

1-1-2012

# Middle school teachers' perceptions of strategies that provide social support to students

Heather Moore

*Eastern Illinois University*

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Psychology](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

---

## Recommended Citation

Moore, Heather, "Middle school teachers' perceptions of strategies that provide social support to students" (2012). *Masters Theses*. 898.  
<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/898>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).

**\*\*\*\*\*US Copyright Notice\*\*\*\*\***

**No further reproduction or distribution of this copy is permitted by electronic transmission or any other means.**

**The user should review the copyright notice on the following scanned image(s) contained in the original work from which this electronic copy was made.**

**Section 108: United States Copyright Law**

**The copyright law of the United States [Title 17, United States Code] governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.**

**Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that use may be liable for copyright infringement.**

**This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. No further reproduction and distribution of this copy is permitted by transmission or any other means.**

## THESIS MAINTENANCE AND REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates (who have written formal theses)

SUBJECT: Permission to Reproduce Theses

An important part of Booth Library at Eastern Illinois University's ongoing mission is to preserve and provide access to works of scholarship. In order to further this goal, Booth Library makes all theses produced at Eastern Illinois University available for personal study, research, and other not-for-profit educational purposes. Under 17 U.S.C. § 108, the library may reproduce and distribute a copy without infringing on copyright; however, professional courtesy dictates that permission be requested from the author before doing so.

By signing this form:

- You confirm your authorship of the thesis.
- You retain the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the original research, creative activity, and intellectual or artistic content of the thesis.
- You certify your compliance with federal copyright law (Title 17 of the U.S. Code) and your right to authorize reproduction and distribution of all copyrighted material included in your thesis.
- You grant Booth Library the non-exclusive, perpetual right to make copies of your thesis, freely and publicly available without restriction, by means of any current or successive technology, including but not limited to photocopying, microfilm, digitization, or Internet.
- You acknowledge that by depositing your thesis with Booth Library, your work is available for viewing by the public and may be borrowed through the library's circulation and interlibrary department or accessed electronically.
- You waive the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) with respect to the contents of the thesis, including your name and status as a student at Eastern Illinois University.

### Petition to Delay:

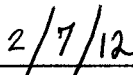
I respectfully petition that Booth Library delay maintenance and reproduction of my thesis until the date specified and for the reasons below. I understand that my degree will not be conferred until the thesis is available for maintenance and reproduction.

Date:

Reasons:



Author's Signature



Date

**This form must be submitted in duplicate.**

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
STRATEGIES THAT PROVIDE SOCIAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

BY  
HEATHER MOORE

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

SPECIALIST IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2012

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED  
AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

  
DR. STEVEN SCHER  
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR


7 Feb 2012  
DATE

  
DR. JOHN MACE  
DEPARTMENT CHAIR

DATE

  
DR. ASSEGE HAILEMARIAM  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

2/7/12  
DATE

  
DR. RONAN BERNAS  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

2/7/12  
DATE

Copyright 2012 by Heather Moore

## Abstract

The present study built on the results of Suldo, Friedrich, White, Farmer, Minch, & Michalowski (2009), which identified several teacher behaviors perceived by middle school students as showing high or low social support. The present study collected data from 123 regular and special education middle school teachers using the Teachers' Perceptions About Social Support for Students (TPASSS) survey to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of the high and low social support behaviors suggested by Suldo et al. (2009). The purpose of the present study was to investigate which behaviors the teachers in the present study and the students in Suldo et al. (2009) agreed provide social support to students. Whether or not the themes of socially supportive teacher behaviors in Suldo et al. (2009) would emerge as factors in the present study was explored through factor analysis. Results indicated Suldo et al.'s (2009) students and the present study's teachers agreed whether or not all 17 categories of teaching behaviors provided social support, except for two categories: interest in student wellness and giving students what they want. Factor analysis suggested five factors with moderate internal consistency underlay the TPASSS's social support items: Being Nice to Students (I), Teacher-Focused Behaviors (II), Interest in Students' Personal Lives (III), Positive Teaching Behaviors (IV), and Lack of Concern for Student Improvement (V). These factors are comparable, yet more condensed, than the categories of social support perceived by the students in Suldo et al. (2009). Implications for the practice of school psychology are discussed.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Steven Scher for all of his help and support from the conception of the thesis topic to data collection and throughout the writing process. I would like to thank Dr. Assege HaileMariam and Dr. Ronan Bernas for their input and suggestions on the thesis drafts as well. I also appreciate the school principals who gave me their consent to recruit teachers from their schools and the teachers who participated in the study. I also wish to thank my family: my parents, Betsy and Jim, my siblings, Joe, Jake, and Jessica, as well as Andy and my friends for their continued love and support.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures.....	7
Introduction/Literature Review.....	8
Importance of Subjective Well-Being & Social Support in Schools.....	9
Benefits of Social Support from Teachers.....	11
Negative Effects of Low Teacher Social Support.....	13
Socially Supportive Teacher Behaviors.....	16
Teachers' Perceptions.....	17
Present Study.....	19
Method.....	22
Participants.....	22
Materials.....	24
Procedure.....	25
Results.....	31
Factor Analysis.....	31
Comparison of Present Results to Suldo et al.'s (2009) Results.....	40
Discussion.....	43
Hypothesis One: Perceptions of Social Support.....	44
Hypothesis Two: Themes of Social Support.....	45
Limitations and Areas of Further Research.....	46
Implications for School Psychologists.....	50
Conclusions.....	52
References.....	54



Appendix A: Recruitment Emails..... 59

Appendix B: Survey Introduction..... 61

Appendix C: Teachers' Perceptions About Social Support for Students (TPASSS)  
    Survey..... 62

Appendix D: Survey Conclusion..... 68

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Certification of Exemption..... 69

## List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. The High and Low Social Support Behaviors Mentioned in the Focus Groups from Suldo et al. (2009).....	21
Table 2. The 17 Categories of Teaching Behaviors and Their Corresponding TPASSS Survey Social Support Scenarios.....	26
Table 3. Factor Loadings of the TPASSS's Social Support Section based on the 5 and 6 Factor Solutions.....	33
Table 4. TPASS Items Contained in Each Factor of the 5 Factor Solution.....	35
Table 5. Characteristics of Outliers in the 5 Factor Solution.....	38
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for the 5 Factors of the TPASSS Social Support Section (N = 123).....	39
Table 7. Correlations among the 5 Factors.....	39
Table 8. Comparison of Present Results to the Results from Suldo et al. (2009).....	41
Figure 1. Scree Plot for the Factor Analysis of the TPASSS Survey's 42 Social Support Items.....	32

Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of  
Strategies that Provide Social Support to Students

The 2002 Conference on the Future of School Psychology discussed the importance of social-emotional well-being for school children (Cummings, Harrison, Dawson, Short, Gorin, & Palomares, 2004; Harrison, Cummings, Dawson, Short, Gorin, & Palomares, 2004). The conference suggested school psychologists should plan to enhance social-emotional well-being to advance the learning of students. Such a plan should include educating school staff, especially teachers, on ways to increase students' well-being.

One component that determines someone's broader sense of happiness, or subjective well-being, is social support (Pavot, 2008). Teachers spend a great amount of time with their students throughout the school year and have many opportunities to provide students with social support (Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, & Patil, 2003). There are numerous benefits of socially supportive relationships between teachers and students (Demaray, Malecki, Rueger, Brown, & Summers, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrøm, 2003; Suldo & Huebner, 2006) and teachers' perceptions and beliefs about classroom practices are believed to drive the way the classroom is managed and the students are taught (Guskey, 2002; Pajares, 1992). Therefore, knowing how teachers perceive various teaching behaviors that can provide social support to students may provide valuable information on how to implement socially supportive practices within schools. The present study investigated middle school teachers' perceptions of teaching behaviors previously identified as providing social support to middle school students.

**Importance of Subjective Well-Being & Social Support in Schools**

Subjective well-being is a person's level of daily happiness and includes both cognitive and affective aspects (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Schimmack, 2008). The cognitive component of subjective well-being is a person's life satisfaction, which is the overall judgment about one's life being satisfactory (Schimmack, 2008). The affective component of subjective well-being involves experiencing negative emotions (negative affect) and positive emotions (positive affect) and is thought to influence a person's life satisfaction. Life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect all comprise a person's subjective well-being.

Well-being does not receive as much attention from researchers as does negative problems, such as anxiety and depression (Linley & Joseph, 2004). However, the dual factor model of mental health supports the notion that both positive indicators (subjective well-being) and negative indicators (psychopathology) determine one's mental health (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). Furthermore, neither the lack of psychopathology nor the presence of high subjective well-being alone is sufficient to ensure a person will have good mental health; a balance of the two is necessary for good mental health. Therefore, research should focus on ways to enhance subjective well-being in addition to methods of decreasing psychopathology. Emphasizing ways to increase subjective well-being may be especially important with school children.

Schools should be concerned about students' well-being because research demonstrates that students' emotional well-being interacts with their school performance (Huebner & Diener, 2008). However, research on subjective well-being has largely focused on adults, not children (Baker et al., 2003; Huebner & Diener, 2008).

Furthermore, most of the research that has been done with children is generally focused on elementary school children (Suldo, Friedrich, White, Farmer, Minch, & Michalowski, 2009). Therefore, more research is needed concerning the subjective well-being of children. Specifically, research is needed that investigates middle and high school students as well as strategies that will enhance students' subjective well-being.

Both genetics and environment contribute to a person's subjective well-being (Larsen & Eid, 2008). While genetics cannot be controlled, a person's environment can be altered to have a more positive influence on one's well-being. For students, schools can have a large impact on their subjective well-being because school is an environment where students spend a large amount of their time (Baker et al., 2003). As students' feelings of school alienation and school distress increase, happiness decreases significantly (Natvig et al., 2003). Another study found that middle school students with good mental health (i.e., high subjective well-being and low psychopathology) had better reading skills, school attendance, academic self-perceptions, academic goals, social support from classmates and parents, perceived physical health, and fewer social problems than peers with low subjective well-being but no mental illness (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). These findings demonstrate that there is a correlation between school experiences and students' well-being.

Social support has been identified as a factor that is related to a person's subjective well-being (Pavot, 2008). In other words, good social relations are thought to contribute to greater happiness and according to Diener and Seligman (2002) are a necessary component for happiness. Due to the vast amount of time students spend in school, school is an environment that can offer many opportunities for students to receive

social support (Baker et al., 2003). Both peers and school staff, especially teachers, can provide social support for students. A study by Suldo et al. (2009) found that 16% of the variance in the subjective well-being of middle school students in their sample was explained by the students' perceptions of social support from teachers. Both the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS) and the Student Social Support Scale (SSSS) identify students' social support as including support from teachers, as well as from parents, classmates, and close friends (Malecki & Demaray, 2002; Malecki & Elliott, 1999). These findings demonstrate that teachers can have a strong role in students' perceived social support, and thus their life satisfaction.

In summary, subjective well-being, a positive indicator of mental health, is just as important as negative indicators when determining one's mental health (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). Social support is one factor related to a person's subjective well-being (Pavot, 2008). For students who spend a vast amount of their time in school, teachers are in a position to provide social support and increase student well-being as well as school performance (Baker et al., 2003; Suldo & Shaffer, 2008).

### **Benefits of Social Support from Teachers**

There is an array of benefits that students can experience if they have social support from teachers. A study of Norwegian school adolescents in Grades 7 through 9 found that students with higher social support from teachers had significantly higher odds of being happy (Natvig et al., 2003). These findings were confirmed by Suldo and Huebner (2006); very high life satisfaction (the 10% of the study's sample with the highest life satisfaction) among middle and high school students was correlated with high social support from teachers, parents, close friends, and classmates. Students with very

high life satisfaction also had the lowest emotional and behavior problem ratings. These studies bolster the suggestion that social support from teachers can enhance student happiness.

Self-concept is another quality that is related to teacher support. In a large representative sample of students in grades 3 through 12, Demaray and colleagues (2009) found that the frequency of social support from parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends was significantly related to self-concept. In contrast, the perceived *importance* of support was not significantly related to self-concept—except for perceived importance of support from teachers. Students with high teacher support had high self-concepts. Additionally, students who viewed teacher support as highly important had higher academic and social self-concept than students who did not view teacher support as important. This finding suggests that the amount of teacher support as well as students' views of the importance of teacher support are related to students' self-concept.

Research has found teacher support to moderate the risk of school failure among students (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Kindergarten students were classified as at-risk of school failure if their mothers had less than a 4-year college education or if the students displayed multiple behavior, attention, academic, and social problems in the classroom. At-risk children were followed from kindergarten through first grade, where they were either in a classroom with high or low emotional and instructional support. Emotional support included having a positive classroom atmosphere, teachers being sensitive to student interests and moods, having child-centered interactions, and well-managed classrooms. Instructional support included teachers encouraging child responsibility, providing literacy instruction, and giving evaluative feedback. Results showed that the

at-risk students in the highly supportive classrooms had achievement scores and student-teacher relationships at the end of first grade that were comparable to their typical peers. In contrast, the at-risk students in the low support classrooms had lower achievement and higher conflict with teachers than their normal peers. These results suggest that teacher support may help reduce the discrepancy in achievement between at-risk and typical children and, thus, lessen the risk of school failure for these children.

Students gain numerous educational and personal advantages when they receive social support from their teachers while in school. Social support from teachers is correlated with higher overall happiness, less emotional and behavioral problems, higher self-concept, and decreased school failure among students (Demaray et al., 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Natvig et al., 2003; Suldo & Huebner, 2006). While positive consequences occur when students have social support from their teachers, negative consequences are common when students lack teacher social support.

### **Negative Effects of Low Teacher Social Support**

When students do not have sufficient social support from teachers, negative outcomes are more likely. Students from an urban middle school who reported carrying weapons to school perceived less overall social support than did students who did not carry weapons (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Students with weapons at school also perceived significantly less teacher, parent, school, classmate, and close friend support. Individual support from parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends were significant predictors of weapon carrying at school. While other factors do contribute to children carrying weapons to school, such as parent and peer support, teacher support is a contributor too.



Another study investigated the relationship between maladjustment and the perceived social support from parents, teachers, school, close friends, and classmates of at-risk (i.e., low income and minority students) students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at an urban school (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). Perceived social support from each source was measured using the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS). Parent and classmate support were predictors of clinical maladjustment (i.e., anxiety, atypicality, locus of control, social stress for parent and classmate support; and somatization for parent support only) and emotional symptoms (i.e., depression and sense of inadequacy) as measured by the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Self-Report of Personality (BASC-SRP). Only parent support was a predictor of personal adjustment (relations with parents, interpersonal relations, and self-esteem) as measured by the BASC-SRP. Perceived teacher support was not a significant predictor of clinical or emotional maladjustment on the BASC-SRP; however, perceived teacher support was a significant predictor of school maladjustment on the BASC-SRP. These findings suggest social support provided by teachers for at-risk students is related to the students' attitudes about teachers and their overall school experience, but may not be related to their emotional adjustment as greatly.

Way, Reddy, and Rhodes (2007) followed adolescents from sixth grade through eighth grade and monitored their perceived school climate and psychological and behavioral adjustment. The dimensions of perceived school climate included perceived teacher and peer support, classroom opportunities for student autonomy, and clarity and consistency of school rules. Way et al. (2007) found that the students' perceived school climate declined over the three years of middle school (sixth through eighth grade).

Decreases in psychological and behavioral adjustment, such as increased behavior problems, lowered self-esteem, and increased symptoms of depression, were seen over the three years as well. This further supports the need for identifying teacher behaviors that effectively provide social support to students in order to prevent reductions in student well-being during the middle school years.

Demaray, Malecki, Davidson, Hodgson, and Rebus (2005) have also suggested that school support can have a lasting relationship with students' well-being. With at-risk youth in urban middle schools, school support was related to the students' school maladjustment one year later. This suggests school support can be related to students' long term outcomes. Teacher support by itself was not a significant predictor of school maladjustment one year later, but Demaray et al. (2005) propose that this may be because middle school students change teachers several times throughout the day and over the years. Thus, the lack of stability with a student's teachers may discourage supportive student-teacher relationships from forming. If this is so, then social support does affect students' well-being and there is a need to uncover what teaching behaviors are effective in establishing supportive student-teacher relationships in middle school. With this knowledge, the limitation of middle school students' having instability among their teachers can be overcome by empowering teachers to better provide social support for middle school students.

The combination of positive outcomes for students who perceive high social support from teachers (Demaray et al., 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Natvig et al., 2003; Suldo & Huebner, 2006), the evidence that poor outcomes are associated with low social support from teachers (Malecki & Demaray, 2003), and the findings that perceived

teacher social support is connected to student adjustment throughout middle school (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Demaray et al., 2005) warrants additional research to investigate how teachers' social support can be enhanced to help produce better outcomes for students. One way to accomplish this is to identify which teaching behaviors provide social support.

### **Socially Supportive Teaching Behaviors**

Being aware of which behaviors provide social support for students is valuable so that teachers can use them and students can obtain their benefits. Some socially supportive teaching behaviors are available from previous research. General teacher behaviors identified as providing social support to students on the Student Social Support Scale (SSSS) and the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS) include encouraging questions, treating students fairly, having an emotional connection to students, using diverse and best teaching practices, and improving the academic success of students, among others (Malecki & Demaray, 2002; Malecki, Demaray, & Elliott, 2004; Malecki & Elliott, 1999).

Middle school students perceived the same broad categories of socially supportive teacher behaviors identified on the SSSS and CASSS, as providing them with social support (Suldo et al., 2009). Suldo et al. (2009) conducted a study in which fifty middle school students took part in a focus group to explore students' perceptions of teacher behaviors that provide social support. The students identified a list of twelve teacher behaviors that the students saw as conveying a high level of support and ten behaviors that the students perceived as providing a low level of support. Many of these teacher behaviors overlapped with the socially supportive behaviors on the SSSS and CASSS.

The teacher behaviors that convey social support and were recognized by the SSSS, CASSS (Malecki et al., 2004; Malecki & Demaray, 2002; Malecki & Elliott, 1999), and the students in Suldo et al. (2009) coincide with teacher behaviors identified in other studies as being beneficial for school attitudes, academic motivation, and student autonomy (Baker et al., 2003; Reeve & Jang, 2006). Therefore, the students in Suldo et al. (2009) perceived similar social support strategies for teachers as the research suggests. It is important to also be aware of what teachers think about the teaching behaviors that are recognized as providing social support to students. Not much research has focused on teachers' views of these behaviors. Knowledge of teachers' views could provide valuable information on ways to implement such teaching strategies within schools and classrooms.

### **Teachers' Perceptions**

Little is known about what teachers believe about the practices previously identified as providing social support to students. Knowing what teachers think about socially supportive practices would help establish whether teachers would be receptive to using such practices. Additionally, not much is known about the relationship between beliefs and practices concerning social support behaviors. However, this relationship in regards to other academic topics, such as math and science instruction, and in general has been investigated.

Early childhood teachers appear to use theories, or beliefs, developed from a combination of their applied practice and knowledge gained from their education (Spodek, 1988). These theories and beliefs are used to drive their decisions and practices when teaching. Teachers' values and knowledge of practice (including curriculum,

subject matter, instruction, environment, and self) were incorporated into the teachers' theories and beliefs. A study using Head Start teachers, who are early childhood teachers, discovered there was a correlation between self-reported beliefs and practices and observed classroom teaching practices (McCarty, Abbott-Shim, & Lambert, 2001).

Many studies have found teachers' beliefs and classroom practices regarding academic subjects to be correlated as well (Cross, 2009; Haney, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 1996). Cross (2009) studied the relationship between the beliefs and classroom practices of five high school algebra teachers. The results found mathematics-related beliefs and classroom practices were more aligned than misaligned among the teachers, which suggests that the teachers' beliefs about mathematics are related to the way the teachers teach.

Other research has shown that general teacher beliefs are indicators of general teacher behaviors present in the classroom (Guskey, 2002; Pajares, 1992); therefore, it seems likely that teachers' beliefs concerning socially supportive behaviors would also be linked to teachers' classroom behaviors involving social support. Additional research is warranted to further investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in general and specifically regarding socially supportive behaviors.

To further support the need for additional research, some studies have found that teachers' beliefs are not always reflected in their practices (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Phipps and Borg (2009) explored the relationship between grammar teaching beliefs and practices of three English teachers in Turkey. The teachers were interviewed and observed over an 18-month period. The researchers concluded that the teaching practices contradicted the teachers' beliefs at times. Reasons that the three teachers acted in ways

not aligned with their beliefs included student expectations and preferences as well as classroom management issues. Cross (2009) also found that there are factors other than beliefs that are related to teachers' classroom behaviors. Such factors include the teachers' personal experiences as students, curriculum and time constraints, and teaching experience. The findings help to explain why teachers' practices and beliefs do not always appear to be related. These obstacles to providing social support and ways to overcome them could be addressed by learning more about teachers' perceptions of socially supportive practices through research.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that teachers' beliefs and classroom behaviors are related. While further research is needed to strengthen the findings that beliefs and practices are aligned, there is support that teachers' beliefs and classroom behaviors are both related to the relationships between teachers and students (Murray & Pianta, 2007). Classroom practices that provide social support to students can be linked to student outcomes, such as school, psychological, and behavioral adjustment, school failure, self-concept, and overall happiness or well-being (Demaray et al., 2005; Demaray et al., 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Natvig et al., 2003; Way et al., 2007). Therefore, if beliefs are connected to classroom practices, teachers' beliefs can be influential to student outcomes as well. The present study attempted to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding teaching behaviors previously identified as providing social support to students in an effort to understand how to enhance positive outcomes for students.

### **Present Study**

The present study built on a study by Suldo et al. (2009), which identified a number of teacher behaviors perceived by middle school students as showing high or low

social support. Suldo et al. (2009) conducted a mixed methods study consisting of a quantitative and a qualitative component. For the quantitative portion of the study, 401 middle school students (grades 6, 7, and 8) from one suburban school completed self reports of their subjective well-being (the Student's Life Satisfaction Scale and the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children) and perceived social support from teachers (Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale; CASSS). The results of this quantitative component demonstrated that 16% of the variance in the students' subjective well-being was accounted for by teacher support.

Fifty students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade were chosen from the 401 students in the quantitative portion to equally represent students in both gifted and general education. Students were not excluded based on their level of subjective well-being or perceived teacher support. The 50 selected students were divided into eight focus groups, grouped based on gender and having similar educational background (e.g., gifted or general education). Following a protocol developed by the authors, participants in the focus groups were asked four questions: 1) how teachers show that they care about them, 2) how teachers show that they treat kids fairly, 3) how teachers make them feel comfortable asking questions, and 4) how teachers make sure that they learn something well. Then, the students were asked the negative form of each of the four questions (e.g., "What do teachers do to make you feel like they don't care about you?"). The participants' responses were recorded and categorized into themes that emerged from the responses. The themes are shown in Table 1. The frequency or number of times participants mentioned a theme during the focus groups is shown in Table 8 and will be discussed more thoroughly in the Results section. However, the students perceived their

Table 1

*The High and Low Social Support Behaviors Mentioned in the Focus Groups from Suldo et al. (2009)*

---

High Social Support Behaviors

---

- 1) **Conveys interest in student wellness**
  - 2) Takes actions to improve students' moods and emotional states
  - 3) **Uses diverse teaching strategies**
  - 4) Helps students improve their grades
  - 5) **Ensures a manageable academic workload**
  - 6) **Treats students similarly**
  - 7) **Punishes in a fair manner**
  - 8) Creates an environment in which questions are encouraged
  - 9) Is sensitive and responsive to the entire class's understanding of academic material
  - 10) Gives students what they want, specifically things that are pleasurable
  - 11) Provides evaluative feedback on student performance
  - 12) Shows interest in an individual student's progress
- 

Low Social Support Behaviors

---

- 1) **Conveys disinterest in student wellness**
  - 2) Contributes to students' negative moods and poor emotional states
  - 3) **Reliance on single mode of instruction**
  - 4) Does not help students improve grades
  - 5) **Assigns an overwhelming workload**
  - 6) **Treats students in a biased manner**
  - 7) **Punishes in an incorrect manner**
  - 8) Creates an environment in which questions are discouraged
  - 9) Insufficient interest in, and assistance with, students' academic progress
  - 10) Sets firm expectations, rules, and discipline procedures
- 

*Note.* In the present study's TPASSS survey, which will be discussed in the Method section, the behaviors in **bold** in the High Social Support Behavior section were combined with the behavior in **bold** of the same number in the Low Social Support Behavior section. The result was 17 categories of teaching behaviors used in the present study.



teachers to be supportive mostly when teachers emotionally connected to students, used a variety of teaching practices, helped students succeed academically, treated students fairly, and encouraged questions from students.

The present study furthered the results of Suldo et al. (2009) by surveying middle school teachers about their perceptions of the high and low social support behaviors suggested by the middle school students in the focus groups in Suldo et al. (2009). The purpose of the present study was to investigate agreement between teachers and students on which teacher behaviors provide social support to students. In addition, it was investigated whether the teachers perceived the same broad categories of social support as the students in the study by Suldo et al. (2009). It was predicted that middle school teachers would also perceive the teacher behaviors identified by the middle school students in Suldo et al. (2009) as being socially supportive. It was hypothesized that through factor analysis, the same general themes of socially supportive teacher behaviors in Suldo et al. (2009) would emerge as factors in the present study.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants consisted of regular and special education middle school teachers employed at 22 middle schools in Illinois and one middle school in Iowa. All participants volunteered to participate in the study. A total of 180 people began the survey. Ten people were excluded from the study because the participants indicated that they were not regular or special education teachers. Another 18 people quit the survey before reaching the social support scenarios (i.e., only completed the demographic questions). Of the people who reached the social support section, 29 participants (19.1%

of the 152 people who began the social support section) did not complete the survey and were, therefore, excluded from the study. Incomplete surveys were defined as missing a response to one or more of the social support scenarios in the survey. These exclusions resulted in 123 teacher participants from 16 different schools (15 in Illinois and 1 in Iowa) who completed the survey and were included in the study. Among the 123 participants, the mean number of years teaching was 14.63 ( $SD = 9.60$ ) and the mean number of years teaching in a middle school was 11.76 ( $SD = 8.20$ ).

The 123 participants in this study consisted of 96 females (78%) and 27 males (22%). The participants' ethnicities included 1 Asian (0.8%), 2 Black or African American (1.6%), 1 Hispanic or Latino (0.8%), 117 White or Caucasian (95.1%), and 2 participants did not indicate their ethnicity (1.6%). In 2011, of the teachers in Illinois, 76.9% were female and 23.1% were male; 82.4% were White, 6.1% were Black or African American, 5% were Hispanic or Latino, 1.2% were Asian, and 0.1% were Native American (Northern Illinois University & Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). The gender of teachers in the present study's sample appears representative of the teachers in Illinois, but the sample over-represents White or Caucasian teachers while under-representing the other ethnicities of teachers in Illinois.

Of the participants missing a response to one or more of the social support scenarios ( $n = 28$ ), the mean number of years teaching was 16.08 ( $SD = 9.66$ ) and the mean number of years teaching in a middle school was 13.12 ( $SD = 8.94$ ). There were 21 females (75%), 6 males (21.4%), and 1 did not indicate his or her gender (3.6%). Their ethnicities consisted of 27 White or Caucasian (96.4%) and 1 Asian (3.6%). These

demographics of people who missed a response to one or more of the social support scenarios were comparable to the participants who completed the survey in its entirety.

Of the participants who quit the survey before reaching the social support scenarios ( $n = 18$ ), the mean number of years teaching was 15.22 ( $SD = 8.71$ ) and the mean number of years teaching in a middle school was 11.06 ( $SD = 8.43$ ). There were 13 females (72.2%), 4 males (22.2%), and 1 did not indicate his or her gender (5.6%). Their ethnicities included 17 White or Caucasian (94.4%) and 1 did not indicate his or her ethnicity (5.6%). The demographics of the people who stopped the survey early were also comparable to the participants who completed the survey in its entirety.

### **Materials**

The Teachers' Perceptions About Social Support for Students (TPASSS) survey was completed by all participants and included questions about their ethnicity, gender, teaching history, and beliefs about strategies to show social support to students (Appendix C). Teaching history questions concerned how long participants had been teaching, how long they had taught in a middle school, which subjects they taught, and in which school they currently taught. Social support belief items included 42 short scenarios depicting situations where teachers may demonstrate high or low social support behaviors. The participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = very poor and 7 = excellent) the performance of a middle school teacher depicted in each scenario.

The social support scenarios in the TPASSS survey were created by Heather Moore and Dr. Steven Scher using teacher behaviors identified by middle school students as expressing high or low social support in a study by Suldo et al. (2009). The 22 categories of teacher behaviors reflecting high and low social support that were identified

by the students in Suldo et al. (2009) are listed in Table 1. Specific examples of each of these 22 categories of teacher behaviors were provided by Suldo et al. (2009). However, some of the high social support behaviors and examples overlap with the low social support behaviors and examples by being direct opposites of one another. In order to prevent such overlap in the creation of the scenarios for the present study, some behaviors were combined with each other, as shown in bold in Table 1. The result of combining some behaviors was 17 general categories of teaching behaviors. Between two and four scenarios were created for each of these 17 teacher behaviors for a total of 42 scenarios used in the TPASSS survey for the present study (Table 2 and Appendix C).

### **Procedure**

Qualtrics, a website that creates online surveys, was used to make the TPASSS survey (Appendices B, C, and D) available online for participants to access and to save the data. A login and password were required in order for anyone to access the results of the survey responses or to edit the survey. The login and password helped ensure confidentiality of the survey responses as well as not recording the participants' names with their survey responses. The setting on the Qualtrics website to protect against "ballot stuffing" was selected to control for duplicate responses from the same participant. In accordance with the American Psychological Association guidelines, data will be retained for a minimum of 5 years following publication of the study.

After setting up the TPASSS survey online, the principals of 134 middle schools were contacted via email to obtain permission to survey the teachers at the school. Principals of 23 schools granted permission. Forms outlining the current study's purpose and methods were submitted to Eastern Illinois University's Institutional Review Board

Table 2

*The 17 Categories of Teaching Behaviors and Their Corresponding TPASSS Survey**Social Support Scenarios*

---

**1. Interest in Student Wellness**

---

1. A teacher knows that a male and a female student are dating. The teacher casually asks the female student how the relationship is going.
  2. A student missed class because he had to be hospitalized. Upon his return, his teacher asks why he was in the hospital.
  3. Mr. Martinez gives students an opportunity to share their weekend plans during class on Friday afternoons.
- 

**2. Improves Student Moods/Emotions**

---

4. Mary is upset because she had an argument with her mother. Her teacher discusses the situation with Mary and helps her brainstorm possible solutions.
  5. Ms. Murphy discusses personal details about a student (e.g., his parents are divorced and his mom has bipolar disorder) over lunch with her friends who do not know the student.
- 

**3. Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotions**

---

6. A class is chatting instead of working on a math worksheet. The teacher tells the students that they will fail the upcoming test if they do not complete the worksheet.
  7. One of Mr. Ward's classroom rules is cell phones cannot be used in class. When his class is working on individual seatwork, Mr. Ward uses his cell phone to text another teacher about what time a meeting is scheduled.
  8. A group of students are passing notes during class. The teacher raises his voice and tells the students to stop immediately.
- 

**4. Gives Students What They Want**

---

9. Ms. Baker gives all of her students a small piece of candy each Monday to start the week off on a positive note.
  10. Mr. Lopez gives students free time during the last 5 minutes of each class to work on assignments or chat with peers.
- 

**5. Responsive to Whole Class' Understanding of Material**

---

11. At the end of each quarter, Mrs. Woods has her students fill out a survey asking what they like and do not like about the class and her style of teaching.
  12. Mr. Allen notices that several students do not understand how to divide fractions. He offers to meet the students after class to go over the lesson with them again.
  13. Mrs. Schultz teaches four science classes. Students in one of her classes are struggling to understand a lesson on density. Mrs. Schultz decides to move on to the next lesson so this class does not get behind schedule with her three other classes.
-

---

#### 6. Interest in Student Progress

---

14. Mr. Haywood has just taught a science lesson on balancing chemical equations and gives students time to work on their homework problems. Mr. Haywood walks around the room and asks students individually if they understand the problems and if they need assistance.
  15. Miss Clark has assigned a research paper to her social studies class. Whenever she sees any of her students in the hallway she asks him or her how the paper is going and if they need help with it at all.
- 

#### 7. Not Providing Enough Assistance

---

16. Mr. Hill is absent on a day when he planned to introduce a new topic, writing persuasive papers, to his Language Arts class. Preferring to teach the lesson himself, Mr. Hill leaves instructions for the substitute to have the students write a two page summary of the book they are currently reading. Mr. Hill does not plan to grade the summaries.
  17. In class one day, Mr. Peterson has his students read a chapter in the math textbook that introduces a new topic to them. The students are also told to do the problems at the end of the chapter on their own and turn their answers in for a grade.
- 

#### 8. Teaching Style

---

18. Mr. Evans is teaching a unit on weather. To better explain what occurs during a hurricane, Mr. Evans tells the class about when he and his wife were on their honeymoon in Florida and had to be evacuated because of a hurricane warning.
  19. During a unit on the ocean and underwater life, Mrs. Harris shows her class the movie "Finding Nemo" to reinforce concepts taught from the textbook.
  20. Mr. Barnes uses mnemonic devices (e.g., ROY G BIV to teach the color spectrum) and concrete examples (e.g., DNA is like a fingerprint) as much as possible in his science classes.
  21. Ms. Torres believes the best way to learn history is by hearing it. She uses lectures to teach all of her history lessons.
- 

#### 9. Gives Evaluative Feedback

---

22. No one in Mr. Hughes' class had any missing assignments for the entire quarter. Mr. Hughes throws a pizza party for the class to reward them for a job well done.
  23. Miss Patterson sends a letter to the parents of students when they receive an "A" on her tests. The letter informs the parents how well their child did on the test and how pleased Miss Patterson is with this.
  24. Mr. Wright is grading a student essay. He writes comments about how the student can improve his or her paper, such as providing more detail in a specific paragraph and using transition words between paragraphs. Mr. Wright also notes that the student had good spelling and grammar throughout the essay.
-

---

#### 10. Helps Improve Student Grades

---

25. Ms. King offers her class an extra credit book report assignment to help students improve their grade before the end of the quarter.
  26. Mr. Lee gives students a study guide before each social studies exam. Mr. Lee also spends time discussing good study strategies so the students are well prepared for the tests.
- 

#### 11. Not Helping Students Improve Grades

---

27. In Mr. Davis' math class, tests determine 80% of a student's class grade.
  28. Miss Turner does not allow any students to make up assignments that are turned in late or redo assignments that receive low grades.
- 

#### 12. Workload

---

29. Today Miss Pool tells her class that there will be a social studies test tomorrow. This is the first time the students have been made aware that there will be a test tomorrow.
  30. Mrs. Smith learns that her students have a science exam the same day she had scheduled an exam in her class. Mrs. Smith decides to postpone her exam by one day so the two tests do not overlap.
- 

#### 13. Treating Students Fairly

---

31. A teacher frequently calls on Samantha instead of other students because Samantha usually has better comments and answers questions more accurately than other students.
  32. Mr. Jones calls on all students, whether or not they raise their hands to participate.
  33. Ms. White tries to avoid interactions with Bobby because he is generally oppositional and noncompliant.
- 

#### 14. Punishment

---

34. Miss William's class had a substitute yesterday and several students were off-task and disruptive during class. When Miss Williams returns, she tries to find out which students behaved poorly before punishing everyone in the class.
  35. Mark calls Tim an "idiot" in class. Mr. Taylor overhears and gives Mark detentions for one week.
- 

#### 15. Welcomes Questions

---

36. Mr. Jacobs tries to thoroughly answer any question posed by his students. If he does not know the answer he suggests where the student should look to find the answer.
  37. Mr. Li lets students write down their questions and turn them in anonymously after a lesson if they do not want to ask the questions aloud. Mr. Li then reads and answers the questions in class the next day.
-

---

**16. Discourages Questions**

---

38. Mr. Wilson prefers his students ask questions only during the last 5 minutes of class. If a student raises his or her hand during a lecture, Mr. Wilson instructs the student to wait until the end of class to ask questions.
  39. When students give a wrong answer to a question, Ms. Pearl tries not to tell the students they are wrong. She tries to find something that is right in the answer.
- 

**17. Sets Firm Rules/Discipline Practices**

---

40. One of Ms. Callahan's classroom rules requires students to raise their hands before speaking. Jack speaks without raises his hand twice in one day. As a result, Ms. Callahan lowers Jack's conduct grade.
  41. Mrs. Johnson regularly reminds her students of the classroom rules, both when they behave well and when they misbehave.
  42. Mr. McKinney creates arbitrary classroom rules to reinforce that students need to learn to obey rules.
-



(IRB) for approval to begin the collection of data for the study. Once the IRB approved the study (Appendix E), the principals who granted permission were then asked to email the teachers an initial email asking the teachers to participate and a reminder email approximately a week after the initial email (Appendix A).

Potential participants (teachers employed at a school in which the principal gave permission to survey the school's teachers) received an email from the principal of the school where they taught (Appendix A). The email asked the teachers to volunteer to complete a survey about their perceptions of teaching strategies for middle school students. A link took the participants to an online survey. Participants were required to enter a password, which was provided in the initial email from the principal, before accessing the survey. The participants first saw the informed consent information and were asked if they would like to participate by completing the survey (Appendix B). If the participant did not agree, the survey was not administered. If the participant did agree, he or she was taken to the survey and answered the demographic and teaching questions before completing the social support section of the TPASSS (Appendix C).

The survey took approximately 30 minutes or less to complete. When the survey was completed a screen appeared thanking the participants for their participation and asking them not to discuss the survey with their fellow teachers until the study was completed (Appendix D). Participants also had the option to provide their email address if they wanted more information about the study's purpose and/or the results of the study. Participants who wanted to provide their email address were asked to click on a link that took them to a separate survey. This separate survey allowed the participants to enter their email address without the email address being connected to their responses, which

helped maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' responses. Emails to the participants wanting more information were sent after the results of the study were analyzed.

## **Results**

### **Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis was conducted with all 42 items in the TPASSS survey's social support section. Maximum likelihood factor extraction was used. Based on the scree plot (Figure 1), the factor solutions with 5 and 6 factors were submitted to an oblique rotation.

The factor loadings for both the 5 and 6 factor solutions are displayed in Table 3. The 5 factor solution has primary factor loadings greater than .300 for all but three (items 34, 35, 36) of the 42 items from the TPASSS. Only one item (24) had a loading greater than .300 on more than one factor. The 6 factor solution has primary factor loadings less than .300 for six of the TPASSS items (9, 17, 34, 35, 36), and seven items (7, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25, 29) had loadings greater than .300 on multiple factors. When interpreting the factors, the factors in the 5 factor solution appeared easier to label than the factors in the 6 factor solution. For the 5 factor solution, the items in each respective factor were more homogenous and, therefore, easier to classify than the items in the 6 factor solution.

Based on the simple structure as well as the interpretability of the factors, the 5 factor solution was chosen as the best factor solution. The factor labels chosen for the five factors were Being Nice to Students (I), Teacher-Focused Behaviors (II), Interest in Students' Personal Lives (III), Positive Teaching Behaviors (IV), and Lack of Concern

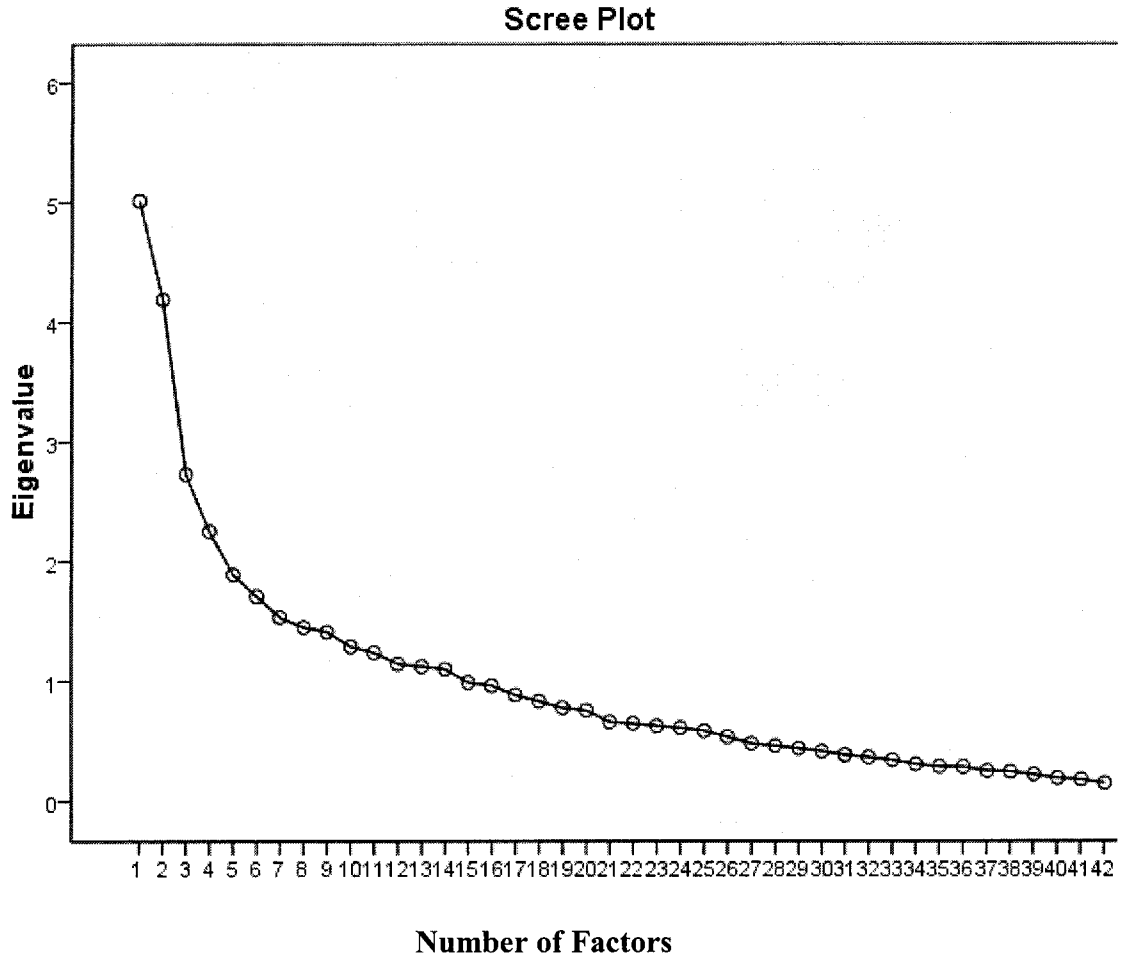


Figure 1. Scree plot for the factor analysis of the TPASSS survey's 42 social support items.

Table 3

*Factor Loadings of the TPASSS's Social Support Section based on the 5 and 6 Factor Solutions*

Item No.	5 Factor Solution					6 Factor Solution					
	I	II	III	IV	V	I	VI	II	III	V	IV
9	.315					.266					
10	.353					.336					
19	.450					.362		.341			
22	.896					.845					
23	.478					.498					
25	.452					.449					.300
5		.311					-.388				
6		.470					-.407				
8		.397					-.546				
13		.449					-.520			-.335	
16		.506					-.621				
17		.394						.264			
21		.485						.388			
28		.367						.485			
31		.446						.489			
33		.376						.369			
38		.494						.457			
40		.405						.501			
42		.458						.600			
1			-.797						-.804		
2			-.520						-.494		
3			-.446						-.436		
4			-.569						-.627		
11				.317						.340	
12				.560						.530	
14				.594						.599	
15				.608						.580	
18				.320		.354	-.371				
20				.321						.349	
24			.369	.486					.374	.465	
32				.335						.305	
34				.269			-.237				
35				.208				.258			
36				.238						.256	
41				.435						.499	
7					.352	.305					-.313
26					-.465						.478
27					.409						-.433
29					.685			.351			-.706
30					-.523						.526
37					-.336						.329
39					-.385						.384

*Note.* "Item No." is the number of the scenario in the social support section of the TPASSS survey (see Table 2). Only loadings greater than .300 are included. For items where no loading was .300 or greater, the highest loading is shown.

for Student Improvement (V). The TPASSS items contained in each of the five factors are presented in Table 4.

The internal consistency of each of the factors was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The alphas were moderate at .70 for Factor I-Being Nice to Students (6 items), .75 for Factor II-Teacher-Focused Behaviors (13 items), .66 for Factor III-Interest in Students' Personal Lives (4 items), .64 for Factor IV-Positive Teaching Behaviors (12 items), .63 for Factor V-Lack of Concern for Student Improvement (7 items). None of the alphas for any of the factors could have been significantly increased if any of the items were removed.

The factor scores were calculated by taking the mean of each factor. For Factor V, where there were some negative loadings and some positive loadings, the negative loadings were reverse coded so that all the loadings were positive before means were calculated. The items were not weighted by their loadings. Participants whose average factor score was an outlier were identified using the box and whisker graphs for each factor. All outliers had an average factor score that was more than 1.5 lengths of the boxplot (the interquartile range or the middle half of the data points) away from either end of the boxplot (the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75 percentiles). As shown in Table 5, there did not appear to be any pattern to the outliers based on the participants' years of teaching, years of teaching in a middle school, school where employed, sex, ethnicity, or subjects taught. The data were analyzed with and without deleting the outliers. Deleting the outliers made very little substantive difference in the findings; therefore, the outliers were included when calculating the mean of each factor (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 4

*TPASS Items Contained in Each Factor of the 5 Factor Solution*

## Factor I: Being Nice to Students

- 
9. Ms. Baker gives all of her students a small piece of candy each Monday to start the week off on a positive note.
  10. Mr. Lopez gives students free time during the last 5 minutes of each class to work on assignments or chat with peers.
  19. During a unit on the ocean and underwater life, Mrs. Harris shows her class the movie "Finding Nemo" to reinforce concepts taught from the textbook.
  22. No one in Mr. Hughes' class had any missing assignments for the entire quarter. Mr. Hughes throws a pizza party for the class to reward them for a job well done.
  23. Miss Patterson sends a letter to the parents of students when they receive an "A" on her tests. The letter informs the parents how well their child did on the test and how pleased Miss Patterson is with this.
  25. Ms. King offers her class an extra credit book report assignment to help students improve their grade before the end of the quarter.
- 

## Factor II: Teacher-Focused Behaviors

- 
5. Ms. Murphy discusses personal details about a student (e.g., his parents are divorced and his mom has bipolar disorder) over lunch with her friends who do not know the student.
  6. A class is chatting instead of working on a math worksheet. The teacher tells the students that they will fail the upcoming test if they do not complete the worksheet.
  8. A group of students are passing notes during class. The teacher raises his voice and tells the students to stop immediately.
  13. Mrs. Schultz teaches four science classes. Students in one of her classes are struggling to understand a lesson on density. Mrs. Schultz decides to move on to the next lesson so this class does not get behind schedule with her three other classes.
  16. Mr. Hill is absent on a day when he planned to introduce a new topic, writing persuasive papers, to his Language Arts class. Preferring to teach the lesson himself, Mr. Hill leaves instructions for the substitute to have the students write a two page summary of the book they are currently reading. Mr. Hill does not plan to grade the summaries.
  17. In class one day, Mr. Peterson has his students read a chapter in the math textbook that introduces a new topic to them. The students are also told to do the problems at the end of the chapter on their own and turn their answers in for a grade.
  21. Ms. Torres believes the best way to learn history is by hearing it. She uses lectures to teach all of her history lessons.
-

- 
28. Miss Turner does not allow any students to make up assignments that are turned in late or redo assignments that receive low grades.
  31. A teacher frequently calls on Samantha instead of other students because Samantha usually has better comments and answers questions more accurately than other students.
  33. Ms. White tries to avoid interactions with Bobby because he is generally oppositional and noncompliant.
  38. Mr. Wilson prefers his students ask questions only during the last 5 minutes of class. If a student raises his or her hand during a lecture, Mr. Wilson instructs the student to wait until the end of class to ask questions.
  40. One of Ms. Callahan's classroom rules requires students to raise their hands before speaking. Jack speaks without raises his hand twice in one day. As a result, Ms. Callahan lowers Jack's conduct grade.
  42. Mr. McKinney creates arbitrary classroom rules to reinforce that students need to learn to obey rules.
- 

#### Factor III: Interest in Students' Personal Lives

---

1. A teacher knows that a male and a female student are dating. The teacher casually asks the female student how the relationship is going.
  2. A student missed class because he had to be hospitalized. Upon his return, his teacher asks why he was in the hospital.
  3. Mr. Martinez gives students an opportunity to share their weekend plans during class on Friday afternoons.
  4. Mary is upset because she had an argument with her mother. Her teacher discusses the situation with Mary and helps her brainstorm possible solutions.
- 

#### Factor IV: Positive Teaching Behaviors

---

11. At the end of each quarter, Mrs. Woods has her students fill out a survey asking what they like and do not like about the class and her style of teaching.
  12. Mr. Allen notices that several students do not understand how to divide fractions. He offers to meet the students after class to go over the lesson with them again.
  14. Mr. Haywood has just taught a science lesson on balancing chemical equations and gives students time to work on their homework problems. Mr. Haywood walks around the room and asks students individually if they understand the problems and if they need assistance.
  15. Miss Clark has assigned a research paper to her social studies class. Whenever she sees any of her students in the hallway she asks him or her how the paper is going and if they need help with it at all.
  18. Mr. Evans is teaching a unit on weather. To better explain what occurs during a hurricane, Mr. Evans tells the class about when he and his wife were on their honeymoon in Florida and had to be evacuated because of a hurricane warning.
  20. Mr. Barnes uses mnemonic devices (e.g., ROY G BIV to teach the color spectrum) and concrete examples (e.g., DNA is like a fingerprint) as much as
-

- 
- possible in his science classes.
24. Mr. Wright is grading a student essay. He writes comments about how the student can improve his or her paper, such as providing more detail in a specific paragraph and using transition words between paragraphs. Mr. Wright also notes that the student had good spelling and grammar throughout the essay.
  32. Mr. Jones calls on all students, whether or not they raise their hands to participate.
  34. Miss William's class had a substitute yesterday and several students were off-task and disruptive during class. When Miss Williams returns, she tries to find out which students behaved poorly before punishing everyone in the class.
  35. Mark calls Tim an "idiot" in class. Mr. Taylor overhears and gives Mark detentions for one week.
  36. Mr. Jacobs tries to thoroughly answer any question posed by his students. If he does not know the answer he suggests where the student should look to find the answer.
  41. Mrs. Johnson regularly reminds her students of the classroom rules, both when they behave well and when they misbehave.

---

Factor V: Lack of Concern for Student Improvement

---

7. One of Mr. Ward's classroom rules is cell phones cannot be used in class. When his class is working on individual seatwork, Mr. Ward uses his cell phone to text another teacher about what time a meeting is scheduled.
  26. Mr. Lee gives students a study guide before each social studies exam. Mr. Lee also spends time discussing good study strategies so the students are well prepared for the tests.
  27. In Mr. Davis' math class, tests determine 80% of a student's class grade.
  29. Today Miss Pool tells her class that there will be a social studies test tomorrow. This is the first time the students have been made aware that there will be a test tomorrow.
  30. Mrs. Smith learns that her students have a science exam the same day she had scheduled an exam in her class. Mrs. Smith decides to postpone her exam by one day so the two tests do not overlap.
  37. Mr. Li lets students write down their questions and turn them in anonymously after a lesson if they do not want to ask the questions aloud. Mr. Li then reads and answers the questions in class the next day.
  39. When students give a wrong answer to a question, Ms. Pearl tries not to tell the students they are wrong. She tries to find something that is right in the answer.
-



Table 5

*Characteristics of Outliers in the 5 Factor Solution*

Factor	Part. ID #	Yrs Tchg	Yrs Tchg MS	School ID #	Sex	Ethn.	Subject(s) Taught
I	5	30	30	1	Male	---	Social Studies, Language Arts
	21 <sup>+</sup>	33	28	8	Male	White	Industrial Technology
	25	9	13	7	Female	White	Art
	63	3	3	14	Female	White	Special Education
	112 <sup>+</sup>	20	14	22	Female	White	Math
II	63	3	3	14	Female	White	Special Education
	81	7	7	14	Male	White	Math, Social Studies
III	33	23	19	7	Female	White	English, Reading
	78 <sup>+</sup>	26	7	14	Female	White	Social Studies, Science, Health
IV	18 <sup>+</sup>	20	16	8	Female	White	Special Education
	31 <sup>+</sup>	29	19	8	Female	White	Variety
	71 <sup>+</sup>	21	21	14	Female	White	Literature
V	18 <sup>+</sup>	20	16	8	Female	White	Special Education
	21 <sup>+</sup>	33	28	8	Male	White	Industrial Technology
	38 <sup>+</sup>	9	9	6	Female	White	Math, Science, Technology
	70 <sup>+</sup>	12	12	14	Male	White	American History
	84	7	7	17	Male	---	Study Skills, Industrial Technology
	93 <sup>+</sup>	30	20	19	Male	White	Social Studies
99 <sup>+</sup>	8	8	19	Female	White	Reading, Writing	

*Note.* Part. ID # = participant identification number. Yrs Tchg = number of years teaching. Yrs Tchg MS = number of years teaching in a middle school. Ethn. = ethnicity. --- = participant did not provide the information. The <sup>+</sup> next to the participant ID number indicates that the participant was more than 1.5 times the interquartile range below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of data. The absence of a <sup>+</sup> indicates that the participant was more than 1.5 times the interquartile range above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of data.

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for the 5 Factors of the TPASSS Social Support Section (N = 123)*

Factor Name	No. of Items	Mean (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
I. Being Nice to Students	6	4.43 (.95)	-.15	.64	.70
II. Teacher-Focused Behaviors	13	2.61 (.61)	.60	.90	.75
III. Interest in Students' Personal Lives	4	3.84 (1.04)	.09	-.35	.66
IV. Positive Teaching Behaviors	12	5.78 (.54)	-.71	.79	.64
V. Lack of Concern for Student Improvement	7	4.32 (.43)	-.29	.49	.63

*Note.* The data were analyzed with and without deleting the outliers. Deleting the outliers made very little substantive difference in the findings. Mean values of the factor scores were virtually identical to the values with the outliers included. The above table shows the findings without deleting the outliers.

Table 7

*Correlations among the 5 Factors*

Factor	I	II	III	IV	V
I	1	.20*	.23*	.32**	.34**
II		1	-.03	.08	.12
III			1	.15	.07
IV				1	.25**
V					1

*Note.* The data were analyzed with and without deleting the outliers. Deleting the outliers made very little substantive difference in the findings. Factor correlations had little substantive change, although with outliers deleted the correlation between Factors I and II no longer reached conventional levels of significance ( $r = .15$ ), and the correlation between Factors III and IV did reach the  $p < .05$  significance level ( $r = .19$ ). The correlations without deleting the outliers are shown in the above table.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for the five factors. Higher mean factor scores indicated that the participants perceived the factor to be more characteristic of a good teaching behavior. Lower scores meant the factor was perceived by the participants as more characteristic of a poor teaching behavior.

The correlations among the factors are presented in Table 7. Factor I- Being Nice to Students was significantly correlated with each of the other four factors (Factor II- Teacher-Focused Behaviors, Factor III-Interest in Students' Personal Lives, Factor IV- Positive Teaching Behaviors, Factor V-Lack of Concern for Student Improvement). Factor IV-Positive Teaching Behaviors and Factor V-Lack of Concern for Student Improvement were also significantly correlated. Overall, five separate factors that were moderately internally consistent were found to underlie the TPASSS survey's 42 social support items.

### **Comparison of Present Results to Suldo et al.'s (2009) Results**

In Suldo et al. (2009), the responses of middle school students in the focus groups were categorized into the 22 themes listed in Table 1. Some of the 22 themes were direct opposites of each other and were combined into one category for the present study, leaving 17 categories. The frequency or number of times participants in Suldo et al. (2009) mentioned the theme during the focus groups is shown in Table 8. For the categories which were combined in the present study (1, 8, 12, 13, 14), the first frequency listed in the second column is for the high social support version of the behavior, and the second is for the low frequency version of the behavior.

The means of the 17 categories in the present study, shown in Table 8, were calculated by first reverse scoring the scenarios that represented low social support

Table 8

*Comparison of Present Results to the Results from Suldo et al. (2009)*

Categories of Teaching Behaviors	Frequency of Suldo et al.'s (2009) Social Support Categories	Means (Standard Deviation) of Present Study's 17 Categories	Students' Perception: High or Low Social Support	Teachers' Perception: Good or Poor Teaching Behavior
1) Interest in Student Wellness	26/27	3.44 (1.10)	High	Poor
2) Improves Student Moods/Emotions	30	5.74 (.84)	High	Good
3) Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotions	89	2.96 (.93)	Low	Poor
4) Gives Students What They Want	35	3.81 (1.25)	High	Poor
5) Responsive to Whole Class' Understanding of Material	52	6.11 (.65)	High	Good
6) Interest in Student Progress	37	6.39 (.78)	High	Good
7) Not Providing Enough Assistance	57	2.85 (1.01)	Low	Poor
8) Teaching Style	51/15	5.15 (.71)	High	Good
9) Gives Evaluative Feedback	46	5.95 (.91)	High	Good
10) Helps Improve Student Grades	38	5.75 (.87)	High	Good
11) Not Helping Students Improve Grades	21	2.88 (1.04)	Low	Poor
12) Workload	14/24	5.75 (1.02)	High	Good
13) Treating Students Fairly	19/69	5.66 (.75)	High	Good
14) Punishment	9/58	4.66 (1.10)	High	Good
15) Welcomes Questions	45	5.94 (.95)	High	Good
16) Discourages Questions	69	1.70 (.90)	Low	Poor
17) Sets Firm Rules/ Discipline Practices	39	3.86 (.84)	Low	Poor

*Note.* For the categories which were combined in the present study (1, 8, 12, 13, 14), the first frequency listed in the second column is for the high social support version of the behavior, and the second is for the low frequency version of the behavior.

behaviors in the categories with a mix of scenarios representing both high and low social support behaviors. This process was performed for categories that represented a high social support behavior (categories 2 and 5) or categories that were the product of combining a low and a high social support behavior from Suldo et al.'s (2009) 22 original themes (categories 8, 12, 13, and 14). One category (category 16) represented a low social support behavior and had a mix of scenarios representing both high and low social support behaviors; therefore, the scenarios that represented high social support behaviors in this category were reverse scored. If the category had all high or all low social support behaviors, the scenarios were not reverse scored. After the reverse scoring was performed, the mean and standard deviation of each category was calculated. The means could range from 1 to 7, with 1 representing a very poor teaching behavior and 7 representing an excellent teaching behavior. Therefore, the higher the mean of the category, the better the category was perceived by the teachers as being a good teaching behavior and vice versa.

On the scale from 1 to 7, 4 is the middle point which can be considered a neutral rating. Seven categories (1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 16, and 17) were perceived by the teachers to be poor teaching behaviors (i.e., the mean rating was below 4). Ten categories (2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15) were perceived by the teachers to be good teaching behaviors (i.e., the mean rating was above 4). The students in Suldo et al. (2009) identified categories 3, 7, 11, 16, and 17 as providing low social support and categories 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15 as providing high social support.

The students in Suldo et al. (2009) and the teachers in the present study were considered to agree on whether or not a category provided social support if the students

identified the category as low social support and the teachers perceived the category as poor teaching behaviors or if the students identified the category as high social support and the teachers perceived the category as good teaching behaviors. Otherwise, the students and teachers were considered to disagree on the social support level of the category.

According to the results, the students and the teachers agreed that five categories were poor teaching behaviors or provided low social support (categories 3, 7, 11, 16, and 17) and that ten categories were good teaching behaviors or provided high social support (categories 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15). The students and teachers disagreed on two categories (1 and 4). The students in Suldo et al. (2009) viewed category 1 (Conveys interest in student wellness) and category 4 (Gives students what they want, specifically things that are pleasurable) as providing high social support. However, the teachers in the present study viewed categories 1 and 4 as poor teaching behaviors.

The correlation between the two different data sets of frequencies ("Frequency of Suldo et al. (2009) High Social Support Categories" and "Frequency of Suldo et al. (2009) Low Social Support Categories") for the Suldo et al. (2009) results was high at .92 ( $p < .01$ ). The correlation was moderate at .64 ( $p < .01$ ) between the high Suldo et al. (2009) frequencies and the mean of the present study and moderate at .64 ( $p < .01$ ) between the low Suldo et al. (2009) frequencies and the mean of the present study.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to build on the results of Suldo et al. (2009) by investigating middle school teachers' perceptions of the high and low social support behaviors suggested by the middle school students in Suldo et al. (2009). The two

hypotheses of this study predicted: (1) The middle school teachers would also perceive the teacher behaviors identified by the middle school students in Suldo et al. (2009) as being socially supportive; and (2) through factor analysis, the general themes of socially supportive teacher behaviors in Suldo et al. (2009) would emerge as factors in the present study.

### **Hypothesis One: Perceptions of Social Support**

The first hypothesis sought to determine which teacher behaviors the middle school teachers in this study and the middle school students in Suldo et al. (2009) agreed provide social support to students and on which behaviors they disagreed. It was predicted that the teachers and students would agree on all the behaviors. The results (see Table 8) indicated the students and the teachers agreed that five categories were poor teaching behaviors or provided low social support (categories 3, 7, 11, 16, and 17) and that ten categories were good teaching behaviors or provided high social support (categories 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15). However, the students and teachers disagreed on two categories (1 and 4).

The students in Suldo et al. (2009) perceived category 1 (Conveys interest in student wellness) and category 4 (Gives students what they want, specifically things that are pleasurable) as providing high social support. However, the teachers in the present study rated categories 1 and 4 as poor teaching behaviors. There are several possibilities for why the teachers and students disagreed on these categories. One hypothesis is that although the teaching behavior may provide social support to students, administration or school rules prohibit or discourage the behavior by teachers. For example, giving students candy (TPASS item 9, category 4), having students share their weekend plans

(TPASS item 3, category 1), or giving students free time to chat with peers (TPASS item 10, category 4) may not be allowed in some schools due to concerns about food allergies or time restrictions to teach a set curriculum. These administrative pressures could explain why teachers rated these categories as poor.

Another hypothesis is that teachers are unaware that the teaching behaviors are beneficial to students' levels of social support and well-being. Asking about students' dating relationships or medical issues (TPASS items 1 and 2, category 1) may seem like an invasion of the students' privacy to teachers and would explain this category's poor rating. A study in which teachers are allowed to give explanations for their ratings of the teacher behaviors could offer valuable insights into the teachers' perceptions and reasoning.

On the other hand, students may view some behaviors as socially supportive when the behaviors are merely enjoyable and do not actually provide social support. Further experiments are needed to determine which teacher behaviors have a real influence on students' levels of social support. Overall, additional research is required to better understand why the teachers and the students perceive these categories differently.

### **Hypothesis Two: Themes of Social Support**

The second hypothesis predicted the same general themes of socially supportive teacher behaviors in Suldo et al. (2009) would emerge as factors in the present study.

The results of a factor analysis suggested five separate and moderately internally consistent factors underlay the TPASSS survey's 42 social support items. The five factors were labeled: Being Nice to Students (I), Teacher-Focused Behaviors (II), Interest



in Students' Personal Lives (III), Positive Teaching Behaviors (IV), and Lack of Concern for Student Improvement (V).

The five factors in the present study are comparable, yet more condensed, than the 22 categories of social support (see Table 1) perceived by the students in Suldo et al. (2009). The discrepancy between the number of factors and the number of categories may be due to the methods used to derive them. In Suldo et al. (2009), transcripts of the focus groups the students participated in were coded and resulted in 22 categories. The present study used factor analysis to arrive at its five factors. Nevertheless, the five factors and the 22 categories of social support are comparable because the survey consisting of the five factors was created using the 22 categories.

#### **Limitations and Areas of Further Research**

Several limitations were inherent in the present study and may have influenced the results. First, the response rate among potential participants was low. It is impossible to know if significant differences exist between the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study and those who did not. The sample size was also small and therefore the sample of teachers surveyed may not be an accurate representation of middle school teachers in Illinois or across the country. Specifically, the gender of the present study's sample appeared representative of the teachers in Illinois, but the sample over-represented White or Caucasian teachers and under-represented the other ethnicities of teachers in Illinois. On a similar note, the teachers in the present study may not be representative of the teachers of the students who participated in Suldo et al. (2009). Suldo and colleagues (2009) did not report the demographics of the teachers in the school from where the student participants were recruited. Therefore, for several reasons, the

results are limited to the demographics of the teachers who participated in the present study.

The results of the present study were also limited by the student sample in Suldo et al. (2009). The students in the focus groups in Suldo et al. (2009) were reported to consist of 62% females, 50% Caucasian, and 18% low socio-economic status (i.e., receiving free and reduced lunch). These demographics may not be representative of the students of the teachers who participated in the present study or the entire population of students in the United States. It is important to note that the results should only be generalized to populations represented in the present study because differences in perceived social support have been found to exist among different genders, races, and ages of students.

Demaray and Malecki (2003) studied the social importance of support from parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends in a sample of 1,688 students in grades 3 through 12 using the CASSS. The results suggested there were gender, age and race differences in the importance of perceived social support among students. Girls rated the importance of overall, teacher, classmate, and close friend support higher than boys did. However, the gender difference of girls perceiving more support and valuing support more than boys was not apparent until the high school level.

In slight contrast, while other sources of support (i.e., classmate and close friend) did differ between boys and girls, middle school boys' and girls' perceptions of teacher and parent support did not differ in a study by Rueger, Malecki, and Demaray (2008). The researchers collected data from 246 students in 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade using the CASSS and Behavior Assessment System for Children, Parent Rating Scale (BASC-

PRS) in order to examine the gender differences in the connection between perceptions of social support and student adjustment.

Suldo et al. (2009) may have explained the discrepancy between some studies that find gender differences in social support and others that do not. When examining the influence of teacher support on students' subjective well-being, Suldo and colleagues (2009) found there were no quantitative differences between boys and girls; however, slight qualitative differences between boys and girls were present. Girls perceived teachers to provide more support when teachers improved students' mood or emotions. Girls perceived teachers to be unsupportive when the teacher appeared unconcerned and disinterested in the students. In contrast, boys perceived teachers as supportive when teachers provided treats, pleasurable activities, a manageable amount of assignments, better grades, and encouraged students to ask questions. The results suggested that girls focus on interpersonal relationships while boys focus on achievement when perceiving support from teachers. As a result, future research should consider such possible gender differences when further investigating social support of students.

The results of Demaray and Malecki (2003) also suggested a difference in the importance of social support according to the age of the students. Younger students rated overall support and support from all sources as more important than older students did. The present study only looked at middle school teachers' perceptions of socially supportive behaviors identified by middle school students. The results, therefore, should not be generalized to younger (i.e., elementary school) or older (i.e., high school) students' and their teachers' perceptions of strategies that contribute to student well-being because younger and older students may perceive social support differently.

Demaray and Malecki (2003) found differences in the importance of support also existed by race; Native American students viewed support as less important than African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students, but not Asian American students. These results further suggest that not all students perceive social support in the same manner. Additional research is warranted to investigate the best way to provide social support to students of varying races. A study by Alder in 2002 further supports the need for additional research on this topic.

Alder (2002) used interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups to examine how caring relationships are formed and sustained between students and teachers in two urban middle schools in the southeastern United States. Twelve students of two African American teachers made up the study's sample. These urban students, predominantly African American and of low socio-economic status, viewed teachers as caring when the teachers knew the students well, helped the students develop reasonable and positive self-images, taught material to understanding, provided academic help (e.g., listened to questions, used fun and diverse teaching strategies, and gave specific feedback), as well as had high behavioral and academic expectations of students. High expectations for students consisted of maintaining control of the classroom by demanding good behavior and challenging students to complete their work. This is in contrast to the predominantly Caucasian and suburban students in Suldo et al. (2009) who viewed setting firm rules and expectations as providing low social support. The contrast between the two different sets of students also suggests that not all students, given their different characteristics such as race, perceive the same behaviors to be socially supportive.

Another limitation is that the present study only investigated how middle school teachers *viewed* high or low socially supportive behaviors. Consequently, the results lead to suggestions about the teachers' perceptions, but contribute nothing to the knowledge concerning which of the behaviors teachers actually perform or how often such behaviors are performed in the classroom. The TPASSS survey required teachers to self-report their perceptions. Both self-reports and perceptions are prone to subjectivity and bias; therefore, the self-report nature of the present study is a limitation. Additional research is needed to examine what teachers do on a daily basis to provide social support to their students. Then, the link between teaching practices and teachers' beliefs in regards to social support can be studied further in order to offer valuable insights on how to best encourage teachers to use socially supportive practices.

Researching what teachers are taught about student well-being and social support during their training to become teachers would also be beneficial. Knowledge of what teachers are taught may help determine if better ways are needed to train teachers about the importance of social support and strategies to provide social support to students. For example, Spodek (1988) suggested improving what teachers are taught about instruction, the environment, and themselves in order to increase the quality and amount of social support teachers provide to students.

### **Implications for School Psychologists**

As previously discussed, much research is needed to advance the area of students' social support from teachers. Such research concerning the social support of students is valuable because social support is linked to one's overall well-being (Pavot, 2008). The 2002 Conference on the Future of School Psychology discussed the importance of social-

emotional well-being for students and suggested school psychologists help improve students' social-emotional well-being to increase the learning of students (Cummings et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2004). Other researchers have also suggested that the role of school psychologists should focus on promoting factors that increase positive student well-being and prevent problems rather than treating symptoms of psychopathology (Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal, & Riley-Tillman, 2004; Huebner & Gilman, 2003).

One way to increase student well-being is to improve students' levels of social support from teachers. Teachers may have a large impact on students' subjective well-being and social support because students spend a large amount of their time in school with their teachers (Baker et al., 2003). There are numerous ways in which school psychologists can expand their role to include an emphasis on promoting the social support of students. School psychologists can use research on social support to inform and develop their practice. Conducting an experiment using high and low social support teacher behaviors with students and measuring the change in well-being could be done to determine which behaviors are most beneficial (i.e., have the largest impact) to students' social support. Such an experiment would help determine which of the teacher behaviors identified by Suldo et al. (2009) are effective in improving students' levels of social support.

Researchers, including school psychologists, could also study strategies to improve other sources of support. Students' social support includes support from parents, classmates, close friends, and teachers (Malecki & Demaray, 2002; Malecki & Elliott, 1999). Exploring effective methods for all four sources to provide students with social support could further enhance students' social support and thus their well-being.

Once school psychologists have gathered the necessary information about providing social support to students, dissemination of the information can take several forms in order to best service students and their families. School psychologists could provide in-service workshops and trainings for teachers and school staff on how to use effective support behaviors to provide students with social support at school. School psychologists could also collaborate with administrators and consult with teachers regarding such techniques. Parent training sessions and lessons for students about how to provide children or fellow classmates with social support could be provided as well.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the present study achieved its goal of furthering the results of Suldo et al. (2009) by contributing to the knowledge of middle school teachers' perceptions of socially supportive teaching behaviors. One hypothesis was partially supported; teachers and students agreed whether 15 of the 17 categories of teacher behaviors provided social support or not. The second hypothesis was not supported because five factors emerged from the present study in comparison to 22 categories of social support from Suldo et al. (2009). Nevertheless, the results suggest that middle school teachers agree that some teacher behaviors perceived by middle school students to provide high social support are good and that some teacher behaviors perceived by middle school students to provide low social support are poor.

Additional research should be conducted to confirm as well as expand the present results. The results should be replicated to confirm them with teachers and students at different age levels and with more representative samples of both teachers and students. Other areas that future research should investigate include: researching which socially

supportive behaviors teachers employ in the classroom, examining what teachers are currently taught about social support or well-being during their training, and expanding the role of school psychologists to help promote better social support for students within the school setting.



## References

- Alder, N. (2002). Interpretations of the meaning of care: Creating caring relationships in urban middle school classrooms. *Urban Education, 37*, 241-266.
- Baker, J. A., Dilly, L. J., Aupperlee, J. L., & Patil, S. A. (2003). The developmental context of school satisfaction: Schools as psychologically healthy environments. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*, 206-221.
- Clonan, S. M., Chafouleas, S. M., McDougal, J. L., & Riley-Tillman, T. C. (2004). Positive psychology goes to school: Are we there yet? *Psychology in the Schools, 41*, 101-110.
- Cross, D. I. (2009). Alignment, cohesion, and change: Examining mathematics teachers' belief structures and their influence on instructional practices. *Journal of Math Teacher Education, 12*, 325-346.
- Cummings, J. A., Harrison, P. L., Dawson, M., Short, R. J., Gorin, S., & Palomares, R. (2004). The 2002 conference on the future of school psychology: Implications for consultation, intervention, and prevention services. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 15*, 239-256.
- Demaray, M. K., & Malecki, C. K. (2002). The relationship between perceived social support and maladjustment for students at risk. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*, 305-316.
- Demaray, M. K., & Malecki, C. K. (2003). Importance ratings of socially supportive behaviors by children and adolescents. *School Psychology Review, 32*, 108-131.

Demaray, M. K., Malecki, C. K., Davidson, L. M., Hodgson, K. K., & Rebus, P. J.

(2005). The relationship between social support and student adjustment: A longitudinal analysis. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*, 691-706.

Demaray, M. K., Malecki, C. K., Rueger, S. Y., Brown, S. E., & Summers, K. H. (2009).

The role of youth's ratings of importance of socially supportive behaviors in the relationship between social support and self-concept. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 38*, 13-28.

Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science, 13*, 81-84.

Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 8*, 381-391.

Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Can instructional and emotional support in the first-grade classroom make a difference for children at risk of school failure? *Child Development, 76*, 949-967.

Haney, J. J., Czerniak, C. M., & Lumpe, A. T. (1996). Teacher beliefs and intentions regarding the implementation of science education reform strands. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 33*, 971-993.

Harrison, P. L., Cummings, J. A., Dawson, M., Short, R. J., Gorin, S., & Palomares, R. (2004). Responding to the needs of children, families, and schools: The 2002 multisite conference on the future of school psychology. *School Psychology Review, 33*, 12-33.

Huebner, E. S., & Diener, C. (2008). Research on life satisfaction of children and youth: Implications for the delivery of school-related services. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen

(Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 376-392). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Huebner, E. S., & Gilman, R. (2003). Toward a focus on positive psychology in school psychology. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*, 99-102.

Larsen, R. J., & Eid, M. (2008). Ed Diener and the science of subjective well-being. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 1-16). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S. (2004). Applied positive psychology: A new perspective for professional practice. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 3-14). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2002). Measuring perceived social support: Development of the child and adolescent social support scale (CASSS). *Psychology in the Schools, 39*, 1-18.

Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2003). Carrying a weapon to school and perceptions of social support in an urban middle school. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 11*, 169-178.

Malecki, C. K., Demaray, M. K., & Elliott, S. N. (2004). A working manual on the development of the child and adolescent social support scale. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University.

Malecki, C. K., & Elliott, S. N. (1999). Adolescents' ratings of perceived social support and its importance: Validation of the student social support scale. *Psychology in the Schools, 36*, 473-483.

- McCarty, F., Abbott-Shim, M., & Lambert, R. (2001). The relationship between teacher beliefs and practices, and head start classroom quality. *Early Education and Development, 12*, 225-238.
- Murray, C., & Pianta, R. C. (2007). The importance of teacher-student relationships for adolescents with high incidence disabilities. *Theory into Practice, 46*, 105-112.
- Natvig, G. K., Albrektsen, G., & Qvarnstrøm, U. (2003). Associations between psychosocial factors and happiness among school adolescents. *International Journal of Nursing Practice, 9*, 166-175.
- Northern Illinois University & Illinois State Board of Education. (2011). Illinois interactive report card. Retrieved January 3, 2012 from [http://iirc.niu.edu/State.aspx?source>About\\_Educators & source2=Teacher\\_Demographics](http://iirc.niu.edu/State.aspx?source>About_Educators&source2=Teacher_Demographics)
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and education research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Education Research, 62*, 307-332.
- Pavot, W. (2008). The assessment of subjective well-being: Successes and shortfalls. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 124-140). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Phipps, S., & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System, 37*, 380-390.
- Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 209-218.
- Rueger, S. Y., Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2008). Gender differences in the relationship between perceived social support and student adjustment during early adolescence. *School Psychology Quarterly, 23*, 496-514.

- Schimmack, U. (2008). The structure of subjective well-being. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 97-123). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Spodek, B. (1988). Implicit theories of early childhood teachers: Foundations for professional behavior. In B. Spodek, O. N. Saracho & D. L. Peters (Eds.), (pp. 161-172). New York, NY, US: Teachers College Press.
- Suldo, S. M., Friedrich, A. A., White, T., Farmer, J., Minch, D., & Michalowski, J. (2009). Teacher support and adolescents' subjective well-being: A mixed-methods investigation. *School Psychology Review, 38*, 67-85.
- Suldo, S. M., & Huebner, E. S. (2006). Is extremely high life satisfaction during adolescence advantageous? *Social Indicators Research, 78*, 179-203.
- Suldo, S. M., & Shaffer, E. J. (2008). Looking beyond psychopathology: The dual-factor model of mental health in youth. *School Psychology Review, 37*, 52-68.
- Way, N., Reddy, R., & Rhodes, J. (2007). Students' perceptions of school climate during the middle school years: Associations with trajectories of psychological and behavioral adjustment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40*, 194-213.

## Appendix A

*Initial Recruitment Email*

Dear Teachers,

Please consider completing the survey found below, which is part of a thesis project for Heather Moore, a school psychology graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. The purpose of the survey is to investigate teachers' views about different teaching behaviors. The survey will take less than 30 minutes to complete and your answers will be kept confidential. Your participation would be greatly appreciated, but is entirely voluntary and anonymous. If you decide to participate, the link below will take you directly to the survey. You can use the password "middleschool" to access the survey.

<Survey Link>

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Principal's Name

*Reminder Recruitment Email*

Dear Teachers,

I would like to remind you about the survey I emailed out earlier in the month. If you have not yet, please consider completing the survey found below.

Again, the survey is part of a thesis project for Heather Moore, a school psychology graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. The purpose of the survey is to investigate teachers' views about different teaching behaviors. The survey will take less than 30 minutes to complete and your answers will be kept confidential. Your participation would be greatly appreciated, but is entirely voluntary and anonymous. If you decide to participate, the link below will take you directly to the survey. You can use the password "middleschool" to access the survey.

<Survey Link>

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Principal's Name

## Appendix B

*Survey Introduction***Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Strategies**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Heather Moore and Dr. Steven Scher, from the Psychology Department at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The study is designed to examine middle school teachers' perceptions of various teaching behaviors. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey consisting of answering six brief questions about your demographics and teaching experience, then rating the performance of teachers in 42 short scenarios depicting different teaching behaviors. The survey will take 30 minutes or less to complete.

There are no foreseeable risks to participants. There are also no direct benefits for the individual participants in this study. However, the overall results may contribute knowledge about how school psychologists can consult with teachers to implement teaching strategies that will benefit students.

We are not collecting any information that can be identified with you. Your participation is completely voluntary and will in no way affect your employment. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Heather Moore  
*Principal Investigator*  
hamoore@eiu.edu  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Dr. Steven Scher  
*Faculty Sponsor*  
sjscher@eiu.edu  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

---

If you wish not to participate in this study, please close your browser now.

If you agree to participate in this study, please mark the box below:

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time.



## Appendix C

*Teachers' Perceptions About Social Support for Students (TPASSS) Survey**Demographic Information*

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching in a middle school?
3. What subject(s) do you teach?
4. In which school do you teach?
5. What is your sex?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
6. What is your race?
  - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Hispanic or Latino
  - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - f. White or Caucasian

*Social Support Scenarios*

The following scenarios depict various behaviors of middle school teachers. For each scenario, please rate the teacher's performance as being good or bad teacher behaviors on a scale of 1 to 7.

---

1. A teacher knows that a male and a female student are dating. The teacher casually asks the female student how the relationship is going.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

2. A student missed class because he had to be hospitalized. Upon his return, his teacher asks why he was in the hospital.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

3. Mr. Martinez gives students an opportunity to share their weekend plans during class on Friday afternoons.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

4. Mary is upset because she had an argument with her mother. Her teacher discusses the situation with Mary and helps her brainstorm possible solutions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

5. Ms. Murphy discusses personal details about a student (e.g., his parents are divorced and his mom has bipolar disorder) over lunch with her friends who do not know the student.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

6. A class is chatting instead of working on a math worksheet. The teacher tells the students that they will fail the upcoming test if they do not complete the worksheet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

7. One of Mr. Ward's classroom rules is cell phones cannot be used in class. When his class is working on individual seatwork, Mr. Ward uses his cell phone to text another teacher about what time a meeting is scheduled.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

8. A group of students are passing notes during class. The teacher raises his voice and tells the students to stop immediately.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

9. Ms. Baker gives all of her students a small piece of candy each Monday to start the week off on a positive note.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

10. Mr. Lopez gives students free time during the last 5 minutes of each class to work on assignments or chat with peers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

11. At the end of each quarter, Mrs. Woods has her students fill out a survey asking what they like and do not like about the class and her style of teaching.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

12. Mr. Allen notices that several students do not understand how to divide fractions. He offers to meet the students after class to go over the lesson with them again.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

13. Mrs. Schultz teaches four science classes. Students in one of her classes are struggling to understand a lesson on density. Mrs. Schultz decides to move on to the next lesson so this class does not get behind schedule with her three other classes.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

14. Mr. Haywood has just taught a science lesson on balancing chemical equations and gives students time to work on their homework problems. Mr. Haywood walks around the room and asks students individually if they understand the problems and if they need assistance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

15. Miss Clark has assigned a research paper to her social studies class. Whenever she sees any of her students in the hallway she asks him or her how the paper is going and if they need help with it at all.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

16. Mr. Hill is absent on a day when he planned to introduce a new topic, writing persuasive papers, to his Language Arts class. Preferring to teach the lesson himself, Mr. Hill leaves instructions for the substitute to have the students write a two page summary of the book they are currently reading. Mr. Hill does not plan to grade the summaries.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

17. In class one day, Mr. Peterson has his students read a chapter in the math textbook that introduces a new topic to them. The students are also told to do the problems at the end of the chapter on their own and turn their answers in for a grade.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

18. Mr. Evans is teaching a unit on weather. To better explain what occurs during a hurricane, Mr. Evans tells the class about when he and his wife were on their honeymoon in Florida and had to be evacuated because of a hurricane warning.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

19. During a unit on the ocean and underwater life, Mrs. Harris shows her class the movie "Finding Nemo" to reinforce concepts taught from the textbook.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

20. Mr. Barnes uses mnemonic devices (e.g., ROY G BIV to teach the color spectrum) and concrete examples (e.g., DNA is like a fingerprint) as much as possible in his science classes.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

21. Ms. Torres believes the best way to learn history is by hearing it. She uses lectures to teach all of her history lessons.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

22. No one in Mr. Hughes' class had any missing assignments for the entire quarter. Mr. Hughes throws a pizza party for the class to reward them for a job well done.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

23. Miss Patterson sends a letter to the parents of students when they receive an "A" on her tests. The letter informs the parents how well their child did on the test and how pleased Miss Patterson is with this.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

24. Mr. Wright is grading a student essay. He writes comments about how the student can improve his or her paper, such as providing more detail in a specific paragraph and using transition words between paragraphs. Mr. Wright also notes that the student had good spelling and grammar throughout the essay.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

25. Ms. King offers her class an extra credit book report assignment to help students improve their grade before the end of the quarter.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

26. Mr. Lee gives students a study guide before each social studies exam. Mr. Lee also spends time discussing good study strategies so the students are well prepared for the tests.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

27. In Mr. Davis' math class, tests determine 80% of a student's class grade.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

28. Miss Turner does not allow any students to make up assignments that are turned in late or redo assignments that receive low grades.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

29. Today Miss Pool tells her class that there will be a social studies test tomorrow. This is the first time the students have been made aware that there will be a test tomorrow.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

30. Mrs. Smith learns that her students have a science exam the same day she had scheduled an exam in her class. Mrs. Smith decides to postpone her exam by one day so the two tests do not overlap.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

31. A teacher frequently calls on Samantha instead of other students because Samantha usually has better comments and answers questions more accurately than other students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

32. Mr. Jones calls on all students, whether or not they raise their hands to participate.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

33. Ms. White tries to avoid interactions with Bobby because he is generally oppositional and noncompliant.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

34. Miss William's class had a substitute yesterday and several students were off-task and disruptive during class. When Miss Williams returns, she tries to find out which students behaved poorly before punishing everyone in the class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

35. Mark calls Tim an "idiot" in class. Mr. Taylor overhears and gives Mark detentions for one week.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

36. Mr. Jacobs tries to thoroughly answer any question posed by his students. If he does not know the answer he suggests where the student should look to find the answer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

37. Mr. Li lets students write down their questions and turn them in anonymously after a lesson if they do not want to ask the questions aloud. Mr. Li then reads and answers the questions in class the next day.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

38. Mr. Wilson prefers his students ask questions only during the last 5 minutes of class. If a student raises his or her hand during a lecture, Mr. Wilson instructs the student to wait until the end of class to ask questions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

39. When students give a wrong answer to a question, Ms. Pearl tries not to tell the students they are wrong. She tries to find something that is right in the answer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

40. One of Ms. Callahan's classroom rules requires students to raise their hands before speaking. Jack speaks without raises his hand twice in one day. As a result, Ms. Callahan lowers Jack's conduct grade.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

41. Mrs. Johnson regularly reminds her students of the classroom rules, both when they behave well and when they misbehave.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

42. Mr. McKinney creates arbitrary classroom rules to reinforce that students need to learn to obey rules.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Poor			Adequate			Excellent

## Appendix D

*Survey Conclusion*

Thank you for your participation. Please refrain from discussing the survey items with any other teachers until after May 1, 2011 when the study is complete. This is to prevent bias in the response of other potential participants.

If you have any questions about this study, and would like to contact us, you may reach us by email at [sjscher@eiu.edu](mailto:sjscher@eiu.edu) or by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you again for your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board  
Eastern Illinois University  
600 Lincoln Ave.  
Charleston, IL 61920  
Telephone: (217) 581-8576  
E-mail: [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@www.eiu.edu)

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

If you would like to receive more information about this study, and a summary of the results when it is completed, please click on the link below. This will take you to a page where you can enter your email address. Your email address will not be connected to your responses to the survey.

Thanks again. Click this link to enter your email address:  
<Survey 2 Link>

*Email Address Entry*

Thanks again for participating in our study! We hope that with your help we will be able to discover useful things to help students and teachers in the future.

If you would like to receive an email with the results of this study, please enter your email address here.

## Appendix E

*Institutional Review Board Certification of Exemption*

---

**IRB Certification of Exemption - Moore, #11-046**

March 7, 2011 9:59 AM

▶ From: "EIU IRB" &lt;eiuirb@www.eiu.edu&gt;

---

March 7, 2011Heather Moore  
Psychology

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, "Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Strategies that Provide Social Support to Students" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has reviewed this research protocol and effective 3/4/2011, has certified this protocol as Exempt from Further Review. The protocol has been given the IRB number 11-046. You may proceed with your study.

The classification of this protocol as Exempt from Further Review is valid only for the research activities and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any proposed changes to this protocol must be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board  
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
Telephone: 217-581-8576  
Fax: 217-581-7181  
Email: [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@www.eiu.edu)

Thank you for your cooperation, and the best of success with your research.

Robert Chesnut, Chairperson  
Institutional Review Board  
Telephone: 217-581-2125  
Email: [rwchesnut@eiu.edu](mailto:rwchesnut@eiu.edu)