something like to every single student, like if I had read the book, if you like, oh that's really good one. What do you think? So far it's one of my favorites. If I hadn't, I asked them like what was it about and if they were liking it so far, just trying to talk about, cause I mean that's one of the few things they get to choose. It's like their book that they're reading at home as opposed to stuff that they're doing in school.
- S: [02:37](#) [inaudible] I like that. Um, do you have any routines that you do every day? Like a greeting at the door, or

- K: [02:47](#) as you said, I guess it's the routine of stopping by their desk every day.
- S: Yeah, well that's, that's once a week, for reading checks. But I try to get out there and say hi to them as they're coming in. Sometimes I have to be in here, you know, setting up for the lesson. But, um, and then also when I'm just like out about, in this school, I was harder. This is the beginning of the year, but I was like, I have to learn their names. So I made it a goal that every single time I saw one of my students, I said hi, like what are from, they was like, Hi Student C. You're like, Hi Student A. And if I didn't know their name, it was like, okay, I gotta like look it up when I get back to my classroom, look at their seating chart and see who that was.
- S: [03:22](#) So, and that's helped a lot too, especially with Student S. I kind of make more of an effort to do it with students who I'm not particularly fond of because I'm like, you know, just that little positive bit of interaction in the hallway, just like, hey, what's going on? Like even if they're kind of a troublemaker in class, then that helps sometimes just making up for maybe some of the negative.
- K: Yeah. Okay.
- S: Cause I want them to know that, you know, I don't hate them or anything. I'm not mad at them. Like I can speak, you know, he could have a pleasant conversation even if they were goofing off in class that day.
- K: Got It. Moving away from the initial like building blocks when you have built the relationship or you've noticed that they're refusing a relationship, cause sometimes I know that happens behaviorally. How do you see that translate in the classroom?
- K: [04:12](#) Or if I need to repeat the question, let me,

- S: what do you mean by that?
- K: Like how can I tell if, how our relationship's going? How or how do you feel the relationship you have with your students affects how they behave in your classroom?
- S: Um, it's honestly both positive and negative because the ones who are like really excited to come talk to me, we'll often like actually maybe interrupt class, like Miss Sylvia, can I show you this video I saw like, well no, because we're having class now and we can't talk about that. So that's a negative. But the positive part is that if there, I think if they're comfortable talking to me just about random stuff, then they're also more likely to participate in class because they know that I'm easy to talk to and I'm not going to be like, no, that's a wrong answer.
- S: [04:51](#) How dare you. Like I'm always open to them sharing things. So I feel like it encourages class participation a lot more.
- K: Okay. And then what about the students who you have a negative relationship with or that if it's not negative, it's just blah, it's not there. How do you see that affect their behavior or do you think it does?
- S: Um, I think it makes them honestly a lot more quiet and reluctant to ask for help. I have several students who are like, I have, I go and take the initiative and checking on them because I know that they don't like me a whole lot and they're not going to raise their hand and see if I'll come help them. But it just means that I have to be more proactive and seeing if they're struggling.
- K: Alright. And then moving from that, have you seen a difference between, or her, I guess you wouldn't necessarily see it heard of a difference in behavior in another teacher's class versus your class? Depending on the type of relationship you have with them and the type of relationship they have with the other teacher. Like with a specific statements

- K: [05:58](#) you can give [inaudible] you don't have to put names obviously, but if you can think of an example where you can speak as general as you want to kind of moment to think. Yeah,
- K: [06:10](#) think about that.
- S: [06:17](#) I have, I have one student in particular that I share with the teacher and she's, she's given us like a lot of trouble this year. She's very stubborn. She does always wants to do whatever she wants to do. And doesn't understand why times of life we got to do stuff, this one button. And she's also very, she's, you know, honestly typical middle school girl, she's always like, and like rolling her eyes and stuff. And I, I think my relationship with her is better than with some other teachers because I am incredibly nice to her on purpose. I don't let it bother me. I'm just like, you know, like, Hey, like good morning, how are you doing today? I am really polite and nice to hear even if she's not to me. And so she knows that x part of it is that she's trying to cause a reaction and so she knows that she doesn't get to me. And so I have, I think a bit of an easier time with her than with teachers who are, who are like visibly upset by her behavior.
- S: [07:09](#) So you tried to control your reactions to what she's doing and instead of giving her the reaction, you know, she wants you give her a positive one.
- K: [07:18](#) Yeah, she had, she had a problem where she was asking to go to the bathroom like every single day and she'd be gone for 10 minutes at a time and it got so bad that eventually I had a meeting, I sat down with her and the counselor and the counselor was like, um, you know, this student doesn't, she's really honest. She was like, sis, you know, this student doesn't particularly like you. Let's see what we can do. And I discovered that the reason she didn't like me is because when she asked us, you go to the bathroom and she had already gone like a bunch of times that week. I would just say very probably like no, sorry, not right now. And she was very upset that I wasn't like going over the top and like

giving her an explanation as to why she couldn't work anyway. But we worked it out and it's actually a lot better now. She is, you know, she doesn't enjoy class but she is more neutral I guess. Like we're not best friends or anything.

K: It didn't work out the bathroom issue.

S: Yeah, we do it now where she has, you know, one bathroom has a week and you know, I'm, whenever she wants to use it, no questions asked. You can go but then that's your word for the week and that seems to be working.

S: [08:20](#) Okay. Sounds Fair. Um, moving from just motivation, which is like the behavior and actually just giving you the time to teach them or attempts to have you noticed, I guess from the beginning of the year to now since we're toward the end of the year now we're in the last nine weeks, have you noticed any changes in a student's ability in class or even maybe their belief in their ability in class from the beginning of the year to now based off of what you've been able to build with them or reach them emotionally or whatever relationship wise?

S: Hmm.

K: Again, specific areas as general as you want to be.

S: [09:10](#) I have, so this is not like one state in particular was thinking notice with several of them is that I've noticed the change where if they, if they get something like wrong on a quiz or like they have a question rather than just being upset, either meet or at themselves from like, why not? I missed this question. They're more interested in finding out why so they can change it for next time. Like there's more of a focus on like, okay, well I didn't get this, but let me figure out what went wrong so I can fix it and more on like growth basically.

K: [09:39](#) Okay. So they're more focused on their growth now than they were on just being offended that they,

S: yeah.

K: [09:45](#) Got It. Yeah. I like that. And I see that myself a lot. Um, can you

K: [09:53](#) think of examples where of maybe a specific, I don't know if you do something I, you sounded like the reading logs. Maybe I'll talk about that. The reading logs where somebody who at the beginning of the year they came in and they told you, I hate reading and working with them and working with those reading log and getting choice and working with them. Have you noticed anybody who is now like willing to, if they're not like, oh I love reading, they're more willing even for if it's for you or for whatever reason that they are actually reading more now and they're enjoying it. Even just

K: [10:27](#) an iota more than at the beginning.

S: I have my, this is the same student who's a bit of a problem I was talking about earlier and she's one of the ones, she was like, I don't like reading. I hate doing it. She's found that she really loves, um, I always forget the name. He does the, she does short poetry. Okay. She really, she's honestly, she read like one book of her poems like three times in a row and I'm like, do you have to pick like a different one? But she did. She found something that she liked and that's what I tell them. I'm like, I don't care what you read. You can read nothing but books about football from getting it here. It's the end of the year if you're enjoying it and like you're reading. No, that's what matters. And I've had, we're doing the give right now in class and I, we do like a ton of discussion and I noticed that kids who before had expressed that they don't enjoy reading and they have a hard time finding things they like are getting really into the book because we talk a lot about like no predictions for what's going to happen next.

K: [11:24](#) You're like why are they doing the things that they're doing? It's funny because they're all like really offended when stuff happens. So like, cause it's a Dystopian

community, right? They're like they can't choose their own husbands and wives. I would leave, I would just walk right out of there. But they're really passionate about it, you know, which is exciting. Yes.

K: How did she

K: [11:42](#) discover her poetry? Was it just you picked something up one day?

K: [11:47](#) I really don't know. I should ask her. I know that the author has an Instagram account and will post poems on their lot and you know, students are like Instagram super big now so she might have found her on there. Gotcha.

S: [11:59](#) Moving kind of away from necessarily, we may come back to it. Student motivation, student learning. What about your motivation or how you feel with your relationships with your students? Have you um,

K: [12:14](#) it's your first year. You're my first, first year teacher that I've talked to, which is exciting.

K: [12:19](#) Um, when you have a positive relationship with a class or an individual student, how does that, or even just a positive interaction with a student that you normally wouldn't have, what is the feeling you get and how is that different from your normal feelings?

S: [12:35](#) I mean honestly it kind of can turn my whole day around if I have is I have like, this is the thing that totally made my day yesterday. I have a student who she's struggling with a lot at home I think and she doesn't, she doesn't want to talk to me. She doesn't want to do anything in class. I've asked her before like, you know, is there anything I can do to help you or do you just want to be left alone? And she was like, please just leave me alone. So, but yesterday we were talking about um, the giver and there is a scene where it's discussed that in this community, every time someone has twins they release one of the twins, which is a big mystery what releasing is. We haven't got there yet. Um, and so she,

I was helping someone else next to her and she like never initiates conversations with me ever.

- S: [13:20](#) And as I finished up, she, before I walked away, she was like, you would think maybe everyone in this book secretly has a twin that got released. And I was like so excited that she's talked to me. I was like, that's so great. Wouldn't that be weird if they all had like secret stuff ladies? So it just, and I'm always looking for those positive things. You know, I try especially hard with students who like, I know just our personalities clash or they really annoy me. I try to find like one good thing about them. Maybe they said something really hilarious in class and like even if it was disruptive, I can appreciate that they had to be pretty smart to think of something to say like that.
- K: [13:54](#) I like that. Um, how do you feel so that you have that positive feeling that you get because you said it can turn your whole day around. What about the ones that are negative or you have a bad day, how is that end and how you feel and what are the thoughts that go through your mind on that?
- S: [14:13](#) I, I try to make a plan for, first of all just like addressing the behavior. Like what am I going to do tomorrow? What am I going to do in the future sets and happened again? And then I, you know, I think about it honestly in the car on the way home. And then when I get home I'm like, I've come up with a plan, I'm going to leave my problems at school and I try to just like chill out and not think about it anymore. Obviously you have to plan for the future, but then if you're just like, oh, that student made me so mad, like just over and over, then it, you know, then I feel like I'm going to react more harshly to them than I should if I'm obsessing over it. So, oh,
- K: [14:49](#) I like that. And we talked about the positive, talking about the negative, how do you feel at the end of an average day of teaching? It's just like
- K: [14:55](#) you coasted,

- K: [14:57](#) nothing bad would on and nothing like a epiphany. Wonderful and magnificent happened. What, how are you feeling at the end of the day
- K: [15:06](#) if it's just an average one?
- S: I mean, just like a pretty good, honestly. I mean, to be honest, I don't have average days. I have days where something bad happened and then if something bad happened and that makes it a good day, even if it wasn't super exciting or anything, you know, I come home feeling like just just like, yeah, that was good. I feel like I'm in the right career. I've, I've had, you know, a couple of moments of panic, like I can't do it, but it's been okay. Mostly
- K: [15:33](#) how have you noticed or have you noticed that from the beginning of the year to now your emotions, have they changed about teaching about a particular class, about a particular student or just about yourself?
- S: [15:48](#) I feel year I feel a lot more confident, especially especially with students who, I don't know at the beginning of the year, like I, if I saw students like misbehaving the hallways or ever, I would kind of feel like, like I'm not a real teacher yet and now I can tell them to stop for us out. I'm just like, Hey, stop that. So, and I feel more confident. Um, I feel more like I can like joke around with them a little bit and like be sarcastic occasionally because I know that I have control of the class and it's not going to get away from me. So it's April, I'm able to like relax a little bit more I feel like.
- K: [16:24](#) Do you feel that confidence and that feeling you get of being able to joke with them? Has affected your students at all?
- S: [16:32](#) I think so. It's honestly, ironically, me being able to joke with them has actually helped some of the behavior with my worst students because they know now if it like, you

know, if they're doing what they should and being productive and not like shouting at me, interrupting me. Like we can have a pretty good time in class, especially when we get to discuss stuff that we're reading. So they've, they've seen the, the not harvest, but they've seen me be either strict and I know that I've done, if that happens, they're not going to have a good day. So,

K: [17:05](#) and why do you think, or can you think of a moment or a series of moments that caused that change to happen within you? What gave you that confidence and that ability to start joking with those people and have that, do you think of a moment, whatever you realize, Aha, I have this or was it a series of things that led up to it?

S: [17:28](#) I think this is going to sound so opposite. I think it was the first time, I'm not going to say shattered because I didn't shout, but I, I raised my voice. It was, it was right before the day I was going to have to leave for a training conference. So I knew I was going to have a substitute the next day and my sixth hour class, which I'm sure all last class of the day or not every teacher's best class, but they were just, they would not stop talking. They're being loud and I like, I was like, this is absolutely unacceptable. You will not treat the substitute tomorrow. Like you are treating me today. We are not going to do this. And the groom just went silent and they were excited leaf the rest of class. And uh, then when I got back the next, the day afterwards, the cell gave me a good report.

S: [18:11](#) I was like, like the job. I really appreciate that. It's the fact that I was able to, I guess scold them and they listen and then the next day I always try it when you know, when did you have to praise them when they do well too, otherwise they don't learn anything. And then the next day when I was like, you know, that was really great. You guys like, I so appreciate that you're doing exactly what you should. I feel like since then, um, obviously there's good days and bad with classroom behavior, but I feel like that the highs and lows have been less extreme, if that makes sense.

There's still loud some days, but it's never been as bad as that.

K: So it was kind of, and you can correct me if I'm wrong. This is what I'm interpreting from what you're saying. It sounds like you got your confidence from, I can say things and they're going to listen.

S: It's the fear of being too lenient and also the fear of being like way too strict and like scaring them, you know? And now that I was like, you know, I can yell at them a little bit and it's going to be okay and they're going to live.

K: Yeah. Yeah. All right. Um, and then we're going to end with kind of two more things. One is, can you describe the best day you've ever had as a teacher so far this year?

S: [19:21](#) Oh,

S: [19:25](#) I don't think I can pick one. Um, okay. I'm going to, it's like a moment and then a day after that. So I, I, so I teach pre AP and then on level classes with my on level classes we took a lot more time to write an essay at the end of the unit. Whereas if my pre AP classes I didn't give them as much time because they just don't need it. So in order for us to both start the next unit at the same time, I had to come up with an extra activity for my pre AP kids to do that. I decided we were going to have debates about, we were reading flowers for Algernon. So it was stuff like, did Charlie make the right decision by leaving at the end of the book or did he die and they worked on it for a week or so and it went really well and a lot of my on level kids have friends in pre AP classes and I had multiple kids come up to me afterwards. He's like, Miss McCracken, could we do debates too? That sounded really fun. It was like, yes, absolutely you can. So the next semester we did debates with all of my classes and I had a lot of students who were like very scared about speaking in front of the class who were very nervous about it and I had,

- S: [20:33](#) I want to say every single student participate and they were able to like speak without being shy about it and they made some really good points. Felt like I didn't even think about it. See that having the motive of students asking me to do more work essentially like asking you to do a class activity and then everyone like really getting into it was just really excited.
- K: [20:56](#) That's, that's kind of moments we live for, isn't it? Um, and then can you think of an activity or a lesson can be like a drawn out project. It could be something that you did for a day or two. Is there something that you can think of a lesson you can think of that you could describe for me that you feel like even if it was intentional or not brought the class together and built relationships either between students or between you and students. Um, it can be from any point in the year. Can you think of something that you did that either intentionally or not you felt did that, was it those debates?
- S: [21:33](#) It's of course. I mean honestly I'm going to say that because I had the obviously on teams and I assigned them by what their interests were. So then we get to sit with their friends. It was like who all is on the anti self driving cars side. We did like current events topics for that one. And so they were with a lot of people that they probably hadn't worked with before. And because it's a debate and I, you know, I told them your greatest not based the way you win your grade is based on you personally speaking. But of course they want to win anyway and they got really competitive. So I like I have like my, my loudest, most exuberant student and I like super, super quiet like smart student huddling together. Like okay, if the other team says this we're going to say this. And just like planning step out. And they got, they just got really into it. It was exciting.
- K : [22:20](#) What are some of the things that you feel like you learn from your students from that are about them?
- S: About also I learned

- S: [22:28](#) honestly like that a lot of the ones who, who never talked in class have some very good things to say if they are required to speak in class or participation. And I learned, I learned a couple of sad things too. I tried to pick topics that would not be controversial at all. So we had our self driving car is a good idea or bad. Um, should college athletes get paid just like professional athletes and should online gambling the band. And I had one student who was like, my Stepdad has, has a real problem with online gambling and it's because he can do it on the computer. And like I talked to him afterwards, I was like, he totally did not have to share that, but thank you. That was really, that was a very good point that you may have and I appreciate you bringing that up. So, and I thought it was really cool people comfortable saying that in front of the whole class to, you know, which is that he knew his classmates were going to be respectful of him. I'm constantly surprised like to share with me. Yeah.
- K: [23:27](#) And we'll end with one last thing. I know I said two, but I thought of another one while you were talking. I just made me think of it. Um, as a first year teacher, if you could go back and tell you before you started, what is one thing about getting to know your students or letting them get to know that you wish you
- K: [23:46](#) could've told yourself to do differently and then we'll end there.
- S: [23:57](#) I would say, I would say don't be afraid to look like a Dork in front of them because you're never going to be cool. And teachers who are trying to be cool, it's that they're not doing what they should be. But if your students know that you're not afraid, like to get silly with things or like to laugh at things that they said or just to be like just a huge nerd about whatever your subject is like, then they really appreciate that and they feel like they can talk to you about their interests too.

K: Thank you so much. I appreciate your time.

Appendix D

IRB Approval Letter



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: February 04, 2019**IRB#:** 10310**Principal Investigator:** Kylie Nicole Gibbons**Approval Date:** 02/04/2019**Exempt Category: 2****Study Title:** Positive Teacher-Student Relationship Building and Its Effects On Motivation, Learning, and Teacher Well-being

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Fred Beard, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix E

District Approval Email

Dr. Romines says it's okay to send the survey.

Please forward to your teachers (I don't have a zz list for secondary teachers). It is their choice whether or not to participate in Mr. Gibbon's survey.

Thank you,
Sherrell

Appendix F

Teacher Survey

Secondary Education Teacher-Student Relationships and Classroom Environments Survey

Online Consent to Participate in Research

Would you like to be involved in research at the University of Oklahoma?

I am Kylie Gibbons, a graduate student from the Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum Department and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled Positive Teacher-Student Relationship Building and its Effects on Motivation, Learning, and Teacher Well-being. This research is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma Norman Campus. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a current secondary education teacher. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to determine different strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships, and how those relationships then affect student motivation and learning and teacher wellbeing.

How many participants will be in this research? About 100 people will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will complete an anonymous survey about your relationships with your students and classroom environment. At the end of the survey, if you are willing to possibly be interviewed and observed, you can provide your email contact information to the researcher.

How long will this take? Your participation in the survey will take approximately 15 minutes.

If you choose to provide your email contact information, additional time for interviews and observations could be added on (approximately one hour for the interview, and one school day for the observation).

What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? If you do not provide your email information, there are no risks or benefits to participating unless in the unlikely event someone obtains and tracks the IP address used to complete the survey.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you without your consent. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records.

Data are collected via an online survey system that has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. Please note no assurance can be made as to the use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.

What will happen to my data in the future?

We will not share your data or use it in future research projects.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Whom do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at 405-204-3132 or kyliegibbons@ou.edu

Faculty Advisor Information:

Dr. Crag Hill

Office Phone: 405-325-1498

Email: crag.a.hill@ou.edu

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s).

Please print this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this research.

1. I have been teaching for:

1-3 years 4-6 years 7-10 years 10+ years

2. I am alternatively certified.

Yes No

3. I have a

Bachelors Masters PHD

4. I give my students a voice in my classroom.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

5. I give students a say in class activities.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

6. If applicable, please elaborate on how you give students a voice and choice in your classroom.

7. I know all of my students' names and how to pronounce them.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I know about all of my students' interests.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I have individual interactions with students in class.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

10. I speak to my students outside of class time.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

11. I attempt to understand my students and their actions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. I share my interests with my students.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

13. Students feel comfortable coming to me with their problems.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. I generally treat my students fairly.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. I make sure students understand the reason(s) for the consequences to their actions.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

16. My classroom has a generally positive environment.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. Students pick on each other in my classroom.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

18. There are student caused learning disruptions in my classroom.

Always Frequently Occasionally Never

19. If you are willing to be interviewed and possibly observed by the researcher, please provide the email address through which you would like to be contacted. Providing your email is NOT required, and is entirely optional.