

Student Teacher Relationships and Learning

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**Abstract**

Teachers interact with students on a daily basis throughout the week. This puts teachers in a position to potentially spend more time with students than their parents do. Having so much time with students, it is not unlikely that teachers have a great impact on students not just as their teachers, but also as their role models, and to some even a parent figure. Since teachers spend so much time with students, they should act as a positive influence on their students to hopefully create a love of learning and guidance into their future.

**Introduction:**

As teachers, we tend to spend more time with our students than their parents do. Children spend an average of seven to eight hours a day at school with their teachers. If students are spending nine to ten hours sleeping when they get home, that only leaves six hours at home. For most families, parents have to work and may not be home until around five in the afternoon. This would take two more hours away from parents being able to be with their children, leaving a total of four hours at home as a family. That is, if they get that much time. Some parents may work second shift and their children do not see their parents until a few hours in the morning. All of this has to make one think, how much influence do we have as teachers. We see our students (during the week) more than their parents probably do.

One big question comes to mind about teachers and their relationships with students. Does having a good teacher student relationship reduce the amount of discipline issues in a classroom/school?

How can teachers make the biggest impacts on their students? Teachers are sometimes the only support systems students have. There are many latch key students who rely on their teachers as not only their teacher, but as a parent figure. Teachers should use this time they have with their students to become a positive role model to them, and to also build relationships with students. One positive relationship between a student and teacher could potentially change the future of a child from being on the streets to becoming successful in life. Without teachers, some students would not have people to look up to. There are students who do have great parents and wonderful role models at home, but not every student is that fortunate. Teaching in a low-income school will open a person's eyes to how different some children's lives are. Some middle

schoolers, or even younger, are raising even younger siblings at home. A lot of the time teachers and other school staff do not even know this is going on at home.

A paper titled, "A review of the relationship between parental involvement indicators and academic achievement" shows how students who have more positive interaction with their parents are more likely to thrive in school. Students who have parents who are involved in as few ways as possible are more likely to fail and get into trouble. Sometimes teachers are the only positive role models that students have in their lives.

### **Review of Literature:**

#### **Time spent with students**

Parents and teachers both play a vital role in students' education, but how much time do teachers and parents spend with children. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, parents spend an average of .11 hours a day in activities related to their child's education. When converted to minutes, this means parents are only spending about six minutes a day doing things that help with education. The average time spent reading to children is .05 hours a day, or about three minutes. These amounts of time seem small, but less than one and a half hours is spent in total caring and helping children (2017).

With the small amounts of time that parents spend with their children, this would equate teachers spending more time with their students.

At risk students have stated that they want their teachers to be caring, have respect for them as a student and a person, be able to get along with them, listen to them, take them seriously, and be available, understanding and encouraging (Rassiger, 2011). Any student could want their teacher to possess these qualities, but students who do not have people to look up to at home are more likely to want these qualities.

### **Connectedness to school and teachers**

The more a student feels connected to school, the more likely they are to succeed. According to the CDC (2009), “Research has also demonstrated a strong relationship between school connectedness and educational outcomes, including school attendance; staying in school longer; and higher grades and classroom test scores. In turn, students who do well academically are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.” When students feel like they have a good, strong relationship with their teachers, the student feels like their teacher is linked to their success.

When a student does not have a good relationship, then the student more than likely does not think that their relationship is linked to their success (Buechler, 2011). In Kimberly Buechler’s dissertation titled *Perceived Student-teacher relationships and the success of at risk middle grade students*, she says, “Having a positive learning experience when coming to the middle school can lessen the chances of dropout and at-risk behaviors” (2011). Students are more likely to drop out of school if their parents do not see school as an importance, or if the student sees other things as more important. This also increases if students move from school to school (Buechler, 2011). When students move from school to school, they are not only unable to build a good relationship with their teachers, but may not learn everything that they are in need of learning for that year. Some other reasons that low income students do not do as well is that schools have a middle class set of norms that they are not used to following (Buechler, 2011).

Students are also more likely to be better behaved when they have teachers as positive role models. “Adolescents are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior when they have secure bonds and positive relationships with important people (e.g., teachers) in their lives” (Wang, 2015). Having those positive relationships should help to decrease discipline referrals.

**Building positive relationships**

Capturing Kids Hearts (2004) is about creating meaningful relationships with students, and creating a classroom environment that students buy into. Students are a part of creating the environment by constructing classroom social contracts. The students decide how they should treat each other, the teacher, and anyone in the room. By letting students come up with the rules, they are more likely to follow them. According to the CDC (2009), “Good classroom management—including having set routines and guidelines, adequate planning, and fair consequences for misbehaviors—is critical to establishing a positive school environment and increasing school connectedness.” By letting students decide what behaviors are wrong, they should feel more connected to the classroom because they were a part of creating the contract.

Michael Camp stated in his Dissertation that, “teachers feel the classroom and school culture influences academics and behavior and believe it is important to understand and respond to individual student cultures (Camp, 2011). When teachers understand a student’s culture it is easier to build relationships with students who are not like them.

The research paper “Creating Birds of Similar Feathers” from Harvard states that, “When people perceive themselves as similar to others, greater liking and closer relationships typically result.” Students are more likely to relate and listen to people that are like them or people that they think understand them.

**Classroom / Curriculum Application:**

Capturing Kids Hearts (2004) is a great program to implement in not only classrooms, but entire schools. With the program, students and teachers come up with a social contract for each class. Students get the chance to decide how they want to be treated by the teacher, how

they want to be treated by each other, how they think the teacher wants to be treated by them, and how they want to be treated when there is conflict. This is just the beginning. Once students and teachers create the classroom social contract together, everyone signs in saying that they will abide by the contract (Flippen Group 2004).

Once the contract is in place, if there is a problem, a teacher will address the problem with five questions. What are you doing? What are you supposed to be doing? Are you doing it? What are you going to do about it? What is going to happen next time if the behavior does not change? This gives the students to take responsibility over their actions (Flippen Group, 2004).

Since the program allows teachers to build positive relationships with students, behavior usually changes drastically. Some examples are following: Brenham Junior High School in Texas reported that after beginning the Capturing Kids Hearts program their referrals fell from 942 to 275, test scores increased, and tardies, truancies, and vandalism also all decreased. South Houston High School in Texas saw attendance rate increase from 91.3% to 95.3%, overall test scores increase from 50.5% to 78.5% reading scores increase from 74.0% to 87.4%, math scores increase from 61.0% to 86.2%, and writing score increase from 78.6% to 90.9% (Flippen Group 2004).

At Statesville Middle School, we use the Capturing Kids Hearts methods, and it really does work. Before we can teach students anything, we have to know them. If the students do not think that we are there for them and know them, then they are less likely to want to learn from us as teachers. There are a few students at my school that other teachers refuse to build a positive relationship with, and it shows. I have tried my best to build those relationships, and those particular students will come talk to me, calm down in my classroom, and I can usually talk them off of a ledge.

I personally believe that positive relationships have to happen before great learning can occur in a classroom. When there is mutual respect between a teacher and students more can get done and students will benefit much more.

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