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Strengthening Student Engagement Through Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

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STRENGTHENING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH POSITIVE TEACHER-

STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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STRENGTHENING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH POSITIVE TEACHER-

STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

BY

KIMBERLY H. SNODGRASS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Eastern Kentucky University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

2021

IN MEMORIAM

The work of this dissertation is in memory of my late mother, Mrs. Mattie Ruth Shelton Hill. A strong believer in the power of education and helping others, she gave me the motivational, spiritual, and educational foundation that would shape and mold me into the woman I am today-Psalms 27. Mother Dear, We did it! I have fulfilled my promise to you to finish what I started. Please know that I will always love you and I could not have gotten this far without you, even in spirit.

DEDICATION

First, I would like to give thanks and honor to God who is the head of my life and providing me with the strength, knowledge, and perseverance to complete this dissertation journey. I would like to dedicate my dissertation work to my husband, Dr. Fredrick W. Snodgrass and my father Willie H. Hill. I would like to thank my husband, Fred, for his unwavering support and tremendous strength on this journey. We are now that power couple that I told you we would always be! We did it! To my father, Willie H. Hill, for your love and support throughout all of my life. Your support has given me the strength to finish this dissertation journey. Thank you so much.

To my aunts-Eva, Polly, Mollie, and Barbara (and other aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. too) thank you so much for believing in me and giving me the support that I know your sister would have given me 10 times over! To my bonus families-The Snodgrass Family and Campbell Family-thank you so much for loving me and supporting me throughout this journey. Lastly, to my sister, LeStaesha, you will never know how important your support and words of encouragement have meant to me while on this journey-Ecclesiastes 9:11.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between teacher-student relationships and student engagement. Specifically, this study was designed to answer the following questions (a) Is there a correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships? and (b) Is there a correlation between student engagement and a safe classroom environment (location of teacher-student relationship development)?

The Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS), utilizing a Likert-scale, was given anonymously to the students of 804 classroom teachers in grades three through twelve in a school district in the state of Kentucky. Of the seven domains of the KSVS, the domains of Engage, Nurture, Trust, Support, and Understand were statistically measured.

The study findings indicated that there is a significant correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships developed in safe classroom environments. A significant positive correlation was found because all of the predictor variables were a significant predictor of teacher-student relationships impacting student engagement in the classroom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the educational realm today, new priorities and concepts have come to the forefront in order to aide students in their success within the P-12 classroom. As an educator at a public education high school, these priorities have been stressed by leadership at the building level, as well as at the local school district and state levels in the State of Kentucky. These priorities include, but are not limited to, the need for the use of more technology to engage students; new ways of thinking and teaching; college and career readiness criteria; the use of standards-based grading; the implementation of career academies and pathways; and different strategies used by faculty and staff as interventions for student behavior which can induce successful academic retention (novice reduction). Inadvertently, it would seem as if students have become obscured and thus it is becoming a struggle to reclaim students, especially minority students, who are a part of a demographic that represents one of the largest achievement gap groups, not only in the state of Kentucky, but in the nation.

Building positive teacher-student relationships is the missing key to opening the door to student academic success in public education. Bergin and Bergin state that positive relationships can have a particular impact on the academic success of students of low socioeconomic status as well as those with Hispanic and African-American descent (2009). Developing positive and authentic relationships with students through showing genuine and intentional interest for the welfare and future success of students can provide higher performance rates. Bracey et al., notes that "when people feel you care about them and won't crush them, they are much more willing to listen to you and learn from you because they want to avoid mistakes and accomplish more" (1990, p. 110). Poplin

and Weeres contend that "students desire relationships where they are trusted, given responsibility, spoken to honestly and warmly, and treated with dignity and respect" (1993, pg. 9). A student's ability to build relationships with their teachers predicts future academic and behavioral adjustments in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Therefore, setting high expectation levels for students through the creation of structure and trust, will result in higher classroom engagement and overall academic success for students that have positive relationships with their teachers. Hughes et al states that students who garner supportive relationships with teachers exceedingly foster students' engagement in learning activities and progress in academic achievement (2008). Moreover, positive teacher-student relationships consistent of trust and warmth are indispensable elements for student's academic success (Swanson et al, 2016).

The topic of positive teacher-student relationship building intrinsically reveals the idea that teachers having a positive relationship with their students can essentially transform the practice of education through the nature of performance in the classroom. According to Spilt et al, the affective bond between teachers and students has received gradually more attention in the last two decades (2012). Therefore, with education shifting from traditional practices into the new wave of keeping students highly engaged through numerous differentiated breakthroughs in interventions and technological strategies, one common fact should never be overlooked: meaningful and positive relationships between the teacher and the student will result in academic success. Ginott states:

> I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood

that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, a child humanized or de-humanized (1972, p. 13).

These are powerful words spoken by an educator that truly interpreted the concept that it is not primarily about the content being taught, but how robustly favorable a relationship of trust, nurture, and respect between the educator and the student can positively impact academic performance. Fredriksen & Rhodes conclude that supportive relationships with teachers may augment students' motivation to learn and actively participate in subject domains that have traditionally held little interest for them.

Students who exhibit problem behaviors, including inattention, internalizing, and disruptive and aggressive behaviors, are likely to have negative relationships with their teachers that may be critically punishing for both parties, and characterized by conflict due to a lack of warmth and nurturing. Additionally, students who experience greater dissatisfaction with the school environment, or who are reluctant to use adults as a source of support to invest in a relationship with, are likely to experience less supportive relationships with their teachers (2004). Thence, students who are able to concretely visualize that they truly matter, in return, will profoundly perform by any means necessary, being cognizant through their actions (behavior/engagement) and their academic performance (success). A famous W.E.B. DuBois quote that solidifies this is that "children learn more from what you are to them than what you teach" (DuBois, n.d.).

Teachers must take the time to effectively build meaningful relationships, especially with those students who have been targeted as "at-risk" or "behavior problem" (usually minority students), to effectively learn and be academically successful. A personalized learning plan developed through positive teacher-student relationships can assist teachers in responding effectively to various individual student needs while still conducting systematic learning structures. Yonezawa, et al., assert that teacher-student relationships are central to personalization while associated positive teacher-student relationships improve outcomes through not only combating students' feelings of disengagement, anonymity, and irrelevance, but also enhancing their connections to learning by incorporating specific student interests, needs, academic, and social-emotional supports into the curriculum (2012). Holt et al., also states effective teachers are those that are able to build relationships with students and implement well-developed classroom procedures (2011). Educators must become aware of the simple fact that building genuine relationships with their students can be a major determining factor on essential improvement in classroom engagement that will positively affect the overall academic success of their students.

Statement of the Problem

Learning achievement gaps exist among students, in particular, with minority students, and are growing significantly wider each year. Okpala, et al., suggest that a connection exists between certain school characteristics, teacher characteristics, student demographics, and student achievement (2000). As such, it is valuable to examine teacher-student relationships and their correlation to school effectiveness through student engagement. In the state of Kentucky, student engagement was largely measured by

students' responses to the Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS). In this survey, students would respond to a series of statements, using a Likert Scale, that assessed their classroom engagement through seven (7) constructs: Support, Transparency, Understand, Discipline, Engage, Nurture, and Trust. According to the Human Relations Incident (HRI) model (Combs, et al.), the following dispositions are shared by teachers who are considered effective: (1) a feeling of oneness with all people, (2) the ability to see others as having the capacities to deal with their problems, (3) the ability to view events in a broad perspective, and (4) the ability to be concerned with the human aspects of affairs (1969). Effective teachers are effective people, who are warm and caring, they enjoy life, and they are enthusiastic about helping other people grow and develop. The teacher who is effective is one who combines these personal qualities (dispositions) with content and methods in order to impact students in a positive way (Wasicsko, 2008). To the avail of this model, the constructs of the variables Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture, and Trust will be measured from the KSVS to conduct this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how positive student-teacher relationship variables, Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture and Trust, can predict student interest, which will in turn, positively effect student engagement and success in the classroom. This study will be achieved by examining grades 3-12 Kentucky public school students (Fayette County Public Schools) and their student voice results that were obtained through the Kentucky Teacher Evaluation System (KSVS). This data will be used to examine how the desire for authentic student relationships are warranted with the teachers through the students' results on the student voice survey. Strategies and/or

interventions that teachers can use to achieve these relationships that students are most engaged will also be explored, specifically looking at the depth of authentic relationships and how this may improve student success towards increased engagement in classes. Using personal experience as a high school level educator, visible, genuine relationships with students outside of the content/curriculum really does matter. When students realize that they are valued and that their teacher is invested in their success, they will strive to work harder to gain the approval of their teacher. Hallinan states that students who like school have higher academic achievement and a lower incidence of disciplinary problems, absenteeism, truancy, and dropping out of school:

> The unique role teachers play relative to students and the kinds of experiences that teachers create for students suggest that teachers may exert a powerful influence on whether students like school. Since attachment to school has been shown to affect students' academic performance, identifying the characteristics of teachers that have a positive effect on students' feelings about school is one way to increase students' academic achievement (2008, p. 271).

Using Fayette County Public Schools (Kentucky) 2017 student voice survey (KSVS) results, the students will show through the constructs/domains of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture, and Trust, that teacher-student relationships are needed to keep the students motivated and engaged in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

The intent of this study is to determine if a correlation exists between student engagement and the relationship that develops between teachers and their students in the public schools of Fayette County, Kentucky using the 2017 Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS) results in the domains of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture, and Trust. According to the Kentucky Department of Education, student perception data provides teachers and other professionals feedback from students related to their learning experiences. Whether the information is used as part of formalized self-reflection or as part of an educator's ongoing formative feedback process, the results have potential to improve the learning environment and instructional practice (2021).

When student surveys are included in a local Kentucky school district's personnel evaluation system, the local district Certified Evaluation Plan (CEP) provides guidance and requirements specific to district administration and use. While a district may determine the use of student voice as a required source of evidence for certified evaluation, there are no mandates for any specific survey or procedures for implementation. The KSVS (see Appendix) asks questions of students, grades 3-5, and grades 6-12, that assess seven constructs of student engagement: Support, Transparency, Understand, Discipline, Engage, Nurture and Trust. Infinite Campus is the state-provided, online mode of implementation of the KSVS. Students rate the statements based on a Likert scale to determine their perception of engagement with their teachers within the learning environment. Students' perceptions of classroom and school climate, as well as their relationships with their teachers are significantly and positively associated with academic engagement (Liang, et al., 2020).

The results of this study will be useful in finding essential areas of growth for teachers in helping their students succeed in their classrooms. Schools that consider using these results may aide their teachers in a better understanding of how effective relationship building based on the variables of trust and nurturing with students can contribute to an improvement in overall school effectiveness. Teachers that consider using the outcomes of this study will be able to utilize an increase in student achievement by reflecting on their own practices and incorporating growth and improvement through individually differentiated professional growth plans centered around their specific interactions in trustworthy and nurturing relationship development with students, which can contribute to increased student effectiveness within their own individual classrooms.

Conceptual Framework

This study will apply a quantitative method to research. Data will be collected from the Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS) constructs/domains of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture, and Trust to determine the correlation to teacher-student relationships. The research of the HRI model established the characteristics that would determine an effective teacher: (1) a feeling of oneness with all people, (2) the ability to see others as having the capacities to deal with their problems, (3) the ability to view events in a broad perspective, and (4) the ability to be concerned with the human aspects of affairs (Combs, et al., 1969; Wasicsko, 2008). These four (4) characteristics, through the data obtained in the constructs/domains of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture, and Trust in the KY Student Voice Survey (KSVS), will give an accurate result from the student perspective of how effective teacher-student relationships can be towards engagement in classes for the students as well as the learning environment that is created.

A more recent theoretical approach to aid in this research study is the Teaching Through Interaction (TTI) Framework, which conceptualizes teacher-student interactions in the classroom through three (3) main components: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (Allen et al., 2013; Hafen, et al., 2015; Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012). Within the TTI Framework, emotional support focuses on ways in which classroom practices foster and facilitate students' social and emotional functionality-when teacher-student interaction contains emotional support, students are willing to express their academic, social and emotional needs for the teacher to respond to such stated needs (Hamre et al., 2013). Classroom organization focuses on interactions and practices related to effective ways of organizing and managing classroom situations-fostering of students' positive behavior and supporting their functionality via clear routines, which is seen as an indicator of classroom organization (Allen et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015). Lastly, instructional support focuses on ways in which the teacher utilizes instructional strategies and feedback to support students' learning-opportunities for students to extend their prior knowledge and participate in discussions expanding their understanding (Allen et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015). The components of the TTI Framework are operationalized in the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Hamre et al., 2013), which assesses key aspects of teacher student interactions at the classroom level (see description in Table 1).

The TTI can provide a promising framework for examining the relationship between features of classroom interactions and variations in situational engagement, as it focuses on aspects of teacher-student interactions that have consistently been documented as being associated with student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Lam et at., 2012).

Table 1. Dimensions of Classroom Assessment Scoring System —Secondary (CLASS-S) measure (Allen et al., 2013; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012)

Domain	Dimension	Description and Examples of Indicators
Emotional Support	Positive Climate	The warmth, respect, and emotional connection in relationships among teachers and students
	Teacher Sensitivity Perspectives	Responsiveness to the students' academic, emotional, and developmental cues and needs regard for adolescents
	Regard for Adolescents	Teachers' ability to meet students' developmental and social needs by providing opportunities for student autonomy and leadership
Organizational Support	Behavior Management	Teachers' ability to use effective methods with encouraging desirable behavior and prevent/redirect misbehavior
	Productivity	Teachers' ways of managing time and routines in a way instructional time is maximized
	Negative Climate	Overall level of negativity within teacher-student interaction
Instructional Support	Instruction Learning Formats	Supporting students' engagement in learning through active facilitation, varying and interesting materials, and overall clarity
	Content Understanding	Ways of supporting students to comprehend framework, key ideas, and procedures connected to content
	Analysis and Inquiry	Students' possibilities to engage in hither-level thinking through analysis and inquiry
	Quality of Feedback	The degree to which feedback expands and extends learning and encourages student participation
	Instructional Dialogue	Cumulative content-focused discussion among teachers and students that lead to a deeper understanding of the content
	Student Engagement	Students' participation in the learning activities

Pöysä, et a., 2019

Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). In prior studies, the TTI Framework has demonstrated positive associations between both classroom organizational and instructional support and student-rated, teacher-rated, and observed general behavioral engagement among lower-secondary school students (Virtanen et al., 2013). Furthermore, it has been suggested that students' general engagement is higher when they study in an emotionally supportive environment (Lam et al., 2012; Skinner and Pitzer, 2012).

This study will explore the correlation between student engagement (Engage) and teacher-student relationships (Nurture and Trust), as well as student engagement (Engage) and a safe learning environment (Support and Understand), in the public schools of Fayette County, Kentucky that were obtained through the KSVS which was administered to students from grades 3-12 in Fayette County (KY) through Infinite Campus, an online communication tool between school and home that measures student progress, growth, and effectiveness. The strategies and interaction styles of developing teacher-student relationships is more thoroughly examined in the literature review (Chapter 2).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and teacher-student relationship (Nurture and Trust)?

2. Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and a safe classroom environment (Support and Understand)?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is:

A correlation will exist between teacher-student relationships and student engagement, and a correlation will exist between a safe learning (classroom) environment and student engagement by the teacher's effectiveness as measured by the constructs of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture and Trust in the KSVS through the students' perception. The KSVS, created by the Kentucky Department of Education (2021) in 2013 and inspired by the Measures of Effective Teaching Project (Gatesfoundation.org, 2016). Because the KSVS strived to measure teacher effectiveness via student perceptions, the hypothesis of this study is that there will be a correlation between teacher student relationships and student engagement based on the student's responses on the KSVS. The KSVS was no longer administered to students in the state of Kentucky after 2017, however, it was unanimously brought back by Kentucky legislators in December 2020 to be administered in the Spring 2021 to students in the state of Kentucky (grades 3-12) to be able to have a voice in the improvement of the learning environment and the instructional practices of their teachers.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include a possible lack of generalizability of findings. Although the results of this study could be generalized to a certain number of schools within Fayette County, Kentucky, the results are limited and may not be generalized to include the results of all 67 schools and programs that service the over 42,000 students within the district. The data collected will be provided by the Grants, Research, Accountability, and Data Office of Fayette County Public Schools. The study

will rely on the honesty of the participants (students) and include their mandatory participation, with their parental consent to complete the state assessed survey, based on their anonymity in the data collected through their responses. The participants (students) may have varied in their interpretation of the statements measured on the survey due to its execution to various grade levels of students (grades 3-12), which may have created bias.

The data collected in this study will also include a limitation to break down and examine any demographic results on the student responses. The data contains anonymous responses of students based on their perception of their teacher as a whole class, not by individual students. Therefore, the limitation created is the inability to examine the student responses through the lenses of student demographics of race, gender, special education identification, and socioeconomic status. The teacher will be the unit of analysis in the data where the student responses as a whole class are anonymously based on their perception of the teacher. The results are designed for the teacher to get feedback on their classroom practices from the student perspective. This limitation creates a large disadvantage to the depth of this study. However, the student perception that is provided through the data does allow for the study to be completed to show how students perceive their teachers in the areas of trust, nurture, support, understand, and engage. The results provided allow for the teacher to get the perception of their students to show where improvements for their classrooms are needed. The results also give the students a voice to show if they believe that their teacher is engaging them in class while a teacher-student relationship is formed and if their teacher is providing a safe learning environment for the teacher-student relationship to develop.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Student engagement through positive student-teacher relationships has a relative connection with student achievement. Zimmer-Gembeck, et al states that engagement and achievement at school are important components of competence during adolescence that can promote or undermine future competencies and developmental pathways (2006). High student achievement is what all schools strive for. A key component in reaching a level of astronomical distinction of general student success is very minute and simple. It does not involve high rigorous level content and curriculums, which will escalate as expectation levels increase. The solution is strengthening student classroom engagement through the development of essential and genuine relationships between students and their teachers. For many students in schools, relationships with school staff are among the most salient and influential relationships in students' lives (Anderson, et al., 2004). The school staff and faculty are engaged with students for eight (8) or more hours per day during a full work week. The opportunity for educators to be able to build trust among their students beyond the core content is essential for student engagement, which can lead to student success.

The Disconnect with Students of Color

Every student can successfully learn. However, students of color face specific externalities that can cause a large majority of their population to challenge that statement academically, economically, and socially. Many of these students come from communities in America that house poverty-stricken, lowly educated, and dispassionate individuals, whom are the product of the detrimental sacrifice of being born into their

circumstance. The urban school district to which this study will take place (Fayette County Public Schools, Kentucky) has a very diverse population with over a 23% African-American and 19% Hispanic student population with about 47% of the total student population qualifying for free and reduced lunch district-wide (fcps.net, 2021). Summers (2010) refers to poverty as a malignant cancer that has no cure and is quickly spreading. Interestingly, the very things that define these communities are the exact elements that are desperately sought to seize opportunities to overcome the involuntary episodes of their everyday lives.

Achievement gaps usually occur among students of color who mostly live in poverty and come from homes where their family members have low levels of education. Fram, et al. (2007), states that the achievement rate among poor and non-poor students is undoubtedly high, with also a poverty gap co-existing with a race gap. These students mostly come from single parent households, where the father is non-existent, and the mother usually on average has a low level of education, which can present barriers to educational achievement.

However, interventions and strategies to successfully closing the achievement gap of students of color have come to the forefront. One of which is building a positive relationship with students of color. When a valid and authentic relationship is created which shows a genuine concern for the well-being and future success of students of color, they will begin to build trust in knowing that the educator is relatively attempting to become a permanent and influential vessel within their development.

A characteristic that most students of color who come from low socioeconomic background status need in their learning environments is the structure and nurturing that

can be provided by positive relationships with their educators. Relationships between students and teachers have been associated with students' motivation, achievement, feelings of belonging, and overall affect in school (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Evidence has suggested an important link between a positive relationship with students and teachers and school performance. Ryan et al., (1994), for example, found that the quality of students' relationships with their teachers was significantly associated with students' sense of autonomy, personal control, and active engagement. In their study, 606 students from a public middle school were asked to complete a voluntary and confidential survey on representation of relationships with their teachers, parents, and peers (school utilization and emulation), school-related functioning (academic engagement and self-regulation), and self-esteem. It was found that the quality of both teacher and parent relationships uniquely contribute to the functioning of the school in such that students who feel more secure with and more able to utilize these adults report more positive attitudes and motivation in school.

There was also a significant degree shown in which there was a sense of emotional security with teachers and utilization of teachers as emotional and school supports that are associated with a greater sense of control, autonomy, and engagement in school. Their study emphasized how much schooling is an interpersonal, as well as, cognitive enterprise. More specifically, the real-world importance of students' underlying beliefs that teachers represent sources of interpersonal support (Ryan, et al., 1994). "Human beings of all ages are happiest and able to deploy their talents to the best advantage when they experience trusted others who are standing behind them" (Bowlby, 1973). Therefore, a robust relationship is found between cognitive engagement and both

personal goal orientation and an investment in learning, which in turn is associated with academic achievement (Greene & Miller, 1996).

An Examination of Engagement

In order to create a definitive connection between student engagement and relationships, engagement should first be examined. Engagement can be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct comprised of four (4) subtypes: academic, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological (Appleton, et al., 2006). Academic engagement consists of variables such as time expended to complete a task, course credits earned for classes, and homework completion, while variables such as attendance, suspensions, and extra-curricular activity participation are indicators for behavioral engagement. Cognitive and psychological engagement include less observable, more internal indicators, such as self–regulation and relevance of schoolwork to future endeavors for the former, and the value of learning and personal goals through autonomy for the latter.

Another student engagement promotion is that of the resilience phenomenon that is sweeping the research on student-teacher relationship literature. A model that creates an intervention in the importance of adult and youth relationships is the Check & Connect program, which is an intervention model designed to promote student engagement with school through relationship building, problem solving, and persistence (Anderson et al., 2004). Grannis (1994) adds that engagement involves positive student behaviors, such as attendance, paying attention and participation in class, as well as the psychological

experience of identification with school and feeling that one is cared for, respected, and part of the school environment.

The importance of positive teacher-student relationships on youths' engagement and academic success has been demonstrated in other studies. For example, in a study conducted by Zimmer-Gembeck, et al, adolescent competence was examined to determine whether it has a connection to relationships at school and school fit in which a latent-variable structural equation model, direct and indirect path estimates, standard errors and confidence intervals were used in producing maximum likelihood and bootstrapping (2006). The results showed that the teacher-student relationship created a cycle to which the association of school fit lead to an association with student engagement that ultimately mediated the path back to school fit which lead to student achievement. There were other studies that showed perceptions of teacher support have been associated with academic engagement, performance, and motivation (Goodenow, 1993; Murdock, 1999; Skinner et al., 1998; Wentzel, 1998), as well as academic achievement and success (Osterman, 2000). Furthermore, the fact that the association between teacher-student relationships and engagement was fairly direct with school fit only playing a weak, mediational role indicates that they may be other reasons that teacher-student relationships result in greater engagement at school. Students may be more engaged because they feel autonomous, connected, and competent within particular classrooms, with certain teachers or because of certain subjects, but this may not necessarily mean they feel autonomous and involved within their school as a whole (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2006). Supporting teachers, especially those that have longer histories in the school system, to maintain autonomy support and involvement with

students could benefit student engagement and achievement. In fact, school level interventions that assist teachers and involve parents may have the added benefit of improving teacher-student and peer relationships, student engagement, and academic achievement during both the early and later adolescent years.

The Importance of Positive Student-Teacher Relationships

One of the greatest issues facing teacher-student relationships is that many children aren't going to class. Chronic absenteeism is increasingly common among students (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2019). Building a rapport with students and establishing mentorship with students combats chronic absenteeism, to where students become more motivated to attend classes when they know that their teachers care about them and will help them succeed. Improving school engagement through these positive teacher-student relationships can also improve academic achievement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Motivating students to work hard and miss fewer lessons, teacher-student relationships can keep struggling students from falling behind and close the achievement gap in education (Gottfried, 2009). Teacher-Student relationships can promote student school success in the following ways:

- Strengthen academic achievement
- Reduce chronic absenteeism
- Promote self-motivation
- Strengthen self-regulation
- Improve goal-making skills

(Reis de Luz, 2015).

Additionally, students who have had poor experiences with adults in the past can have a hard time trusting teachers (Varga, 2017). Therefore, positive teacher-student relationships enable students to feel safe and secure in their learning environments and provide scaffolding for important social and academic skills. Teachers who support students in the learning environment can positively impact their social and academic outcomes, which is important for the students' long-term trajectory of school and eventually their employment. Fredriksen & Rhodes state that children's relationships with their teachers can be a crucially important influence, affecting student's connection to school, motivation, academic performance, and psychosocial well-being. Students spend a great deal of time at school, and the classroom is the source of many of their interpersonal relationships and activities (2004), students who develop positive relationships with their teachers use them as a secure base from which they can explore the classroom and school setting taking on academic challenges and improve social-emotional development. Student relationships with their teachers has a powerful impact on students' learning and academic achievement because these supportive relationships augment students' motivation to learn and actively participate in subject domains that have traditionally held little to no interest for the students (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). In order to seek approval from their teachers when a positive relationship has been formed, students become motivated to employ achievement-related behaviors to meet the goals and expectations of that teacher. When positive bonds are developed with students, classrooms become supportive spaces in which students engage in academically and socially productive ways (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Positive teacher-student relationships also promote higher levels of participation and motivation, especially among students who come from low-socioeconomic demographics. Murray & Malmgren state that students in high-poverty urban schools may benefit from positive teacher-student relationships even more than students in high-income schools, because of the risks associated with poverty (2005). The educational risks that are associated with poverty include increased high school dropout rates, negative school attendance rates, low self-efficacy, and decreased motivation to attend higher institutions of learning. Low-income students who have strong teacher-student relationships have higher academic achievement and have more positive social-emotional adjustment than their peers who do not have a positive relationship with a teacher (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Studies have shown that "high risk" students have greater academic results when there is a positive bond of closeness formed between the student and the teacher. Students who went from low teacher closeness to high teacher closeness significantly increased in math skills over a transition year, from elementary to middle school (Midgley et al., 1989). Their study showed how positive relationships can significantly impact academic achievement.

Student engagement will increase when a genuine student relationship is formed between the student and the teacher. The teacher has the power to motivate and influence their students through positive relationship building which can spark trust with the student and a sense of belonging-being respected, liked, and valued. Place states that care is not a finite resource. Giving care to some does not diminish the amount you have left to give to others. The more you give, the more you tend to get back, and then you are more inclined to give even more. This self-perpetuating quality makes caring more than

worth doing; it can be energizing and motivating (2011). The importance of positive teacher-student relationships is essential because it largely supports academic engagement, performance, and motivation, as well as academic achievement and success. The fact that the association between positive teacher-student relationships and engagement is direct indicates that positive teacher-student relationships result in greater engagement at school (Goodenow, 1993). Once a student has a meaningful connection with their teacher, they're more likely to form similar relationships in the future. Reis da Luz states that these relationships can give students the guidance and support they need to succeed, which is essential to nurture them in school (2015). Positive teacher-student relationships can help children develop self-regulation skills, particularly autonomy and self-determination (Varga, 2017). As students learn how to evaluate and manage their behavior, they will be able to reach their personal and academic goals and over time can reduce failing grades and the need for redirection (Reis da Luz, 2015). Apathy can grow and spread in a similar fashion. Place states that:

> If someone smiles at you, it is easier to smile at the next person you see, but if you get a harsh look or a snarl, it is hard to change your mood and smile at the next person you see. It takes a conscious effort to combat and change the negative impact of a snarl or even an indifferent glance. The way a teacher reacts towards students can change the course of their day. One positive interaction can change the course of the day. (2011, p. 60)

Student Engagement

Effective communication and relationship development between teachers and students can also strengthen a school's learning environment. Because these relationships are so closely tied to self-motivation, they can lead to an engaged classroom (Varga, 2017). According to The Glossary of Education Reform, student engagement is defined as the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Student Engagement, 2016).   Student engagement should be a multidimensional construct, focusing on three aspects: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement.

- **Behaviorally engaged** students do what students are supposed to do in class. When students are actively engaged in a lesson, they are less likely to have discipline issues during class. They adhere to the rules and norms, and they display behaviors associated with persistence, concentration, and attention. They may ask questions and contribute during discussions.

- **Emotional engagement** reveals students' attitudes toward learning. Those attitudes can range from simply liking what they're doing to deeply valuing the knowledge and skills they are acquiring.

- **Cognitive engagement** involves effort and strategy use. It's wanting to understand something and being willing to go beyond what's required in order to accomplish learning goals. Those who are cognitively engaged use strategies associated with deep learning.

  (Weimer, 2016)

Student engagement holds a high level of importance in the link to student success. Bundick et al., states that student engagement, in general and across its many conceptualizations, has been found to be predictive of a variety of desirable academic and life outcomes. Specifically, numerous studies have shown that the more students are engaged in their schoolwork, the more likely they are to perform well academically, including getting higher grades in their classes, as well as higher scores on standardized tests (2014).

Moreover, student engagement and positive teacher-student relationships can be connected to an increased rate of student motivation and student self-efficacy. This can be achieved through the relativity of the content to the student. Class material is likely to affect student engagement through one's perceived competence and self-efficacy in the subject area and the degree to which that class is central to one's academic self-concept (Caraway et al., 2003). Therefore, student engagement is very important to student success, academically, emotionally, and socially.

Effective Teacher Methods/Strategies for Student Engagement

Teachers face overwhelming demands and challenges in their classrooms, such as being expected to know content and pedagogy, develop engaging lessons that meet the needs of diverse learners, and use a variety of instructional strategies that will boost student achievement while they simultaneously develop positive relationships with, on average, 125 students each day who are experiencing the personal, social, and cognitive challenges and opportunities of early adolescence (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Schmakel, 2008).

In order for students, especially those of color, to learn, there must be some form of genuine contact between the student and the teacher. In U.S. cities with concentrated poverty, Fergus, Noguera, and Martin (2014) conducted a longitudinal study of mainly single-sex high schools for Black and Latino boys, where a key finding centered on these learning environments cultivating school relationships to support boys' academic success. In their seminal study of mostly single-sex high schools for Black and Latino boys, it was discovered that the potential for academic gains happened when the relational dimension of these schools was prioritized. Through policies, practices, and traditions (e.g., identity-based advisory programs, peer-to-peer mentoring, "gifted and talented" academics, and seventh and eighth grade retreats), according to the study, educational institutions in the lives of these students of color (Black and Latino boys) should not inadvertently limit their potential in life, but should promote a rich intellectual life, infused with joy, gratitude, love, and high levels of expectations where brotherhood, care, support, and respect should make up their core values (Fergus et al., 2014). *Brotherhood* is where boys assume the role of caretaker for their fellow brothers (i.e., same-sex peers), the growth of their entire school community, and their own personal growth (i.e., social and academic). *Care* encourages boys to place the in-school and out-of-school needs of peers before their own, fully participate in collaborative tasks (e.g., school maintenance), and accept peers for who they are (i.e., unique identities). *Support* challenges boys to let no physical or emotional harm come to peers and demand the personal best from peers in all facets of life. *Respect* asks boys to allow truth, kindness, and love to govern their interactions, whereby exclusive relationships are discouraged, and boys are expected to treat each other like brothers (i.e., family kinship).

These values are not only for boys, but every member of the school community (i.e., teachers, administrators, staff). School adults primarily cultivate these values through their learning relationships with boys (e.g., seminar-based instruction, advisory), and other school policies and traditions. (e.g., community meetings, peer mentoring, retreats) (Fergus et al., 2014).

According to Marzano, teachers' actions in their classrooms have twice as much impact on student achievement as assessment policies, community involvement, or staff collegiality; and a large part of teachers' actions involve the management of the classroom, which can be directly linked to the student-teacher relationship (2003). An essential key to having productive classroom management is the development of a positive student-teacher relationship in the classroom. Marzano, et al., in a meta-analysis of more than 100 studies, reported that teachers who had high-quality relationships with students had 31% fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and other related problems over a year's time than did teachers who did not, which can significantly justify the importance of teachers developing relationships with their students (2003). In order to build these permeating relationships with their students, teachers should implement, but are not limited to the following strategies and/or interventions: using gentle interventions, finding time for bonding, avoiding punishments, and building activities that ensure success for all students (Hall & Hall, 2003). Rogers and Renard assert that "educators need to understand the needs and beliefs of their students as they are- not as they think it ought to be" (p. 34), through having empathy, admiring negative attitudes, leaving their egos at the door, and making multicultural connections as often as possible (1999).

Five (5) tips on how to build trust and connect with students to create an ideal classroom environment:

- Remember to put your heart into your lesson plans. Try to focus just as much on getting to know and guiding your students as you do on teaching academic concepts (Pattison et al, 2011).

- At the beginning of the year or semester, discuss your and your students' expectations as a class. You can also hold individual meetings to help struggling students reach their goals (Varga, 2017).

- Studies suggest that storytelling can help build teacher-student relationships. Try telling personal anecdotes during class or making story-time a regular activity to connect with your students (Mello, 2001).

- Learn how to construct positive comments by giving specific compliments (e.g. "good job" vs "your art project is so colorful") and avoiding back-handed compliments (e.g. "you're not as bad as you used to be") (Lehigh University College of Education, 2021).

- Make sure you keep healthy boundaries with your students. If a student upsets or frustrates you, don't take it personally or bring it home with you (Bluestein, 2012).

Understanding the Student

In today's school learning culture, students have changed over time due to having greater needs than in the past. Nelson (2009) explains that populations of students in our schools have changed because more increasingly, students come to school with greater needs than in the past, which has led to the crisis in public education: The Education Gap.

This means that students in certain populations (i.e. low socioeconomic status, minorities, etc.) come to school but are not always provided what is needed for them to learn and therefore become underserved. As a result, school districts, in particular public school districts, set out to change the trajectory of marginalized teaching by requiring the full service of their teachers to emphasize direct instruction by effectively providing training and development on checking for understanding and reteaching to definitively see by the end of a lesson if the students are learning (Schmoker, 2021).

Teachers should strategically think about their lesson design with their students learning and understanding in mind. Wiggins and McTighe created the "Understanding by Design" Model to encourage teachers to ask these certain questions when designing lessons:

> What do I want the students to learn from this lesson?; How does the lesson relate to the standard being taught?; How does the lesson relate to the rest of the standards being taught for the course?; What evidence will I look for to determine if a particular student has acquired the learning? (2008, pg. 39).

As teachers design meaningful and essential lessons for their students, it is imperative that a teacher-student relationship is built so that the teacher can sufficiently answer the questions above while effectively meeting the needs of all students in their classrooms. Finn et al. (2009), reported that teacher credibility, defined by students' perceptions of teachers' competence, trustworthiness, and caring, accounted for 20% of the variance across student learning outcomes. Teacher credibility was also found to relate to motivation, respect for teachers, and in-class and out-of-class communication.

Building relationships between the teacher and the student are important because with a positive relationship between the teacher's credibility, immediacy (actions that increase psychological closeness), and a student's motivation and affective learning makes it reasonably susceptible that the student's academic and behavioral outcomes will be displayed upon their perceptions of their teachers (Pogue & AhYun, 2006). Therefore, the accuracy of the use of the KSVS to measure student engagement based on student perceptions of their teachers, which is appropriate to the outcome of this study.

Supporting Students Through Relationships and the Learning Environment

What teachers do in the classroom plays an important role in improving student academic performance. Opportunities for student to learn can be shaped by teacher behaviors and interactions in the classroom. If students feel that their teachers truly care about them, then an increase in the students' initiative to participate in academic tasks will arise (Roeser, et al., 1996). The classroom is an inherently social environment that can be described as a "relational zone" (Goldstein, 1999, pg. 647). Students have long touted the importance of interpersonal relationships in classrooms (Frymier & Houser, 2000) and these relationships have been described as "central to the issue of teaching and instruction" (Martin & Dowson, 2009, pg. 344). The importance of these relationships is especially salient when examining the positive impact of teacher-student relationships on issues such as retention and persistence, motivation, affect, and learning (Nicpon, et al., 2007).

Self-Determination Theorists (SDT), Deci & Ryan, argue that there are three basic psychological needs that drive human behavior and motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (1985). In other words, individuals need to feel free from

intrusion, capable in their given domain, and a sense of belongingness. When these needs are met, optimal motivation can be achieved in a variety of contexts because the individual can then focus his or her energy on other tasks (Deci & Ryan, 2008). However, when these needs are thwarted, individuals may exhibit anxiety, uncertainty, withdrawal, compensation, sadness, and a variety of other responses that will detract from positive educational outcomes (Skinner & Edge, 2002). As students redirect their energy and resources to combat the denial of these basic psychological needs, they often reduce efforts to achieve academically. But, when these needs are met, students are more interested, engaged, have higher well-being, effort, and persistence (Korthagen & Evelein, 2016).

Students' relational needs may also be met through an overall positive perception of the social climate or environment (i.e. classroom) (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2003). In the ideal connected classroom, strong cooperative and supportive bonds exist (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Students that experience a connected classroom environment experience a sense of belonging and connection that permits students to express themselves freely (Frisby, et al., 2020). Martin and Dowson (2009) stated that "in high-quality relationships, individuals not only learn that particular beliefs are useful for functioning in particular environments, but they actually internalize the beliefs" (pg. 330). Achieving high-quality relationships can be viewed as the means to achieve a positive outcome (Martin & Dowson, 2009).

Teacher behaviors used to build rapport, such as appropriate conversations and disclosure, relevant humor, and immediacy, were related to students' communication satisfaction (Sidelinger, et al., 2015). Student communication satisfaction is defined as

students' level of satisfaction with their communication with their teachers' ability to meet their instructional needs (Goodboy, et al., 2009). In other words, if students have rapport with their teachers and feel comfortable to ask questions and seek help, and the teacher answers their questions and provides help or support in a communicative and satisfactory way, then the students' psychological relational needs may be met when compared to a lower quality teacher-student relationship (Frisby et al., 2020).

It is believed that the teachers' authority can be a significant factor in creating a positive climate in the school classroom. Petrik (2019) states that a teacher who has authority creates a positive climate in the classroom, which is characterized by purposefulness, focus on tasks, and relaxed, sincere, and supportive environment with a sense of order. On this basis, it is concluded that the classroom climate depends on the teachers' authority and the teacher-student relationship, which should be based on mutual respect to which it is essential that students see that their teacher is genuinely interested in their progress (Petrik, 2019).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Role of the researcher

In this research, data will be collected to determine if there is any correlation between developing student-teacher relationships and increased student engagement. The task will include a survey that will be given to a small general group of students that will measure their engagement and teacher perceptions. Once the information is collected and analyzed, students' perceptions of their teachers will be used through the responses on the survey to determine if there is a correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships. In order for this research to be conducted, consent will have to be obtained from the Director of the school district's Data and Research Department for the general collection of the survey data.

Method Type

In order to gather information for this research, a quantitative research design will be used to collect data. The quantitative data will be obtained through an online assessment (survey) given to students that will assess their classroom student engagement and their perception of their teacher. The data collected will then be analyzed through the use of a data analysis system.

Participant Characteristics

This research will be conducted using the data of anonymous students and their teachers in Fayette County Public School District in Kentucky. The participants will be between the ages of 9-18. The demographics of the participants in this research are unknown due to non-identifiers used in the collection of the data from the school district.

Sampling Procedures and Sampling Size

The emphasis for this research will be on correlating the relationship between teacher-student relationships with student engagement. This research will be conducted in a Kentucky public school district with a diverse student population. The school district will be Fayette County Public Schools in Lexington, Kentucky.

Measuring Instruments

The measuring instrument in this study will be an assessment instrument (survey-KSVS) that will measure student classroom engagement in correlation with the teacher-student relationships through student assessed perceptions. The data collected will then be analyzed through the use of a data analysis system. The analyzed data should answer the two (2) primary research questions which are:

Research Questions:

1. Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and teacher-student relationship (Nurture and Trust)?

2. Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and a safe classroom environment (Support and Understand)?

Research Design:

This research will follow a quantitative method design. Therefore, this research will be requested for Expedited IRB Review because the research involves not greater than minimal risk and the only involvement of human subjects falls within one or more of the categories defined by federal regulations. This study will begin once approval has been given for the research to begin by the IRB board committee as well as the approval

of the collected data from the school district (Fayette County-KY) where the research will be conducted.

Limitations

This research has possible limitations. One possible limitation is the honesty of students on the survey. It should be a priority for students to feel that they can be honest on the survey because it is designed to help them as well as the teachers that teach them. Another possible limitation could be student attendance. The number of absent students could cause a limitation to the depth of the content within the data collected. Also, another limitation is the inability to analyze the demographics of the students, as well as the demographic information of the teachers in this study. Due to the data results being secondhand (previously collected) and being anonymous (student identification is anonymous) because the survey was rendered to give teachers feedback on improvements that can be made to create a more conducive learning environment for the students. The demographics that will not be explored in this study include student gender, race, special education identification, and socioeconomic status. A final noted limitation is that this study will be conducted in only one school district within the state of Kentucky and cannot be generalized further.

Potential Contributions of the Research

My goal for this research is to determine that student engagement can increase if a genuine student relationship is formed between the teacher and the student while in a safe and conducive learning environment. A contribution from this research will be informative for educators to know if it is beneficial to structure their classrooms around genuine relationship building with their students to improve their students' overall

performance through increasing student engagement. Finally, a contribution that is hoped to be unveiled through this research is a minute solution that could build toward solving a larger problem that is affecting most schools: bridging large gaps in performance among all students.

Chapter 4: Results

The goal of this study was to better understand the impact that a positive teacher-student relationship can have on student engagement in the classroom setting. Student engagement is a robust indicator of student achievement and behavior in school, regardless of socioeconomic status (Voelkl, 1995). The way a teacher interacts with their students in a positive manner can incorporate an increase of student engagement within the learning environment, no matter the content being taught. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not a correlation exist between student engagement and a teacher-student relationship and also whether or not a correlation exist between student engagement and a safe learning environment as measured through the students' perception of the ability of their teachers.

The survey instrument that was used in this study was the 2017 Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS). It consisted of 22-25 items (22 items for elementary-level students, grades 3-5; 25 items for middle and high-level students, grades 6-12) on a 5-point Likert Scale to indicate their level of satisfaction: (a) no, never- grades 3-5/ totally untrue- grades 6-12; (b) mostly not-grades 3-5/ mostly untrue-grades 6-12; (c) maybe/sometimes-grades 3/5/ somewhat-grades 6-12; (d) mostly yes-grades 3-5/ mostly true-grades 6-12; and (e) yes, always-grades 3-5/ totally true-grades 6-12. The survey contains seven domains to which students were asked to anonymously give their perception of their teacher by answering with their perception of the ability of their teacher using the Likert scale above. The Domains that the students were surveyed upon were:

Support

Transparency

Understand

Discipline

Engage

Nurture

Trust

Of these domains, Engage was used as the outcome variable to represent student

engagement. The domains of Nurture and Trust would represent the teacher-student

relationship for Research Question One and Support and Understand would represent a

safe classroom environment for Research Question Two, where the teacher-student

relationship would be developed. Based upon the discussion in Chapter 2, each item used

in the analysis was associated with student engagement teacher-student relationships, and

a safe classroom environment. The survey items related with the two research questions

of this study:

Research Question One: Is there a correlation between student engagement

(Engage) and teacher-student relationship (Nurture and Trust)?

Research Question Two: Is there a correlation between student engagement

(Engage) and a safe classroom environment (Support and Understand)?

To effectively answer the aforementioned questions, a quantitative research

methodology was used in this study to measure these relationships using the IBM SPSS

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Statistics analysis software program. This

chapter has been organized into three sections. The first section describes the

demographics of the participants in the study. In the second section, a stepwise linear regression test was used for each research question to compare the means of the outcome variable (engage) to the predictors (nurture and trust; support and understand) to determine whether there is statistical evidence using the associated domains to support the hypothesis of an existence of a correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships, as well as a correlation between student engagement and safe classroom environment. The chapter will close with the last section, a succinct summary of the findings of this study.

Demographics

The school district in Kentucky that was used for this study was Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS) in Lexington, Kentucky. Fluid facts on FCPS (www.fcps.net):

- FCPS is the second largest school district in Kentucky (behind Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS)-Louisville, Kentucky)

- The school level breakdown of FCPS:

  - Elementary schools: 37
  - Middle schools: 12
  - High schools: 6
  - Technical centers: 3
  - Other academic and alternative programs: 12

- The student population breakdown of FCPS:

  - Grades K-5: 17,998
  - Grades 6-8: 9,755
  - Grades 9-12: 12,500
  - Other (preschool & over 18): 728
  - Total students enrolled: 40,981
  - Special programs & alternative schools: 1,965 (included in K-12 counts above)

- The student population diversity breakdown of FCPS:

    o White: 46.9%
    o Black: 23.3 %
    o Hispanic: 18.6 %
    o Asian: 4.9 %
    o Students classified as English learners (EL): 5,413
    o Native languages spoken by EL students: 95
    o Students classified for Special Education: 4,871

- Socioeconomic status of FCPS:
    o Students who qualify for free/reduced meals: 51%

- Staff breakdown of FCPS:

    o Support and administrative staff: 2,692
    o Full-time teachers: 2,928
    o Teachers with advanced degrees: 2,404
    o Teachers with National Board Certification: 203
    o Beginning teacher's salary: $42,431
    o Average teacher's salary: $60,361

- Financial Budget of FCPS:

    o 2020-21 working budget: $575.2 million
    o 2019-20 per-pupil spending: $16,200

- 2018-2019 Annual Report stance on relationship building for FCPS:
    o Establish a culture of transparency, trust and mutual respect.
      Ensuring the success of every student will require a shared
      commitment from staff, families and community partners. We
      must maintain open lines of communication, listen to our
      stakeholders, and consider a wide range of diverse viewpoints
      when making decisions. Keeping students first, schools and
      families must come together, bolstered by the support of our

community to find solutions and share accountability for educational outcomes.

Descriptive data was helpful when trying to understand the background and status of the relationship between student engagement and the teacher-student relationship as well as the relationship between student engagement and safe classroom environment. This knowledge would be helpful in developing future targeted training and professional development for teachers and school staff as they can use the results of this study to work towards student success and ultimately begin to bridge student achievement gaps.

The Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS) was taken anonymously online by students for individual teachers to be able to access the data to help improve the practices within their classrooms. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the overall class student results of unidentified teachers within the district. The five domains from the KSVS that were measured were Engage (outcome variable), Nurture (predictor), Trust (predictor), Support (predictor), and Understand (predictor). For each of the domains, the number of teachers whose class was surveyed was 804 with a minimum number of participants for each teacher: 10 and the maximum number: 264 (there was a large capacity exploratory/specials class) which created a mean average of 27.68% and a standard deviation of 17.616%.

Table 2 provides the descriptive frequencies and percentages for the participants used in this study. Please note that the survey was taken anonymously online by unidentified students for unidentified teachers within the school district to be able to access the data to assist in the improvement/sustainability of practices within their

40

classrooms. Out of approximately 40, 981 total students in the district (*N*), 22, 255

unidentified students (*n)* in the district completed the survey for their teacher, to which

about 54% of the student population participated in this survey. Out of approximately 2,

928 total teachers in the school district (*N*), 804 teacher classes (*n*) were surveyed, which

is about 27% of the staff that were able to receive results from the survey.

Table 2

Descriptive Frequencies and Percentages for the Participants

Characteristics	*N*	*n*	*%*
Teachers	2,928	804	27.4
Students	40, 981	22, 255	54.3

Stepwise Linear Multiple Regressions

To understand if there was a correlation between student engagement and teacher-student

relationships, a stepwise linear multiple regression was conducted. The variables used in

this study to describe the correlations from the KSVS were the domains of Engage (the

outcome variable) Trust, Nurture, Support, and Understand (predictors).

Research Question One: Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage)

and teacher-student relationship (Nurture and Trust)?

To respond to the first research question, the means and standard deviations for

the variables of the domains of Engage (the outcome variable) and Nurture and Trust

(predictors) in Research Question One are explained in Table 3. The score indicates the

percent of positive responses. This will explain the average score of each predictor out of

1 (0-1)-the mean (*M*), as well as that for the standard deviation (*SD*) which measures the

variability of the distribution of the data set.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the variables of Research Question One

Variable	*M*	*SD*
Teacher-Student Relationship: Nurture	.71	.172
Teacher-Student Relationship: Trust	.72	.168
Student Engagement: Engage	.64	.199

Table 3 indicates that for Research Question One, the teacher-student relationship,

71% of the students perceive that their teacher nurtures them and 72% of the students

perceive that they trust their teacher. For student engagement in Research Question One,

64% of the students perceive that their teacher engages them in their class.

A correlational matrix was generated to examine the relationship between student

engagement and teacher-student relationship in Research Question One. Correlation is a

statistical technique that can show whether and how strongly pairs of variables are

related. The main result of a correlation is called the correlation coefficient (or "*r*"). It

ranges from -1.0 to +1.0. The closer r is to +1 or -1, the more closely the two variables

are related. The *p*-value is the probability that would have found the current result if the

correlation coefficient were in fact zero (null hypothesis). If this probability is lower than

the conventional 5% (P<0.05) the correlation coefficient is statistically significant.

The results of the correlation (See Table 4) for Research Question One revealed

that there is a significant relationship between student engagement (Engage) and teacher-

student relationships (Nurture), and student engagement (Engage) and teacher-student

relationship (Trust). More specifically, Pearson Correlations (*r*), a commonly used

method of measuring the strength and direction of the association that exists between two

continuous variables, revealed significant relationships between student engagement

(Engage) and teacher-student relationship (Nurture) (r= .746, *p*<.001) and student

engagement (Engage) and teacher-student relationship (Trust) (r= .785, *p*= .000). The bi-

variant correlation of teacher-student relationship (Nurture and Trust) (r= .820, *p*=.000) is

also significant. Therefore, the Pearson Correlation for Research Question One explains a

significant correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationship

because *p* <0.001 (sig.).

Table 4

Correlation Table for Research Question One

	1	2	3
1. Student Engagement: Engage	-	.746*	.785*
2. Teacher-Student Relationship: Nurture	.746$^+$	-	.820$^+$
3. Teacher-Student Relationship: Trust	.785$^+$	.820$^+$	-

*Correlation is significant at the <.001 Level
$^+$Correlation is significant at the .000 Level

The R^2-value is used in regression analysis to determine the amount of variance

which can be explained in the outcome variable by the predictor variables. While

correlation coefficients are normally reported as "*r*", squaring them simplifies it. The

square of the coefficient (or R^2) is equal to the percent of the variation in one variable

that is related to the variation in the other. In this study, for Research Question One, the

overall model accounts for about 65% of the variance in Student Engagement because the predictors are able to account for a significant amount of the variance with the focus on Model 2 ($F(2, 801)= 739.489$, $p < .001$).

In analyses, an alpha of 0.05 is used as the cutoff for significance in p-value. If the p-value is less than 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between the variables and conclude that a significant correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships does exist. If the p-value is larger than 0.05, we can conclude that there is not a correlation between the variables and that a significant correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships does not exist. A p-value means the probability of getting the results you received, given that the null hypothesis is true. The null hypothesis is the hypothesis of no association.

Table 5 explains the percentage of how Trust and Nurture are predictors of Student Engagement for Research Question One.

Table 5

Predictors of Student Engagement for Research Question One

	Model 1		Model 2	
	R^2	R^2_{adj}	R^2	R^2_{adj}
Teacher- Student Relationship: Trust	.617	.616	-	
Teacher-Student Relationship: Trust and Nurture	-		.649	.648
ΔR^2	-		.032	
				$p < .001$

R^2 shows that Trust alone (Model 1) accounts for about 62% of the variance in Student Engagement; for the predictors: Trust and Nurture (Model 2) the R^2 accounts for about 65% of the variance in Student Engagement. The overall model accounts for about 65% of the variance in Student Engagement because the predictors are able to account for a significant amount of variance with about a 3% change in measuring only Trust and measuring both Nurture and Trust to represent the teacher-student relationship. Therefore, the correlation is significant and supported for Research Question One.

Research Question Two: Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and safe classroom environment (Support and Understand)?

To respond to the second research question, the means and standard deviations for the variables of the domains of Engage (the outcome variable) and Support and Understand (predictors) in Research Question Two are explained in Table 6. The score indicates the percent of positive responses. This will explain the average score of each predictor out of 1 (0-1)-the mean (*M*), as well as that for the standard deviation (*SD*) which measures the variability of the distribution of the data set.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for the variables of Research Question Two

Variable	*M*	*SD*
Safe Classroom Environment: Support	.76	.154
Safe Classroom Environment: Understand	.71	.174
Student Engagement: Engage	.64	.199

Table 6 indicates that for Research Question Two, for the safe classroom environment, 76% of the students perceive that their teacher supports them and 71% of the students perceive that their teacher ensures that they understand the content. For student engagement in Research Question Two, 64% of the students perceive that their teacher engages them in their class.

A correlational matrix was generated to examine the relationship between student engagement and safe classroom environment in Research Question Two. Correlation is a statistical technique that can show whether and how strongly pairs of variables are related. The main result of a correlation is called the correlation coefficient (or "r"). It ranges from -1.0 to +1.0. The closer r is to +1 or -1, the more closely the two variables are related. The p-value is the probability that would have found the current result if the correlation coefficient were in fact zero (null hypothesis). If this probability is lower than the conventional 5% (P<0.05) the correlation coefficient is statistically significant.

The results of the correlation (See Table 7) for Research Question Two revealed that there is a significant relationship between student engagement (Engage) and safe classroom environment (Support), and student engagement (Engage) and safe classroom environment (Understand). More specifically, Pearson Correlations (r), a commonly used method of measuring the strength and direction of the association that exists between two continuous variables, revealed significant relationships between student engagement (Engage) and safe classroom environment (Support) (r= .703, p<.001) and student engagement (Engage) and safe classroom environment (Understand) (r= .797, p= .000). The bi-variant correlation of safe classroom environment (Support and Understand) (r=

.799, *p*=.000) is also significant. Therefore, the Pearson Correlation for Research

Question Two explains a significant correlation between student engagement and safe

classroom environment because *p* <0.001 (sig.).

Table 7

Correlation Table for Research Question Two

	1	2	3
1. Student Engagement: Engage	-	.703[*]	.797[*]
2. Safe Classroom Environment: Support	.703[+]	-	.799[+]
3. Safe Classroom Environment: Understand	.797[+]	.799[+]	-

[*]Correlation is significant at the <.001 Level
[+]Correlation is significant at the .000 Level

The R^2 -value is used in regression analysis to determine the amount of variance

which can be explained in the outcome variable by the predictor variables. While

correlation coefficients are normally reported as "*r*", squaring them simplifies it. The

square of the coefficient (or R^2) is equal to the percent of the variation in one variable

that is related to the variation in the other. In this study, for Research Question Two, the

overall model accounts for about 65% of the variance in Student Engagement because the

predictors are able to account for a significant amount of the variance with the focus on

Model 2 ($F(2, 801)$= 734.591, p < .001).

In analyses, an alpha of 0.05 is used as the cutoff for significance in *p*-value. For

Research Question Two, if the *p*-value is less than 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis that

there is no correlation between the variables and can conclude that a significant

correlation between student engagement and safe classroom environment does exist. If

the *p*-value is larger than 0.05, we can conclude that there is not a correlation between the

variables and that a significant correlation between student engagement and safe

classroom environment does not exist. A *p*-value means the probability of getting the

results you received, given that the null hypothesis is true. The null hypothesis is the

hypothesis of no association.

Table 8 explains the percentage of how Support and Understand are predictors of

Student Engagement for Research Question Two.

Table 8

Predictors of Student Engagement for Research Question Two

	Model 1		Model 2	
	R^2	R^2_{adj}	R^2	R^2_{adj}
Safe Classroom Environment: Support	.635	.634	-	
Safe Classroom Environment: Understand	-		.647	.646
ΔR^2	-		.012	

p <.001

R^2 shows that Support alone (Model 1) accounts for about 64% of the variance in

Student Engagement; for the predictors: Support and Understand (Model 2) the R^2

accounts for about 65% of the variance in Student Engagement. The overall model

accounts for about 65% of the variance in Student Engagement because the predictors are

able to account for a significant amount of variance with about a 1% change in measuring only Support and measuring both Support and Understand to represent a safe classroom environment. Therefore, the correlation is significant and supported for Research Question Two.

<u>Summary</u>

This quantitative study measured the relationship between student engagement and positive teacher-student relationships. The driving purpose of this study was to examine how teacher-student relationship variables, Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture and Trust, can predict student engagement. Table 9 explains the summary of the hypotheses for this study.

Table 9

Summary of the Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Outcome
HQ1: There is a significant correlation between student engagement and teacher-student relationships.	Supported
HQ2: There is a significant correlation between student engagement and safe classroom environment.	Supported

The study investigated the statistical correlational relationships between the following variables of the KSVS: Engage (outcome variable), Nurture (predictor), Trust

(predictor), Support (predictor), and Understand (predictor). Overall, the data reported very strong correlations between the dependent variable and the independent variables, which showed positive and statistically significant correlations. Therefore, the data results show with a high confidence that the null hypothesis should be rejected and to accept the alternative hypotheses that trust, nurture, support, and understand are very significant in predicting an increased student engagement while in a safe classroom environment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitations, Implications, and Recommendations for Future Research

Conclusion

The intent of this study was to determine the relationship between positive student-teacher relationships and student engagement in classroom environments. The relevance of the study was in connection with the development of relationships between the teacher and the student and its impact on student learning through engagement in the classroom setting. Past research indicates that the teacher has the greatest impact on students and their achievement (Marzano, 2003; Marzano, 2007; & Rice, 2003). Effective teachers have four times the positive impact on student achievement than the least effective teachers (Marzano, 2003).

The literature review of this study explored how positive teacher-student relationships can increase student engagement, which in turn would positively impact student success. Theoretical Models that were researched to explain the concepts of this study were:

1. HRI Model: established the characteristics that would determine an effective teacher: (1) a feeling of oneness with all people, (2) the ability to see others as having the capacities to deal with their problems, (3) the ability to view events in a broad perspective, and (4) the ability to be concerned with the human aspects of affairs (Combs, et al., 1969; Wasicsko, 2008)

2. TTI Framework, which conceptualizes teacher-student interactions in the classroom through three (3) main components: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (Allen et al., 2013; Hafen, et al., 2015; Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012).

Seeking student input for improving learning outcomes, enhancing teaching, and learning, and fostering whole school improvement has increased tremendously in school districts (Fielding, 2012). The research in which students contribute on their collaboration with their adult counterparts (teachers) in making key educational decision gives the opportunity for students to play a huge part in enhancing the learning and teaching in schools (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). Therefore, the data obtained for this study came from the constructs/domains of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture, and Trust in the Kentucky Student Voice Survey (KSVS). The survey provided an accurate result from the student perspective of how effective teacher-student relationships can be.

These specific constructs were chosen after research revealed in chapter 2 that teacher-student relationships and safe learning environment (classroom) were possible predictors of increased student engagement. In the survey, the construct of Engage was closely related to student engagement because it gave student perception of how the student believed their teacher engaged them in their class. The items that were surveyed on a Likert scale by students for the construct Engage on the KSVS were:

Engage (Grades 3-5)

School work is interesting

We have interesting homework

Homework helps me learn

Engage (Grades 6-12)

I like the ways we learn in class

My teacher makes learning interesting

My teacher makes learning enjoyable

The items surveyed here are indicators of student perceptions to their teachers engaging them in class.

The constructs of Trust and Nurture were closely related to teacher-student relationships because they gave the student perception of how the student believed their teacher interacted with them to develop a relationship within the class. The items that were surveyed on a Likert scale by students for the constructs of Trust and Nurture on the KSVS were:

Trust (Grades 3-5)

My teacher wants us to share our thoughts

Students speak up and share their ideas about classwork

My teacher wants me to explain my answers-why I think what I think

Trust (Grades 6-12)

My teacher respects my ideas and suggestions

My teacher wants us to share our thoughts

Students speak up and share their ideas about classwork

My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas

Nurture (Grades 3-5)

My teacher in this class makes me feel that he/she really cares about me

If I am sad or angry, my teacher helps me feel better

My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me

My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas

Nurture (Grades 6-12)

My teacher in this class makes me feel that s/he really cares about me

My teacher really tries to understand how students feel about things

My teacher deems to know if something is bothering me

The items surveyed here are indicators of student perceptions to their teachers developing

relationships with them through trust and nurture.

The constructs of Support and Understand were closely related to safe classroom

environment because they gave the student perception of how the student believed their

teacher interacted with them to develop a relationship while in their classroom. The

classroom is where the majority of the relationships that develop between teachers and

students are created. The items that were surveyed on a Likert scale by students for the

constructs of Support and Understand on the KSVS were:

Support (Grades 3-5)

My teacher pushes us to think hard about the things we read

My teacher pushes everybody to work hard

In this class we have to think hard about the writing we do

Support (Grades 6-12)

In this class, we learn a lot almost every day

In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes

My teacher doesn't let people give up when the work gets hard

In this class, my teacher accepts nothing less than our full effort

Understand (Grades 3-5)

My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day

When my teacher marks my work, he/she writes on my papers to help me understand

Understand (Grades 6-12)

My teacher checks to make sure we understand what h/she is teaching us

The comments that I get on my work in this class help me understand how to Improve

We get helpful comments to let us know what we did wrong on assignments

The items surveyed here are indicators of student perceptions to their teachers creating a safe learning environment to where the students can understand and be supported.

Engagement in classes for the students as well as the learning environment that the relationship is created was statistically and confidently supported to show that teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on student engagement and that a safe classroom environment also has a significant impact on student engagement. The research questions that drove this study were:

Research Question One: Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and teacher-student relationship (Nurture and Trust)?

Research Question Two: Is there a correlation between student engagement (Engage) and a safe classroom environment (Support and Understand)?

Research Question One looked at the relationship between student engagement and teacher-student relationships. The study found that there was a significant relationship between them. Using the outcome variable Engage, which represented student engagement and the predictors of Nurture and Trust, which represented teacher-student relationships, populated a highly significant result to show that trust and nurture from the teacher generated from a genuine and authentic relationship greatly impacts a student's engagement in the class.

Research Question Two looked at the relationship between student engagement and a safe learning environment, which is where the teacher-student relationship is developed. The study found that there was a significant relationship between them. Using the outcome variable Engage, which represented student engagement and the predictors of Support and Understand, which represented the safe classroom environment, a significant result showed that teacher support, as well as evidence of student understanding from the teacher in a safe classroom environment where genuine and authentic relationships are developed between the teacher and the student greatly impacts a student's engagement in the class. The results of the study are congruent with the hypothesis of the research (from chapter 1):

A correlation will exist between teacher-student relationships and student engagement, and a correlation will exist between a safe learning (classroom) environment and student engagement by the teacher's effectiveness as measured by the constructs of Support, Understand, Engage, Nurture and Trust in the KSVS through the students' perception of their teacher.

Limitations for Research

There were some limitations of this study's findings, which will be discussed in this section. These limitations should be addressed to prevent future results that may not be as good as the current study's results.

First, the data that was obtained from the school district was based on the results of a teacher's class as whole, not individual students. Therefore, the unit of analysis was based on the results of the KSVS from 804 unidentified individual teacher's classes across the district for all levels (elementary, middle, and high).

Next, the survey (KSVS) was given anonymously to students online, which created the inability to examine the student responses through the lenses of student demographics of race, gender, special education identification, and socioeconomic status. Due to the teacher being the unit of analysis, the student responses as a whole class were anonymously based on their perception of the teacher. The results were designed for the teacher to get feedback on their classroom practices from the student perspective. This limitation created a large disadvantage to the depth of this study. However, the student perception that is provided through the data results did allow for the study to be completed to show if correlations exist between student engagement and teacher-student relationships and student engagement and a safe classroom environment.

Lastly, the KSVS was last given in the state of Kentucky to students in 2017. It was unanimously brought back in December 2020 by Kentucky State lawmakers. The survey was given in the spring of 2021 to students across the state. It was still given anonymously online, but it was given as a field test to students during state assessment tests that were given. Due to a large number of students not tested across the district due to the 2020-2021 academic year COVID-19 pandemic where the school district in

Kentucky (FCPS) where this study was conducted was remote for most of the year. Students also had the option to remain virtual once in-person classes started back late in the school year prior to testing. Those virtual students were not tested, which accounted for only about 70% of the total student population within the district being tested, which would create misappropriated data in this study.

Implications for Future Research

The research investigated in Chapter 2 implicated a relationship between student engagement and the teacher-student relationship within a safe classroom environment. This study included the correlations of the perceptions of teachers by student in the domains of Engage, Nurture, Trust, Support, and Understand using the KSVS. The perceptions analyzed for this study indicated that teacher-student relationships greatly impact student engagement and the learning environment where these relationships are build are also significantly associated. However, there are concerns about getting individual student responses to demographically breakdown the characteristics of the students (i.e. race, gender, socioeconomic status, special education services, etc.). The KSVS is given anonymously to students in order to protect the identity of the students to prevent the development of biases among the teachers towards their students. The outcome of the KSVS is for teachers to use the results to improve and/or enhance their teaching and classroom practices. The goal is for teachers to have opportunities to perfect their crafts to being the most effective teacher than can be with all of their students. On the other hand, the results showing the student demographic breakdown would assist in a meaningful addition to the study. Overall, it is evident in this study the importance of

teacher-student relationships impacting student engagement in the classroom provides a number of opportunities that would allow for students to advance academically.

Reflecting upon this study, I believe that its results will have a major impact on the teaching field and the development of future educators. Teachers building relationships with their students is a very critical piece to students engaging in their classrooms and becoming more successful in their academics. This study indicates that future research should continue to focus on the student's perception, giving them a distinctive voice in the enhancement of their educational journey. Developing positive and authentic relationships with students through showing genuine and intentional interest for the welfare and future success of students can provide higher performance rates. Building genuine relationships between teachers and their students can be a major determining factor on essential improvement in classroom engagement that will positively affect the overall academic success of the students.

The results of this study also show the increasing need of professional development for teachers in the areas of SEL (Social Emotional Learning) through the lower percentage of survey results on student perceptions of their teachers just nurturing them alone. In present day, with the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down in-person schools in Kentucky in March 2020, students and teachers alike have experienced the trauma that has come along with the pandemic. With most schools reopening to in-person learning, the mental health of both parties critically implicates the future of teacher-student relationship development and providing safe classroom environments that are conducive for learning, as well as for nurturing of all parties involved. Most staff development opportunities are centered around effective instructional strategies using

instructional technology to engage students of the current generation. They are more tech-savvy with being born in a time where technology has been an integral part of their life. The pandemic heightened their technology involvement with most schools having to go 1-to-1, where every student, teacher, administrator, etc., had a school-issued computer to complete educational tasks. Even within technological constructs, it is still imperative that a genuine relationship and safe learning environment be created for both the student and the teacher. Both parties have to become cognizant of each other's mental health and empathetic to outside barriers, which extends the need for improved practices training in SEL to increase the teachers' ability to nurture their students.

The dilemma that exists behind the assumption that effective teaching practices lead to increased student academic success is that not all teachers are alike and value their students. This study indicates that when students feel not only that they can trust their teachers, but also when their teachers nurture them by showing them genuine love and care, their engagement will increase. The data also suggested that when teachers show that they support their students and check for their understanding that student engagement will increase as well. Therefore, developing professional training plans that will provide teachers with the guidance and support to become more successful in reaching their students through not only relationship building but also being aware of their mental health can move student engagement to higher levels. Teachers must know their content and educational pedagogies, but all of that is irrelevant if teachers are not willing to create a positive relationship with their students-one of trust, nurture, support, and understanding. Caring and supportive interpersonal relationships in school indicate more

positive academic attitudes and values, and more satisfaction with school (Klem & Connell, 2004).

A teacher's disposition sends an immediate message to the student. It will either be positive or negative. From their verbal and facial expressions, to their attire, the disposition of a teacher determines if the classroom setting will be a nurturing and trusting environment, or one that will neglectful and will deprive them of learning. Students decide based upon their teacher's disposition as to how they will react: giving their undivided attention to the teacher or becoming defiant towards the teacher. Increased Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) of teachers working collectively together to increase not only their content knowledge, but the ability to increase their students' sense of worth, efficacy, and potential to learn creates professional and caring relationships with the students to maximize their learning potential. Teacher dispositions, attitudes, and motivation play important roles in educating students so that they are highly successful in school (Cline & Necochea, 2006).

The use of student perception can be used to break down barriers that may occur in teacher-student relationships. If students feel more connected to their teachers, especially in a safe learning environment, student engagement will increase. The data suggests that when teachers take the time to develop a relationship and work to provide a safe classroom environment student engagement is significantly impacted which can be beneficial towards the ultimate goal which is the overall academic success of students.

Recommendations For Future Research

Future research should continue to investigate what factors are related to teachers and students developing similar or dissimilar views of the teacher-student relationship. Student perception should continue to be used because it would warrant an impact on the student's ability to discriminately own their opinions of how they should learn. Furthermore, future research should examine more aspects of the student-teacher relationship that are meaningful and important to the students-allowing for the students to make the determination of what it means to them to be trustworthy, nurturing, supportive, etc. In addition, future research should examine the impact of teacher behaviors and characteristics on the development of the relationship that is developed with students as these factors are likely to play an important role on the impact of the student's attitude towards their engagement with that teacher. Student behaviors could also be further internalized to understand the role that student behaviors play in the teacher-student relationship. Lastly, future research should investigate additional implications that can be associated with teacher-student relationships, such as student achievement, student behavioral trajectories, and the impact that student/teacher genders have on these relationships.

Interestingly enough, the bottom line of this study clearly informs that the impact of effective classroom engagement between the teacher and the student can be developed through trust, nurturing, support, and understanding between the two parties. The evidence provided in this study shows that when teachers create a safe learning environment by intentionally and purposefully building a genuine relationship with their students, the students will be significantly engaged in their classroom.

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Separation Sheet – Leave Blank

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
BOARD APPROVAL

Eastern Kentucky University Institutional Review Board Approval

Hello Kimberly Snodgrass,

Congratulations! Using a limited review process, the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Kentucky University (FWA00003332) has approved your request for an exemption determination for your study entitled, "Strengthening Student Engagement Through Positive Teacher-Student Relationships" This status is effective immediately and is valid for a period of three years as long as no changes are made to the study as outlined in your limited review application. If your study will continue beyond three years, you are required to reapply for exemption and receive approval from the IRB prior to continuing the study.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that all investigators and staff associated with this study meet the training requirements for conducting research involving human subjects and comply with applicable University policies and state and federal regulations. Please read through the remainder of this notification for specific details on these requirements.

APPENDIX B: CITI TRAINING CERTIFICATE FOR IRB RESEARCH

APPENDIX C: APPROVAL LETTER FOR DATA USE FROM FAYETTE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS, LEXINGTON, KY

It's about **kids.**
FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TO:

From: Office of Grants, Research, Accountability, & Data
             Fayette County Public Schools

Subject:

Date:

This letter is to notify you that the Office of Grants, Research, Accountability, and Data (GRAD) has completed its review of your research application and approves your request. The approval is valid for one calendar year from the date listed above and requires you to submit copies of any manuscripts to GRAD prior to submission for publication. You are required to include a copy of this letter in materials distributed to students, families, and/or staff participating in your research.

While GRAD has approved your research project moving forward, school leaders must also approve of the research being conducted in their buildings prior to the commencement of any research activities.

If you have any questions, please add a comment to your original submission or contact our office at data.research@fayette.kyschools.us.

Congratulations and we look forward to seeing the outcome of your research,

Carl Hayden
Interim Director of School Improvement
Career and Technical Education
Grants, Research, Accountability, & Data

Shanshan Wang, PhD
Data Strategist
Grants, Research, Accountability, & Data

APPENDIX D: DATA SHARING AGREEMENT WITH FAYETTE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN LEXINGTON, KY

Please fill out entire form. Contracts sent to IAKSS for signatures are subject to a 10-day turnaround. Please plan accordingly.

AGREEMENT SUMMARY FORM

Person Sending Agreement to IAKSS

Kimberly H. Snodgrass

Purpose of Agreement *To collect district data (anonymous) of the Kentucky Student Voice Survey results. A total demographic breakdown of the results are also requested if available. For Dissertation*

Type of Agreement:

☐ Contract   ☐ Purchase
☐ Grant   ☑ MOU/MOA

Specifications:

☐ Related to an Extended Field Trip Request
(Charter buses, out of town/overnight trips)
 ○ Extended Field Trip Request Sent On: _____

☐ Over $30,000?
 ○ If yes, is this a grant?   ☐ YES   ☐ NO

☑ Do you need the original back?   ✓ YES   ☐ NO

Contractors and/or their representatives who will be on FCPS property and/or around students must submit a background check prior to beginning work:

1. Will this contractor or a representative be on FCPS property?

   ☐ YES   ✓ NO

2. **IF YES, has this vendor completed the required background check?**
   ☐ YES   ☐ NO

PLEASE SEND ALL CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS TO:

Elisabeth McIntosh/IAKSS Legal Office

Any adult who is permitted access to school grounds on a regularly scheduled and continuing basis pursuant to a written agreement for the purpose of providing services directly to a student or students as a part of a school-sponsored program or activity will be required to submit a national and state criminal background check and have a clear CA/N check. Contractors must register at https://dna.fcps.net/Contractors and submit their background check prior to beginning work. For more information, please see https://www.fcps.net/Page/12728 or contact the FCPS Application Center at (859) 381-4190.

FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Memorandum of Agreement: Data Sharing Agreement

Introduction

- This document is an agreement between the Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS) and *Kimberly H. Snodgrass* and together referred to as "Parties", regarding the transfer of student and teacher data ("Data") to the Contracting Party and the subsequent processing of that data.
- This Agreement excludes any data which is freely and publicly available through other sources.
- Pursuant to KRS 61.932 and KRS 365.734, the Parties to this Agreement do hereby agree to the following:

Mechanism for Data Sharing

FCPS and the Contracting Party will at the appropriate time agree on a file or data sharing process that will involve the encrypted transfer of the Data via the public networks. The Data request will include (please list all data elements): _____

Kentucky Student Voice Survey Results for the county school district (race Demographic breakdown if at all possible)

Obligations of the contracting party

The contracting party warrants that it will:

- Use this Data only for the joint project outlined above.
- Read and strictly comply with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and KFERPA; KRS 160.700 et seq.
- While in possession of this Data, maintain it in a secure non-public location.
- Ensure that the student Data will be accessed, used and manipulated only by those individuals necessary for the successful implementation of the project.
- Advise all individuals accessing the Data on proper procedures for securely maintaining the Data.
- Take appropriate technical and organizational measures against the unauthorized or unlawful accessing of the Data.
- Securely delete all copies of the student Data when they are no longer required. "Securely Delete" means that industry standard methods will be taken for the purpose of ensuring that no unauthorized person shall be able to reasonably locate or extract the Data after the deletion date.
- Promptly comply with any request from FCPS to amend, transfer or delete the Data or a subset thereof.
- The Contracting Party shall not in any case process student Data to advertise or facilitate advertising or to create or correct an individual or household profile for any advertisement purpose , and shall not sell, disclose, or otherwise process student Data for any commercial purpose.
- To the extent permitted by law, Contracting Party assumes all liability for damages which may arise from its use, storage or disposal of the Data. FCPS will not be liable to Contracting Party for any loss, claim or demand made by Contracting Party, or made against Contracting Party by any other party, due to or arising from the use of the Data by Contracting Party, except to the extent permitted by law when caused by the gross negligence or willful misconduct of FCPS.

Data Breach Act

Pursuant to KRS 61.931, et seq., the Contracting Party certifies it has procedures and practices in place to safeguard against security breaches.

Data Sharing Agreement

Within 48 hours of completion of the investigation, the Contracting Carty shall notify the above if the investigation finds that the misuse of personal information occurred or is likely to occur.

Data Opt Out

FCPS may provide a mechanism for students, parents or guardians to opt out of any data sharing agreement with any contracting party.

Termination
This Agreement may be terminated by either Party upon written notification to the other Party.

I grant approval for the release of
personally identifiable information.

Superintendent

Fayette County Public Schools

Contracting Party Representative

8/25/2021

Date

08/19/2021

Date

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education: Tyler Murphy, Chair· Amy Green, Vice Chair· Tom Jones· Christy Morris· Stephanie Spires

Superintendent Demetrus Liggins, PhD

450 Park Place, Lexington, Kentucky 40511 · Phone: 859.381.4100 · www.fcps.ne1

Data Breach Act

Pursuant to KRS 61.931, et seq., the Contracting Party certifies it has procedures and practices in place to safeguard against security breaches.

APPENDIX E: KENTUCKY STUDENT VOICE SURVEY, GRADES 3-5

Kentucky Student Voice Survey, Grades 3-5 Questions

STUDENT Survey Questions for Grades 3 - 5

On the elementary survey, the 5 choices are labeled:
"No, never", "Mostly not", "Maybe/sometimes", "Mostly yes", "Yes, always" ASL Answer Guidance

Support:

1. My teacher pushes us to think hard about things we read 3-5-ASL-1
2. My teacher pushes everybody to work hard 3-5-ASL-2
3. In this class we have to think hard about the writing we do 3-5-ASL-3

Transparency:

4. In this class we learn to correct our mistakes 3-5-ASL-4
5. This class is neat-everything has a place and things are easy to find 3-5-ASL-5
6. My teacher explains things in very orderly ways 3-5-ASL-6
7. My teacher knows when the class understands, and when we do not 3-5-ASL-7

Understand:

8. My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day 3-5-ASL-8
9. When my teacher marks my work, he/she writes on my papers to help me understand 3-5-ASL-9

Discipline:

10. My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to 3-5-ASL-10
11. Our class stays busy and does not waste time 3-5-ASL-11
12. Students behave so badly in this class that it slows down our learning 3-5-ASL-12

Engage:

13. School work is interesting 3-5-ASL-13
14. We have interesting homework 3-5-ASL-14
15. Homework helps me learn 3-5-ASL-15

Nurture:

16. My teacher in this class makes me feel that he/she really cares about me 3-5-ASL-16
17. If I am sad or angry, my teacher helps me feel better 3-5-ASL-17
18. My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me 3-5-ASL-18
19. My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas 3-5-ASL-19

Trust:

20. My teacher wants us to share our thoughts 3-5-ASL-20
21. Students speak up and share their ideas about class work 3-5-ASL-21
22. My teacher wants me to explain my answers-why I think what I think 3-5-ASL-22

APPENDIX F: KENTUCKY STUDENT VOICE SURVEY, GRADES 6-12

Kentucky Student Voice Survey, Grades 6-12 Questions

STUDENT Survey Questions for Grades 6 - 12 - Teacher
On the 6-12 survey, the 5 choices are labeled
"Totally Untrue", "Mostly Untrue", "Somewhat", "Mostly True", "Totally True"

ASL Answer Guidance

S upport:

1. In this class, we learn a lot almost every day 6-12-ASL-1
2. In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes 6-12-ASL-2
3. My teacher doesn't let people give up when the work gets hard 6-12-ASL-3
4. In this class, my teacher accepts nothing less than our full effort 6-12-ASL-4

T ransparency:

5. My teacher explains difficult things clearly 6-12-ASL-5
6. My teacher has several good ways to explain each topic that we cover in this class 6-12-ASL-6
7. If you don't understand something, my teacher explains it another way 6-12-ASL-7
8. My teacher knows when the class understands, and when we do not 6-12-ASL-8

U nderstand:

9. My teacher checks to make sure we understand what s/he is teaching us 6-12-ASL-9
10. The comments that I get on my work in this class help me understand how to improve 6-12- ASL-10
11. We get helpful comments to let us know what we did wrong on assignments 6-12- ASL-11

D iscipline:

12. Students in this class treat the teacher with respect 6-12-ASL-12
13. My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to 6-12-ASL-13
14. Our class stays busy and does not waste time 6-12-ASL-14
15. Student behavior in this class is under control 6-12-ASL-15

E ngage:

16. I like the ways we learn in this class 6-12-ASL-16
17. My teacher makes lessons interesting 6-12-ASL-17
18. My teacher makes learning enjoyable 6-12-ASL-18

N urture:

19. My teacher in this class makes me feel that s/he really cares about me 6-12-ASL-19
20. My teacher really tries to understand how students feel about things 6-12-ASL-20
21. My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me 6-12-ASL-21

T rust:

22. My teacher respects my ideas and suggestions 6-12-ASL-22
23. My teacher wants us to share our thoughts 6-12-ASL-23
24. Students speak up and share their ideas about class work 6-12-ASL-24
25. My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas 6-12-ASL-25

VITA

KIMBERLY H. SNODGRASS, Ed.D.

1300 Greendale Road
Lexington, Kentucky 40511
(C) 859- 619-3943
E-mail: kimberly.snodgrass@fayette.kyschools.us

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Effective communicator with planning, organizational, and negotiation skills with an ability to lead all stakeholders to reach consensus and attain goals.
- Extensive background in developing and implementing programs and curricula to meet the needs of marginalized groups of students in K-12 public schools.
- Accomplished career demonstrating consistent success as a 5-12 social studies teacher ensuring student achievement.

EDUCATION

- **Ed.D., Leadership, Policy Studies and Social Justice,** Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY, 2021 DISSERTATION: *Strengthening Student Engagement Through Positive Teacher-Student Relationships*
- **Educational Specialist for School Leadership,** Eastern Kentucky University, School of Education, Richmond, KY, 2015
- **M.Ed., Teacher Leadership,** Eastern Kentucky University, School of Education, Richmond, KY, 2013
- **B.A., History,** Albany State University, Albany, GA, 2003

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Classroom Teacher (Social Studies), Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, Lexington, KY, 2015-Present
- Assists with data organization from all assessments and diagnostic instruments and develops strategies for intervening with students who are experiencing difficulties
- Implements and supports the goals determined by the district/schools' comprehensive plan
- Works collaboratively with colleagues to integrate educational initiatives and resources
- Assists in program implementation and curriculum development

- Assists in developing and implementing comprehensive lesson plans designed to meet individual student achievement needs
- Coaches and models research-based instructional strategies
- Serves on the ILT Leadership team to assist in the implementation of the school's mission and vision goals
- Supervises and evaluates staff as needed and required with ESS (Extended School Services) after school program
- Develops and implements a budget for the ESS after school program
- Serves as the Imagine Learning/Galileo Assessment Ambassador for the Building

PGES Coach, Meadowthorpe Elementary School, Lexington, KY, July 2014-2015
- Assists with data organization from all assessments and diagnostic instruments and develops strategies for intervening with students who are experiencing difficulties
- Engages staff in intensive data analysis and results planning
- Implements and supports the goals determined by the district/schools' comprehensive plan
- Works collaboratively with other educators to integrate educational initiatives and resources
- Assists schools in developing and implementing comprehensive plans designed to meet individual schools' student achievement needs
- Coaches and models research based instructional strategies
- Supervises staff as needed and required
- Evaluates staff as needed and required

Classroom Teacher (Social Studies), East Jessamine County Middle School, Nicholasville, KY, July 2013-2014
- Meets and instructs assigned classes in the locations and at the times designated
- Plans a program of study that, as much as possible, meets the individual needs, interests, and abilities of the students
- Creates a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and appropriate to the maturity and interests of the students
- Prepares for classes assigned and shows written evidence of preparation upon request of immediate supervisor
- Encourages students to set and maintain standards of classroom behavior
- Guides the learning process toward the achievement of curriculum goals and establishes clear objectives for all lessons, units, projects, and the like to communicate these objectives to students
- Employs a variety of instructional techniques and instructional media, consistent with the physical limitations of the location provided and the needs and capabilities of the individuals or student groups involved
- Maintains accurate, complete, and correct records as required by law, district policy, and administrative regulation

Classroom Teacher (Social Studies), Leestown Middle School, Lexington, KY, July 2010-2013

- Meets and instructs assigned classes in the locations and at the times designated
- Plans a program of study that, as much as possible, meets the individual needs, interests, and abilities of the students
- Creates a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and appropriate to the maturity and interests of the students
- Prepares for classes assigned and shows written evidence of preparation upon request of immediate supervisor
- Encourages students to set and maintain standards of classroom behavior
- Guides the learning process toward the achievement of curriculum goals and establishes clear objectives for all lessons, units, projects, and the like to communicate these objectives to students
- Employs a variety of instructional techniques and instructional media, consistent with the physical limitations of the location provided and the needs and capabilities of the individuals or student groups involved
- Maintains accurate, complete, and correct records as required by law, district policy, and administrative regulation
- Served on the Leadership Team as Department Chair to assist in the implementation of the school's mission and vision goals as well as lead the department on school and district policies

Classroom Teacher (Social Studies), Horizon Science Academy, Columbus, OH, July 2005-2010

- Meets and instructs assigned classes in the locations and at the times designated
- Plans a program of study that meets the individual needs, interests, and abilities of the students
- Creates a classroom environment conducive to learning and appropriate to the maturity and interests of the students
- Prepares for classes assigned and shows written evidence of preparation upon request of immediate supervisor
- Encourages students to set and maintain standards of classroom behavior
- Guides the learning process toward the achievement of curriculum goals and establishes clear objectives for all lessons, units, projects, and the like to communicate these objectives to students
- Employs a variety of instructional techniques and instructional media, consistent with the physical limitations of the location provided and the needs and capabilities of the individuals or student groups involved
- Maintains accurate, complete, and correct records as required by law, district policy, and administrative regulation

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
_____

GoTeachKY Ambassador Program, 2021- Present
PLD Equity Committee, Lexington, KY, 2021- Present
PLD PBIS Committee Representative, Lexington, KY, 2018-Present

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
_____

Google Certified Educator, Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, KY, 2019-Present
Canvas (LMS) Cohort Educator, Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, KY, 2016-Present
Aspiring Leaders Program, Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, KY, 2018- 2019

COMMUNITY SERVICE
_____

President, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., Lexington, KY Alumnae Chapter, 2019-Present
- YMCA Black Achievers Education Cluster Leader, Lexington, KY 2020-2021
- BMW Boys Program Tutor, Lexington, KY 2010-2014