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# Educator Mindsets and the Impacts to the Teacher-Student Relationship: An Exploratory Case Study

Tammy Fisher Huson  
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Educator Mindsets and the Impacts to Teacher-Student Relationship:  
An Exploratory Case Study

by

TAMMY FISHER HUSON

Dissertation presented to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of Education at  
Seattle Pacific University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Seattle Pacific University  
August 2018

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to an amazing crew of personal cheerleaders who have walked beside me in this challenging adventure for the past four years with unwavering love, wisdom, and support. For my mother, Dena Klingler, a retired award-winning educator herself, who has willingly edited my two previous books, chapters from this dissertation, as well as numerous papers in my doctorate program with support, clarity, and tenacity. I am so blessed to have a gifted editor as my mother. To my adult daughters, Maddison and Braeden Small, who have watched their mom sit at the table on her writing days and supported my lack of verbal communication and “spontaneity” on this mission. They are both so successful and courageous in their own educational and career journeys and motivate me to continue learning, always. To my school administration team at St. Thomas School in Medina, WA, who have encouraged me, supported my research and continual barrage of “evidence-based” suggestions to our curriculum and instruction methods, embraced the efficacy of the Nurtured Heart Approach®, and accepted the fact that I wouldn’t work on Mondays in order to make this marathon journey to the finish line. They model the educator qualities of personalization, flexibility, and relational support exemplary in a schoolhouse. Finally, and most significantly, to my husband, Steve Huson, who often jokes that his ultimate career journey is to be my personal assistant. Thank you, Steve, for your faith in my arrival at this juncture. I am beyond thankful for your sacrifice of our shared time, patience, technology wizardry, and “formatting” genius throughout all of my writing projects and presentations. I am even more honored by your unwavering belief in my ability to be successful, without exception – and for supporting my efficacy and mindset with your consistency and love. I am forever blessed to share the rest of the journey with you.

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I would particularly like to thank Howard Glasser, the creator of The Nurtured Heart Approach®, who sent me on this journey unwittingly over a decade ago. His inspirational approach has provided me the opportunity to inspire others in the transformative power of their relationship in impacting students' self-efficacy. Educators must believe in their *own* efficacy before they can empower others. This remains my mission in my work as a professional school counselor, teacher, trainer, and parent/educator coach: Seeing and naming greatness. Thank you, Howie, for helping me find this yellow brick road to my Oz.

Finally, I need to acknowledge with endless gratitude, the active participation of the educators and students from two alternative schools in Canada. In particular, I want to honor the middle school counselor, Cathy, for her tenacity and vision to bring the Nurtured Heart Approach® to her schools and support the ongoing efforts to build capacity and success in her students and educators. The honesty and engagement of these participants provided significant evidence and insight to educators far beyond the reach of their schools. Thank you for your risk-taking and your clear commitment to empowering yourselves as relationship experts, dedicated to student success.



Seattle Pacific University

Abstract

Educator Mindsets and the Impacts to Teacher-Student Relationship:

An Exploratory

Case Study

By Tammy Fisher Huson

Chairperson of the Dissertation Committee: John Bond, Ed.D., School of Education

Teacher-student relationships (TSR) have long been demonstrated to have significant impact on student outcomes. There has been far less research, however, focused on identifying the specific mindsets that educators' hold which influence their actions toward students. As relationships are situated and contextual and qualitative in nature, this case study sought to explore the specific qualities of effective TSR through the perspectives of both educators ( $n = 31$ ) and students ( $n = 65$ ) in two alternative schools in Northwest Canada. Staff members in both the middle school and the high school participated in a professional development TSR intervention designed to coach significant adults on new mindsets and actions, The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA). Using anonymous survey data, short answer responses, and focus groups for both populations, qualitative data analysis (QDA) revealed three emergent educator themes, with associated sub-themes, and three dichotomous student themes. The results provided evidence that positive TSRs are supported most significantly by personalized, flexible, and relationally focused mindsets and actions. The findings from the analysis of this data gathered in the alternative school settings are additionally significant, as the related,

overlapping themes from both educators and students in these unique populations, provide specific recommendations for educators seeking to increase their positive teaching efficacy with challenging students and settings.

*Keywords:* teacher-student relationships, TSR, The Nurtured Heart Approach®, NHA, qualitative data analysis, QDA, educator mindsets, alternative school



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Few can argue against the power of relationships in schools. Edutopia (Ray, 2017), a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting evidence-based practices in K-12, conducted an online poll of educators asking these adults to identify and describe the strongest teachers from their earlier schooling. The anecdotal messages presented by more than 700 respondents were clear: the most highly regarded teachers used the currency of their relationship to connect with and support their students. These former students cited hundreds of examples of behaviors and qualities that made the respondent, as the student, feel known, challenged, supported, and respected. Experts in the relational qualities of schools contend that positive relationships with adults are quite possibly the single most important element in promoting and nurturing efficacious youth development and achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Pianta & Allen, 2008; Tsigilis, Gregoriadis, Theodorakis, & Evaggelinou, 2017). In the schoolhouse, the unique teacher-student relationship (TSR) remains a focal point of educational researchers seeking to identify teacher beliefs and actions which increase not only student achievement, but also the persistence and efficacy (self-belief) of students. Longtime researchers on the impact of TSR, Pianta (2003, 2008), Hattie (2012), and Brophy (2006; Brophy & Good, 1986), identified this relationship as the pivotal change agent in the schoolhouse. Hattie (2012) reminded educators that the TSR is the one factor over which teachers have the greatest control in the classroom.

Most educators recognize that the currency of their relationship is a valuable commodity to increase student engagement, persistence, and other variables essential for student success. The challenge of this research direction, however, lies in the variability of each TSR and the considerable moderating variables which influence these individual relationships (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010; Osterman, 2000). The multiple, overlapping dimensions of a classroom and school community necessitate an ecological perspective that limits analyses to a simple model of the single, ideal TSR. In Osterman's (2000) frequently cited analysis of students' perceptions of belonging in a community, she identified the challenge of examining relationship factors in a school setting where adult, student, peer, classroom, and community overlap and vary significantly. "The social context plays a significant part in determining whether individual needs are satisfied; second, needs are domain and situation specific; third, needs are on-going" (p. 325). In alignment with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) systems theory, this ecological model requires educators to be aware of the reciprocity which occurs between student and teacher and the overlapping relationships which impact the individual relationship. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1977) reminded researchers to be mindful of conclusions drawn in the accommodating context of the schoolhouse. He noted, "...the properties of the environmental context in which research is carried out influence the processes that take place within that context and thereby affect the interpretation and generalizability of the research findings" (p. 516). Process and product readily overlap in school settings.

Additionally, there is frequently a dissonance between the perceptions of teachers regarding their effective relationships with their students, and that of the students themselves (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010, 2012; Burniske & Meibaum,

2012; Cornelius-White, 2007; Ellis, Hart, & Small-McGinley, 1998; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Fisher, Waldrip, & den Brok, 2005; Hughes, 2011; Van Maele & Van Houte, 2011; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). These mismatched perspectives provide impetus for greater education on what works best to build strong TSR – and more importantly, specific strategies to build educator *awareness* of their impacts.

With the ultimate goal of maximizing the benefits of a strong TSR, researchers continue to try to identify the specific actions and underlying beliefs that effective teachers employ (Corbett, Wilson, & Williams, 2002; Cornelius-White, 2007; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). But relational habits and mindsets can be hard to change. Even when presented with research-demonstrated approaches and methods, adoption of these evidence-based practices in the educator's significant, personalized relationships with students continues to be a challenge (Guskey, 1986, 1988; Pace, Boykins, & David, 2013). What works in theory may be challenging to implement in day-to-day interactions with the most demanding students. Researchers Nagaoka, Farrington, Ehrlich, and Heath (2015) agreed that although beliefs and mindsets can be changed, “they tend to persist until disrupted and replaced with a different belief or attitude” (p. 4).

Can teachers, and other significant educators in the building, be coached to adopt these research-supported actions and beliefs, particularly with their most demanding student behaviors? This study aims to add to the growing body of research supporting the critical qualities of positive TSR actions and beliefs, and more critically, explore the opportunity to “disrupt and replace” (Nagaoka et al., 2015, p. 4) negative mindsets with greater relationally positive, powerful ones.

With heavy emphasis on measurable academic outcomes, research that explores the TSR is often secondary to other emphases on math achievement or increasing standardized test scores in lower socio-economic status (SES) populations. But for counselor educators, the significant impact of strong, positive relationships between educators and their most challenged students can be the trump card to changing the trajectory and mindset of students (Carlos & Miller, 2007; Cornelius-White, 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004; Nagaoka et al., 2015; O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002). The quality of the teacher relationship has been demonstrated to outweigh other factors of teacher knowledge or lesson design. In fact, John Hattie (2012) identified the TSR as having a much greater effect on student outcomes, with an effect size of  $d = .72$ , compared to teacher's subject knowledge,  $d = .09$ , or individualized instruction,  $d = .23$ . Researchers Corbett et al., (2005) affirmed the power of TSR in their three-year exploration of teacher beliefs and expectations in urban schools. They asserted that before academic achievement can be addressed, educators must have the mindset that every student can be successful. That mindset, in turn, informs educator actions, strategies, and persistence toward that goal (Corbett et al., 2005). An emphasis that leans solely on the academic outcome without capitalizing on the qualities of a strong teacherstudent relationship will fall short of the broader range of student outcomes, including the development of positive motivational orientations (Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wentzel, 2010) and classroom engagement (Ladd & Dinella, 2009; Lee & Reeve, 2012).

## Teaching Efficacy: A Mindset for Success

Social learning theorist Bandura (1977) empirically defined self-efficacy as a self-belief of “I can.” The core construct of one’s efficacy focuses primarily on an individual’s perceived ability to be successful in a future undertaking. Unlike an independent outcome expectation, efficacy is personal and influenced by one’s experience, persuasion of others, live modeling or demonstration of task, as well as one’s emotional state (Bandura, 1977). From Bandura’s social cognitive perspective (1993) an individual’s self-efficacy plays a major role in the drive to succeed, adapt, expend effort, and persist through challenge. While much of Bandura’s initial research was focused on the behaviors and cognitions individuals experience during threat situations, these qualities of self-efficacy are the personal characteristics teachers seek in their students and, ideally, in themselves. Gist and Mitchell (1992) stated that *self-efficacy* need not be evaluative as to how one feels about oneself, but more specifically directed at one’s *ability* to complete a task successfully. One can see how this mindset of capability would be critical for both teacher and student in persisting through challenges. Dweck’s (2006) more recent research on growth mindset was initiated in collaboration with Bandura in the late 1980’s. Dweck focused on an individual’s perceptions of ability as being either incremental, meaning it can grow with effort, or entity, meaning it is fixed and unchangeable (Bandura, 1993). The crosswalk between the two research-supported constructs of Bandura’s self-efficacy and Dweck’s growth versus fixed mindset emphasizes a self-theory of learning which has implications for identifying, and ultimately coaching, teachers in specific self-beliefs that support future success with students (Bandura, 1993; Dweck, 1975, 1986).

Researcher Cornelius-White's (2007) large meta-analysis exploring data on more than 1000 effective learner-centered teaching strategies, identified the top four teacher qualities which appeared to go beyond academic outcomes in supporting student success. These personality qualities: trust, respect, empathy, and positive relationships are challenging to quantify, as they are subjective, contextual, and personalized. Even the latter quality of positive relationship can be vague as to clarity of meaning. It was frequently indicated in the research as a reciprocal feedback loop of caring behaviors between teacher and student. As research continues to demonstrate the impact of such actions and beliefs on student outcomes (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Carlos & Miller, 2007; Dweck, 2006; Hattie, 2012), much of the emphasis has focused on strategies to build student self-efficacy and student growth mindset (Balzer, 2014; Cantor, Kester, & Miller, 2000; Cornelius-White, 2007; Dweck, 2015; Wentzel, 2010). Many educators, however, may be unaware of their own mindsets. Brooks and Goldstein, defining mindsets as assumptions we hold about ourselves and our students (Brooks 1994, 1999, 2004; Brooks, Brooks, & Goldstein, 2012; Brooks & Goldstein, 2004; Goldstein & Brooks, 2007, 2008), have long explored the power of teacher assumptions in fostering resiliency, persistence, and engagement in students.

Educators bring assumptions about student behavior into all of their interactions with those in their classrooms and schools. The more aware they are of these assumptions, the more they can change those beliefs that may work against the creation of a positive classroom environment. (Brooks, Brooks, & Goldstein, 2012, p. 542)

Additionally, Sabol's and Pianta's (2012) analyses of effective relationally-focused teacher trainings reported that "A focus on professional development that provides

teachers with knowledge, skills, and support within individual classroom contexts and experiences has been shown to improve the quality of teacher–child relationships and in some cases improve children’s outcomes,” (p. 225-26). In alignment with these shared perspectives, this current study hones its lens on teacher mindsets and actions, rather than student, and the use of a professional development intervention designed specifically to increase teacher awareness of their mindsets and actions.

Through the use of the professional development intervention, The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) (Glasser & Easley, 1998), the intention is to provide experiential activities and evidence-based practice which coaches significant adults toward effective strategies and positive mindsets. Glasser, creator of NHA, originally developed this system of relationship to provide significant adults with strategies to build capacity in our most challenging students. In 2007, Grove and Glasser published the first of many authored books designed to boost teacher self-efficacy in working with challenging students in schools. The Nurtured Heart Approach®, along with providing specific actions to build positive TSR, highlights the importance of teachers in recognizing their own mindsets in regard to student capacity. NHA coaches educators to see each student as capable of success and capitalize on their energetic relationship to build that efficacy in each student (Glasser & Block, 2011; Grove & Glasser, 2007). With the body of evidence that teachers’ implicit mindsets about students impact their explicit actions (Brooks & Goldstein, 2008; Brophy & Good, 1970; Cantor, Kester, & Miller, 2000; Education Commission of the States, 2012; Gottfredson, Marciniak, Birdseye, & Gottfredson, 1995; Hamre et al., 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968a, 1968b), this study explored the teacher and student perceptions of specific mindsets and actions adopted in

their TSRs, in association with an intervention designed to increase the teachers' awareness and knowledge of his/her own efficacious mindsets.

### **Research Questions**

Armed with this evidence that educator mindsets have powerful effects on their student relationships, this study was designed to explore two research questions. Q1: Which specific mindsets do teachers believe influence their actions in the teacher-student relationship?

Q2: What are student perceptions of specific teacher actions which influence the teacher-student relationship?

As the exploratory research design of this case study involved a specific TSR intervention (NHA), these research questions align with foundational inferences inherent in the Nurtured Heart Approach® professional development training. Ultimately, it is hoped that the findings of this study will provide further evidence that educators' mindsets affect their actions and choices toward students. Additionally, and significantly for instructional coaches, administrators, and professional development designers, this exploration can these effective mindsets can be coached with appropriate interventions.

Chapter Two explores specific, related research studies and theories which focused on teacher-student relationships, mindsets, and actions.



## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

The critical impact of teacher-student relationships (TSR) has been explored from many different theoretical approaches in the past several decades. Qualities of teacher effectiveness have been tied to teacher expectations (Aronson, Cohen, & McCloskey, 2009; Brophy & Good, 1970; Cantor, Kester, & Miller, 2000; Education Commission of the States, 2012; Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995; Hamre et al., 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968a, 1968b), teacher actions (Brophy, 2006; Cornelius-White, 2007; Marchand & Skinner, 2007; Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016; Ray, 2017; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Weinstein, 1998; Wubbels, Brekelmans, den Brock, & van Tartwijk, 2006), teacher mindsets and beliefs (Balzer, 2014; Bandura, 1993; Carlos & Miller, 2007; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Smith, 2005; Yeager & Dweck, 2012), as well as student perceptions (Ellis, Hart, & Small-McGinley, 2003; Fisher, Waldrip, & den Brok, 2005; Hughes, 2011; LaBelle, Martin, & Weber, 2013; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2014; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2010; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 2010). The complexity and multidimensionality of relationships in general, require educational researchers interested specifically in the teacher-student relationship to narrow the wide lens of possible moderating variables. Relational qualities, specifically mindsets and actions that create positive student outcomes, remain a challenge to isolate independent of the shared relationship.

Under the umbrella of an ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), schools are socialization ecosystems which extend beyond the intellectual development of students. This systems theory model takes a broader view of child development,

overlapping the interactions of the different contextual environments where the child exists. In addition, Brofenbrenner (1977) highlighted the bi-directionality of the relationships that occur within a system: each influencing the other reciprocally. Wentzel's (2010) analysis of students' relationships with teachers also recognized the duality of the TSR, claiming "...students social and academic achievement can elicit social approval and corresponding positive interactions with teachers" (p. 76). She suggested that student characteristics may be as influential on the development of the TSR as the teacher's own qualities. Thus, like the proverbial chicken/egg debate, this loop of reciprocity can make it challenging for researchers to confidently isolate a relationship factor without consideration of the give and take in all relationships. For example: Is a student leaning into a challenging learning situation because of a teacher's positive relationship qualities, or is the teacher actually providing greater positive relationship *because* of the student's pro-social actions?

Affective relationship qualities have long been examined in schools. In a metaanalysis of 119 studies exploring teacher-student relationships, Cornelius-White (2007) found a strong correlation ( $r = 0.31$ ,  $SD = 0.28$ ) between affective learner-centered teaching variables and student outcomes. For example, teacher empathy, warmth, and encouragement for learning and effort were positively associated with student variables of greater efficacy, motivation to learn, creative and critical thinking, and even social connectedness and skills. In addition, Cornelius-White also found similar moderate to strong correlations between learner-centered teaching and behavioral outcomes, such as a reduction in dropouts, absences and disruptive behaviors. These pro-social outcomes "...seem to indicate that students make better relationships with both themselves and

others” (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 131) when the positive TSR is marked by shared qualities of trust, empathy, and respect.

### **Beliefs as Foundational in TSR**

Dr. Rick Miller, Arizona State University professor, has been exploring the power of positive TSR from the lens of teacher beliefs for decades. In alignment with research on the power of mindset and hope in regard to student engagement and success (Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003; Snyder, 1994; Snyder, 2002), Miller founded the national youth development program, Kids At Hope® (KAH) in 2000. Miller’s school and after school-based program was named as such in order to create a paradigm shift from the more commonly adopted mindset of youth *at-risk*. Introduced originally into Boys & Girls Clubs in Phoenix, Kids at Hope experienced near-immediate success by training the significant adults to see, and treat, all students as capable of success, without exception (Bernat, 2009; Carlos & Miller, 2007). His educational team trains staff in schools to maintain high expectations for all students, build positive, individual TSRs, and provide them with a hopeful, future-oriented perspective (Bernat, 2003; Carlos & Miller, 2007). Miller identified the KAH trained adults as *treasure hunters*, asserting: “A treasure hunter is a caring adult who digs beneath the surface to discover all the skills, talents, and intelligence that exists in all children and youth, No Exceptions!” (Rick Miller, personal communication, December 20, 2017). According to Wally Endicott, the Northwest Regional Director of KAH, Kids at Hope is now present in more than 300 schools and 22 states across the country (W. Endicott, personal communication, December 11, 2017). In one study, Bernat (2009) compared beliefs of teachers and students in a school adopting KAH versus a control school operating in the same district. The teachers in the

experimental school changed their belief system significantly regarding student success. Initially, 50 percent of the staff in the experimental group believed all children were capable of success. After the year of training and KAH program adoption, 77 percent of these teachers *strongly believed* that all children were capable of success. Even more powerful, compared to the control, the students in the KAH school more readily identified that their teachers had high expectations for them, and they, too, had long term goals for academic success (Bernat, 2009). Bernat supported the power of teacher expectations in her studies, contending that “youth success is associated with youth having adults in their lives who care about them and set high expectations for them to succeed” (p. 251). Clearly, actions that support these intentions are critical for effective teaching.

### **Theoretical Frameworks Underlying the Research Purpose**

In alignment with Brofenbrenner’s (1977) systems approach, social learning theorist Bandura (1997) stressed that “...children’s intellectual development cannot be isolated from the social relations within which it is embedded...it must be analyzed from a social perspective” (p. 237). This theoretical lens underscores much of the research on effective teaching and the TSR. While achievement remains the ultimate objective of this critical relationship in schools, there is evidence that specific teacher behaviors and beliefs support much more than students’ achievements (Bandura, 1997; CorneliusWhite, 2007; Dweck, 2006; Hattie, 2012). Hattie (2012), in his meta-analysis of over 900 educational studies on effective teaching, expanded to over 1,400 studies by 2017, sought to systematically calculate the effect sizes of specific educational influences on specific educational outcomes. In a breakdown of 150 potential influences (now 250 plus), Hattie found the influence of *Teacher-student relationships* ranked twelfth, behind other

affective factors of #2 *Teacher credibility in the eyes of students* and #10 *Feedback*, with an effect size of  $d = +0.90$  and  $d = +0.75$  respectively (Hattie, 2012, p. 269). His research suggested that teacher behaviors and even teacher *beliefs* have evidentiary potential to impact student change. “We must consider ourselves positive change agents for the students who come to us...teachers’ beliefs and commitments are the greatest influence on student achievement over which we can have some control...” (p. 25). In support of this research direction and findings, social learning theorists have long examined the shared interaction and social environment of this critical relationship.

Dewey’s leadership in the progressive education movement in the mid-twentieth century garnered great support from researchers seeking to validate student-centered teaching approaches. Dewey believed that interactions and experiences are the core elements in learning, and therefore “...education is essentially a social process” (Dewey, 1938, p. 58). Additionally, Dewey’s progressive ideals in education were precursors to later theories of learning and instruction in regard to Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1977), Helplessness Theory (Seligman, 1972), Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1979), Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2006). Each of these related approaches focus on the experiential and reciprocal aspect of learning in social settings and the beliefs which drive our choices, specifically in areas of persistence and effort (Bandura, 1979), locus of control (Seligman, 1972), perceived causal relationships (Weiner, 1979), intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and incremental versus entity mindsets on intelligence and ability (Dweck, 2006). These overlapping self-theories have informed educational researchers as they evaluate the impact of self-beliefs and actions within the ecological system of schools.

**Understanding a growth mindset.** Dweck's (1975) seminal research on motivation and goal orientation identified two different perspectives of intelligence that appear to influence an individual's persistence under challenge. Dweck and her colleagues (Bandura & Dweck, 1988; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Dweck, 1975; Dweck & Leggett, 1988) originally explored self-theory from a perspective of learned helplessness and self-expectation. Dweck noted that "Two children may receive exactly the same number and sequence of success and failure trials yet [they] react quite differently as a function of whether they interpret the failure to mean that the situation is beyond or within their control" (Dweck, 1975, p. 675). "Those subjects who persisted in the face of prolonged failure placed more emphasis on the role of effort in determining the outcome of their behavior" (Dweck & Reppucci, 1973, p. 109). Defined later as an individual's mindset, Dweck (2006) found that a limiting perspective of a fixed "entity" of intelligence compared to one that is malleable (i.e., can grow based upon effort) played a significant role in student achievement and willingness to persist under the necessary challenges of learning. In alignment with Bandura's developing social self-theory of self-efficacy, Dweck collaborated with Bandura in 1988 on an unpublished manuscript at Harvard University. This research focused on self-beliefs of individual's ability as being either a fixed entity or incrementally malleable, effectively bridging these two constructs of self-efficacy and growth mindset (cited in Bandura, 1993). These educational researchers demonstrated that the power of one's efficacious mindset can clearly influence the choice of actions taken when facing challenges (Dweck, 2006; Maier, Seligman, Teasdale, 1978; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Weiner, 1979). This research direction on the power of one's mindset to affect actions is relevant to both the student and the teacher seeking academic success, as Bandura (1993) observed, "A person with the same

knowledge and skills may perform poorly, adequately, or extraordinarily depending on fluctuations in self-efficacy thinking” (p. 119).

Possession of this efficacious mindset of growth benefits educators in working in the daily world of the schoolhouse. Challenging student situations require a sense of “I can be effective,” in order to be the change agent necessary for student success and engagement. Additionally, increased awareness of how our fixed mindsets can negatively influence our TSR is the critical insight needed for strong teacher efficacy in schools.

**Mindset and expectation in connection to educator impact.** The power of self-belief can also be impacted by the beliefs and actions of others. Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968b) famous *Pygmalion in the Classroom* study introduced educators to the power of teacher expectation on student achievement. Using the now common terms of growth, fixed, and malleable to discuss the findings as relevant to expectations of intelligence, these researchers provided false information to educators in their experimental group regarding the intellectual potential of certain students. These identified “special” children, especially those in the younger grades, achieved significantly greater gains on assessments than those who were identified with more limited potential. Although the specifics of the teacher behaviors toward different students were not explored at length, Rosenthal and Jacobson’s study alerted educators to the power of subjective teacher bias and mindset on student outcomes, such that “the results...provide further evidence that one person's expectations of another's behavior may come to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968a, p. 20). This study has been criticized for its broad claims of causal outcomes (Brophy & Good, 1970; Elashoff & Snow, 1971), however, other researchers have since concentrated on the implicit beliefs of teachers in determining explicit actions (Brophy & Good, 1972; Gottfredson, Marciniak, Birdseye, &

Gottfredson, 1991; Kerman, Kimball, & Martin, 1980; Silberman, 1969). Early work by Brophy and Good (1970, 1972) and Silberman (1969) focused similarly on the power of differential teacher expectations in reinforcing student behaviors and academic outcomes. Using a unique rating system, Good and Brophy (1972) had 10 teachers identify specific students with whom they prefer either: 1) more relationship, 2) less relationship, 3) have concerns for, or are 4) indifferent toward. Following up with earlier work by both Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968a, 1968b) and Silberman (1969), Good and Brophy (1972) included more than 20 hours of observation for each of the 10 participating teachers. This additional data point of observation provided the researchers further evidence that teacher actions directly matched self-identified attitudes toward specific students. For example, students whose teachers identified as those with whom they wanted *more* connection (or “attachment” as labeled originally by Silberman), received more positive comments and were called on more often. Conversely, the students whom teachers indicated ambivalence or indifference, received little teacher initiated contact or positive encouragement.

Despite nearly five decades since this early work, there remains minimal teacher education on the significance of teacher attitudes and its demonstrated reciprocal effect on student behavior. Indeed, back in the early 1980’s, a professional development program was developed to address the disparity identified by the earlier research (Kerman et al., 1980), Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (T.E.S.A.). T.E.S.A. was a behavior change program (sponsored by the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, the CDS), and adopted by a large number of schools and districts across the country (Gottfredson et al., 1991, 1995). Within this highly-structured program, teachers and administrators were coached to



recognize their bias and appropriately mediate actions with specific teacher-student interactions and behaviors (Kerman et al., 1980). While a small positive effect was found within-school comparisons, the between-school comparison actually revealed a small negative effect, implying that a well-implemented and well-received training, may not ultimately translate into significant outcomes of non-biased teacher practices (Gottfredson et al., 1995). However, as with many educational initiatives that garnish widespread favor but limited empirical evidence of effectiveness, such as matching teaching styles to learning styles or ability grouping for gifted students (Hattie, 2012), the theory behind this program continues to resonate with educators. In 2000, Cantor, Kester, and Miller explored the continued use of the T.E.S.A. program across 45 states and the District of Columbia. Their data, unlike earlier analyses, focused on the teachers' opinions of the program and consistency of use of the intervention and feedback tools several years after the formal training. Contrary to Gottfredson et al. (1991, 1995), Cantor et al. (2000) found that the majority of the teachers surveyed ( $n = 1020$ ) would recommend the program to their cohorts (94 percent), found it both highly useful (94 percent) and positively impactful (77 percent) in their teaching practice, and believed it should be a continued professional development training priority (89.4 percent).

Qualitatively, it appears that coaching for un-biased mindsets and strategies to increase equitable expectations is well-received by educators, despite the lack of definitive empirical support. This discrepancy is a common challenge in educational research that is primarily relational-focused. The nature of the unique, personalized classroom dynamic and the individual teacher-student relationships often are hard to quantify. Yet, these studies support the value in coaching teachers to better understand how their beliefs can impact their actions and choices with students.

**Educator expectations of self.** Many other researchers have continued to focus on the idea of mindsets and beliefs, finding significant evidence that a positive belief system of student capacity increased students' motivation when confronted with setbacks (Balzar, 2014; Bandura, 1993; Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Dweck, 1975; Dweck, 2006; Schunk, 1991; Sun, 2014). Current work in this area has been focused on educating and training *students* about the concept of mindset and providing teachers with the tools to support a student growth, versus a fixed, mindset (Brainology®, 2016; Committee for Children, 2015; Dweck, 2015; Sparks, 2013; State of Washington OSPI, 2016). With this research lens and educational agenda directed primarily at students' self-beliefs, a related construct to Bandura's self-efficacy, more research is needed to explore the potential impact of *educator* growth or fixed mindsets. If research on a growth mindset demonstrates stronger outcomes for students in areas of effort, persistence, and self-belief, would it not be logical that teacher's *own* efficacious mindsets could provide them with greater persistence in regard to student learning, motivation, and behavior? And, conversely, if an educator approached student challenges with a more limited, fixed mindset or expectation, would they be less effective with students and expect less from both themselves and the student in regard to academic or behavioral outcomes? Some researchers addressing teacher beliefs and expectations support these inferences.

Balzer (2014) explored the impact of 35 middle school math teacher mindsets on their actions of persistence with struggling learners in Texas. She found that "Teachers who believe that they are in control of their students learning are more willing to persevere and put forth effort when students struggle," (p. 9) versus teachers who perceive little control of this outcome. Using data from over 1,000 middle disadvantaged

middle school students in conjunction with teacher surveys, Balzer found a statistically significant positive correlation between teacher beliefs and student grades in math, though not in standardized assessments. In an earlier study, Good, Arnsion, and Inzlicht (2003) applied this experimental model of mindset training to address stereotype threats on low achieving minority students of color, finding a moderate effect size of the incremental condition, or growth potential, compared to the attributional group of fixed intelligence. Although not a focus of this study, the researchers also found that the females who were a part of the incremental condition training, narrowed their gap in math to their male peers.

Good et al. (2003) implied that a fixed mindset, or attributional condition, is a form of stereotype threat which can limit student potential and success. McKown, Gregory, and Weinstein's (2010) exploration of teacher expectations in the classroom additionally identified this potential teacher judgment, or stereotype threat, as one that can become a "stigmatized identity... [which can be] devalued by society" (p. 259). Under the umbrella of self-fulfilling prophecies, they highlighted the fact that teachers can inadvertently provide salient clues to their beliefs and expectations, ultimately impacting the benefits of a positive TSR with a struggling learner. These powerful, personalized theories of self and others' identity can be influenced quite significantly by overt and unexamined teacher expectations and biases (Babad, 1990; Jussim, 1989; McKown et al., 2010; McKown & Weinstein, 2008).

One can recognize that in order to build a positive mindset in our students, we must be armed similarly. Babad (1990), a cohort of Rosenthal's, recognized the challenge of raising teachers' awareness of their biases, making these mindsets difficult to change. Babad's study focused on measuring teachers' differential treatment of high and low

achieving students. Teachers in her study ( $n = 17$ ) demonstrated greater negative responses to low achievers, while at the same time, they reported providing more teacher emotional support to this population. Students' perception ( $n = 520$ ) of strong emotional support differed significantly from teacher perception, however, with students reporting low teacher support to low achievers, and higher teacher support to high achievers. When teachers were provided this differential perception, nearly 50 percent became resistant and defensive.

Sun (2014), a cohort of growth mindset researcher, Dweck, explored the power of teacher mindset with middle school math instructors. She found that math teachers with a more fixed mindset had differing instructional practices. They were much less likely to see mistakes as part of learning, and much more likely to identify specific students as unlikely to be successful in math.

As the power of a positive growth mindset is considered in regard to motivation and achievement of students, we must similarly identify the mindsets of effective educators that support student's academic and social success. Qualitative researchers Goldstein and Brooks' (2007) examined the powerful concept of developing the mindset of effective teachers. They asserted that "Mindsets are assumptions and expectations we have for ourselves and for others that guide our teaching practices and our interactions with students, parents, and colleagues" (p. 193). Brooks and Goldstein (2008) evaluated the impact of these limiting mindsets and related behaviors on students' own mindsets. They found significant differences in the way the students themselves responded to the explicit behaviors demonstrated by teachers whom held these limiting mindsets. Citing one struggling student's perception, they noted "...his behavior [with different teachers] reflected what he believed were their mindsets and expectations for him" (Brooks &

Goldstein, 2008, p. 116). This theme was repeated in dozens of other qualitative studies. Corbett et al.'s (2005) three-year project exploring the success and challenges in mid-size urban school districts, continually noted that exemplary teachers held the unwavering mindset that all students can learn. In turn, these teachers transferred this mindset to their students with high expectations and student support. Additionally, Corbett et al. (2005) found that while teachers might employ similar best practices for classroom instruction with comparable populations such as small cooperative groups, hands on learning, and checking for understanding, the outcomes were not equal. "The difference appeared to stem more from the teachers' attitudes than from any particular instructional method they used..." furthermore these teachers were "incessantly vigilant" (Corbett et al., 2005, p. 9).

In much earlier work done on teacher expectations and student achievement in the 1970's, researchers found that the majority of teachers were unaware of their existing bias – and the ensuing impact it could have on student motivation, engagement, and achievement (Brophy & Good, 1970, 1972; Cantor, Kester, & Miller, 2000). Jussim and Harber's (2005) meta-analysis of research on teacher expectations in the previous 35 years implied that these biases exist in all of us. Our awareness is critical to our own efficacy with challenging student behavior or motivation. Jussim (1989), similar to Babad (1990), found that "in comparison to students whom teachers believed to be lazy, those whom teachers believed to try hard, received higher grades but not higher standardized test scores" (Jussim, 1989, p. 493). McKown et al. (2010) further implied that students' perceptions of teachers' "...overt and subtle behavioral cues [signal] that the teacher does not think much of the student's abilities, in turn shaping the student's self-expectations,

engagement ...and...achievement” (p. 261). It appears, then, that teacher mindsets and actions influence student success and students’ own mindsets.

Several studies, however, have revealed that teachers are not accurate self-evaluators. Cornelius-White’s (2007) examination of accuracy of self-reports found teachers’ perspectives did not often align to actual teaching practices. Hughes (2011) also found a discrepancy between teacher self-report and child reports of the relationship. In her longitudinal study of at-risk third graders, Hughes found that teachers tended to identify students with whom they experienced high conflict as those who also received much less teacher support, with a negative correlation of  $r = -0.56$ . These same students, however, perceived a much more modest negative correlation between their perception of relational conflict and teacher support ( $r = -0.14$ ). Shifrer (2013), exploring the power of labels on students identified as learning disabled in high school, reaffirmed that this stigmatizing identification can affect how teachers respond to their students, and ultimately inform student self-beliefs about their ability to succeed in college. Pulling data from the Education Longitudinal Survey of 2002, who sampled more than 11,400 students and their schools, Shifrer found a statistically significant difference between teacher expectations of the similarly behaving and achieving students labeled LD versus non-labeled students. Students who did not have the LD designation were identified as much more likely to be successful in post-secondary education, despite the fact that these students performed at the same level as students labeled as LD. This remarkable 82 percent difference in the odds ratio of teacher expectation between the two groups of *similarly* behaving and achieving students is powerful to note. In addition, the student expectations appeared to be moderated much more strongly by the teacher expectation

rather than that of the parent. This supports earlier work on labeling which predicts that students' lowered expectations can be attributed, in part, to perceptions of others.

Collectively, these studies addressed the often subtle, inadvertent impact of teacher perceptions and biases. Evidence reveals that often what teachers believe about themselves may not be aligned with their students' beliefs. Even more significant, however, is that these fixed or negative mindsets can be accurately identified by students, potentially limiting their personal expectations.

**Related educator actions.** Researchers focusing on teacher behavior noted that good teachers express a desire to have students believe in their own ability to master tasks and persist through challenges (Cornelius-White, 2007; Lee & Reeve, 2012; Murray & Greenberg, 2000), and they often seek strategies to build on these self-efficacious skills (CASEL, 2015; 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Bandura (1993) and Dweck (2006) implied that ability and mindsets are changeable attributes, but both theorists recognized that this change requires more than simply effort and belief. It may also require new strategies and help from others (Bandura, 1993; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Of the four attributions of self-efficacy, Bandura recognized the benefits of scaffolding new challenges with verbal coaching and opportunities for successful practice. In Tschannen-Moran and McMaster's (2009) study of the impact of a professional development model on teacher efficacy ( $n = 93$ ), they found that certain conditions were necessary for teachers to adopt a new strategy, emphasizing, "...the importance of an authentic task-specific mastery experience and of individualized verbal persuasion in raising self-efficacy beliefs and supporting the implementation of a new teaching strategy" (p. 242).

Earlier, Canadian researcher Ross (1992) explored the idea of influencing teacher efficacy with targeted instructional coaching. He found significant self-reported benefits, as well as student achievement gains, when teachers had more frequent contact with their instructional coach, versus an administrator or peer. Just as teachers desire for their own students, Ross (1992) asserted that educators must recognize that the power to change their own teacher efficacy lies both within themselves and through the supportive individuals who reinforce that thinking through their actions.

Pianta (Hamre et al., 2012), a longtime TSR researcher from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, found that in order to change teacher mindsets as to student abilities, you must provide them with new, effective teacher behaviors. Focusing on changing implicit mindsets in order to impact explicit actions, Pianta's research team used a 14-week intervention designed to help shift the intentional mindsets of hundreds of early-childhood educators ( $n = 220$ ). The intervention better equipped the teachers to respond to challenging behaviors with positive mindsets and redirections, rather than a negative feedback loop. First, the educators were presented with research-based strategies, and then provided coaching opportunities to practice the effective relational interactions. The researchers' concluded that the teachers who participated in the intervention had a positive significant change in their expectations and beliefs regarding student efficacy (Hamre et al., 2012).

As to discipline and teacher actions, Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton (2016) found that even a brief intervention addressing discipline mindsets could alter teacher actions. Recognizing the negative impact of suspensions on student learning and engagement ( $d = - 0.19$ ) (Hattie, 2016), Okonofua et al. (2016) had an experimental group of middle school math teachers ( $n = 31$ ) read several articles and complete related



writing prompts which coached the educators to hold an empathetic mindset of student misbehavior. This intervention reduced suspension rates for their group by half, as compared to the control group of teachers who read an article encouraging punitive mindset conditions. In addition, the educators who were in the empathetic discipline coaching group shifted their mindsets as to their high-risk students to ones of greater compassion, perspective taking, and insight. Exploring student feedback from both the control and intervention classrooms in five diverse middle schools, Okonofua et al. (2016) found that students with a history of suspension felt more respected by their math teacher if the teacher had participated in the intervention, in comparison to students of teachers in the control group ( $M = 4.70$  versus  $M = 3.85$ ,  $t(1,439) = 2.68$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ,  $d = 0.77$ ). “The intervention simply encouraged teachers to view discipline as an opportunity to facilitate mutual understanding and better relationships and empowered teachers to do so in a manner effective for them and their students” (p. 5224). The findings from these Stanford researchers are encouraging and powerful. An online intervention exercise like this is simple, cost effective, scalable, and replicable by instructional coaches and school counselors across the country.

The foundational theories of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and mindsets (Brooks 2004; Dweck, 2006) highlighted above provide strong evidence of the impact of our cognitions on our behavioral choices. Studies cited earlier support this association and the potential for change in efficacious educator beliefs and actions, both directed inwardly and outwardly toward students. The implications of this relationship between self-beliefs and ensuing actions, then, can logically be connected to the critical influence of TSR in the schoolhouse.

## The Teacher-Student Relationship Factor

The quality of the teacher-student relationship has been frequently tied to a student's academic success, as well as to school engagement and motivation (Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith, & Lande, 2018; Hughes, 2011; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Lee & Reeve, 2012; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Murray & Greenberg, 2000). Roorda, Koomen, Split, and Oort's (2011) explored the influence of TSR on students' engagement in schools. The results of the meta-analysis indicated interpersonal relatedness to have a strong association with student connection through nearly all grade levels. Certainly, when educators consider their most academically at-risk students, one might hope TSR could positively impact student self-efficacy. Roorda et al.'s (2011) analysis of 99 studies completed between 1990 and 2011, confirmed this assertion revealing "positive associations between positive TSRs and both engagement and achievement" (p. 515), and demonstrating overall effect sizes for the associations between positive affective TSRs and learning behaviors as significant ( $r = .39, p < .01$ ). Roorda et al. (2011) found that, regardless of age of student, *negative* TSR had negative school engagement outcomes. They further noted that these negative relationships had much longer-term impact on negative student engagement and achievement compared to *positive* TSR. Effect sizes measured one year later demonstrated low-to-moderate effects on positive relationships and engagement ( $d = 0.20$ ) and achievement ( $d = 0.16$ ) versus negative relationship and engagement ( $d = -0.32$ ) and achievement ( $d = -0.21$ ),  $p < .01$  for all associations. In support of Okonofua et al.'s (2016) emphasis on empathetic teacher discipline, Roorda et al. (2011) also found that "a focus on affective TSRs seems to be especially relevant for students at risk for academic maladjustment" (p. 520). This is particularly critical as students transition to middle and high school, where perhaps the

academic demands are greater, and the variable of positive teacher relationship has greater impact on engagement and achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The reciprocity of the teacher-student relationship is also a unique dynamic impacting both student and teacher mindset. Skinner and Belmont (1993) explored these reciprocal effects between elementary teachers ( $n = 13$ ) and students in grades 3-5 ( $n = 144$ ). They found that teachers responded more favorably and frequently to their most engaged learners, and much less to students who were disengaged. Marchand and Skinner (2007) found similar effects in exploring help-seeking versus concealment behaviors by students in middle and elementary school ( $n = 765$ ). Using a series of surveys for teachers and students, the researchers explored three different student motivational self-perceptions and teacher reports of motivational supports for specific students. Ironically, the less students asked for help, the less teachers sought them out independently to prompt this critical skill for growth. In fact, as the year progressed, students who “initially used concealment as a way of coping with problems were more likely to find that their teachers withdrew their support as the year progressed” (Marchand & Skinner, 2007; p. 75). Additionally, these researchers found that the primary predictor of student help-seeking motivation was the students’ own sense of connection or relatedness to the teacher.

With the research lens directed at the TSR, As we continue to examine the unique power of the TSR, Marchand and Skinner (2007) implied that teacher actions of persuasion and positive relationship can influence student motivation: “One pathway through which teacher support shapes students’ help-seeking and concealment is by influencing students’ perceptions of their relatedness, competence, and autonomy” (p. 74). Marchand and Skinner’s (2007) study explored mindsets of both teachers and

students and highlighted the reciprocal loop that can occur when a teacher pre-assesses a child as “easy to like” or “not enjoyable” (p. 71).

Researchers exploring the TSR found similar outcomes as to the reinforcement of beliefs (Cornelius-White, 2007; Stuhlman & Piñata, 2001; Wubbles et al., 2006; Watson, Miller, Davis, & Carter, 2010). Wubbles et al. (2006) explored data from a 25-year program which investigated TSR in high schools from both student and teacher perspective. They cautioned educators to take the lead in the relationship trajectory. “If both sides show little understanding of each other’s behavior, their interaction often has an escalating character. Teachers and student may find themselves in a vicious circle in which they intensify each other’s behaviors...” (p. 5). Placing responsibility on the significant adult in the schoolhouse, these researchers remind educators that, “Only by changing one’s own behavior can one change the behavior of the other person, and thus break the destructive spiral” (Wubbles et al., 2006, p. 5). Cornelius-White (2007) identified the issue of adult responsibility in his exploration of learner-centered TSR, calling educators to avoid “power struggles through empathy and encouragement of self-initiated learning” (p. 131), and finding positive TSR and positive student behavior and affect to have an overall moderate correlation of  $r = +0.35$ .

O’Connor et al. (2011) researched the TSR using data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, birth to adolescence ( $n = 1,364$ ) carried out between 1991 and 2009. With a lens on behavior problem trajectories, they examined the power of high quality TSR as to child externalizing and internalizing behaviors, finding that TSR was one of the strongest predictors of the absence or presence of disruptive externalizing behaviors. Though some specific methodologies in educational research can overestimate TSR

effects (Cornelius-White, 2007), the reality of teacher affective behaviors such as trust, warmth, respect, and empathy remain significant qualities in high quality, efficacious TSR (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012; Ellis et al., 1998; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Hattie, 2012; Hendricks, Smith, & Stanuch, 2014; Kohn, 2005; Okonofua et al., 2016; Schulte, Slate, & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Watson et al., 2010).

Educational researcher and author Kohn (2005) adopted the term “unconditional teaching” in reference to the growth mindset which perceives all children as capable of learning and worthy to be taught. Additionally, he called on educators to increase the awareness of the perception of other students when a child is publicly reprimanded or sent out of the classroom, as this behavior can be interpreted by observers that the teacher relationship is conditional and contingent and “...that only those who do well count” (p. 22). Other students are indirectly impacted by the negative, escalated emotional responses of teachers. Nelson and Roberts (2000), in a study focusing on teacher-student interactions with students who exhibit such disruptive behaviors, also found that teacher responses to students have “collateral effects...on the other students in the classroom” (p. 37). In alignment with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological model, Nelson and Roberts’ (2000) research on teacher responses to challenging student behavior in two schools (first through eighth grade), found that teachers’ actions impact more than just the identified student in the teacher-student interaction, but additionally affect others in the classroom system witnessing the relationship. Kohn’s (2005) philosophy on the mindsets of teachers mirrors psychologist Roger’s (1951) client-centered approaches in psychology. Rogers believed that change could only occur with clients if the therapeutic relationship provided for unconditional positive regard: A belief and treatment by the adult to the client, or as in Kohn’s case: the student, of unconditional respect and support. Kohn acknowledged the

challenge of the mindset of unconditional regard, yet still identified it as central to the teacher-student relationship. “Accepting students for who they are, rather than for what they do, is integrally related to the idea of teaching the whole child” (Kohn, 2005, p. 24).

Beyond theory, Hattie’s (2012) ongoing seminal work analyzing what works *best* as to teacher impacts on student outcomes, identified the powerful impact of teacher behaviors on student learning. In his analysis of more than 1,400 studies exploring one quarter million students, Hattie found that such behaviors as singling out a student or suspension/expulsion had a negative effect size of  $d = - 0.19$  and  $d = - 0.20$ , respectively. Conversely, *not* labeling students and providing second/third chances had significant positive effects of  $d = + 0.61$  and  $d = + 0.53$ , respectively. Although policies for special education identification and school-wide discipline may limit our ability to provide label-free connections with our students or empathetic second chances, recognizing the benefits of these “unconditional teaching” mindsets and actions is essential in supporting our most struggling youth.

Not all teacher interventions are equal, however. Klassen and Lynch (2007) cautioned that teacher interventions and responses to student academic struggles also have the potential to be counterproductive, especially if individual student support is done within whole class instruction. Thus, while a well-intentioned teacher may seek to provide positive encouragement to a struggling learner, this support may actually reduce student self-efficacious efforts because of the social stigma against drawing attention to one’s learning difficulties. Ellis et al. (2003) addressed this in their qualitative study on “difficult” students’ perceptions of teacher behaviors that limit efficacy and engagement. Students in their study expressed humiliation and a desire for retaliation when criticized

or confronted publicly on a behavior. The authors logically suggest that adults would likely feel this same way if they were reprimanded in front of their adult peers.

Conflict in all relationship is often inevitable. The relevance of these studies implies that awareness of one's interpersonal body language, tone of voice, and communication approach during conflict can mitigate potential negative responses if the teacher manages the conflict in a friendly, relaxed manner (LaBelle et al., 2013). Earlier, Birch and Ladd (1998) explored the interpersonal relationship qualities between kindergarteners ( $n = 199$ ) and their teachers. They found a direct correlation between the amount of conflict or negativity in this significant, developmental teacher-student relationship and a decrease in pro-social behaviors demonstrated both with teachers and peers. Burnett (2002), in a study of elementary age students ages 8-12 ( $n = 747$ ), which used three different student self-report measures, noted that the strongest relationship path was found between receiving effort feedback *and* the relationship to the teacher ( $r = +0.80$ ). Additionally, strong correlations were also demonstrated between classroom environment perception *and* teacher relationship ( $r = +0.69$ ) with 72 percent of the variance accounted for by the researcher's model. This finding further supports the contention that both a positive classroom environment *and* positive teacher relationship influence a student's ability to more readily lean into teacher feedback and support. Burnett (2002) also demonstrated that these more satisfied students received greater amounts of effort feedback from their teachers than the students who identified themselves as less satisfied. Additionally, he found a correlation between the student's perception of receiving frequent negative feedback and student's self-report of a negative relationship with his/her teacher. This finding supports Dweck's (2008) implication that "students are tremendously sensitive to what we adults value in them" (p. 13). An

unconditional mindset regarding all students' potential to be successful can be challenging, but clear evidence demonstrates that keen student perceptions respond more favorably when they believe their teachers believe in them.

The focused research on teacher-student relationship has also explored the variable TSR as it applied to lower versus higher efficacious students and the students' persistence toward goals. Both research teams of Marchand and Skinner (2007), who studied help-seeking patterns of students with differing levels of efficacy, and Yetkin, Özedemir, and Pape (2013), who examined the number of positive teacher feedback comments given to identified students with differing levels of efficacy, found similar outcomes in teacher feedback. Less efficacious, less confident, and less motivated learners receive significantly far less teacher relationship and support over time.

These studies, which mirror other findings on teacher expectation and student achievement (Cantor et al., 2005; Education Commission of the States, 2012; Hamre et al., 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968b), are concrete reminders of the teacher's responsibility to be aware of the potential bias that can occur in all relationship-based settings. The research supports the need for increased intentionality of teacher actions when seeking to build student efficacious engagement. It appears that the affective delivery of our instruction methods, from formative feedback to discipline responses, communicate a similar affective message to students, and directly impacts the TSR. Armed with this insight, strong educators can moderate their actions to promote greater positive student outcomes.

**Relationship qualities of effective TSR.** Research indicates that student outcomes can be affected by teacher actions, yet many relational qualities, such as trust and sincerity, are subtle and personalized. Frey et al.'s (2018) research on student



engagement asserted that trust of the adult in charge was at the core of students' willingness to engage in complex, challenging tasks. Ennis and McCauley (2002) explored the idea of trust in classroom communities, highlighting its potential for student buy-in. "Schools are central places in which children and adolescents learn to reach beyond the early conceptualizations of family trust to initiate trusting relationships with classmates and teachers" (p. 151). In their qualitative study exploring the effective teacher qualities which support disruptive or disengaged high school students, the qualities of trust and sincere commitment in the TSR were strongly identified by both student and teacher. This focus aligns with the social learning theories of psychologist Rogers' (1951, 1983) work with the critical construct of trust and safety in relationship between the stakeholders: therapist and client, teachers and students, students and peers, teachers and peers. In his 1983 book *Freedom to Learn in the 80s*, Rogers encouraged educators to bring this attitudinal approach into their relationships with students: What we are describing is a prizing of the learner as an imperfect human being with many feelings, many potentials. The facilitator's prizing or acceptance of the learner is an operational expression of his essential confidence and trust in the capacity of the human organism. (Rogers, 1983, p. 109)

Rogers (1983) recognized the challenge of managing one's attitudes and honing empathy toward learners stating, "First of all, one must be close to one's feelings, capable of being aware of them. Then one must be willing to take the risk...not disguising them as judgments, or attributing them to other people" (p. 114).

Rogers' (1983) work, and the implications of other social theorists and researchers, indicated that one's proactive self-awareness, as well as use of the best practices to successfully engage a challenged learner, have the potential to increase a

teacher's self-efficacy. Pace et al. (2014) addressed this need for greater training in these proactive responses to manage disruptive behaviors. In their study of the effectiveness of an education-training model designed to increase the efficacy of teachers in managing common challenging student behaviors (such as students failing to respond to a teacher's request, arguing, deliberately annoying peers, and other self-management concerns), teachers expressed a "lack of confidence... [and lack of] gratification and self-fulfillment in their profession as a result of ineffective classroom management skills" (Pace et al., 2014, p. 32). This feedback loop of the student's lack of self-management and the teacher's lack of confidence or skill to manage the student's challenge is not an uncommon occurrence (Bluestein, 2008; Glasser & Easley, 2011; Kohn, 1996; Kopkowski, 2008). In a 2015 Education Week Research Center national survey examining teachers' perspectives on the implications of social emotional learning in schools ( $n = 493$  to  $1,043$ ), responders identified self-management as the most important trait for students to possess for success in schools. This quality trumped responsible decision-making, relationship skills, empathy, and self-awareness in this self-selected population. Dewey, in 1938, also called on educators to serve as guides to support students on being more aware of their internal motivations – and to "stop and think." Dewey (1938) stated, "Thinking is thus a postponement of immediate action...this union being the heart of reflection...The ideal aim of education is creation of the power of self-control" (p. 64). This aim of self-reflection prior to action is an admirable outcome we seek, not just for our students, but also for ourselves, calling upon educators to utilize strategies which support self-control and regulation, and ultimately build stability and safety in relationship (Bluestein, 2008; Grove & Glasser, 2007; Kohn, 2005; Rogers, 1983).

Can teachers be taught this unconditional belief of student potential? Dweck (2006) believed so. The setback that a student experiences in learning can be paralleled with the challenge a teacher experiences with a struggling learner or a non-compliant student. The work of researchers Goldstein and Brooks (2007, 2008) similarly supported the idea that if we can train students to think differently about their capabilities and the situation, we can do the same for the educator. In Goldstein's and Brooks' (2007) nearly 600-page, research-based text for educators and consultants, 12 mindsets for effective teachers are introduced and expanded in detail. Each mindset is supported with strong citations, reflecting a learner-centered approach, and placing the teacher in the key position of responsibility for successful TSRs. For example, effective teachers "believe that the learning that occurs in the classroom and the behavior exhibited by students has as much, if not more, to do with the influence of teachers than what students might bring into the situation" (Goldstein & Brooks, 2007, p. 119). Brooks' (2001, 2004) earlier qualitative research focused on mindsets of learning-disabled children and classroom environments where children thrived. Much of his findings highlighted teacher mindsets and behaviors as having greatest influence on student outcome. Each specific mindset presented and expanded upon by Goldstein and Brooks (2007) recognized the teacher as a powerful "change agent" (p. 24).

The emphasis of the research on TSR qualities that strengthen student outcomes is a strong focus on the significant impact of the teacher in managing the trajectory of the relationship. While evidence suggests that qualities of trust and empathy play a strong role in mediating a positive TSR, adoption of these affective qualities requires educators to be proactively self-aware and mindful in the verbal and non-verbal ways they consistently communicate with their students.

**Supporting positive TSR with teacher feedback.** With the ultimate goal of high-quality TSRs to build both academic and social efficacy, research into specific verbal feedback consistently points to its positive value in student learning and perceptions. Hattie, in *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* (2012), demonstrated that teacher feedback had a significant effect on student achievement, ranking as the 10<sup>th</sup> most influential factor out of 256 explored, with a calculated effect size of  $d = +0.75$ . Teachers themselves, however, may not recognize the influence of their verbal feedback on the student relationship. Klassen and Lynch (2007) noted that while teachers in their study identified their verbal persuasion comments of praise or encouragement as having little impact on a student's self-efficacy, this type of feedback "was the students' most commonly requested self-efficacy booster" (p. 504).

Although researchers have long demonstrated the value of skill-specific feedback and descriptive encouragement, focusing on effort and persistence versus simply summative outcomes (Dweck, 2015; Kohn, 1993, 2001; Yetkin, Özedemir, & Pape, 2013), Klassen's and Lynch's (2007) finding revealed that the teacher's supportive comments had staying power regardless if they were statements of praise/compliments (e.g. "Terrific idea") or more formative, specific encouragement (e.g. "Keep going with more strong details!"). Consistent with these findings on the power of teacher feedback in building positive TSR, researchers Siegle and McCoach (2007) investigated the relationship between student mathematics self-efficacy and an effective teacher feedback training. They observed that teacher feedback, given in the form of correction or redirection, did not actually reduce the student's effort, but rather appeared to convey a message to the student of high teacher expectation and relationship. Thus, this teacher action potentially indicates to the student: "I think you are capable," by maintaining trust

and authentic, specific feedback. The researchers summarized the common finding that not only should verbal praise and encouragement be related to success and effort rather than ability, but they also critically highlighted the impact to the TSR noting that “Students experience greater gains in self-efficacy when they are told they are capable by someone they believe is trustworthy” (Siegle & McCoach, 2007, p. 281).

This research on feedback qualities reinforces the role of the positive TSR as to how feedback is both given and received. Researchers noted that it is not just what you say, but *how* you say it that influences student outcomes. Teachers’ communication of their high expectations translates to the student as an indication of caring and trust, ultimately building greater student persistence.

### **Characteristics of Teacher Efficacy Interventions**

As the most significant change agent in the classroom, the reality of changing teacher mindsets remains uncertain. Hamre et al. (2012) pointed out that our expectations are deeply rooted in our past experiences. In a meta-analysis revealing the characteristics of effective TSR in learner-centered classrooms, Cornelius-White’s (2007) noted that the data on students’ perceptions of teachers’ caring, defined by qualities of warmth, empathy, respect, and positive relationship, were directly tied to whether they believed their teachers had high expectations of them. The crosswalk for educators here, then, is to see not only all children as capable of success, but also *themselves* as able to provide a relationship which supports that intention.

Researchers exploring implementation of new strategies have found a strong positive correlation between high teacher-efficacy and a willingness to adopt new methods or accept coaching and feedback (Bandura, 1997; Ross, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Stein & Wang, 1988). Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009)

analysis of teaching efficacy in applying a new strategy, found that teachers who believe they will make a difference were more likely to view intervention strategies as positive, accept negative feedback, and believe that the instructional improvements will be helpful.

Gutshall (2013) discovered, too, that these teacher mindsets toward students are personalized. Using detailed student scenarios, teachers ( $n = 238$ ) responded to three questions regarding their belief that a student, with or without a learning disability diagnosis, could be successful. She found that, overall, teachers responded much more favorably to students, regardless of disability status, when details about the student's personality, such as persistence, attitude, and home life, were provided.

Identifying teacher mindsets that potentially impact teacher actions is not a new endeavor in educational research. Researchers exploring adopted reading programs in Los Angeles in the 1970's were actually the first to explore teacher attributes with two statements of self-reported teacher efficacy. Question 1: "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much [because] most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment," and Question 2: "If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students" (Armor et al., 1976, p. 23). Ultimately, these two statements place the responsibility for student success on the "change agent" in the classroom: the teacher. In this original study sponsored by the RAND Corporation, these two statements were ultimately combined into a single measure that continues to be adopted into scales and measures of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, & McMaster, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Zee, Koomen, Jellesema, Geerlings, & de Jong, 2016). Though these measures are self-reported evaluations of current mindset, they alone do not afford the window for change. The Stanford research team of Okonofua

et al. (2016) provided the most hopeful evidence of a TSR mindset intervention. The evidence of that brief, empathetic intervention cited earlier, supported the hypothesis that teachers can be coached to adopt a mindset of capacity, and then in turn, respond in way which provides a safe place for student growth, which is scaffolded by the TSR.

**One promising intervention for teacher mindsets and actions.** The system of adult-child relationship that was chosen for the professional development intervention used in this exploratory case study was The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA). NHA was originally created by child therapist, Howard Glasser, who recognized that many of the adopted methods of coaching and working with intense children were ineffective. In fact, many of the approaches used to address misbehavior often backfired when significant adults would provide lots of energetic relationship and heightened responses to a child's poor choices. Glasser introduced his first book for parents in 1998, *Transforming the Difficult Child: The Nurtured Heart Approach* (Glasser & Easley, 1998). He has since expanded this work to include schools, juvenile justice agencies, mental health organizations, Head Start, state foster care and other agencies that work with and support youth (Glasser & Block, 2011; Grove & Glasser, 2007). Today, NHA has been adopted by hundreds of schools across 32 different states and countries around the world ([www.childrensuccessfoundation.org](http://www.childrensuccessfoundation.org)). Additionally, more than 2500 professionals and parents have been trained in weeklong courses as Certified and Advanced Nurtured Heart Trainers (H. Glasser, personal communication, December 29, 2017).

Compatible to the literature on teacher actions and beliefs which increase positive TSR (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2012; Rodriguez, 2015; Siegle & McCoach, 2007), NHA utilizes three main Stands® or intentions which adults are coached to employ in

relationship: Stand 1) Absolute No: relationship or energy around negativity, such as warnings, anger, threats, or other relationship actions which create a negative loop in the TSR; Stand 2) Absolute Yes: to recognizing all the good choices that students make constantly, and to name these with specific, authentic and frequent feedback; Stand 3) Absolute Clarity: to upholding high expectations and consistent neutral responses to broken rules (Glasser & Block, 2011). Ultimately, NHA aims to build capacity in children to see themselves as capable of success regardless of challenges, and for the significant adults to see and name that success with clarity, consistency, and fluency (Glasser & Block, 2011; Grove & Glasser, 2007).

Quantitative research on the efficacy of NHA has been more focused in clinical settings with parents of children identified as ADHD, ODD, or other challenging behavioral diagnoses (Brennan, Hektner, Brotherson, & Hansen, 2016). In Brenner et al.'s (2016) two-year study of 41 different five-week parenting courses in NHA, the researchers found that while parents ( $n = 326$ ) in the experimental groups identified fewer strengths in their children at the baseline than the control group parents, their recognition of a greater number of strengths in their children changed after being trained in NHA. Additionally, trained parents reduced negative responses to their children and increased positive comments and actions.

In a study cited in Grove and Glasser's (2007) first book for educators adopting NHA, demographic data from an elementary school (headed by a principal trained as an Advanced Trainer in NHA), identified a significant reduction in special education and classroom discipline referrals (Grove & Glasser, 2007). And although Glasser's nonprofit organization, The Children's Success Foundation, lists more than 30 news blogs and anecdotal, public publications regarding the efficacy of the approach, empirical data is



less forthcoming. Though the sample size and research design of a qualitative case study can limit generalizability of findings (Creswell, 2008), this current study is an attempt at gathering more significant data toward this end.

### **Limitations and Challenges of Research on Personal Beliefs**

Relationships are messy constructs to measure and nearly impossible to quantify (Education Commission of the States, 2012), and researchers continue to debate the most accurate approach of analyses. The complexity of each unique relationship in each classroom and each schoolhouse is often recognized by researchers seeking to scale an intervention or isolate the independent factors at play in an overlapping ecological system (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2012; Okonofua et al., 2016). Critiques of research on non-cognitive constructs such as the TSR point out that the majority of the research is correlational rather than causal, making it “unclear the extent to which particular factors can be intentionally developed in classroom and school contexts” (Farrington et al., 2012, p. 13).

The most frequent and cost-effective tools used to evaluate both teacher and student mindsets and beliefs about TSR factors have been self-reports (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Although concerns about the validity of these measures of social desirability as to the accuracy of self-evaluation have been noted (Ashton, 1984; Bertling, Borgonovi, & Almonte, 2016; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015), there is also the concern of potential cultural biases in these questionnaires (Hamre & Pianta, 2012). These well-versed researchers point out the challenge of “the ability of developmental scientists to bridge the lab with the classroom” (Hamre & Pianta, 2012, p.36).

Cornelius-White’s (2007) analysis of more than 14,500 findings, pointed out that beliefs “...just like genuineness” (p. 113) are inordinately hard to measure. He called on

researchers to rely on observations rather than self-reports in the analysis of effective behaviors. Cornelius-White (2007) implied that frequently teachers are not the best judge of their own actions or even potential student outcomes, inferring that the need to be seen as making the ‘right’ choices professionally can be a barrier to our own insight as educators. So much so, in fact, that he found both outside observers and students were more accurate in identifying teacher actions than the teacher himself/herself.

In much earlier work, Ashton (1984) also explored the validity of teacher self-reports, finding a high correlation between teacher responses for the “right” answer when self-referenced questions were asked about perceived efficacy in a future situation. The risk of responses in self-reports to be moderated by implicit social desirability is a common critique of the research method (Creswell, 2008; Fowler, 2014; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005; Garland, 1991).

Still other findings were contradictory. Kelm and Connell (2004), in their research of both teacher and student self-reports on engagement in a larger urban school district, found that “Teacher reports of student engagement are stronger predictors of student success than student reports” (p. 267). As both Duckworth of *Grit* (2016) fame, and Yeager of essential social-emotional learning research, observed “perfectly unbiased, unfakable, and error-free measures are an *ideal*, not a reality” (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015, p. 243).

While some researchers would claim that observation is a better tool of evaluation of the TSR in the classroom (Cornelius-White, 2007), others would disagree. In addition to the cost of observation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2012), in their study on student perceptions of teachers, believed that surveys better represent the hours of time spent by that student in relationship with the teacher; the few observational data

points would provide a much less accurate picture. Duckworth and Yeager (2015) further implied that objective observations are inherently not possible, as all performance tasks are subjective when we evaluate them using our human lens. They suggested that what we focus on is informed by our past experiences, and therefore, nearly impossible to isolate objectively.

Evaluation of an implicit mindset is not a new pursuit. Experts in this field of evaluation have yet to agree on the best approach for the most bias-free analyses, as ultimately what may be implicit in one's mind may not explicitly align with one's actions. Considering these different perspectives and theories as to evaluating perspectives in the TSR can inform a more widespread, variable viewpoint.

### **No Choice but Success: Mindset Matters**

The challenge of the variable and unique relationship of TSR forces researchers to address limitations of generalizability to different contexts, but it does not prevent the pursuit to quantify what is ultimately qualitative. The teacher-student relationship is inevitable in every classroom, and the current research continues to support the power of intentional mindsets and ensuing actions that positively impact student outcomes (Corbett et al., 2005; Cornelius-White, 2007; Dweck, 2006, 2008; Goldstein & Brooks, 2007; Hattie, 2012; Okonofua et al., 2016). Researchers Corbett et al. (2002), authors of *Effort and Excellence in Urban Classrooms: Expecting, and Getting Success with All Students*, researched strategies employed by the most effective educators, finding one common element: a mindset of teacher responsibility for student success. Ultimately, supporting the power of the TSR as the hinge point to student success, these researchers call upon educators to recognize this critical mindset if they want to be the change agents in the schoolhouse. "If we allow students to fail, some will," they stated directly (Corbett et al.,

2005, p. 8). Their research, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, further supported the data that mindsets matter significantly in the choices and actions teachers take. “Best practices alone were insufficient,” they observed, “effective teaching meant giving students no choice but success” (p. 12). Ultimately, teachers armed with this efficacious mindset can take strategic and positive action with even their most challenged learner.

In this chapter, I presented research findings on effective and ineffective strategies to building positive teacher-student relationships. The next chapter will discuss the research method selected, including participants, procedures, and measures used to explore the research questions.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methods**

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to investigate, through the lens of both educator and student, the association of educator mindsets and actions on teacher-student relationships. Specifically, the study investigated these two research questions, as they related to the intervention and study's purpose:

Q1: Which specific mindsets do teachers believe influence their actions in the teacher-student relationship?

Q2: What are student perceptions of specific teacher actions which influence the teacher-student relationship?

As a trainer-researcher of a specific TSR-based intervention focused on teacher mindsets and behaviors, the Nurtured Heart Approach®, I was interested in collecting data from multiple sources to explore the theoretical intention of the intervention with educators and students from one district (case) which self-selected to adopt the approach. The qualitative research approach was chosen as the most appropriate method in exploring, examining, and describing in-depth a complex, situated real-world case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Yin, 2018). This chapter will describe the rationale for the qualitative research design, the research sample, the measures, the procedures, the data collection and the data analysis used to address the two related research questions. Ethical considerations and limitations are also presented.

## **Rationale for Research Design and Method**

Qualitative research is a method of empirical research grounded in constructivism: The philosophy of learning which recognizes that knowing occurs through individual experiences and interpretation of a particular context or time (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005). The qualitative lens is directed at the social reality. This subjectivist epistemology is one where the researcher acknowledges their personal and professional commitments as influential in their research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Leavey, 2015). Leavey identified the researcher as one of the instruments in the qualitative research. This unique role of researcher-as-participant is in contrast to the intended objective role of researchers in quantitative, experimental research design, which primarily utilizes numerical or statistical versus narrative data (Creswell, 2013; Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

The selection of this qualitative approach was well-suited for the purpose and nature of my study. This study was an exploration of the use of a relationally focused intervention directed at informing the mindsets and actions of educators working within a challenging student population. The established professional development intervention of the Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) was developed based upon theories regarding effective mindsets and actions which impact the teacher-student relationship (Brennan, Hektner, Brotherson, & Hansen, 2016; Glasser & Easley, 1998; Grove & Glasser, 2007). Although evidence of the relationship of mindsets and actions has been researched qualitatively (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012; Bruhn, 2006; Corbett et al.,

2005; Goldstein & Brooks, 2008; Good & Brophy, 1972; Gutshall, 2013; Sabol & Pianta, 2012), the adoption of specific NHA practices and mindsets has had far less scholarly examination.

**Rationale for exploratory case study method.** As the emphasis of this study was on relational factors that are situated and contextual in teacher-student relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Newton et al., 2010; Osterman, 2000; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003), the descriptive nature of an exploratory case study analysis provided a broader lens that relied on multiple sources of evidence (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Yin, 2018), and was bounded by time, event, or program (Creswell, 2013). A case study is often the ideal research method when exploring the unique variables co-existing in educational settings (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Merriam, 1998). The case study provides a method to explore context-dependent knowledge that can add to current research on effective TSR interventions (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

Yin (2018) supported the relevancy of the case study method for researchers seeking to increase the understanding of a real-world case in relation to “the prior development of theoretical propositions which guide the researcher’s design, data collection, and analysis” (p. 15). Simons (2015) additionally identified the use of the theory-led case study when seeking to test a specific theory through a case evaluation and analysis. The specific strategies embedded in the Nurtured Heart Approach® TSR system were based upon theoretical philosophies presented previously and provided a strong rationale for examining its efficacy through the qualitative exploratory case study.

## **Participants**

A one-day Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) training was provided to the staff and faculty of the two alternative schools in early November 2016. Prior to this professional development, the participants completed two brief anonymous preassessments concerning their beliefs and actions in working with challenging students. Additionally, baseline self-reported survey data which focused on both TSR and student beliefs was also gathered from students prior to the teacher intervention. It is also relevant to note that, although the intervention focused on coaching significant adults with strategies in responding to student behavior and using their positive TSR to increase pro-social choices, NHA is not a curriculum. Unlike other school-based programs aimed at increasing positive student engagement, such as Kids at Hope (Carlos & Miller, 2007) or School-Wide Positive Behavior System (SWPBS) (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negrón, 2008), there is no extended cost or needed materials for NHA implementation and adoption. Dozens of members from the two schools also chose, however, to purchase one of the many NHA books authored for either educators or parents as part of the grant-funded professional development. In addition to the training and pre-assessments, 12 teachers and staff from the two schools participated in a post-training book club. This voluntary group of participants was coordinated by the school counselor in the middle school and was independent of the training. Data was gathered from the book club during a follow-up focus group session in May 2017. Seven students from the high school also participated in a focus group designed to gather feedback regarding their relationship with their teachers and support staff.



## **Sampling Process**

A purposeful sample was used in this study. The two schools were both non-mainstreamed alternative schools, one a middle school (grades 6-8) and one a high school (grades 9-12+). Although about five miles apart, both schools shared the same principal, who worked primarily with the high school. The middle school had a Dean of students. Both schools had full-time school counselors. The middle school student population varied daily based upon the flexible student attendance and transitional demographic. At the time of the original professional development, the middle school student enrollment ( $n = 39$ ) was primarily male (77 percent), Aboriginal (54 percent), and with a significant number of students identified with intensive to moderate behavioral disabilities (49 percent), and 21 percent identified as learning disabled. The enrollment at the secondary alternative high school ( $n = 183$ ) was more gender balanced with 54 percent identifying as male, and just over 50 percent Aboriginal. At the high school, 35 percent of the students were identified with intensive to moderate behavioral disability. Just six percent of the high school population was designated as learning disabled.

Thirty-seven certified and classified faculty participated in the professional development training, as well as several other faculty invited from throughout the district: The non-affiliated staff members did not complete the surveys. Of the staff included in the training, the middle school had three main classroom teachers, seven educational assistants, a Dean of students, and one full-time school counselor ( $n = 12$ ). The high school faculty included one full-time principal, 10 full-time teachers, 10 educational assistants, two Child and Youth Welfare Assistants, and two school counselors ( $n = 25$ ). Both schools have designated Aboriginal educational assistants.

The unique demographics of these alternative schools should be noted. Both schools require faculty and staff to adopt flexible responses to discipline and curricular design. This learner-centered design is outlined in both of their websites and mission statements. For example, the middle school names three key school goals: the focus on social-emotional learning (SEL), academic and behavior needs, and the support of a student mindset of success with an emphasis on attendance and social responsibility. The secondary school identifies the extra supports offered in its program, targeting it for “...students who want a flexible learning environment rich with supports both inside and outside of the classroom” (Welcome page, B.C. Alternative Secondary Education website). Students in both schools can choose to attend these alternatively structured models rather than the more traditional middle and high school framework. Most of the students in the middle school, however, have been referred to the alternative site after high levels of attendance or behavior issues (C. Lawson, personal communication, November 7, 2016). The high school has a greater number of self-selected attendees, with just a handful of referred students. Additionally, the high school provides extended curricular options for young adults who have been unable to graduate by grade 12. At the time of the training, all of the students in attendance were of school age.

This sample matched the intentional purpose of the particular professional development program employed, The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA), as NHA is a relationship system originally created for schools’ most challenging, resistant student population (Grove & Glasser, 2007). The sample size from both schools would still be smaller than if the intervention had been applied to a larger, mainstream school.

## Measures

The data collection for this purposeful sample of both educators and students involved several selected measures: three self-report surveys, two separate focus groups, and two open-ended reflection feedback formats gathered from the middle school educator sample. Descriptive data was gathered qualitatively through short answers on anonymous surveys completed by both teachers and students prior to the NHA intervention, as well as during two voluntary focus groups several months after the NHA intervention. Focus groups, as a research method, were selected for their dynamic nature and collective form of feedback. Kamberelis and Dimitraïdis (2011) implied that data from focus groups is preferable to observation or individual interviewing, as these homogeneous groups “often produce data [that] yields particularly powerful knowledge and insights [and] often reveal unarticulated norms and normative assumptions” (p. 559). Weinstein (1998), in her qualitative study exploring the association between educator caring behaviors and high expectations, believed that interviews were also superior to the open-ended data gathered from surveys. She implied that interviews could increase the clarity and reduce the ambiguity inherent in respondents’ comments that cannot be further clarified on an anonymous survey (i.e., what a respondent might mean by the term “being there”). The two focus groups, held nearly six months after the intervention, allowed for interviewer follow-up accordingly.

The descriptive survey data used in this study is *ex post-facto*; it was requested on behalf of the schools participating in the professional development and initially collected beginning in October of 2016. School administrators also distributed identical surveys in June of 2017. Return rates on the post-test surveys were significantly lower, limiting

analysis for change in means, but potentially providing an opportunity to explore descriptively for associations.

**Credibility and trustworthiness.** In this study, quality measures of validity and reliability were evaluated through the qualitative lens of credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility and trustworthiness refer to the accurate representation of the data in reflecting participants' responses and in alignment of the construct(s) being explored (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Saldãna, 2014). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) spoke to the challenge of validating "context-grounded truths" isolated from "the processes of interpretation" itself (p. 120).

Several methods can contribute to the quality credibility of the researcher's study (Yin, 2018). The use of prior relevant related studies that support the construct being validated, detailed specification of particular data analysis methods, as well as the use of multiple sources of evidence can be shared factors that support the credibility of a study (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Saldãna, 2015; Yin, 2018). A rich description of the data, explanation of the methods, and inclusion of multiple sources of evidence in the Results section are included to support this intention.

Additionally, trustworthiness relates to the decision of the researcher to include expanded details which demonstrate the researcher's efforts to be rigorously specific, ethical, and transparent (Saldãna, 2015). Trustworthiness is also tied to ensuring the dependability (reliability) of the data and its consistency (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2018). Merriam (1998) suggested that in contrast to reliability measures of quantitative research, qualitative researchers seek to

have outsiders “concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable” (p. 206). To support the consistency and dependability of this study an independent researcher trained in qualitative coding and theming also analyzed the data. This attempt to establish inter-rater reliability can reduce the potential bias inherent in a single researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

### **Data Collection**

It was hypothesized that specific teacher mindsets promote positive, efficacious educator actions and that, additionally, these effective mindsets can be coached with a targeted professional development intervention. As mindsets have been identified as internal constructs (Brooks, 2004; Goldstein & Brooks, 2007), self-report surveys and focus groups were selected as primary data points (Fowler, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Data for this exploratory case study was gathered primarily through anonymous self-reports on surveys and during the focus groups. In addition to questions about teacher beliefs and actions, descriptive demographic facts about grade level(s) taught and years in education were included in the two educator surveys. Years at the school and grade level data were also requested from students completing the self-report survey on student beliefs.

**Focus groups.** The educator focus group ( $n = 12$ ), whose members also read a book on the school-based intervention method, met for an hour-long conversation focused on their beliefs and actions. For example, teachers explored the question: “Do you think it is important for kids to like you?” and “How do you know if you have a positive impact on a student?” Only eight of members shared aloud during the focus group taping. A smaller group of high school students ( $n = 7$ ) were also interviewed during this same time frame. Dialogue in this focus group emphasized student perspectives of positive teacher

qualities that encourage student success. For example, students responded to questions such as “What are the qualities of the best teachers you have had?” and “Can you think about what a teacher did that made a difference in your life?” Additionally, informal classroom observations and activities were completed in the alternative middle school in November of 2016 and in June of 2017. In the activity, two middle school classes participated in a lesson designed to support growth mindset. Of these two latter connections at the alternative middle school, no specific data was recorded or analyzed, however, teacher feedback following the professional development and then again after the student lesson was voluntarily shared to both myself and to the school counselor upon my departure.

**Surveys.** In addition to the qualitative feedback gathered in person, descriptive data was gathered from both populations prior to the NHA professional development. Two ten-item pre-test surveys, one on *Educator Beliefs* and a second on *Educator Actions*, were given to teachers in both schools prior to the training (See Appendices H and I). Twenty-nine teachers completed the survey on Beliefs and 31 completed the survey on *Actions*. Sixty-five students from the schools completed a survey on *Student Beliefs* (see Appendix J). A four-point rating scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) was used on the *Beliefs* surveys to reduce neutrality of responses (Garland, 1991). In alignment of questionnaire length recommendations (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015), all three surveys were just 10 questions in length and, on average, took less than four minutes to complete. The descriptive quantitative data used in this study is ex post-facto; it was requested on behalf of the schools participating in the professional development and initially collected in October of 2016. The school

administrators also distributed identical surveys at the end of the school year. Return rates on the post-test surveys were significantly lower, limiting analysis for change in means, but potentially providing an opportunity to explore associations.

The questions selected for the teacher surveys were connected to the specific mindsets and actions coached and reinforced in the NHA professional development objectives regarding effective teacher relationship strategies and beliefs (Grove, Glasser & Block, 2007; Goldstein & Brooks, 2007). After the first two demographic questions regarding role in the school, The Educator Action Survey asked questions related to teacher proactive or reactive response to student behaviors, providing choice responses of 1) Almost Never, 2) Sometimes, 3) Often, and 4) Almost Always. For example, question #4 stated: "I am able to give consequences without anger, frustration, tone, glares, sarcasm, or punitive measures." The next three questions (6-8), focused on the regular use of intentional positive feedback, and provided an example for clarity. For example, question #7 stated: "I name and label positive behaviors that I describe to provide meaning and depth." e.g. *"Aiden you came over and sat down, clearly ready to join the group; you are being incredibly responsible."* The final two questions (9-10) addressed consequences and consistent clarity around expectations. Question #9 stated: "I consistently enforce limits with immediate brief consequences each time a rule is broken instead of letting things go, giving warnings, or threatening larger consequences." These questions were designed to measure adopted actions related to the three stands of NHA: 1) Absolutely No: negative energy and relationship to broken rules, 2) Absolutely Yes: focusing your relationship on good choices, and 3) Absolute Clarity: of consequences and expectations with calm consistency (Glasser & Block, 2011). Ultimately, the NHA

intervention coaches educators to step away from punitive, negative response, increase positive recognition of student choices, and maintain consistent boundaries that build trust and safety in the TSR. It was hypothesized that if teachers adopt the approach they would more commonly answer affirmatively (meaning agree or strongly agree), to all of the questions regarding actions.

The Educator Belief Survey was coded in reverse of the actions, with the choices being 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Agree Somewhat, 3) Often Disagree, and 4) Strongly Disagree. The first eight questions of this survey were belief statements designed to reveal teacher mindsets as to their role in the TSR and ultimate beliefs about most of their students. For example, questions #1: “All children are capable of success, without exception,” and #7: “While my job can be challenging, I feel like I make a difference every day in the lives of my students,” varied significantly from #3: “Despite all efforts, some students are simply not able to be truly successful,” and #6: “Like it or not, there are some students that only respond to negative consequences.” In alignment with research on positive TSR (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012), individuals who Strongly Agree with Questions #1 and #7, would more likely Strongly Disagree with Questions #3 and #6, demonstrating an alignment of their beliefs about student potential with their own ability to influence their response to students. These questions also were designed based upon the core strands of NHA, but additionally tapped into research and work done by the national school program, Kids at Hope® (KAH), which has, as its first mission statement, similar wording of Question #1 in the Educator Belief survey, the belief statement that: *All* children are capable of success. In addition to the emphasis and research on hope and other teacher belief factors, Miller and



his colleagues (Carlos & Miller, 2007) maintained that student success is dependent upon positive, significant adult connections in the schoolhouse. In fact, their evidence-based program suggested that adopting schools need to assess for this critical belief prior to hiring new faculty or staff into the schoolhouse (Bernat, 2009).

Other demographic data was gathered in three additional questions in the surveys. Teachers indicated years in education and years at current school. Students indicated grade in school and years in current school. Although discipline referrals can often be used as quantitative data points when assessing the effectiveness of a classroom management intervention (Goldstein & Brooks, 2007; Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 2000), the principal of these schools noted that alternative discipline was often used in their system and would not be a reliable measure of change nor quantifiable because documentation on individual student discipline was inconsistent (C. Lawson, personal communication, November 8, 2016). Additional qualitative data in the form of short answer was gathered in the two anonymous surveys about beliefs, offering both teachers and students an opportunity to clarify any of their responses with an expanded narrative. Of the 29 educators who completed the Beliefs survey, nine (31 percent) added open-ended comments, and 19 of the 65 students (29 percent) provided additional comments after the close-ended responses.

The Student Belief Survey had seven Likert scale questions of perceptions and emphasized research-based qualities in the TSR such as respect, empathy, and positive relationship (Cornelius-White, 2007): Q5 “My teachers make it clear to me that they believe in my ability to learn,” in addition to self-beliefs of belonging (Osterman, 2000): Q3 “I belong in this academic community,” and efficacy (Bandura, 1977): Q4 “My

learning ability and skills grow with my effort and hard work.” Students had the four response options of 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Agree Somewhat, 3) Often Disagree, and 4) Strongly Disagree. Two demographic questions asked them to indicate grade level as well as years at their current school. As with the Educator Belief Survey, the last open-ended question allowed for clarification of any answer.

### **Data Analysis**

Multiple data sources were explored in this study to allow for greater credibility and depth in analysis of the research purpose. The theory that teachers who believe that all children are capable of success, exhibit more positive TSR qualities, was explored, both with the qualitative responses, as well as with the four-scale rating questions on the surveys which targeted educator beliefs and actions regarding student challenges (Royce, Thyer, & Padgett, 2010).

As TSR is reciprocal and contextual (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Jussim, 1989; Hughes, 2011; Nelson & Roberts 2000; Skinner & Belmont, 1993), the association of students’ perceptions of teacher relationships was examined through the qualitative data. In alignment with the evidence that students who experience positive relationships with their teachers demonstrate a more positive attitude and engagement toward learning and school, students’ perceptions of teacher relationships and belonging was included in the results. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions and interviews was analyzed, as well as patterns in the descriptive statistics.

In the design of an exploratory case study, this study purpose was aligned to the supporting research on professional development interventions that reinforce change in teacher behaviors and mindsets (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, & Doolard,

2016; Okonofua et al., 2016; Rodriguez, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). In addition to exploring mindsets that impact the TSR, this researcher sought to add evidence to the theory that teachers who participate in an intervention to increase awareness of effective teaching mindsets and actions, might adopt a stronger teacher efficacy with all their students. The use of the qualitative responses from the educator focus group, which occurred nearly six months after the professional development intervention, was analyzed for themes and indicators of adoption of stronger teacher efficacy with their challenged students (Okonofua et al., 2016; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

In the analysis of the data, the primary and two independent researchers read the transcripts and short answers multiple times and coded them for statements which reflected the intentions of the intervention, patterns in responses, as well as any negative instances or discrepant responses. Coding is a qualitative “method of discovery to the meanings of individual sections of data” (Saldña, 2015, p. 584). The codes were organized into categories or clusters, and interrelationships and associations were explored. The use of the independent coders provided greater confidence in the data analysis and reduced single researcher-bias inherent in qualitative studies (Fluvbjerg, 2011).

In addition to transcript analysis, descriptive data from the anonymous surveys was analyzed for patterns and themes. The use of multiple data points for analyses supports the overlapping nature of both qualitative methods and quantitative data, as quantitative designs are generally initiated from qualitative theory or constructs (Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

## **Ethical Considerations**

The administrators and counselor at the district-level identified the intervention selected for the professional development exploratory case study. However, as a researcher-trainer, my knowledge and expertise in this area increased the potential for bias in analyses. Every effort to include contrary findings and alternative explanations was included, to reduce such bias and increase credibility (Yin, 2018). Sensitivity to the subjects was also considered, so that surveys were anonymous, and transparency of purpose and voluntary participation was communicated to both focus groups. The data gathered in the surveys remains the property of the district, and was analyzed with permission of the stakeholders, post-facto. While participation in the one-day intervention was the requirement of the district leaders, participation in the surveys and focus groups was completely voluntary.

## **Limitations**

This study contained some limitations inherent with exploratory case study design, as well as with qualitative methodology. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) implied that as “analysis ultimately rests with the thinking and choices of the researcher, qualitative studies in general are limited by researcher-subjectivity” (p. 178). Efforts to address the challenges of subjective researcher-bias and reflexivity (the reciprocal response which can occur during interviews or focus groups [Yin, 2018]) were undertaken to minimize this impact. Recognizing the limitations inherent in researcher-trainer, the decision to include an independent researcher in the data analysis provided stronger neutrality. To reduce the problem of reflexivity, the researcher continued to

reflect on how she might have influenced participants inadvertently, particularly as the trainer and the researcher.

A further limitation relates to generalizability. Case study methods are designed to provide an in-depth situated exploration of a context-dependent case (Flyvbjerg, 2011), and therefore are not designed to generalize to a larger population. However, provision of a thick, rich description, and detailed contextual information could allow readers to assess for similarities in populations and backgrounds, affording some potential transferability to other contexts, settings or environments.

Finally, it is important to recognize the limitations of using both the district's ex post facto data as well as the researcher's inaccessibility of the educator and student populations for the survey data collection. These limitations are addressed more thoroughly in the Chapter Five, but important to note. The use of ex post facto data limited the researcher's ability to follow-up directly with participants; the inaccessibility to the participants via the emails of the surveys greatly impacted the researcher's ability to explore or analyze any change in beliefs or actions that may have occurred as the sample size from pre to post-test were significantly different for any valid analysis.

## **Conclusion**

This exploratory case study was designed to examine the two related research questions, which were associated with the strategies and mindsets coached in the professional development intervention tool selected, The Nurtured Heart Approach®. These are:

Q1: Which specific mindsets do teachers believe influence their actions in the teacher-student relationship?

Q2: What are student perceptions of specific teacher actions which influence the teacher-student relationship?

It was hypothesized that specific teacher mindsets promote positive, efficacious educator actions and that, additionally, these effective mindsets can be coached with a targeted professional development intervention. Prior to providing a one-day professional development intervention on relational strategies that support positive student outcomes, the participants completed surveys to report beliefs and actions that impact positive TSR. These surveys, given again prior to the end of the school year, were analyzed descriptively for associations and themes. The researcher also conducted two focus groups, coding and theming transcripts with an additional researcher to identify patterns and inferences. Issues of credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability were also addressed in this process.

In the next chapter, the findings of this exploratory case study data analyses will be reported and interpreted.

## Chapter Four

### Results

This study explored the mindsets of teachers and perceptions of students in regard to actions that affect the teacher-student relationships (TSR). The purposeful sample of alternative middle school and high school teachers and students were used in this exploratory case study. The data analyzed was ex-post facto and provided with permission by the Canadian school administrators after completion of the intervention and data collection. Survey data was gathered in November 2016 prior to the intervention to assess initial attitudes, values, and mindsets of both teachers' and students' beliefs. Post surveys were also administered to examine stability of beliefs. Qualitative data analysis (QDA) was applied to the educator focus group (book club) and high school student focus group which occurred six months after the initial intervention. Other short-answer, anonymous participants' statements were also included in coding and analysis. The participant responses were analyzed from two separate but related perspectives regarding TSR: educator and students. From the data sets on educator mindsets and actions (survey responses, focus group, and intervention feedback), three main educator themes emerged, with supportive, relevant sub-themes. Analysis of the data sets on student beliefs (survey responses and high school focus group) revealed three dichotomous student perception themes directly related to the research purpose. These themes will be explored and summarized in this section. An analysis of the inter-related connections of the findings will follow in the Discussion.

## **Educator Themes of Mindsets, Actions and Challenges**

The data was analyzed to address the first research question in this exploratory case study, “Which specific mindsets do teachers believe influence their actions in the teacher-student relationship?” Educator data from the anonymous survey on Beliefs ( $n = 29$ ) and Actions ( $n = 31$ ), open-ended short-answer ( $n = 9$ ), day-of post-intervention middle school educator comments ( $n = 9$ ), six-month post middle school educator short answer handout ( $n = 6$ ), and 50-minute focus group transcript ( $n = 12$ ) was included for analysis. The three themes which surfaced from the qualitative data sets were 1) Perceived effective mindsets, 2) Identified Effective Teaching Strategies, and 3) Challenges in the TSR. Each of these themes is described below with the related subthemes. See Appendix D for the full transcript. Line citations are provided in text. Pseudonyms are used to replace the actual names of the participants.

**Educator Theme 1: Perceived Effective Mindsets.** As defined earlier, mindsets are assumptions and beliefs we hold about others, and ourselves that influence our instructional and personal interactions (Goldstein & Brooks, 2007). Participant statements that were coded as *Mindsets* were identified thus by the researchers as examples of the implicit beliefs, which support a positive TSR. Three sub-themes emerged to support this theme: A) bringing a level of commitment to their job working with students, B) being a role-model for students, and C) the value of providing relational support qualities.

***Sub-theme A: A commitment to profession and students.*** There was clear mindset of a long term and personal commitment to the students they worked with, despite not always seeing immediate success. Abby contrasted it to the idea of fast food:

I was just thinking that we don't see the results of our work as quickly as in a typical setting or typical lessons for children and the community at our



[alternative schools] ...Working with our disenfranchised or fringed community's children, we won't get our results for years. I think, for us, our biggest reward is when we run into to a former student who *we're* the only person they remember the school system 10 years down the road, 20 or 30 - and *we*, in Alternate [schools], get that more than anybody a lot. (Abby, 13-22)

This resonated with the participants. Both Doreen and Abby also shared stories of former students reconnecting. Doreen, animatedly said, "He was like, 'Hi.' He was really happy to see me. That was so cool. He looked really good. He looks really happy..." (Doreen, 50-51). Abby clearly felt empowered by a student who sought her out to say thank you 10 years after she had graduated. "She contacted *me*," she repeated in awe and pride, "to tell me [she solved some mental health issues] and she's so thrilled" (Abby, 77-78). This willingness to commit to these relationships without knowing immediate results was expressed as a sense of pride, motivation, and ultimately a belief that this commitment was important to not only their students but also to them. Jim speculated that this appreciation occurs after the students are out of their households and able to reflect back to positive connections in their past. Evelyn observed, "It's about the relationships, right? If you don't commit to a good relationship where they trust you, where they look up to you, you just don't have that connection. You have to commit" (Evelyn, 54-55). Doreen described this commitment as one of stability in the students' lives. This theme also surfaced later when the teachers spoke about their populations' specific challenges and the persistence needed. "I find that you make the difference where you can make the difference... You just have to be okay with that and do what you can, when you can, with what you've got -" (Mari, 553-555).

***Sub-theme B: Being a role model.*** There was also a clear mindset that many possessed about being the role model of a healthy adult relationship in contrast with the home life that many of them may face. Cindy summarized, “A lot of them didn’t get that healthy adult relationship from other mainstream schools or from their parents, their homes” (Cindy, 66-67). This idea of a healthy role model is also brought up in regard to being consistent and present in their lives. Abby, Doreen, and Betsy expressed a mindset that the consistency of the teacher was important in developing a security in the TSR. “It’s dependable for them to know what to expect from you” Betsy clarified (748). Teachers’ consistent relationship and reliable responses were mentioned many times in the regards to what they believed mattered in the TSR. Doreen summarized this mindset when she said, “Somebody they can rely on, day in and day out” (177). “We don’t all have to be the same,” Mari added, “we’re not all the same, but just being consistent to who you are, they can know what to count on with your personality, and your behavior, and all those things that create safety for them, I think” (Mari, 183-185). On the Educator Belief survey, Respondent #7, an educational assistant, highlighted this mindset of providing a healthy role model when he/she wrote, “I feel our job is to ensure that children see their successes for what they are. Every step forward is a success” (see Appendix B).

There was a sense that teachers needed to respond differently than other significant adults in their lives had. “So, when their behavior has gone sideways, and we are sometimes the only people in their life that get that we can separate their value from their behavior, and [their] value is still phenomenal for us...Very few people in their life do that” Abby observed powerfully (Abby, 472-475). Data from the Educator Belief Survey done prior to the intervention also supported this mindset of the teacher

relationship making a difference in students' mindsets. In Table 1 (Frequency 2B) below, all of the 29 respondents agreed that their relationship has the power to impact students, and 96 percent also agreed to Q7: *“While my job can be challenging, I feel like I make a difference every day in the lives of my students.”*

Table 1

*Q2: My relationship with my students can impact how they perceive their own ability to learn.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( <i>n</i> = 29)	%
Strongly Agree	26	89.7
Agree Somewhat	3	10.3
Often Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

***Sub-theme C: Focused on relational support.*** Teachers recognized the value of interpersonal relational qualities in building positive TSRs. Specifically, they mentioned listening, demonstrating care, building trust, being genuine with students, and offering respect. “I like to treat others the way I would like to be treated” (Respondent #8), answered one respondent in the open-ended section of the Educator Belief Survey preintervention. This veteran educator of 11-15 years added, “Fairly and with respect.” Respondent #1, another veteran educator, simply wrote, “Build relationships.” Many of the comments and descriptions that the participants shared reflected a clear vein of empathy for students’ life experiences prior to their connection to the alternative settings. In tandem with the mindset of being a role model for healthy adult relationships, Doreen believed that most of her students are “not used to having somebody treat them with

respect. Someone that actually listens to them, you know, and thinks they got something important to say, right? When in fact most of them just need someone to listen to them, right?” (139-141). Cindy agreed, “You have to be a listener in our field” (144). In considering why students may not trust teacher actions or positive comments, Cindy also reflected that a guarded student’s response of doubting teacher positive recognition may be a pattern formed from the student’s experiences with less dependable relationships. She asserted that the student may want your “sincere care” (118) but not yet trust in the relationship. Doreen recognized that while you may not connect with every student, being liked by a student can help support a stronger TSR. “But if you are liked, then you can connect a lot better, right?” (Doreen, 168). Other participants mentioned being authentic and using humor as additional relational strategies that support teacher-student connection. On the end of the year NHA Feedback Reflection Sheet (see Appendix G), a veteran middle school classroom teacher wrote, “The big idea is to create an atmosphere in the classroom that is warm, welcoming, and positive. A place where staff and students feel safe and want to be” (Respondent #4). Leading with this empathetic, relational perspective provided for a positive mindset, which then, in turn, afforded a more personalized, flexible response to student misbehavior and instruction.

**Educator Theme 2: Identified Effective Teaching Strategies.** All of the participants spoke about teaching approaches and actions that were effective for their alternative population. These practices were outlined in three sub-themes: Taking a more personalized discipline approach, adopting collaborative relational actions, and utilizing some of the specific intervention-supported actions to build toward positive outcomes.

***Sub-theme A: Personalized discipline approaches.*** “You are much more relational. You communicate with them; the rules are not very tight. Yes, a lot of give and

take...in the way that is negotiating, relational” (Ed, 319-321). Rather than a tiered, inflexible approach to classroom management and discipline, there was a shared practice of enforcing rules with personalized flexibility and empathy. From the Educator Belief Survey (see Appendix B) completed before the training, Respondent #6, a novice teacher with less than three years of experience, and # 3, a veteran of over 16 years, the both wrote about having student success by adopting an individualized, relational perspective. “The students respond better to kindness and genuine care than a directive attitude” (Respondent #6). Respondent #3 felt that, “Every child is unique and needs a good and understanding educator to make them achieve their social and educational goals.” Ed, who works with older students in the high school, recognized that often the misbehavior had nothing to do with the adult, and therefore felt the teacher role could provide some grace and empathy in order to support student regulation.

Sometimes, for me, it's coming in with a bit of sense of humor. Just diffuse it a little bit and also realize it's not at *me*; they're not aiming it at me. And that tells me, okay, and then maybe when the person deescalates. Maybe came to, sometimes, well actually come and apologize. But now we have to learn at not going there. A lot of what we do is life skills. We do that in the context of teaching them Math and English and Social studies and all that. But we're always stopping and saying, ‘Hold on, how's that look?’ you know (Ed, 419-424).

When I summarized Ed’s perspective to the group, Cindy agreed that being heavily authoritarian was ineffective in gaining positive relationship. “The power struggle does *not* work,” she summarized adamantly (Cindy, 438), as others nodded in agreement. In the focus group, Abby elaborated that, in addition to not engaging in a power struggle, she has had success with having clarity on her rules:

Like with my kids whether, they're a student or even in my home, we have negotiable and non-negotiable, period. They never demonstrate disrespect for me... I'm very clear on it and it works. They just know. I don't have kids telling me to F-Off. They just don't do it. Or if they do, right away they're like, "I'm so sorry that slipped out." And make sure it doesn't happen twice. They will make mistakes, okay that's cool (Abby, 442-447).

There was a powerful agreement that the adult responses to student behavior should still demonstrate high value the student themselves. "Give them the opportunity to feel bad in the behavior and still feel good in their value in a few minutes. Very few people in their life do that. So to rock them up to the opportunity to say sorry" (Abby, 474-476).

While flexibility and personalization were important, the participants also agreed that consistency in action, and not just consistence presence, supported student success. Abby said, "The second you break that consistency, you're contributing to already an anxious child... And it would be so unfair to them if we're not consistent without expectation with them" (736-741). In an exchange regarding maintaining clear boundaries without extended negative responses, Cindy added "There are consequences...And you are *not* holding it against them" (Cindy, 768, 773). "It's not about the person that's going to be in further trouble" Abby agreed (775). Members of the group shared this view that the adult maintenance of boundaries served as positive emotional support and safety for their students. Doreen observed later that often the calm, clear, consistent communication of the rules demonstrate that "somebody cares about them" (Doreen, 739).

***Sub-theme B: Collaborative relational actions.*** In alignment with more flexible, authoritative versus authoritarian approaches in the TSR, the adults expressed the value

of finding a balanced role of working with their students toward the common purpose of student success. With an emphasis on student ownership of student choice and future thinking, Ed shared his objective of letting students know he cared about their future but didn't own it "You put it on them and say, 'Okay, this is your education, not mine, and you know *I* want you to graduate, and this is what you need to do. And if you don't, you just won't graduate'" (Ed, 321-323). In discussing relational methods that supported positive student choices, Evelyn and Betsy both recognized the value of their personalized relationship. "I think we got those opportunities to be one-on-one, and that's when I got to realize, if I can leave the classroom, and leave the student one-on-one, then I know you're contributing [to student growth]" (Evelyn, 557-558). In a further affirmation of this supportive teacher role, Betsy agreed: "Because in [an intense student] moment, you could be that person who's like co-regulating, bringing that student [back to regulation] - perhaps their thinking brain is working so they can get back into the classroom and then kind of continue and function" (Betsy, 560-562).

Collaboration in the creation of class and group rules surfaced as a helpful TSR strategy. Discussion on the value of having clear rules that were student created and revisited helped build student buy-in and teacher support as well. Evelyn shared:

The beginning always was, with the room developing the rules, coming from them. So, it was like, "You put it there, like I mean, *you* didn't want anybody to hit you. *I* don't want anybody to hit me. You know, that's the rules. Let's do it together." Be a part of it. Everyone's clear (Evelyn, 676-679).

Betsy added that this collaborative strategy also worked well in creating circle guidelines that then were used in class meetings and advisory programs.

*Sub-theme C: NHA intervention supported actions.* The participants in this group had been meeting for the six months to support each other in better understanding and adopting the intervention The Nurtured Heart Approach®. The members had been reading one of the books designed for teachers, and the members discussed some of the specific strategies suggested in the approach. “Always trying to find the positive” Cindy recalled when asked what members remembered from the training nearly seven months previous (Cindy, 275). Similarly, on the NHA End of Year Feedback Sheet (see Appendix G), all six of the middle school educators mentioned the role of positive recognition in supporting their connections with students. As they spoke of consequences and clarity, there was agreement on the intention of giving less teacher relationship or energy to broken rules. Betsy gave an example of having a non-energetic response to a student toying with something in class. Rather than getting angry or yelling, the approach encourages the adult to simply take the item from them and keep teaching. “You just move on” Betsy explained (307). Abby summarized it later: “I really love and support the concept of: Don't give energy to negative energy unless it's a safety issue” (Abby, 600-601). Again, on the NHA End of Year Feedback Sheet, respondents spoke of the value of quick consequences and student choice as valuable strategies. The participants also discussed the power of small, simple verbal recognitions that are truthful and personal in building upon positive student choices. Cindy gave an example: “With this small stuff, the side comments like, ‘Wow, that was really awesome, he pulled that off.’ Just whatever, [or] ‘Oh, god, you just stayed in the room. That's cool.’ Like little things” (Cindy, 566-568). When I then commented in response that this kind of student feedback can actually be *more* significant to students than she initially indicated, she quickly agreed. “Yes. It is the big stuff. I find that, like, that *is* the most powerful” (Cindy, 572).



**Educator Theme 3: Challenges in the Teacher-Student Relationship.** The educators spoke about the natural interpersonal struggles that occur, not only with individual students in general, but also in their unique alternative schoolhouse settings, as well as in the consistent adoption of strategies from the intervention. This third theme provided authentic perspectives as to the challenges of managing negative actions, maintaining clear boundaries, and the potential limitations of fixed mindsets. Aligned with the intervention, these three sub-themes demonstrated the ongoing tension existing between educator's positive intentions and the genuine challenge of changing teaching practices.

*Sub-theme A: Negative actions.* Although teachers agreed about the value of remaining positive and neutral in supporting student misbehavior, there remained concerns of how to manage extreme behaviors that can also be a safety issue. "Safety first" Abby clarified, "and if sounds negative, we'll mop it up emotionally later (Abby, 605-606). Others in the focus group shared stories of violence and behaviors that made it difficult to remain positive. Jim spoke of how challenging it was to manage his experience of disrespectful, swearing. This struggle in responding to negative student behavior surfaced on surveys and open-ended responses, too. On the Educator Belief Pre-Test Survey, 31 percent of respondents agreed that some students only respond to forms of negative consequences (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Q6: Like it or not, there are some students that only respond to negative consequences.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( <i>n</i> = 29)	%
Strongly Agree	1	3.4
Agree Somewhat	8	27.6
Often Disagree	11	37.9
Strongly Disagree	9	31.0

On anonymous follow-up surveys provided to middle school staff by administration in May of 2017, this theme of managing adult responses to negative student actions was consistent. A female veteran middle school teacher with 26 years of experience noted that providing quick consequences for students remains a challenge for her. A veteran vice-principal wrote more directly, “I want to scream! Trying to find something positive to say when a kids is acting like an ass.” A new educator who works with the Aboriginal student population also wrote, “Sometimes lengthy consequences are necessary” (see Appendix G). Mari noted that some relationship repair is often still needed. “I think it’s the closure. Don’t we need some closure?” she observed as the group debriefed past escalated situations (Mari, 498). Mari also later brought up the challenge of staying positive when the school’s leadership style may not match the intention of the teacher. Betsy shared the additional dilemma that can occur when a student can become overly dependent on one of the adults to the exclusion of support from other caring adults. In describing the balance of supportive care to appropriate boundaries, Betsy suggested:

We also have to make sure that they're moving on. They're actually going to succeed. We run into that where students will become so attached to a staff member that they're not willing to work with any other staff member ... and you actually hold them back and that is a battle... (Betsy, 160-163).

On the pre-test Educator Belief Survey, Respondent #2, an educator for 11-15 years, wrote honestly about feeling unprepared to help some of his/her students. "I find sometimes the problems they bring to class are overwhelming, and some of their problems I am not able to help with." It is relevant to note the association here between this individual's comment regarding presenting student behaviors and his/her responses to other questions on this survey regarding TSR beliefs. This same individual Agreed that some students only respond to negative consequences, and Often Disagreed that he/she made a difference every day in the student's life (see Appendix B).

***Sub-theme B: Maintaining clear boundaries.*** *The* balance of personalized flexibility and more emphasis on positive relationship appeared to push against the need to have clear, consistent rules. Abby, in trying to adopt the approach and stay positive with students wondered, "[Is] there's a time and place for this simple word 'No.' I want to hear your thought on that because [we are] robbing them again if we don't help them learn to accept the word 'No'" (Abby, 637-639). The value of helping students manage the 'Nos' in life supported the group's earlier ideas regarding the emotional benefit of boundaries for students. Abby later added, "It's black and white for them in processing, especially at that moment" (Abby, 654). The challenge of managing hidden rules in buildings was not just a problem that many of their students may face. Evelyn also observed:

Even when you come in to a school where you haven't been a part of, which I've done numerous times, I don't know what the rules are either. So, it was really vague to me often. It takes me how many months to figure out what the rules are; often, they're different with different people. (Evelyn, 686-689)

There was an agreement of the need to have increased clarity and regular repetition of rules as a way of supporting both student and staff success.

Participants also spoke about wanting more tools and empowerment to set boundaries with students. Jim shared his challenge in reacting to repeated swearing directed at him without having a firm sense of the right response. With older students he felt he might have them consider the impact of that choice with a future boss: "Hey this is your education, what happens when you go to jobsite? Are you gonna be able to tell your boss to go "F off five times?" (Jim, 367-368). Ultimately, Jim struggled with a level of powerlessness, concluding, "And so we still take it" (Jim, 384).

***Sub-theme C: Limiting mindsets.*** Despite evidence that teacher mindsets influence teacher actions, several of the educators in the study continued to be challenged by limiting efficacy beliefs of their students as well as their own ability to impact change. As educator, author, and student advocate, Rita Pierson (TED, May 2013) said in her frequently viewed Ted Talk, "Kids don't learn from people they don't like." Some teachers in this study, however, continued to struggle with the concept of being liked in association with also being trusted. Abby shared:

I think it's a bonus. But I have to remember, like, when I spoke to a police officer, at the end of the day, they still have to do their job first. They try to do it with compassion and thoughtfulness but you're not going to have everybody like you and that's not, that's the nature of the game. You're going to have students that you

remind them of somebody they didn't like no matter what you do. But at the end of the day we still have to do our job first. That's my take. If I go in there wanting to be liked, I'm going to miss the mark on what my job is first. (Abby, 152-157).

On the Educator Belief Post-Test Survey completed in mid-June, one veteran teacher of more than 15 years in education, Strongly Disagreed that teacher trust and being liked were needed for students to be successful, leading this researcher to regret the lost opportunity to follow-up with her rationale. Respondent #4 of this question on the pre-test clarified this challenge in the association of these relational qualities. He/she wrote "I believe like and trust should almost be separate. I strongly believe students need to trust me to be successful." This same respondent, with 4-10 years of experience as an educator, indicated that they only Agreed Somewhat to the belief statement that he/she "make a difference every day in the lives of (my) students (see Q7, Appendix B).

In reflecting on the sub-theme of relational qualities that are effective, Cindy appeared to be struggling with seeing her own ability to reach her guarded student: "When you say nice things to him and he's so guarded, and was like, 'Why?'" Cindy (129) wondered aloud, clearly feeling stuck in how to connect with a perceived, unreachable student. A similar limiting mindset of an educator's ability to enact student change also surfaced in response to Q3 on the Educator Belief Survey. While not a significant number, it remains distressing to this researcher that even 7 percent of the participants Agreed Somewhat to the statement: "*Despite all efforts, some students are simply not able to be successful.*"

The transparent statements and responses of the educators in the study provided evidence of consistent themes regarding their mindsets and actions in relationships with students. These themes reflected not only what they believed worked best in the TSR, but

also addressed some authentic and natural struggles in their roles. These three emergent themes of perceived effective mindsets, specific teaching strategies, and continued challenges in the teacher-student relationship aligned strongly with the findings from the student data also gathered in this study. The emergent sub-themes identified several specific and effective mindsets and actions: a commitment to students, being a role model, focusing on relational qualities, adopting personalized discipline approaches, and utilizing collaborative TSR actions and NHA intervention strategies. These contrasted with the specific sub-themes surfacing in their identified relationship challenges: negative teacher or student actions, the struggles to maintain clear boundaries, and their recognition of limiting adult mindsets. The authentic statements and detailed responses of the educators in the study provided evidence of these consistent themes of educators' mindsets and actions in relationships with students. The educator data findings is further significantly connected to the research questions of this exploratory case study when analysis of the themes and patterns of the student data is explored in depth. Both perspectives are critical in an analysis of mindsets that impact the teacher-student relationship. In the next section, I will share the specific findings that emerged from the QDA of the student data.

### **Student Themes of Teacher-Student Relationship**

The data analyzed for the emerging themes that explored student perspective addressed the second research question of this study: What are student perceptions of specific teacher actions which influence the teacher-student relationship? Student data sets from anonymous student belief survey ( $n = 65$ ), open-ended survey responses ( $n = 19$ ), and one 27-minute focus group of high school students at the alternative school ( $n = 7$ ) were used to explore the emerging themes. Unlike the educator themes, student

participants were as equally focused on what works *best* for them in teacher relationships as they were on what had not been effective.

**Focus Group.** In the high school focus group, seven volunteer students met for pizza and water in a larger classroom with couches and soft chairs. One of the teens had her black lab with her. They were informed that they would be taped, but that their names would be changed for confidentiality. Throughout the interview, all of the students were engaged and appeared to be listening, though often the dog owner, Mia (pseudonym), was sitting and playing with her dog. One older student in particular, Robert, had to be redirected from interrupting and allowing others a voice. He managed this well. Another younger teen, Samuel, was asked to put his phone away about midway through the conversation. He also handled that well and became more engaged after the redirection. After the interview portion, we engaged in a short challenge game to introduce the concept of grit. This was not the focus of the study, but a way to bridge their participation back to learning.

The discussion focused on two related questions: 1) What are some of the qualities of the best teachers you have had? and 2) What advice would you give teachers to support your success? In coding the transcripts with two other researchers, as well as exploring the descriptive statistics and short answers on the Student Belief Survey, the findings revealed three consistently dichotomous relationship themes: 1) Personalized and Flexible *versus* Rigid; 2) Acceptance *versus* Judgment, and 3) Relational *versus* Disengaged. Each of these themes was supported by the students' personal examples, responses, and descriptions, and are described in detail below. See Appendices for data tables and full transcript. Line citations from the in-person focus group are provided in text. Pseudonyms are used to replace the actual names of the participants.

*Student theme 1: Flexible versus rigid.* “Go easier on kids” was the advice of tenth grader, Samuel (534), when he was asked to give advice to his teachers on ways to best support him. This theme of flexibility and personalization, especially in regard to discipline was supported by Hattie’s (2012) research. He identified a significant positive effect of second or third chances ( $d = +0.53$ ) over more punitive responses, such as suspension and expulsion ( $d = - 0.20$ ). This flexible, personalized approach was strongly reinforced by the voices of the students in the interview.

Colton, a junior, offered two examples of the personal connection and support he had with two different educators, one his drug counselor: “She was so chill about everything,” and the other, a former principal, “Mr. B. He was our old principal. And usually when I get in trouble, I didn't get in as much trouble. Like last year, I accidentally brought a pocket knife to school because of my friend, and I was supposed to get expelled but he made sure I didn't” (Colton, 45-46, 51-53). When I asked him to consider why he wasn’t expelled, he replied “Because he *understood* [emphatic]” (Colton, 61). This example was then contrasted, however, as Colton continued, “...But then we got Mr. Roth [drop in voice; slow sigh]” explaining with passion, “He would say a bunch of things. He said, like, ‘I will destroy your career if you don't listen or answer this question! Like, okay [Miffed]. So that was a quality, but not a *good* one” (Colton, 61-71). This pattern of rigid discipline response surfaced in association teacher behaviors that reflected a lack of empathy or individualized responses to student behaviors. Colton continued to illustrate the difference between the two approaches of these teachers. “For example,” he said, “is here my friend kept getting called a slut, and all those things, and she finally stood up for herself because the principal isn't doing anything. So she slapped



him but then *she* got suspended for a week” (Colton, 76, 80-82). This same zero tolerance approach was addressed near the end of the interview in regard to not providing student voice. Mason, visibly angry, spat, “But it’s like, ‘You hit a kid, you are suspended, no talking!’” (Mason, 589).

Traditional whole group or punitive discipline methods were also mentioned as negative teacher actions that appeared to not consider individual circumstances. Colton mentioned the challenge of requiring the entire class to stay after when student behavior wasn’t appropriate, making students late to the next class. Cyan and Robert complained about teachers who required students to write sentences or paragraphs as punishment for misbehavior or forgetting a textbook. Near the end of our time, Mason shared an example of a teacher’s negative action to a broken rule of eating a snack in his homeroom. “I remember Mr. Holt. He was messed...I had a snack one time. I was eating it in his metals shop class - no, I was eating it in his homeroom, and he took it and ate it. Never gave it back [Shaking head angrily]. Straight up” (Mason, 713, 719-721). It was evident in Mason’s retelling of this event from years past, that he still felt a strong emotional response of powerlessness and disrespect by the teacher’s action.

The theme of flexibility also was shared in regard to personalized teaching strategies. Several students offered ideas and observations which reflected the benefits of individual supports versus threats and rigid expectations. Samuel spoke about the importance of the teacher’s self-controlled response to student behavior as helpful in supporting the student’s own regulation. “Like some teachers, like, if the kids act up but then there are some kids who, like, if a teacher walks up to them, and like, calmly tries talks to them and then they’re fine” (Samuel, 538-539). Mia also appreciated the teacher’s own ability to “cope” with students and handle their challenges, valuing the teacher who

“can basically connect with you” (Mia, 143).

This personalized connection was clearly important to students who had experienced more rigid responses to learning struggles, as well as behavioral choices. Mia spoke of an eighth grade teacher who focused on individual growth versus being the best in the class, “She, I guess, pushed for good learning...if someone improved, even if they weren't best in the class, if they improve in what they used to do, then she'd give them a little treat,” further clarifying, “It wasn't compared to other students,” (Mia, 164-167, 173). In contrast, Samuel and Robert complained about teachers who offered little in help, patience, or new strategies if the students were stuck. Samuel commented, “They wouldn't really, like, care too much. Like they, well they would, but to an extent, they would just be like ‘Well, ok, I'll show you how to do this. If you don't figure it out at that point, then I won't help you anymore’” (Samuel, 195-197). Richard agreed, “Like if you don't get that the first time, I'm not helping you again” (Robert, 199). Later in the discussion, Mason spoke positively about the flexible learning approaches of his current school:

It's a pretty good school...you have the option of learning at your best, like, learning ability, like, you're getting a hands-on. You can have opportunities for that, but if you're not - if you're more like the type that can just sit there and get work done: be quiet in a quiet environment, they have that if you like (Mason, 398-401).

Alexandra, Samuel, and Robert also reflected about the value of the personalized support. Alexandra recalled the benefit of sensitive and individualized support from a former teacher. “Somebody at my old school, Mr. L.,” she shared, “would personally take the time and after school to meet students and help them understand what they did in class.

So he didn't have to, like, push them during class” (Alexandra, 312-314). Later she observed: “The teachers here actual check on you once and a while to see if you’re doing well or need help” (Alexandra, 428-429). Samuel agreed “Yeah, to see if you need help” (Samuel, 431). “Or like if they noticed you're struggling,” Robert added, “...they'll come by and be like, ‘You need help there?’ and then I’d say, ‘Yes, I kind of do, actually. I need help with this. I think I'm doing it wrong. Can you help me with that note?’” (Robert, 433-435). Other students jumped in to contrast these examples of positive teacher actions to their own disenfranchised experiences in mainstreamed schools. Issues of not paying attention, being rushed, and simply providing answers rather than helping the stuck student with patient instruction were common frustrations expressed by the students where individualization of their learning needs was not consistent. Mia’s advice for teachers was to have students complete learning style surveys in order for their teachers to better understand the needs of their students, “...a visual or like a hands-on or like what their work ethic is... so you could be placed in a certain classroom that is maybe more suitable for you” (Mia, 597-598, 602-603). Cyan shared an experience of a teacher bringing in a personal strategy that provided her with a new tool for learning. Speaking in the voice of her teacher, she said, ““Every time before a test, you should study and chew an odd flavor of bubble gum [enthusiastically]. And then right before the test, chew that same flavor of bubble gum’... Teachers should research that and put that action into the classroom” (Cyan, 617-619, 623). Robert, exhibiting a personal theme of distrust for teachers throughout the interview, countered her suggestion with a cynical rebuttal, “But then the teachers would be like, ‘Oh, you are blowing bubbles too much. We’re not allowed to have gum anymore’” (Robert, 625-626).

The contrasting student experiences between personalized, flexible approaches of teachers versus more rigid policies and strategies emerged as a clear preference from these students. In the anonymous short-answer pre-test on Student Beliefs, Respondent #18, a ninth grader who has attended the alternative schools for over two years, wrote the word “Democracy” in the space provided for clarification. Though unable to follow-up specifically for deeper clarification, it is worthwhile to note that this ninth-grade student, a veteran of over two years at the alternative setting, was the only student of the 62 respondents, to answer Often Disagree on Q9: *I have positive relationships with most of my teachers*. No respondents answered Strongly Disagree. This researcher might speculate that this student outlier might benefit from greater flexibility and personalization in his teacher relationships over rigid and less democratic approaches. Speaking directly in response to advice for teachers, Cyan summarized it powerfully when she stated, “You should learn how to help your students” (Cyan, 617).

***Student theme 2: Acceptance versus judgment.*** “Just let them explain themselves” Mason (565) shared as advice, voicing a common student theme of adults being quick to provide a solution or consequence without the chance for the student to explain the circumstances. Students made an emotional case for being given the opportunity to be heard and understood prior to adult assumptions of guilt or blame. This exchange mid-interview between Robert and Alexandra illustrated this perspective.

*Robert:* You say something, or like, you get in trouble, and you try to explain yourself, and the teacher says, “I don't care! Just go there!” [Pointing toward the office]. It's like, oh well, all right, fine! [Clearly angry].

*Alexandra:* Or like when they accuse you of lying.

*Robert:* Yeah.

*Alexandra:* And when you're trying to tell them your perspective, and then there like, "No, that's wrong."

*Robert:* Or it's like whenever you get into a fight and because you don't wanna obviously get the crap kick out of you, you fight back, and then they end up worst for wear. So, they take their side of it, cause they actually have bruises or something. So, it's stuff like that. And then it's just like, well, I may not have bruises, but still he's the one who started it. "No, you did it!" [Using an angry teacher voice]. (Robert and Alexandra, 321-335)

Later in the conversation, Mason returned to this theme. While not defending the action of a student making a bad choice, he simply wanted teachers to provide the space for student explanation before judgment. "He's in trouble. No explaining" (Mason, 579).

Cyan had the similar experience of false judgment.

And, like, if you have a marker that is like school related or something, Mr. Holt would take it. "Um, where did you get this marker?" [Acting out the scene.] And I'd be, like, "I got it from home." And he'd say, "No, you probably actually stole it." I *never* stole any markers. [Still angry] (Cyan, 733-735)

"If I don't get respect, I'm not going to give respect. Like people always say, 'Respect is earned,' but that's a two-way street," Samuel stated adamantly near the end of our interview time (702-703). This reciprocal loop between teacher actions and student choices was also highlighted by Cyan's experience in some mainstreamed classrooms. She explained, "Teachers kinda look at the back of the class and they see students were kind of zoned out or listening to music, and they just kinda send them away because they are not good students or they're working bad" (Cyan, 438-440). Cyan implied that this teacher judgment was not an effective action in supporting student challenge. Mason's

responding comment, “Yeah. They aren’t paying attention” (Mason, 442), could potentially applied to both educator and student in this example.

Differential treatment and judgments were also perceived by Colton in describing the negative assumptions made when a troubled student from his population is discovered missing from a class versus a more mainstreamed student. “If they consider students’ history, and you know all the classes we were in were, like, the worst, so if we were gone, or like missing, they would be everywhere. It's horrible. They're like -” (Colton, 232-233), “It's like a police search,” Robert interrupted in support (235). The use of assumptions, labels, name-calling, and other explicit acts of judgments versus acceptance, represented fixed mindsets, and significantly limited the development of healthy, supportive relationships between these students and their teachers. Many voices shared this perspective.

You don't jump to conclusions just because of that doing one thing! Cause I've got a situation where I did that one thing and that teacher literally branded me as like the horrible kid in this school just like that, because I did one thing to defend myself or something. (Robert, 543-545)

Being labeled as a “horrible kid” logically would impact student engagement and success. Alternatively, name-calling can be viewed as another version of labeling students, something many well-versed educators work to avoid. In fact, Hattie (2012) found a strong, positive effect size for *not* labeling students ( $d = +0.62$ ) in relation to the impact on student learning. Mason returned to this idea of name-calling in his response to teacher advice.

I would give them the advice not to call them names. I don’t know. I just got in trouble a couple of times – and in elementary school, too. There was this one

teacher...Mr. L. He would sit me down at his desk. And like, half the time I didn't do what he said I did! And he would sit me down and call me rude, disrespectful, ignorant, and he would just keep calling me those names until I admitted to whatever I did. And I was like whatever, I guess I did it, cause I didn't want to fucking listening to this bullshit. (Mason, 632-637)

Mason, now a sophomore at the alternative high school, was visibly still affected by this experience, which had occurred back in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. When I reflected back to him that this teacher lecture likely did not increase his positive mindset, engagement, or relationship with the teacher, Cyan voiced her agreement, joking sardonically, "I'm cured!" (657), as others also laughed in painful empathy. Mia shared that a teacher once called her a whore when she shared that she needed a pregnancy test. Robert was told he was a dumb retard when he made a mistake on a math problem. Samuel began to share his experience being labeled in the lower reading group. Ultimately, the need for acceptance and tolerance clearly trumps the students' experience with those laden with judgment and negative assumptions. The lasting impact of these negative experiences was apparent to this researcher. Even in this short discussion, the students struggled to sustain their focus on positive teacher actions (see Appendix E).

Issues of home life, past or current trauma, and mental health are often secondary for teachers who simply must teach the student walking into their classroom. However, knowledge and awareness of the basis of some student behaviors can benefit teachers' pro-social relationships with their students. Mia shared the need to address this missing educator knowledge base. "Teachers need to realize mental health issues are still a huge problem" (547). "Yeah, like anxiety," Samuel added (549). "Whether you can see it or

not, like, you don't know what they are going through," Mia added (551). Robert agreed, "Like if you miss school because of anxiety, and then you come [back to school], and then they come, and they lecture you about it. 'Like you don't need to be missing school' [using a teacher's voice of reprimand]" (Robert, 553-554). The complicated, personalized TSR can benefit from Mia's wise, but often forgotten observation: Teachers don't always know what kids are facing in their lives. Setting aside assumptions or judgments and leading with grace and compassion likely benefits all relationships in schools, not just the teacher-student.

***Student theme 3: Relational versus disengaged.*** "They give time, they get to know you, and actually know you for you, not just, like, you're their student" Mason said, describing his version of a teacher who cared (Mason, 360-361). There emerged a clear theme regarding the value of being engaged relationally with the students on a personal level versus impersonal and distant. The perception of caring versus not caring resonated equally through the participants.

Earlier when speaking about his middle school counselor, Mason had said, "Right away when I met her, we clicked and like, I bonded with her right away. And I was able to tell her everything. And I could tell that I could trust her" (Mason, 12-13). Colton spoke of the value of a teacher mindset that reflected confidence in the student's ability, a belief that implied: "We believe in you, you can do it" (Colton, 40). This positive feeling and a sense of caring translated into student perceptions on the Student Belief Pre-Test survey, where nearly 94 percent of the 62 respondents indicated that Q7: *My teachers treat me with empathy and respect* and Q8: *I can succeed here* (see Appendix C).

In the anonymous short answers completed on this survey six months before the focus group, student responses highlighted the sense of belonging and being valued in



their schools by their teachers. Respondent #2, a 12<sup>th</sup> grader who indicated that he/she attended the alternative school for two or more years, wrote, “I believe in my teachers cause they believe in me and they teach me something new every day or week.”

Respondent #7, a tenth grader who has attended the school for over a year, shared, “I love this school, I feel it’s a welcoming and safe environment and I am quite positive I will succeed here.” In the Student Belief post-test ( $n = 20$ ), Respondent #2, a tenth grader who had been at the alternative school setting for over one year wrote, “I like the teachers [at my school], this school has helped me grow a lot in my own abilities.” In identifying qualities of strong educators in these students’ lives, focus group members got specific. Mia shared, “I like when they are understanding,” (142). Samuel recognized the value in his teachers making the effort to know him personally, as well. “They actually care for you, like, there’s a few teachers, they’ll, like, ask how you’re doing, what you did on the weekend” (Samuel, 203-204). Cyan also recognized the power of teacher warmth in building trust.

I guess for a teacher advice would be to actually smile and actually learn about students. Like, if you go up to a student whose having trouble and you scowl at them, they’re gonna freeze up and have no idea what they did wrong. (Cyan, 610-612)

Cyan is interrupted with sarcastic remark by Robert, which she ignores and continues. “But if you smile, then they’re gonna relax and they’ll explain what went wrong” (Cyan, 616). In contrast to these relational-focused qualities of empathy, trust, caring, and personal attention, Mason spoke about his experience at his previous school: “The teachers [at the other schools] really didn’t care. I don’t know. They said that they’re

going to help me. They said that they're *going* to, but they never really did anything [to help me]" (Mason, 369-371).

Some students shared a perception that many teachers were in the profession for the money only. Cyan spoke with a lot of energy about a science teacher's overall response to students' non-compliance:

He was like, kind of, "I'm just here for the paycheck," kinda thing not, like, [for] the students. I would kinda, like, "Okay." Then he would treat the students really crappy. Like, if they did something wrong, they would, he would make you do paragraphs and stuff like that. (Cyan, 112-115)

Early in the interview, as Colton provided a contrasting example of his negative experience with a teacher, I asked if he trusted the teacher (Mr. Roth)– or if he felt that Mr. Roth believed in him. Colton scoffed, "No! He was so mean" (76). Samuel implied that he could sense if a teacher was invested in students, "You can tell just by how they act. Like how controlling they are. That they would basically be there just for the money" (Samuel, 201-202).

These student comments reflected an awareness of teacher disengagement versus engagement that affected the students' trust in the TSR. Robert commented, "A fair amount of the teachers here are pretty cool. They were actually pretty nice, and they actually cared. Instead of just calling us out, like, yes, we're not cool...they actually had enthusiasm, motivated" (Robert, 95-97). When asked to clarify what he meant by motivated, Robert added that, unlike other teachers at his mainstreamed schools, "they were actually like excited to come [to work]" (Robert, 102). Mason agreed with the relational focus of his current school compared to his perceptions past ones. "That's true. Teachers don't really like their job. I don't know, mostly don't" (Mason, 105). This

perception of lack of relational qualities in the TSR translates to most of these students as these educators not liking their jobs and being disengaged. These students appear to recognize that specific teacher actions indicate caring, and for them, caring about your job translates as caring about the students. Robert adds, “[Effective teachers] actually care about the students. The fact that they actually care about their job? That probably be the best thing. Just say that, and that covers everything. Just say: they actually care about their job” (Robert, 145-147).

The student data gathered and analyzed in this exploratory case study included descriptive survey results, short-answer responses, and a transcribed focus group. Evidence from the QDA indicated that students are perceptive and active partners in the critical teacher-student relationship. Often sensitive, opinionated, and passionate, the student perspectives reflected three clear dichotomous themes which had some significant overlap with several of the teacher themes, supported the research on TSR, and aligned with the theories embedded in the professional development tool adopted, The Nurtured Heart Approach®.

**Educator Mindsets and Student Perceptions.** This chapter explored the qualitative perspectives of educators and students in alternative school settings. Both populations expressed clear challenges in the TSR, as well as illustrative examples of effective methods and qualities which they believed promoted student success. The themes that emerged reflected overlapping and related perspectives, as well as individualized views based upon individual experience. In the next chapter, I will discuss the relevance and conclusions of the findings as they relate to the research questions. Additionally, I will present several actionable recommendations supported by the evidence of the findings, directions for future research, and a final reflection.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

#### Summary

The primary purpose of this research study was to explore teacher mindsets and actions in association with the teacher-student relationship (TSR). The purposeful sampling used in this study was students and educators in two alternative schools in British Columbia, Canada. Several weeks prior to educator participation in a one-day professional development intervention (November 2016) that targeted teacher mindsets and actions, The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA), both educators ( $n = 29-31$ ) and students ( $n = 62-65$ ) completed pre-assessment surveys. The data analyzed was ex-post facto and was part of the schools' adoption of the specific relationship-based program, NHA. The research design use of an exploratory case study was appropriate in best representing the qualitative nature of the TSRs, as these relationships are situational, personalized, and often reciprocal (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Marchand & Skinner, 2007; Wubbles et al., 2006). The emphasis on qualitative data analysis aligned with the two research questions being explored:

Q1: Which specific mindsets do teachers believe influence their actions in the teacher-student relationship?

Q2: What are student perceptions of specific teacher actions which influence the teacher-student relationship?

These research directions were based upon the beliefs and evidence-based findings that teacher mindsets influence teacher actions, and that positive mindsets and actions are instrumental in effective TSRs. Additionally, and as supported by the literature (Brooks,

Brooks, & Goldstein, 2012; Carlos & Miller, 2007; Nagaoka et al., 2015), interventions which focus on TSRs have the potential to increase teacher's awareness of effective mindsets and actions, and thus promote more positive outcomes with students.

Through the analysis of descriptive survey data, focus group transcripts, and short-answer responses, three major educator themes and three associated sub-themes for each finding emerged. In summary, these are: 1) Perceived effective mindsets, which included a mindset of commitment to profession and students, perception of being a positive adult role model for their students, and a belief in positive relational supports, such as trust, respect, and being a caring listener. 2) Identified Effective Teaching Strategies, which emphasized personalized approaches to discipline, collaboration and understanding of the shared relationship needed for student buy-in, and adoption of some of the positive teaching strategies coached in the Nurtured Heart Approach intervention. 3) Challenges in the Teacher-Student Relationship, which reflected the conflict between intention and action as educators identified struggles in responding to challenging student behavior, struggles in maintaining clear, consistent boundaries, and some fixed or limiting mindsets that could hinder the effectiveness of their TSRs.

These emergent educator themes bore some strong overlap with some of the student perceptions gathered in student descriptive survey data, the high school focus group, and some short answer responses. However, unlike the educators' emerging findings with supportive sub-themes, the student data reflected clear perspectives of what they preferred versus what they did *not* prefer in their relationships with teachers. In the QDA of student perceptions of effective teacher actions, three clear dichotomous student perception themes emerged. These have been differentially coded with "S" for student to increase clarity. 1S) Flexible and personalized teaching style and discipline approach

versus an approach that was more rigid or authoritarian. 2S) Acceptance of student challenges and individual needs versus assumptions or judgments. 3S) Relational and connected versus disengaged and uncaring.

These themes will be further analyzed in this chapter as they relate to the two research questions and provide insight into both teacher mindsets and actions, and student perceptions of positive TSRs. Conclusions based upon the emerging themes will be discussed, as well as strong associations between the educator and the student findings. This discussion is followed by this researcher's analysis of limitations in the study, recommendations for future research, and some final reflections regarding this study.

### **Specific Educator Mindsets Which Influence Actions**

The data analyses provided some clear understandings to address the first research question: Which specific mindsets do teachers believe influence their actions in the teacher-student relationship? Previous researchers have demonstrated the key role of the educator as the primary manager of the TSR (Cornelius-White, 2007; Goldstein & Brooks, 2007; Hattie, 2012). In alignment with this evidence, the majority of the teachers in this study recognized their leading role in managing the teacher-student relationship trajectory. Compatible with the emerging themes in the QDA, this educator mindset was reflected in the survey data, as well as the focus group transcript, as participants discussed the need to be committed to students, to focus on relational qualities of trust, respect, and personal connection, and to be consistent and maintain high expectations. On the Educator Belief survey, 79 percent (23 of the 29 respondents), Strongly Agreed to Q7: *“While my job can be challenging, I feel like I make a difference every day in the*

*lives of my students,”* and 100 percent agreed that Q1: *“All children are capable of success, without exception”* and additionally, Q2: *“My relationship with my students can impact how they perceive their own ability to learn.”*

**A mindset of personal teacher efficacy.** As this study incorporated professional development training with a new TSR method, The Nurtured Heart Approach®, adoption of these positive mindsets as to one’s personal teaching efficacy are key elements in support of student efficacy. This mindset of personal teacher efficacy in the TSR also supports past research by Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009). As indicated previously, these researchers found a strong correlation between a teacher’s willingness to adopt a new strategy and the possession of a personal mindset that they can make a difference with their students. In their study of teacher efficacy, the researchers’ found that a teacher was more likely to adopt a new approach if they held a belief that their relationship was an important factor in student outcomes. (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Teacher adoption of this belief that their relationship influences student’s own perception of his/her ability to be successful was also reflected in the emergent educator theme of effective teaching strategies. Armed with a mindset of relational supports, educators in this study consistently shared the intention of using personalized, flexible discipline approaches, of working collaboratively with the student, and of recognizing that student behavior choices should not be taken personally. The teachers frequently expressed the desire to focus on positive choices and provide consistent, proactive feedback. In alignment with earlier cited research by Siegle and McCoach (2007), positive student reception of teacher feedback was dependent on having an established relational quality of trust in the TSR. The bridge of this quality of trust in association with the effective teacher action of feedback might thus explain why a

student may be “guarded,” as Doreen indicated in the focus group, when receiving positive recognition. Leading with relational qualities over actions appears to be necessary for the feedback to be received effectively. Appendix A displays the frequencies from the Educator Action Survey given prior to the training, reflecting the intention of most educators to emphasize good choices and reduce engagement during poor student choices.

**Still challenged.** In tandem with the identification of the mindsets that these educators believed supported their relationships with students, there surfaced a collective theme regarding student behavior challenges. On the one hand, these committed educators recognized the power of their positive mindsets to influence the TSR, but admittedly struggled to be consistent with all students. “There are kids who I feel less patient with,” expressed a veteran teacher of over 15 years. This teacher also acknowledged that he/she had “favorites,” and additionally indicated that it was not important to have his/her students like or trust him/her. Other well-intentioned and self-aware teachers shared challenges with broken rules, real safety concerns, individual student conflicts, and habits of responding to student issues with anger or long consequences. On the anonymous Educator Action survey, 69 percent of respondents admitted that they Almost Never or only Sometimes are able to consistently enforce limits with brief, non-emotional consequences (see Appendix B). Their honest responses reflected this tension between being committed to their challenging students and feeling overwhelmed by their needs. Educators in this study consistently recognized the value of their positive, healthy adult relationship to provide a stable, role model for their students. In fact, nearly 94 percent of respondents said that they Often or Almost Always are aware of their student triggers and can regulate themselves. However, many also shared that



they needed more support, practice, or tools to remain consistent, positive, and healthy in these relationships.

**Educator findings: Conclusions.** Several conclusions can be drawn from the educator themes which relate to supporting positive TSR. The mindsets and actions provided in the professional development intervention, The Nurtured Heart Approach®, supported the educators' intentions, but ultimately, consistent adoption of a new method requires on-going coaching and support. The opportunity for volunteers to participate in an academic book club provided some continued conversation around challenges of adoption and developing of new habits in relationship, and participants in this group demonstrated a clear intention and openness toward practicing the approach and dialoging about challenges. Despite evidence that possession of a strong mindset of teacher efficacy to manage student behavior is a critical quality in supporting students, educators frequently expressed the opposite in both the short answer statements, as well as during the focus group. It is worthy to note, however, that when the educators spoke of individual students, the emerging theme of personalization and relational supports was consistently present. This finding supports the conclusion that increased personalized connection between teachers and each individual student can positively benefit the TSR. Gutshall's (2013) earlier cited study supported this conclusion, finding that teachers were much more likely to respond favorably to students, regardless of identified learning needs, if they had detailed information about the student's personality or home situation. The evidence in the QDA of this study further supports Gutshall's (2013) findings: relationship qualities that are personalized, flexible, collaborative, and relational reflect the effective mindsets and actions of successful TSR.

An additional, related supposition based upon this study's QDA can be bridged from the former conclusion above. Both educators and students in these alternative school settings mentioned the need to be better informed or educated in how to best support student mental health issues. With a recent push in professional development and policy toward trauma-informed practice (Gulbrandson, 2018; Klein, 2018), there appeared to be a gap for both students and teachers in this knowledge base. While one might predict a higher percentage of mental health issues in alternative school settings, it surprised this researcher that this prerequisite education is not required for all school settings to support more effective and supportive teacher-student relationships.

### **Student Perceptions of Teacher Actions**

The inclusion of student data provided an opportunity to explore a second related research question: What are student perceptions of specific teacher actions which influence the teacher-student relationship? While researchers have mixed findings on student versus teacher perceptions of the TSR (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012; Cornelius-White, 2007; Farrington et al., 2012; Kelm and Connell, 2004), the inclusion of both populations provided for richer analyses and potentially stronger overlapping findings and conclusions.

Unlike the educator data, the data on student perceptions provided three clear polarized themes. The students expressed strong feelings of effective versus ineffective teacher actions, with some overlap to the educator themes also apparent. The students' stories comparing positive teacher relationships to those which were less so, were shared with great passion. Within these emerging themes of: Flexible versus Rigid, Accepting versus Judgmental, and Relational versus Disengaged, the students' messages emerged with clarity. These themes served as advice to educators as ways to support relationship

with them: Treat me like an individual. Show me you care. Get to know me. Assume there is more to my story and give me a second chance. “Smile” (Cyan, 610).

Alternatively: Don’t call me names. Don’t assume the worst. Don’t be inflexible. Don’t treat me like everyone else. In its simplicity, this researcher was able to see a clear crosswalk to the like-minded educators’ emphasis on positive relationship qualities that were relational, personalized, and flexible.

**Student perceptions: Conclusions.** The interrelationship between these themes provides additional insights and conclusions. Students in this study quickly perceived disrespect and judgment as indicators of lack of trust and acceptance. The feedback loop in the TSR was evident: “If I don’t get respect, I’m not going to give respect” (Samuel, 702). Returning to the mindset of teacher as change agent and ultimately in charge of the TSR foundation, this further supports the implication that it is the educator’s job to take a proactive lead in establishing trust, respect, care, and empathy: the very qualities identified in effective learner-centered classroom (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Students clearly articulated their histories of negative TSR, providing deep evidence of the impactful power of educators’ actions on students. The impact of educators’ negative actions, such as name-calling or hasty judgments of character, appeared to have long-lasting effects on these students. In the Student Belief survey, 27 percent of the 62 respondents only Somewhat Agreed that Q7: *My teachers treat me with empathy and respect*, and 6 percent Often Disagreed. It was also interesting to note the shared perception students had that many of their teachers were not engaged in their jobs. This understanding was often directly related to lack of personal connection with the teacher. Students interpreted the disengagement as disinterest in the student and lack of commitment to their job – and ultimately to the student him/herself. If a teacher was

described as caring about their job, they appeared to be caring about their students. The evidence in this study of student sensitivity to teacher actions has potential to increase teachers' awareness of the unintended consequences of their choices in mediating the TSR.

**Educator and student: Related conclusions.** There were some overlapping conclusions which can be inferred from the findings. Both educator and student data identified the significant role of the teacher as manager. Educators overwhelmingly acknowledged their role in supporting student success, and in feeling like they make a difference in students' lives. This identification of the power of the educator relationship was additionally reinforced in the student perception data. Of the 62 survey respondents on the Student Belief Survey, 92 percent ( $n = 58$ ) agreed that Q5: *My teachers make it clear to me that they believe in my ability to learn.* Here student perception matches the educator intentional mindset: Q1: *All children are capable of success, without exception.* Both populations also reported high and consistent expectations as a valuable, supportive quality in effective TSR. Similarly related to student feedback on teacher engagement, these students spoke positively about teacher actions which demonstrated care for their learning. Alternatively, the students also mentioned teachers who offered little help or simply gave them an answer rather than pushing them to learn. The teachers in the educator focus group, as well as the findings in the educator surveys, also supported the conclusion that high expectations for their students mattered. Associated with their commitment to the students, the teachers bridged high student expectations with adult consistency in boundaries, stability, and dependability in their relationship. In Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis of student-centered classrooms, teachers' high expectations translated to students as relational qualities of caring, empathy, and respect. The overlap

of the student perceptions to teacher actions in this current study consistently supported Cornelius-White's earlier findings.

The issue of self-management was an additional underlying message which emerged in both educator and student data. Teachers expressed being "overwhelmed" by student problems, challenged to respond calmly when students continue to break rules, swear, or "act like an ass." Students shared difficult moments when a teacher would lose control, yell, dole out discrepant consequences, and belittle the student with name calling. Both populations recognized the lack of self-management and regulation by the other population as a significant challenge in TSR. In alignment with the 2015 Education Week Research Center national survey examining teachers' perspectives (cited previously in Chapter Two), teachers had identified self-management as the *most* important trait for students to possess for success in schools, trumping many other qualities of effective relationships. This trend in the data suggests that students also recognize the challenge of adults who struggle with self-management, and that increased awareness of the impact of teacher's self-control under challenge is needed to support the desire expressed by educators in the study to be a healthy, adult role model for their students. This conclusion is further supported by the previously stated implication that the educator is the primary leader in the direction of the TSR. Educator self-management is critical in supporting student self-management.

A further overlapping and related conclusion surfaced in regard to recovery and restoration of relationship in both populations. Jim, from the educator focus group, voiced this need when retelling his frustration with a student who continued to swear at him repeatedly. Confused and almost saddened by the student's continued action, Mari had empathized, "I think it's the closure. Don't *we* need some closure?" (Mari, 498). Other

adults also agreed that this was a missing piece in being able to heal their relationships with challenging students. The students in the focus group expressed this feeling of injustice and unfinished resolution, as well. While not as clear in asking for relationship restoration specifically, these students remained deeply wounded by negative teacher comments and actions. Closure or healing did not fully occur for them, either. Nor, it appeared, did an apology or ownership of harmful words or actions come consistently from either population.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations to the research design, data collection, analyses, and final conclusions must be considered. The use of an exploratory case study research design, while appropriate for the qualitative, situated nature of teacher-student relationships (Yin, 2018), naturally limits the findings to the specific, contextual population with which the study was explored. As qualitative researcher Starman wrote (2013), “Case studies cannot be repeated because during repetition, the case is already different” (p. 41).

This limitation challenges the ability of the data to be generalized to a larger population, but does not limit the value of the case study methodology in providing a rich, empirical method of qualitative analysis that can be applied to similar settings. Attempts to provide contextual details of this unique population have been included in this exploratory case study to afford readers the opportunity “to make theoretically-informed judgments about which contexts are most proximally similar” (Polit & Beck, 2010, p. 1456). Generalization of findings is often seen as a limitation in single case studies, as context is specific and situated in all settings. However, other researchers argue that interpretation and description of the case can support generalization of both concept and process if the results are clearly outlined in detail (Simons, 2014). The value

of the single in-depth study can add to research done with similar conceptual research questions and processes for evaluation and analysis.

Limitations of the data collection and interpretation must also be considered. The subjective nature of qualitative design can potentially bias researchers seeking to support their theories. In qualitative research design, the researcher is often the instrument, and that human lens can limit objectivity in both the choice of data sources and in analyses (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011). This researcher's choice to triangulate data by including multiple measures in the form of frequencies on surveys, focus group transcripts, and additional short answer responses, was undertaken to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of findings. Additionally, two third-party coders participated in analyses of transcriptions to address necessary inter-rater reliability for identifying consistent themes and sub-themes (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Despite these validity efforts of transparency of methods, quality of data gathering, and interpretation, there remains the standing role of researcher as instrument in qualitative data gathering (Yin, 2015). This limitation can affect objectivity in data gathering during focus groups, where participants may respond in ways to gain approval by the researcher. In addition, caution must be taken by the researcher to avoid inadvertently directing the interviews in subtle ways that may be designed only to support the researcher's subjective mindsets.

Limitations to validity and accuracy exist in nearly all research designs. While it was initially the intention of this researcher to compare a change in means over time in the pre and post-test surveys, I did not have independent access to the educator or student populations. The distribution of the educator and student post-tests was done by the administration of both schools at the end of the school year. Despite their efforts to

remind staff to complete the surveys, the return rate was too small to adequately analyze quantitatively. Of the Teacher Action surveys, only 26 percent of the original respondents completed a follow-up survey, just 17 percent completed the Teacher Beliefs, and 31 percent of the original population completed the Student Belief post-test. While pre/posttest research designs are frequently used in educational settings to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, there are limitations to these designs when the emphasis is on non-cognitive factors, such as relationship qualities (Farrington et al., 2012).

Researchers Pratt, McGuigan, & Ratzev (2000) exploring the pre/post-test research design in evaluating program outcomes, noted that “Even when complete pretest-posttest information is obtained, actual changes in knowledge and behaviors may be masked if the participants overestimate their knowledge and skills on the pretest” (Pratt, McGuigan, & Ratzev, 2000, p. 342). This limitation of valid self-reports was discussed at length in Chapter Two, and perhaps most succinctly summarized by Duckworth & Yeager’ (2015) acknowledgement that, “perfectly unbiased, unfakable, and error-free measures are an *ideal*, not a reality” (p. 243).

A final limitation should be considered when interpreting and drawing conclusions around personal, qualitative data. While the survey data was used to describe frequencies of responses for both teacher and student beliefs, the qualitative nature of relationships make empirical analyses of personalized beliefs challenging. Much of the relationship factors explored in the TSR are contextual and personal; in fact, so personal in nature that individuals may perceive their anecdotal examples as the true empirical proof. Royse, Thyer and Padgett, (2010) observed, “Personal experiences and accounts can create very powerful belief systems that may yield true conclusions in a situation or for a particular individual” (p. 26). However, they contended, these personal truths cannot



be fully generalized to a larger population. Furthermore, while anecdotal experience is not directly rejected by science as evidence, it cannot be applied to other individuals or situations without the context and experience of the individual that informed it. This limitation of the personalized, qualitative nature of perspectives can also benefit the informative nature of case study findings. Individual “truths” can often provide insight to specific contexts and relational factors that may emerge collectively as multiple perspectives are gathered (Royse, Thyer and Padgett, 2010).

With these limitations of the data and its interpretation considered carefully, this researcher feels that the emergent themes and conclusions warrant actionable recommendations for both educators seeking to maximize positive impact on the TSR, as well as future researchers interested in expanding on this research direction.

### **Actionable Recommendations**

The goal of the research study was to explore effective teacher mindsets and actions that increase positive teacher-student relationships. Through careful analysis of the triangulated data, some clear recommendations for future actions and research surfaced.

Using data from both educators and students provided substantial evidence to confirm the shared relational qualities of personalization, flexibility, and caring as highly prized in the TSR. Both populations acknowledged the leading role of the teacher as relationship manager. Both populations expressed ongoing frustration with the other in regard to lack of self-management and regulation under challenge. Both populations indicated residual impacts from negative TSRs. Both populations noted the need for greater empathy and training to address and support student mental health issues. These shared perspectives provide opportunity for the significant adults in school settings to

increase their self-awareness and management in positively taking the lead on the trajectory of the critical teacher-student relationship. Three actionable and intentional recommendations surface from these findings: 1) Train educators as relationship experts, 2) provide on-going support and training for new learning, and 3) adopt concrete tools for relationship repair. I elaborate on each of these as they relate to the findings below.

**Educators need to be relationship experts.** Collectively, this data points to the need for educators to become masters in managing their relationships with their students. While both teachers and students complained about each other's negative actions, the teacher remains the one responsible of being the "change agent" in the classroom, and positively directing the relational feedback loop which occurs between student and teacher. Owning this mindset appears to be key in moderating positive TSR. While some teachers expressed frustration in student behavior, there remained a stronger theme of leading with empathy, consistency, and respect. The educator mindset of being a positive, healthy adult in the student's life reinforces this recommendation. Wubbles et al. (2006) and Goldstein and Brooks (2007), long-time research teams on the effective qualities of TSRs, supported adoption of this of teacher responsibility. "Only by changing one's own behavior can one change the behavior of the other person, and thus break the destructive spiral," Wubbles et al. stated (p. 5). Goldstein and Brooks (2007), in identifying 12 effective mindsets of educators, also highlighted this educator duty in the TSR. They suggested, "Each word a teacher utters and each action a teacher takes may make the difference whether students become cooperative and optimistic or feel alienated..." (p. 26).

**Beyond intention: On-going support and training for new learning.** While it is recommended that the educator should shoulder the primary responsibility for the TSR,

many educators in this study expressed continued challenges in their relationships with students. Simply bearing a mindset of teacher efficacy and student ability appeared to not be enough for some teachers needing more tools, information strategies to support student mental health, and new habits to manage difficult or noncompliant behavior. Teachers expressed an understanding of the value of the belief systems and the NHA strategies that 1) focused on positive choices, 2) coached adults to not give relationship to negative actions, and 3) maintain consistent, high expectations. But intentional mindsets do not always translate into actual outcomes. When the middle school educators in this study were asked to write what has been the most challenging in adoption of the NHA strategies, four of the six respondents wrote about the difficulty to remember to remain positive and adopt a neutral response, while the other two wrote about their continued use of lengthy consequences when working with their population (see Appendix F). The awareness of their intention is clear; the follow-through is harder.

Professional development and interventions that focus on changing teacher responses to student misbehavior are not uncommon. However, changing mindsets and habits of behavior takes consistent practice and commitment, and, as Dweck and colleagues (2006; 2015; Yeager & Dweck, 2012) point out: Support. Frequently, as it was in the case of this study, these interventions are presented to educators in a one-day workshop format. However, one might recognize that a longer intervention, which provided more ongoing performance feedback as they were practicing a new strategy and increasing their own awareness, would demonstrate greater impact over a single-day intervention. Simply understanding a theory or being taught a new relational method in student management does not necessarily become a new learning or habit without this informed support and coaching. Researchers Reinke, Lewis-Palmer and Merrell (2008)

demonstrated this conclusion in their study of the adoption of a teacher-consultation model where voluntary participants expressed a desire to gain greater support in classroom management strategies. In addition to providing teachers with a variety of intervention strategies, the researchers also provided: 1) direct teacher feedback and 2) a series of classroom observations designed to help teachers increase their awareness of their own use of praise or reprimands in regard to student behaviors. The outcome from their study demonstrated the effectiveness of ongoing performance feedback, versus a single observation, in bringing about greater awareness and increased positive TSR in the classroom.

Evidence from this study ... suggest[s] that one-time consultation and training may not be enough to effectively create classroom change. Teachers may need additional support to overcome the difficulties associated with changing longstanding behaviors when attempting to implement effective classroom management strategies. (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008, p. 330) This is a logical recommendation in regard to coaching adults in the adoption of new habits which promote positive TSRs.

**Concrete tools for relationship repair.** A third recommendation surfaced from the findings in this study. The impact of negative actions shared consistently by participants in the study suggests a need to provide healthy alternatives for reparation and restoration of damaged relationships. Both populations harbored frustrations based upon historical actions of a teacher or student. Concrete tools of personal reflection, conflict resolution, mediation, and restorative justice have been demonstrated to effectively moderate and heal relationships in schools, prison settings, and larger community forums (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016; Hopkins, 2002). These forms of informal or formal relationship interventions have a central goal, “to put things right, to ‘repair the

harm'...after some behavior or event which has adversely affected people" (Hopkins, 2002, p. 144). It is not the intention of this study to expand at length on the details of effective restorative practices, but the growing research in this field is providing strong evidence of the usefulness of these tools in school settings seeking to adopt discipline methods that focus on relationship building strategies.

### **Future Research Directions**

In addition to actionable recommendations based upon the findings, some suggestions can be made regarding future research on the relational qualities of effective TSR and evaluation of effective non-cognitive interventions.

**Mixed-method research design to explore intervention outcome.** The impact of educator mindsets and actions on TSRs was the focus of this research. The design selected for addressing the two research questions was an exploratory case study. Descriptive statistics from both educator and student belief pre-test surveys were incorporated in the QDA. The low return of the post-test surveys collected by administration at the end of the training year prevented valid analysis of change in means between the pre/post-tests. Although it was the initial intention of this researcher, and the administrators involved in the data collection, to have dependent, within-subject, paired t-tests for additional statistical analyses, the data gathered was not paired, nor equal in sample size from pre to post test. Subjects surveyed were the same in both groups of pre and post testing; however, not all who completed a pre-test, completed a post-test, making accurate comparison of means a challenge for analysis. This missing paired, posttest data prevented inclusion of quantitative analysis of intervention impacts. It is recommended that if future research were to be conducted using the online surveys of Educator Actions and Beliefs and the Student Belief Survey, the researcher would have

direct access to the populations being assessed, and thereby increase potential for greater return rate on all measures. Additionally, the administration effort to distribute and collect the post-tests from both educators and students occurred in the last few weeks of school. The low yield on post-test completion could possibly be attributed to the late timing of the request by administrators in the building, as this can be a time when most educators are focused on completion of grades and curricular assessments. Inclusion of strong post-test data would ultimately change the research question, but also allow for additional statistical analyses focused on the intervention outcomes.

**Adjusting the surveys to additionally explore “Why.”** While the intention of this researcher was to examine educator mindsets and actions through multiple data sources, the “whys” behind the individual responses to the survey questions were not explored. For example, if a teacher Somewhat Agreed that, BQ6: *“Like it or not, there are some students that only respond to negative consequences,”* on the Educator Belief survey, personalized explanations as to what might contribute to that belief was not explored on this tool. Similarly, if a student Strongly Disagreed that, SQ3: *I belong in this academic community,* the opportunity to learn more about the rationale which supported the student’s response was not offered. Providing a short answer opportunity for each individual question on actions or beliefs, rather than simply one overall open-ended at the end of the survey, might allow for deeper respondent reflection, and increase the researcher’s insight into the rationale behind the educator’s or student’s beliefs. This added data would be useful in informing concrete recommendations and associations with effective strategies. Additionally, learning what specifically prevents an educator in a child’s life from “believing all children can succeed” (Q1, Educator Belief Survey), or a student feeling like they didn’t “belong” in their academic community (Q3, Student

Belief Survey), would be a relevant follow-up analysis that could be also be addressed more concretely through an evidence-based TSR intervention.

### **Final Reflections on Findings**

“If they knew what to do, they would do it,” a wise educator once shared with me in my early years as a middle school teacher. Even today, I adopt this accepting mindset regularly as I coach adults working with challenging students, helping them to see that the student’s poor choice is much less about the adult - and much more about the student trying to find a way through. While this belief resonates with most motivated adults working in schools, adoption of this mindset into a consistent habit of mind requires evidence, practice, and support. As a school counselor, I apply this same belief when I work with the challenged educator: If they knew what to do, they would do it. Well-intentioned and committed to student success, every educator surveyed in this study believed that all children were capable of success, without exception. However, many of these same educators felt ill equipped to create this consistent pathway to success when faced with challenging student behavior. Students, in turn, were inordinately perceptive to adult’s commitment to their success – or lack thereof.

This researcher’s intention was to provide continued evidence of the unique reciprocal relationship which occurs between each student and every significant adult they connect with in the schoolhouse. In addition, I sought to utilize this additional evidence to motivate educators toward greater awareness of their primary responsibility in the reciprocity of this personalized relationship. It is this researcher’s continued goal to demonstrate, through this initial study and future research, that when educators are able to recognize themselves as the lead manager of the pivotal teacher-student relationship, they can more clearly acknowledge how their own mindsets and actions have the potential to

limit, or empower, the youth that they choose to serve. Armed with this evidence-based knowledge, these educators can then lead their students toward success with their intentional, personalized, flexible, and relationally focused mindsets and actions.



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## Appendix A

Frequency Tables: Teacher Action (A) Pre-test Survey Question  
Responses

Table A1

*If you are an educator, please indicate the number of years you have been working in this profession.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	Percent
0-3	8	25.8
4-10	7	22.6
11-15	5	16.1
15-20	2	6.5
20+	5	16.1
Not an educator (list below)	4	12.9

*Note.* Non-educators identified as: Education Assistant – 16+ years; Education Assistant; Child and Youth Worker; Education Assistant

Table A2

*If you are an educator, please indicate the grade level(s) you teach.*

Answer Choices	Frequency	Percent
7	14	53.9
8	15	57.7
9	17	65.4
10	16	61.5
11	12	46.2
12	12	46.2

*Note.*  $N = 26$

Table A3

*Q3: I give brief and mild consequences without explanations, lectures or questions. (e.g. "Take a seat," "You need a reset," "Take a minute outside and complete this reflection sheet.")*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	Percent
Almost Never	8	25.8
Sometimes	15	48.4
Often	7	22.6
Almost Always	1	3.2

Table A4

*Q4: I am able to give consequences without anger, frustration, tone, glares, sarcasm, or punitive measures.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	Percent
Almost Never	4	12.9
Sometimes	14	45.2
Often	13	41.9



Table A5

*Q5: I am aware of my triggers and am able to reset and calm myself when I get frustrated, angry, or negative.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	Percent
Sometimes	2	6.5
Often	10	32.3
Almost Always	19	61.3

Table A6

*Q6: I regularly call attention to student success in the moment with details and genuine recognition. (e.g. "Mya, I see you are ready to work, with your rough draft in hand.")*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	%
Sometimes	6	19.4
Often	17	54.8
Almost Always	8	25.8

Table A7

*Q7: I name positive behaviors that I describe to provide meaning and depth. (e.g. "Aiden, you came over and sat down, clearly ready to join the group; you are being so responsible.")*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	%
Almost Never	1	3.2
Sometimes	13	41.9
Often	12	38.7
Almost Always	5	16.1

Table A8

Q8: *I proactively notice and describe the student challenges of self-control and recognize good choices of students who follow rules, manage frustration, and show restraint. (e.g. "Jackson, you are demonstrating immense self-control right now even though you are clearly frustrated.")*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	%
Almost Never	1	3.2
Sometimes	6	19.3
Often	17	54.8
Almost Always	7	22.6

Table A9

Q9: *I consistently enforce limits with immediate brief consequences each time a rule is broken instead of letting things go, giving warnings, or threatening larger consequences.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	%
Almost Never	3	9.7
Sometimes	18	58.1
Often	8	25.8
Almost Always	2	6.5

Table A10

*Q10: After a brief and unemotional consequence, I am able to let go of what just happened and look for an opportunity to shift the student back to being more positive.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 31$ )	%
Sometimes	2	6.5
Often	14	45.2
Almost Always	15	48.4

## Appendix B

## Frequency Tables: Teacher Beliefs (B) Pre-test Survey Question Responses

Table B1

*Q1: All children are capable of success, without exception.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	27	93.1
Agree Somewhat	2	6.9
Often Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table B2

*Q2: My relationship with my students can impact how they perceive their own ability to learn.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	26	89.7
Agree Somewhat	3	10.3
Often Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table B3

*Q3: Despite all efforts, some students are simply not able to be truly successful.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	26	89.7
Agree Somewhat	3	10.3
Often Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table B4

*Q4: My students would say I treat all of them with equal respect.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	20	69.0
Agree Somewhat	8	27.6
Often Disagree	1	3.4
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table B5

*Q5: In order for my students to be successful, it is important that my students like and trust me.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	15	51.7
Agree Somewhat	12	41.4
Often Disagree	2	6.9
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table B6

*Q6: Like it or not, there are some students that only respond to negative consequences.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	1	3.4
Agree Somewhat	8	27.6
Often Disagree	11	37.9
Strongly Disagree	9	31.0

Table B7

*Q7: While my job can be challenging, I feel like make a difference every day in the lives of my students.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	%
Strongly Agree	23	79.3
Agree Somewhat	5	17.2
Often Disagree	1	3.5

Table B8

*Q8: Please clarify any of your answers here or add any questions, thoughts or feedback that may inform the data provided above. Thank you for taking the time to reflect honestly on your practice and for completing this survey!*

#	Role/ Years in Ed	Individual Responses
1	MS/HS 11-15 years	Build relationships
2	MS/HS 11-15 years	I find sometimes the problems they bring to class are overwhelming and some of their problems I am not able to help with.
3	HS Ed Assist 16 + years	Every child is an individual. Every child can learn. Every child learns differently and at different rates of time. Educators need to be creative and tap into the child's learning style. Every child is unique and needs a good understanding educator to make them achieve their social and educational goals.
4	HS 4-10 years	In number #5, I believe like and trust should be almost separate. I strongly believe students need to trust me to be successful.
5	MS/HS 15+ years	In the eyes of some, they would think I show favouritism and to be honest, I might. There are kids who I feel less patient with.
6	HS 0-3 years	I find with the outreach students that it is important to work towards encouragement and support and be more relaxed in regards to discipline. The students respond better to kindness and genuine care than a directive attitude.
7	Ed Assistant	I feel our job is to ensure that children see their success for what they are. Every step forward is a success.
8	MS/HS 11-15 years	I like to treat others the way I would like to be treated. Fairly and with respect.
9	MS 4-10 years	I think a few of these questions depend on how you define "successful." What represents success for one student may be totally different than what represents success for a different student.

*Note.* These responses reflect 31% of respondents on this survey.



Table B9

*My role here at school is one of...*

Years as Educator	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	Percent
0-3	4	25.8
4-10	4	22.6
11-15	7	16.1
15-20	5	6.5
Non-educator; in schools 0-5	1	12.9
Other role (list below)	8	

*Note.* Non-educators identified as: Education Assistant – 16+ yrs.; Education Assistant 20 yrs.; Child and Youth Worker; Aboriginal education assistant 3+ yrs.; EA, E A; Education assistant; school counselor

Table B10

*If you are an educator, please indicate the grade level(s) you teach/support.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 29$ )	Percent
7	13	54.2
8	15	62.5
9	16	66.7
10	19	79.2
11	12	50.0
12	12	50.0
Total Respondents	24	

## Appendix C

## Frequency Tables: Student Beliefs (S) Pre-test Survey Question Responses

Table C1

*Q1: What grade are you in?*

Answer Choices	Frequency	% ( $n = 65$ )
12	16	24.6
11	15	23.1
10	15	23.1
9	11	16.9
8	6	9.2
7	2	3.1

Table C2

*Q2: Approximately how long have you attended this school?*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 65$ )	%
This is my first year	27	41.5
Over one year	21	32.3
Two or more years	12	18.5
Other (listed below)	5	7.7

*Note.* Alternative responses: Only a year here; Under a year; a month; 3 months; 3.

Table C3

*Q3: I belong in this academic community.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 62$ )	%
Strongly Agree	23	37.1
Agree Somewhat	31	50.0
Often Disagree	4	6.4
Strongly Disagree	4	6.4

Table C4

*Q4: My learning ability and skills*

*row with my effort and hard work.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 62$ )	%
Strongly Agree	30	48.4
Agree Somewhat	27	43.6
Often Disagree	4	6.4
Strongly Disagree	1	1.6

Table C5

*Q5: My teachers make it clear to me that they believe in my ability to learn.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 62$ )	%
Strongly Agree	38	61.3
Agree Somewhat	19	30.6
Often Disagree	3	4.8
Strongly Disagree	2	3.2

Table C6

*Q6: The work I do here has value for my future.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 62$ )	%
Strongly Agree	30	48.4
Agree Somewhat	27	43.6
Often Disagree	4	6.4
Strongly Disagree	1	1.6

Table C7

*Q8: My teachers treat me with empathy and respect.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 62$ )	%
Strongly Agree	41	66.1
Agree Somewhat	17	27.4
Often Disagree	4	6.4
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table C8

*Q8: I can succeed here.*

Answer Choices	Frequency ( $n = 62$ )	%
Strongly Agree	39	62.9
Agree Somewhat	19	30.6
Often Disagree	2	3.2
Strongly Disagree	2	3.2

Table C9

*Q9: My teachers treat me with empathy and respect.*

Strongly Agree	43	69.4
Agree Somewhat	18	29.0
Often Disagree	1	1.6
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table C10

*Q10: Please add any confidential comment, clarification or detail here to help us better understand any of your above answers.*

#	Gr	Yrs. at school	Individual Responses
1	12	2+	[Name counselor] is the best. Thank you [counselor]
2	12	2+	I believe in my teachers cause they believe in me and they teach me something new every day or week
3	11	2+	[Name of school] is an amazing school to get work and stuff done
4	10	1+	I enjoy this school I get my work done and I'm happy about the education I am getting.
5	12	2+	I have a pen, I have an apple?????????
6	10	1+	I love this school, I feel it's a welcoming and safe environment and I am quite positive I will succeed here
7	12	1 <sup>st</sup> yr.	teachers here at this school are helpful enough I have no clear detail on what needs to be improved
8	10	1 <sup>st</sup>	Hi
9	10	1 <sup>st</sup>	The teachers actually help more

10	10	1 <sup>st</sup>	[Teacher name] is an asshole
11	11	2+	[Name of school]'s great
12	11	2+	Best teacher ever
13	9	1+	They were answers
14	9	1+	Just have a problem with my classroom teacher [Name]
15	9	2+	:D
16	9	2+	10
17	9	3	I sort of like it here
18	9	mo. 2+	Democracy
19	7	1 <sup>st</sup>	I like school and I want to go farther in life

---

## Appendix D

## Educator Focus Group Transcript

May 8, 2017

*All names are pseudonyms for actual participants*

- 1  
2 Group Leader: [we were talking about] how you make an impact and how you make a  
3 growth.  
4 Then you said you have this idea and I love that you're giving an analogy of not having  
5 drive-by.  
6  
7 Abby: No, drive thru.  
8  
9 Group Leader: Drive thru. Thank you. Sorry, Abby I am listening here.  
10  
11 Evelyn: That maybe the Canadian-American translation, right? Lost in translation.  
12 [Laughter]  
13  
14 Group Leader: Okay [laughing]. Yeah go ahead.  
15  
16 Abby: I love that. No, I was just thinking that we don't see the results of our work as  
17 quickly as in a typical setting or typical lessons for children and the community at our  
18 [alternative schools]. I usually call them typical, because I think our kids can be pretty  
19 typical, actually. Um, and I think, we as, a community, services in general, like  
20 technology, we like quick results. This is actually what you consider like a lag in the  
21 whole system, because we don't *see* quick results. We don't get that drive-thru result. And  
22 you know, you're hungry, you drive-thru, you feel that hunger; it's done. Working with  
23 our disenfranchised or fringed community's children, we won't get our results for years. I  
24 think, for us, our biggest reward is when we run into to a former student who - *we're* the  
25 only person they remember in the school system ten years down the road, or 20 or 30 and  
26 *we*, in Alternate, get that more than anybody - a lot.  
27  
28 Sounds of other agreement: "that's true," "uh-uh," "a lot"  
29  
30 Group Leader: Well, and I think that speaks to why people are in this profession. You  
31 don't have a big turnover. I mean, you're there because you get that, that's the greatest-  
32  
33 Abby: - So you have to ask why? What is it that we did ten years ago that we couldn't see  
34 the day we wanted the results? Ten years later, and when they *do*, they *come* to us, and  
35 they're so grateful...  
36  
37 Group Leader: I'll tell you why-



38

39 Mari: Or what works? [Agreeing with the question]

40

41 Group Leader: The kids will tell you. *They* tell you what worked.

42

43 Mari: What worked, yes.

44

45 Abby: But it's ten years later. So everybody needs to know is this: We're not a drive by,  
46 drive thru service.

47

48 Group Leader: Right.

49

50 Doreen: You know that I saw [Student name] in the superstore the other day, [Name]  
51 with-

52

53 Abby: Coby? Oh, that [student name], yes.

54

55 Doreen: Yes. He was like, "Hi." [Voice is enthusiastic, excited] He was really happy to  
56 see me. That was so cool. He looked really good. He looks really happy, and he's wearing  
57 a normal hat now.

58

59 Evelyn: It's about the relationships, right? If you don't commit to a good relationship  
60 where they trust you, where they look up to you, you just don't have that connection. You  
61 have to commit.

62

63 Cindy: I think to add to that, it's how you leave them feeling even for what - that's kind of  
64 my thing is like, how are they left feeling when they're around me, you know. I'm not  
65 100% up for that that's my goal. Always. Right?

66

67 Betsy: And authentically.

68

69 Cindy: Yes, for sure.

70

71 Cindy: I think we're really aware though, from a lot of our youth, we're the healthy adult  
72 relationship for them. A lot of them didn't get that healthy adult relationship from other  
73 mainstream schools or from their parents, their homes.

74

75 Jim: So, is it the result of ten years after because now they're out of their household, and  
76 now they are on their own looking for those positive connections and remembering that?

77

78 Abby: And what it looked like, yes. I had a former student today...

79

80 Jim: Because they are still in the home and they're still negative? Negative until they're  
81 out on their own?

82

83 Abby: Well, I have a former student. She's 24, she contacted me today to tell me that she  
84 got a full-time job and she's all excited. She contacted *me* to tell me that and she's so  
85 thrilled. She also told me they finally figured out what her anxiety was and where it was  
86 coming from. That was ten years ago when she was at her school. Anxiety was just  
87 coming into our mindset as to, you know, an issue with our students. Ten years later,  
88 they've just figured out it's directly connected to her diabetes.

89

90 Group Leader: So one of the students who I interviewed at the [Alternative High School]  
91 shared that one of the things they wanted more from their teachers is to have a better  
92 understanding of the mental health issues that they are facing. [Sounds of others  
93 agreeing]. While they were all very, felt like, *you* got that at the level that is the missing  
94 link they felt in the mainstream school. And one of the questions I asked them, it was one  
95 student, named Mason, who just got the question, and I was like, 'Okay now you're in  
96 charge of a school that has a thousand kids in it, because they get that the small size  
97 allows for this adult healthy relationship, 'How would you structure that school so that  
98 the value-- Because your program [the alternative education model] is costly and schools  
99 can't afford to do your program for everybody...So how can *you* [referring to the  
100 students] you get to design it based on what you know and experienced in that situation  
101 that wasn't good for you: How do you do it differently? That was some of the ideas and  
102 they were like, "Well they need to know about this in the mainstream and you could  
103 reduce it. Mason had immediately math related answer, he was like, and "Well you could  
104 have these 20 rooms and 22 kids in each room." And it was so great - [Laughter]

105

106 Abby: Is it Mason Morrissey?

107

108 Group Leader: What?

109

110 Abby: The student you were talking about? Is it Mason Morrissey?

111

112 Group Leader: I don't know what his last name is. I just got first names. A taller kid? He  
113 wore a cap or something?

114

115 [Crosstalk]

116

117 Group Leader: Anyway, so the question, Cindy, just so you know what it is we're doing.  
118 Just to be able to talk about what other impacts [teachers have on students]. Abby was  
119 great, she gave us a start off: [Summarizing] We don't necessarily see what they are, what  
120 we know. I think it is kind of that. What about kids liking you?

121

122 Cindy: I think I have a pretty good relationship with my students. I have one very  
123 guarded, defensive student who always thinks even when you're trying to be kind to him,  
124 that it's some kind of attack, and he's like open through your angle [Inaudible]. So he  
125 really wants your sincere care-

126

127 Group Leader: Right. He's the one who needs that Nurtured Heart even more, right?

128

129 Cindy: Yes.

130

131 Abby: Yes.

132

133 Group Leader: Because we know that when kids deflect our compliments or positive  
134 relationship, it's because they're this hollowed in.

135

136 Cindy: When you say nice things to him and he's so guarded, and was like, "Why?"

137

138 Doreen: Yeah, "What do you want?" [Acting like the student]. Yes.

139

140 Cindy: He doubts it, that's his rigid face.

141

142 Doreen: Trust. He doesn't trust you.

143

144 Cindy: And that could be the pattern that he's had in his life, right?

145

146 Doreen: And of course, they're not used to having somebody, you know, treat them with,  
147 you know, respect. Someone that actually listens to them, you know, and thinks they got  
148 something important to say, right? When in fact most of them just need someone to listen  
149 to them, right?

150

151 Cindy: It think you have to be a listener in our field. We hear a lot of stuff.

152

153 Abby: Are you asking us whether it's important that we're liked?

154

155 Group Leader: Yes. What did you think about that?

156

157 Doreen: Yes, I think that is important.

158

159 Abby: I think it's a bonus. But I have to remember like, when I spoke to a police officer,  
160 at the end of the day, they still have to do their job first. They try to do it with  
161 compassion and thoughtfulness, but you're not going to have everybody like you and  
162 that's not, that's the nature of the game. You're going to have students that you remind  
163 them of somebody they didn't like, no matter what you do. But at the end of the day we  
164 still have to do our job first. But that's my take. If I go in there wanting to be liked, I'm  
165 going to miss the mark on what my job is first.

166

167 Betsy: Well, that's a balance because you want to develop that relationship with them so  
168 that they're they want to work with you and they want to succeed. We also have to make  
169 sure that they're moving on. They're actually going to succeed. We run into that where

170 students will become so attached to *a* staff member that they're not willing to work with  
171 any other staff member and so you're not going, and you actually hold them back and that  
172 is a battle, at Alternate where -

173

174 Doreen: Well, you're just like being a parent, really, I mean you're not to be their friend or  
175 buddy, you know. You're just like being a parent. You have a job. And you're not going  
176 to connect with everyone. But if you are liked, then you can connect a lot better, right?

177

178 Cindy: Well, kids are smart, and I think what you're talking about to, kind of, it was like,  
179 I don't know how I felt for that, but it was like reliability and dependability. So there was  
180 this boy who's constantly wondering, right? But if he sees your consistency and you're  
181 *consistent*, that speaks volumes to these kids because they don't have that and--

182

183 Abby: Yeah, its security.

184

185 Doreen: Somebody they can rely on, day in and day out.

186

187 Mari: It is. You know. So, I got some important to list, alternate--

188

189 [Crosstalk]

190

191 Mari: We don't all have to be the same, we're not all the same, but just being consistent to  
192 who you are, they can know what to count on with your personality and your behavior  
193 and all those things that create safety for them, I think.

194

195 Doreen: Yes, its stability.

196

197 Group Leader: Fabulous. Thanks for this, you guys. So, let's me see how much you  
198 remember about The Nurtured Heart Approach. So there are three stands in The Nurtured  
199 Heart Approach, and I wonder if you remember what they are. Do you remember what  
200 they are? Think you remember?

201

202 Mari: Stand on three legs.

203

204 Group Leader: Stand on three legs, three stands. Do you remember? Betsy knows, I  
205 know.

206

207 Betsy: Yes, I do! So one is clear consequences.

208

209 Group Leader: Clear rules.

210

211 Betsy: Clear rules?

212

213 Cindy: Expectations. Rules. Yes.

214

215 Group Leader: I think you got--I want to make sure we're clear about understanding that.  
216 So, it's clear rules. Which means, you know like if kids says FU, FU, FU. You know,  
217 your rule is we don't swear as adults and your rule does not wiggle. The consequence of  
218 that rule may be delivered at different times and different ways. But a rule is still your  
219 rule, so you're firm and entrenched in that rule. So, that's one. But if you start that one,  
220 you'll fail.

221

222 Betsy: Yeah, great.

223

224 [Laughter]

225

226

227 Jim: And they will swear in with you.

228

229 Group Leader: Yes. So, what's the other ones?

230

231 Cindy: Consequence?

232

233 Group Leader: Well, that's stand. So, after the consequence, what are the other two  
234 stances?

235

236 Cindy: Who's got their books here?

237

238 Mari: I do, and I just read that. Would you like me to find it -?

239

240 Cindy: Call it out.

241

242 Cindy: What's that reset one...

243

244 [Laughter]

245

246 Group Leader: I brought an extra book. Cindy. You didn't get to hear this right? So can I  
247 get, can I give you my book, extra book.

248

249 Cindy: Yes.

250

251 Group Leader: I brought another one on purpose.

252

253 Cindy: Yeah, that would be really helpful.

254

255 Group Leader: Sorry but I was just kick, I'm kicking somebody down there.

256

257 Mari: Not me, it's the pole.

258

259 Group Leader: Kicking the heck out of the pole.

260

261 Betsy: Just while you guys are looking that up, I just [inaudible].

262

263 Group Leader: Okay so I mean it, so here. Wait, don't whisper you got to talk loud. So the  
264 question again is which of the stance is the hardest one for you? Do you want to begin  
265 and just-were you talking? Okay, thanks.

266

267 Doreen: Okay.

268

269 Group Leader: Okay. Thank you.

270

271

272 Doreen: Well definitely number two; Refuse to put any energy into anything negative  
273 that's the most difficult for me. You know when they are doing this (banging the table)  
274 when the teacher's talking and doing a bottle flip and--It's really hard to think of  
275 something witty and positive in that situation, you know. Like when I go home I could  
276 think of something, but it takes a while, right?

277

278 Group Leader: Right. Right.

279

280 Cindy: You have to be on your toes.

281

282

283 Doreen: Yes. Rather than, "Stop it!" [Laughs]

284

285 Group Leader: Right.

286

287 Cindy: Always trying to find the positive.

288

289 [Cross talk]

290

291 Doreen: Don't do that.

292

293 Group Leader: But it's hard.

294

295

296 Abby: What about when it's a safety issue? The perception of getting a child to stop is  
297 safety is interpreted as negative. When the bottom line is, my directive is because  
298 something's happening.

299

300 Doreen: (Interrupting) Something bad is going to happen.

301

302 Abby: Safety issue. I mean as adults, we can foresee something coming down the line.

303

304 Doreen: Yes. Because we've been there.

305

306 Abby: And how would you address that? Like the other day, I had three students fighting  
307 in the pool. They were actually physically going at each other. Real strong and really  
308 good. They were surrounded by primary-aged special needs children including  
309 wheelchairs, everywhere. We had fist-a-cuffs. There was no room for not addressing the  
310 negative energy.

311

312 Group Leader: Of course not.

313

314 Abby: They went straight to directive.

315

316 Group Leader: Could we talk about that, that's just clearly rules like of course anybody's  
317 in danger of being harmed? Safety as your protocol all the time. I think going back to  
318 some of that is the delivery of that, of how you deliver that clarity of rules. So even the  
319 kid is messing around with something, it's just no energy to it. You just take it out of his  
320 hands and you keep talking.

321

322 Betsy: You just move on.

323

324 Group Leader: Yes, you move and distract on that. I'm always like, "Well this coffee cup  
325 isn't behaving nicely or I'm going take in over here." You know, but I think it is, it's  
326 having that energy and you're right it is kind of being on your toes. So partly it was like  
327 which stand is harder and why. I want you to think, when are you strongest? When are  
328 you on your best foot and when are you not? And are there certain kids who you just  
329 struggle to see the positives and that's what I want you to talk about. Could you share  
330 some of them? How about you Ed, you've been very quiet over there. Can you give me  
331 some of your insight?

332

333 Ed: Well my groups of kids are a bit older. They're from fifteen to nineteen. One thing, I  
334 realize is especially when you're dealing with eighteen and nineteen-year-old, you're not  
335 operating like you are with a fifteen-year-old. You are much more relational. You  
336 communicate with them; the rules are not very tight. Yes, a lot of give and take. And you  
337 work with, at that point already you are able to communicate in the way that is  
338 negotiating, relational, and you put it on them and say 'okay, this is your education not  
339 mine, and you know I want you to graduate, and this is what you need to do and if you  
340 don't, you just won't graduate. And so, you start going that direction once they get older.

341

342 Group Leader: That's absolute clarity, right.

343

344 [Laughs]

345

346 Ed: Yes, and at sixteen years old and you sort of-

347

348 Group Leader: You won't graduate. There's your consequence.

349

350 Ed: So yes, I mean you were talking a little bit before about this kind of education is  
351 expensive. I've work with inmates, adult inmates in prison. Taught there, that's more  
352 expensive. Trying to salvage adult inmates is way more expensive than working and  
353 trying to divert our young people away from that sort of lifestyle and working and  
354 talking to them about that.

355

356 Cindy: Prevention as opposed to intervention.

357

358 Betsy: Yes, prevention.

359

360 Ed: And so. Intervention, we do so much of that. I think we don't even realize how much  
361 of what we do is intervention. It is, becomes a part of what I do on a daily basis. When  
362 I'm sitting down and teaching trigonometry to a student, the conversation goes to like,  
363 "Oh, when are you working. Are you still?" He got a part-time job. So, you're working  
364 from, "Well, I won't be there tomorrow because I'm working 6 to 1 o'clock or 6-11 or  
365 whatever at the superstore so I won't be here tomorrow." And the others, you know, and  
366 then at 10:30 a student says, "Well, I got to leave now. I'm gonna start working at Burger  
367 King at 11 o'clock," and another one goes, so you have that sort of give and take. You  
368 don't make, you have, you don't say, "You have to be here at 11:30. You can't skip out."  
369 These kids have jobs. So, a lot of them have 30 and 40 hour-a-week jobs and they're  
370 working this school around their 40-hour job. So, I'm saying, "Great, you got a job.  
371 You're learning a lot of stuff in life." So, my group already, I got three of them for sure  
372 that have 30 hour a week job and maybe plus.

373

374 Group Leader: But they're coming to school?

375

376 Ed: They're coming to school –

377

378 Betsy: Or we go to them –

379

380 Ed: So, we work a schedule around. But that's my fifteen to nineteen-year-olds. That's not  
381 at [Alternative Middle School] where the smaller group where you have to be fairly rigid.

382

383 Jim: I'm finding now, being a newer teacher, coming from the childhood youth care  
384 where it's all 'care, care, care' now stepping into the role of *educator*, that when do I say,  
385 you know, just told to go "F off" five times a day... When do I say, if they are a littler,  
386 when do they go into that role of, "Hey this is your education, why happens when you go  
387 to jobsite? Are you gonna be able to tell your boss to go "F off" five times?"

388

389 [Cross talk]



390

391

392 Ed: That's right. That's the kind of discussion we have. When they are younger you have  
393 to be fairly rigid.

394

395 Jim: Even though, the younger they are, the more mature supposedly they are, the more  
396 *life* experience they might have in our site, we're still not able to tell them, "Hey wait a  
397 minute; if you're in a job site, you're fired."

398

399 Mari: Well they can't foresee that anyway.

400

401 Group Leader: Right. They aren't future thinkers yet.

402

403 Jim: Yes, and so we still take it. But with your crew, they've been in the workforce and  
404 they understand. Maybe they were fired once -

405

406 Ed: Yes. They've been fired once or twice already.

407

408 Jim: And they will realize, "Whoa, I can't do that anymore." So we're a little in the middle  
409 -

410

411 [Cross talk]

412

413 Group Leader: The ten reasons of the Top ten reasons of why people are fired, none of  
414 them are cognitive. None of them.

415

416 Cindy: No, they're social.

417

418 Group Leader: So, they are social, emotional skills. All of them you know, from  
419 dishonesty, to drug and alcohol, to...

420

421 Betsy: Disrespect.

422

423 Group Leader: Disrespect. So, I think you're spot-on, Jim. And the reality, but what we  
424 do know, that continues to be huge is having a significant adult who *sees* them is really  
425 critical. The one piece I guess I want you to get when you're thinking about this is, it's  
426 okay to have absolute clarity but it's not okay for you to swear at me. And so even if  
427 you're just turning away and not responding and inside, you just don't show that kid that  
428 you're getting that angst and that they're triggering you, you're not taking it. Don't take it  
429 because it's their choice for what they say but you're not going to be in relationship with  
430 the kid who's foaming at the mouth with potty language and abusive. That's not, you  
431 know, they wouldn't tolerate it from their friends why, you know, the same way. And it's  
432 a learned behavior because likely, a lot of these kids have been scorned at by their  
433 parents, you know. So, it makes it a tough balance because you're trying to set a reason

434 behind it. And like today, the activity, right? I think a lot of times they're in that panic  
435 zone, right? So when they're in the panic zone and you're an authority figure and they  
436 don't have a lot of tools. I mean, I was joking with Charlie about that. It was like, "Really  
437 that's all you have? It's just FU, FU, FU you have nothing else?" [Laughs] You just say it  
438 clearly and needed more tools to manage that difficult place. But, yeah. There are more  
439 important things.

440

441 Ed: Sometimes, for me, it's coming in with a bit of sense of humor. Just diffuse it a little  
442 bit and also realize it's not at *me*; his not aiming it at me. And that tells me, okay, and  
443 then maybe when the person deescalates, maybe came to, sometimes, well actually come  
444 and apologize. But now we have to learn at not going there. So a lot of what we do is life  
445 skills. And we do that in the context of teaching them Math and English and Social  
446 studies and all that. But we're always stopping and saying, "Hold on, you know, how's  
447 that look?" you know. There's a discussion going on but you're talking in a large thousand  
448 school people school or two thousand, it doesn't work. When you have 30 or 40 kids in  
449 the classroom, 30 kids, that doesn't-

450

451 Group Leader: I don't know. I feel like, Ed, we're letting him off the hook a little.  
452 Because I feel like, I have worked in large schools. And I have worked in strong large  
453 schools with strong educators that figure out how to build relationships even if there's 35  
454 kids in their classroom.

455

456 Ed: You want to [inaudible]

457

458 Group Leader: Those are the people that we should be counseling out of this school if  
459 they can't figure out a way to connect with the kid. It just doesn't work. Being an  
460 authoritarian figure in schools does not work.

461

462 Cindy: It doesn't work. The power struggle does NOT work.

463

464 Group Leader: It does not work nor does being permissive. Right? It's just like parenting.

465

466 Abby: But it also means it doesn't have to be a power struggle. Like with my kids  
467 whether, they're a student or even in my home, we have negotiable and non-negotiable,  
468 period. They never demonstrate disrespect for me, they know what, you know, I'm very  
469 clear on it and it worked. They just know. I don't have kids telling me to F-Off. They just  
470 don't do it. Or if they do, right away they're like, "I'm so sorry that slipped out." And I  
471 make sure it doesn't happen twice. They will make mistakes, okay that's cool.

472

473 [Crosstalk]

474

475 Betsy: The kid is saying FU right? So just an example, because that happened today. That  
476 student ended up in my office. And I just said, it's okay for you to be angry, it's okay for

477 you to think some thing's unfair but it's not okay for you to say FU at the teacher. It's just  
478 not okay. So, but the student was still really, still-

479

480 Group Leader: Elevated.

481

482 Cindy: And felt very unjustly, whatever. So, then it's up to our school, what is our  
483 school policy for like, repairing the harm, right?

484

485 Group Leader: Exactly, exactly. And I can send you some forms. I will send you some of  
486 the forms that I use, and I actually talked to Charlie about this. Because it is, it's about  
487 what we want as kids to take ownership. And a lot of times, I can get kids to understand  
488 that if they wear the shoe on the other foot. So, if you know, 'if this was Joey who did  
489 this to you,' you would feel inflamed and whatever. I mean and for them to actually see  
490 teachers as human beings and understand the impact you made on a teacher.

491

492 Participant(s): Yes. Absolutely.

493

494 [Crosstalk]

495

496 Abby: And so when their behavior has gone sideways, and we are sometimes the only  
497 people in their life that get that we can separate their value from their behavior - and the  
498 value is still phenomenal for us. And so to give them the opportunity to feel bad in the  
499 behavior and still feel good in their value in a few minutes. Very few people in their life  
500 do that. So, to rock them up the opportunity to say sorry.

501

502 Group Leader: Exactly, Abby. That is exactly how I view it. Like when we, and this is the  
503 same thing if a kid comes in you got a kid who's identified bully and you got the kid that  
504 he's identified victim or whatever the story is, or you'll get the parents. I work in a  
505 wealthy community. I think I shared that with you guys. So you get parents is like you  
506 know, "Cindy should be suspended for this behavior" Or whatever they want for this  
507 action, and helping those parents and that kid at the same time, that victim, to understand  
508 that Cindy is my student, too, and Cindy needs to see how his behavior impacted other  
509 people but I believe in Cindy, I believe in his ability to be successful no matter what. And  
510 I'm going to hold him accountable for that, but and not in any shaming way or anything  
511 like that – um, but it's a challenge for some parents who just want retribution, you know.  
512 We know for a fact that retribution doesn't solve a problem.

513

514 Abby: But a parent is emotionally connected, right, and they're *genuinely* hurt. And so,  
515 it's different for us and these kids are able to see the opportunity of understanding that we  
516 still have value. There's a lot of inner values taken when the behaviors is constantly the  
517 focus.

518

519 Group Leader: No I think that was an excellent. I think, that was absolutely the truth  
520 when they struggle to separate their behavior from their own value to people. That is our

521 challenge. That's our journey in so many ways. Its helping them see and don't like what,  
522 just like you were, that behavior is not okay, you're lovely and you were dis-regulated but  
523 you need another tool.

524

525 Mari: I think it's the closure. Don't we need closure?

526

527 Group Leader: Yes, we do, and they have not had closure to a lot of really hurtful  
528 comments and situations that have happened to them from their teachers

529

530 Mari: From their teachers -

531

532 Group Leader: yeah, from their teachers and their early experiences of their youth. It was  
533 really, I was sitting next to Carolyn (the HS building counselor) and was there in the  
534 room with me. And it was really--when I turned to her and I'm like, "This is really hard  
535 for me to hear" She's like "Yes this is really hard for me to hear, too." I'm like, "Okay,  
536 you have to stay with them. I leave." [Laughs] And so you have to, I mean, there are  
537 some kids and you can just, by the way they talk about it. So 4th Grade, and this  
538 experience of humiliation and bullying and he talks about it, and as talks about it, his  
539 eyes start to tear up. And the reality is--

540

541 [tape break]

542

543 Betsy: [inaudible] So only two our teachers weren't able to make it today. Everyone else  
544 who's on this table is support staff. They're educational assistance, educators in their own  
545 way. And I'm just wondering if some of you find it difficult just to keep the positive  
546 going when maybe that's not a general mindset that you deal with regularly in the  
547 programs you have. Or if you want to ask maybe Tammy a question about how do I bring  
548 that positive energy or how do I not give energy to the negative when I'm in a program  
549 that's being run by somebody else that they're really just part of, right?

550

551 Group Leader: Right. Yes.

552

553 Cindy: I'm just wondering if that's a question that-

554

555 Group Leader: Yes

556

557 Mari: Totally

558

559 Abby: You mean a question or a struggle?

560

561 [Laughs]

562

563 Cindy: It's a struggle.

564

565 Abby: Sure

566

567 Mari: Yes

568

569 Abby: I'm just wondering. What do you mean?

570

571 Cindy: Well, it could be something that is just, people are dealing with. And there's like,  
572 how do I, because the majority of the people around this table had been coming all year  
573 learning about the book, and learning about The Nurtured Heart Approach, and talking  
574 about it, right? So that's just the question I have.

575

576 Group Leader: Right. How you stay positive?

577

578 Mari: When your leadership may appear different. And I experience that in other places,  
579 whatever, but definitely, that is a struggle for sure. Especially because I come from an  
580 experiential learning background where there's a different approach to learning anyways,  
581 so I constantly struggle that but. I find that you make the difference where you can make  
582 the difference. You just have to be okay with that and do what you can when you can,  
583 with what you've got and-

584

585 Evelyn: I think we got those opportunities to be one-on-one and that's when I got to  
586 realize, if I can leave the classroom and leave the student one-on-one, then I know you're  
587 contributing.

588

589 Betsy: Because in that [an intense] moment, you could be that person who's like co-  
590 regulating, bringing that student [back to regulation], perhaps their thinking brain is  
591 working so they can get back into the classroom and then kind of continue and function.

592

593 Evelyn: Absolutely. Shocking, talking.

594

595 Cindy: And also, with this small stuff, the side comments like, "Wow, that was really  
596 awesome, he pulled that off." Just whatever, "Oh, god, you just stayed in the room. That's  
597 cool." Like little things.

598

599 Group Leader: Actually, this small stuff, Cindy, it's the big stuff.

600

601 Cindy: Yes. It is the big stuff. I find that, like, that is the most powerful.

602

603 Group Leader: The small stuff is the biggest stuff that you do. Whole group recognition –  
604 meh. Even sometimes large group and individuals which are great. So, it's always good to  
605 energize people in that situation, but that pull to the side (Admirably)...

606

607 Participant 4: One on one

608

609 Cindy: There's the comments right.

610

611 Group Leader: Yes. And then don't stick around for them to diffuse it. So, when you're  
612 dropping a greatness bomb on a kid, you're just going to stay--You're not going to stay  
613 present for him to respond when your kids are dealing coming from trauma space, you'll  
614 just going to say, "I see this" and you're going to turn around.

615

616 Abby: And the bonus of that is we don't have time anyway so.

617 [Laughter]

618

619 Evelyn: Yes. Then there's that.

620

621 Group Leader: Don't even argue it, right?

622

623 Evelyn: Funny.

624

625 [Background talk]

626

627 Abby: I have a couple of questions, there was a word in the book that you used that I  
628 wanted you to clarify, and it was around the behavior of when they would--I really love  
629 and support the concept of: don't give energy to negative energy unless it's a safety issue.

630

631 Group Leader: Absolutely. Yes.

632

633 Abby: I have police officers and nurses. I have teachers in the family. Safety first and if it  
634 sounds negative, we'll mop it up emotionally later.

635

636 Group Leader: Absolutely, sorry. Yes.

637

638 Abby: But right now, it's your safety. There was a word that was used. You referred to  
639 kids as 'Goofing off' and I like that term, 'if they're goofing off.' I'm not a fan and I  
640 needed clarity from you if that's possible, is that welcome here?

641

642 Group Leader: Yes. Absolutely. Yeah.

643

644 Abby: Okay. When a kid, when they goof up, you actually used goofing, goof up. I guess  
645 when I see the word goof, I think of silly antics and behaviors like that?

646

647 Group Leader: Yes. So that would be goofing off. So, goof up, it was just - make a  
648 mistake. Like here I'm intentional, I'm trying to do this, and I goof up, go-

649

650

651 Abby: Because I don't want to belittle - You know when a kid's throwing a punch at  
652 another kid [inaudible] share down the hall and having,

653

654 Group Leader: That's not a goof up, that's a safety issue.

655

656 Abby: - and definitely what I call an emotional seizure meltdown, that's more than  
657 goofing.

658

659 Group Leader: Yes, that's more that goof up. Now goof up would be just like, to me, I  
660 would go back to the kid who gets really angry, and he says F U, or something like that.  
661 When he knows the rule is the rule, and not to do that and he did not demonstrate self-  
662 control. We don't respond to it the same way as somebody who throws a chair at  
663 somebody or something like that. That's what I meant by that.

664

665 Abby: And the other question I have for you was, the word 'No' covers under this  
666 umbrella of negative. But I'm wondering, there's a time and place for this simple word  
667 'no.' I want to hear your thought on that because you're robbing them again if we don't  
668 help them learn to accept the word 'no.'

669

670 Group Leader: Howard Glasser thinks all of our rules should be based on 'No.'

671

672

673 Abby: At some point because the world is full of big fat Nos.

674

675 Group Leader: There's a great book about that, actually. Adele somebody or other who  
676 wrote this book about Nos. No, in fact, I'm sorry if you got that impression but actually  
677 Howard Glasser was one of the first people who said, "All your rules should be with No."  
678 No hitting, no swearing, no -- Because it is clarity right versus "respect" which is wiggly  
679 and vague. So clarity around that No is pretty-

680

681 [Cross talk]

682

683 Abby: It's black and white for them in processing, especially at that moment.

684

685 Group Leader: It is, you know, I mean you can process afterwards why the rules exist. I  
686 mean many times when I'm doing this it looks like, "Oh, we didn't yet have a rule about  
687 "No throwing that plastic bottle across the room." I guess we have to add-

688

689 Cindy: Add it to the list.

690

691 Group Leader: No throwing or adding it to the list. You don't want this endless little-

692

693 Participant 4: Particularly if you can aim well. [Laughs]

694

695 Group Leader: Yes exactly.

696

697 Cindy: No throwing items would be a good thing, right

698

699 Group Leader: Right. Yeah, you also don't want to be inundated with the list of life's

700 Nos. I mean you want to be about 'the yes' as much as you possibly can be. But,

701 absolutely when it comes to safety, there's no wiggle room at all on that.

702

703 Participant: There's a time and a place.

704

705 Evelyn: When we worked with the, when I did the Life's Skills program with at-risk

706 youth, the beginning always was, with the room developing the rules, coming from them.

707 So it was like, "You put it there, like, I mean, you didn't want anybody to hit you. I don't

708 want anybody to hit me. You know, that's the rules. Let's do it together." Be a part of it.

709 Everyone's clear.

710 Group Leader: You're right.

711

712 Betsy: And there's a section in your book that talks about that coming together as a circle

713 and then coming up with the rules for the circle. And I thought that was really clear.

714

715 Evelyn: You know what else? Even when you come in to a school where you haven't

716 been a part of, which I've done numerous times, I don't know what the rules are either.

717 So, it was really vague to me often. It takes me however many months to figure out what

718 the rules are. Often, they're different with different people. And so-

719

720 Abby: So how clear are we for the kids?

721

722 Evelyn: How clear must we be for the kids? I mean it takes me that long to figure it out -

723

724 Group Leader: Well I think that's an opportunity, too, for every new kid that comes in

725 your building, that should be an opportunity for let's--"Okay you guys, Joey's here new.

726 Let's--yeah-what are the rules; let's go revisit our rules right now just so that Joey can see,

727 our new student can see.

728

729 Evelyn: Or re-visit. It's up on the board, we wrote it, put it up.

730

731 Jim: And every month we got a new student coming in and it's let's, not put them on the

732 spot but let's go over the rules.

733

734 Evelyn: It's helpful for us.

735

736 Evelyn: Or you get a leader from your classroom to help share

737

738 Group Leader: And then you could say, are they still working? These are the rules we

739 have. Are these still working? Is there one rule that we're just not having clarity on, is

740 there something-



741

742 Jim: Coming from the presentation today, and what I really took away from it was those  
743 two groups in the board, 'group' time and 'me' time.

744

745 Group Leader: No, the plan — 'group' plan and 'own' plan.

746

747 Jim: Yeah. And looking at the classroom was like, we haven't got, our students don't  
748 know what group time is. They don't know what it is.

749

750 Group Leader: No, no, no, they need some social thinking skills. So you should check out  
751 Jim, Socialthinking.com and look at some of those terms that I teach my students because  
752 even my middle-schoolers learn the term group plan and own plan. They all learn  
753 expected versus unexpected and how people feel when you behave in an unexpected way.  
754 And it's a great word - other than being able to reset when somebody does something,  
755 like, I noticed today, one of the students comes up with her fidget and if that was a  
756 vocabulary as it is on my classroom, I would have simply said unexpected. And that  
757 could have been a way of resetting her in that moment for her to go. 'Yes, that was  
758 weird.' It's another way of saying, that's weird. It makes people uncomfortable and  
759 without a lot of energy around it.

760

761 Betsy: Yeah, negative.

762

763 Group Leader: You know, because, part of it is you're absolute right Jim: they don't  
764 know...

765

766 Jim: Yeah.

767

768 Abby: Consistent with it. Because the second you break that consistency, you're  
769 contributing to already an anxious child-

770

771 Doreen: And it shows that somebody cares about them.

772

773 Abby: And would be so unfair to them if we're not consistent without expectation with  
774 them. Regardless of what it is. I mean, obviously that's an extreme-

775

776 Doreen: We have to be accountable.

777

778 [Cross talk]

779

780 Betsy: And being - it's dependable for them to know what to expect from you.

781

782 Cindy: Yes.

783

784 Abby: That's the safety. It's safe.

785

786 [Cross talk]

787

788 Group Leader: It is. It feels safe to know I pull this out during, if I pull out a fidget during  
789 my visiting time or whatever, it will get taken away. And the rule is, the rule, is the rule.  
790 But it's a non-energetic role. It was like, "Yeah, oops, not this time." The time for that  
791 'own plan' comes up later on. Understanding that, you know, no, the inconsistency is  
792 super hard on kids and I think you bring up a really good point because it is helpful to  
793 have a couple of group plan rules in your buildings that everybody is aware of. So,  
794 substitutes coming to building know, this is what we don't... like you know, [Speaking to  
795 Betsy] you lock the doors for the kids to come in. You have some kids pounding. You  
796 repeated that reminder for that kid three times. And I would tell you, he doesn't get to  
797 come in next time. You say, "I'm sorry, you got to wait 20 minutes because you broke the  
798 rule." And it's, you know, most kids can you know, if he has to pee, he can pee in the  
799 woods.

800

801 Cindy: There are consequences.

802

803 Abby: And we're doing them a favor by making them wait 20 minutes. Because the real  
804 world is going to be much harder on them...

805 Cindy: And you're not holding it against them.

806

807 Abby: And it's not about the person that's going to be in further trouble.

808

809

810 Group Leader: Like okay, the next time you talk. Because otherwise, we're treating him  
811 like you're not capable and that's what you get to say, 'Oh my God, I've been doing this  
812 so wrong. I've been like reminding you of the rule.' I said, 'You don't know how to  
813 knock.' Let's just practice. [Knocks] Okay, we got that down. Good. You're a really good  
814 knocker. I'm looking forward to hearing that knock. Because you remind him, I will get  
815 there every time, but you know what you get there every time when he pounds too?  
816 [Knocks] so why should I go to that rule, you know. I mean, so that's a piece of cake, you  
817 just, you know, I will answer if you knock. I will not answer if you pound it. You might  
818 just announce that to the whole group or your class. And we're going to all work to help  
819 you know this rule because actually, if you pound at someone's door, they're not going to  
820 answer either because you're scaring the crap out of them, right?

821

822 Doreen: Tell the police.

823

824 Group Leader: Or the police, right? So, you know that's a life skill. It's the same ideas.  
825 Anyway-

826

827 Mari: How do you do that with someone that's the perpetual victim?

828

829 Group Leader: Yes, like somebody did it if there's [inaudible] calls.

830

831 Mari: They do not take own-. No. There's zero accountability for anything. If somebody  
832 else's fault, they are, like to me, it's harming.

833

834 Group Leader: Right, I would start; I would suggest like in the next incident where that  
835 happens and have them write down. Get in the habit of having them write it down  
836 because if they can see because, you can use one of my reflection forms or something but  
837 it's like, what did you want to have happened by these acts. What were you thinking at  
838 that time, what it is? And you begin to have evidence where you're like were there--  
839 Could you have done something differently? And the moment they can take up  
840 ownership, I say, I could have done something differently and what you can commit to  
841 moving forward is an opportunity for them to feel powerful. And then, all your energy  
842 goes to them taking responsibility. And if they're not, and if they don't, you're going to  
843 arrive here again and then they'll fill out another form. It's like, "Ahhh."

844

845 Abby: So, is there ever an instance where they don't ever?

846

847 Jim: Or something that they write it down that eventually you can see like concrete  
848 evidence of a pattern -

849

850 [End - taping concluded]

## Appendix E

**Student Focus Group Transcript**

May 8, 2017

*All names are pseudonyms for actual participants*

- 1  
2 Interviewer: Well, hello. All right. So, best teacher that or the qualities of the best teacher  
3 you ever had? You could say the teacher's name, or you could just say a teacher and  
4 describe them.  
5  
6 Mason: Do school counselors count?  
7  
8 Interviewer: Yes.  
9  
10 Mason: Betsy Travis from [Alternative Middle School].  
11  
12 Interviewer: Tell me what made her good for you.  
13  
14 Mason: Right away when I met her, we clicked, and, like, I bonded with her right away.  
15 And I was able to tell her everything. And I could tell that I could trust her.  
16  
17 Interviewer: You could trust her.  
18  
19 Colton: She is awesome though, and she's an exception, because she's so awesome.  
20  
21 Interviewer: She's an exception. Don't you think there are more Betsys out there?  
22  
23 Colton: There probably is but not -  
24  
25 Mason: In theory, but I've yet to meet one.  
26  
27 Colton: Exactly. Well, other than Betsy.  
28  
29 Interviewer: So, when you say trust, is there anything else you can expand on that to me  
30 that describes what makes her a great educator?  
31  
32 Colton: You can definitely [inaudible].  
33  
34 Mason: I'm not good at explaining things  
35

36 Interviewer: What did you say?  
37  
38 Mason: I'm not into explaining things.  
39  
40 Interviewer: Well, you did pretty well. You jumped right in, so thank you for that.  
41  
42 Colton: We believe in you, you can do it.  
43 Interviewer: So, how about you Colton? What would you describe as an educator who  
44 you think is really one of the best? What qualities did they have?  
45  
46 Colton: I have two teachers. One is Karen. She was a really good teacher to talk to  
47 because she was so chill about everything.  
48  
49 Interviewer: So chill?  
50  
51 Colton: Kind of that. Yes. You know she was just a drug counselor, and then the other  
52 one was Mr. B. He was our old principal. And usually when I get in trouble, I didn't get  
53 in as much trouble, like, last year I accidentally brought a pocket knife to school because  
54 of my friend, and I was supposed to get expelled but he made sure I didn't so that was  
55 really -  
56  
57 Interviewer: So he had your back in some way or, why do think he didn't expel you?  
58  
59 Colton: What?  
60  
61 Interviewer: Why do you think he didn't expel you?  
62  
63 Colton: Because he understood. Because he could show both ways. But then we got Mr.  
64 Roth [drop in voice; sigh]  
65  
66 Interviewer: And he wasn't such a good -  
67  
68 Colton: No. He would say a bunch of things. He said, like, "I will destroy your career if  
69 you don't listen or answer this question!" Like, okay...[Miffed]  
70  
71 Interviewer: Okay. So, he was more...  
72  
73 Colton: So that was a quality, but not a *good* one.  
74  
75 Interviewer: No that exactly. But that's a good contrast because you would say that you  
76 didn't trust him. Do you think he believed in you?  
77  
78 Colton: No! He was so mean.  
79

80 Interviewer: What? Can you say more about what made him mean?  
81  
82 Colton: Well, for example, is here my friend kept getting called a slut and all those  
83 things, and she finally stuck up for herself because the principal isn't doing anything. So  
84 she slapped him but then she got suspended for a week.  
85  
86 Robert: Yes, I was about to say so, let me guess: Suspension!  
87  
88 Colton: Yeah.  
89 Robert: Here's the thing. I think all of us could probably go on and on about bad traits,  
90 which is why you probably asked a good question of any good traits, because we can  
91 probably be here for days talking through all the shit we've been through it. Pretty –  
92 frank.  
93  
94 Mia: Profanity!  
95  
96 Robert: Assholes. I said I'm going to, to be frank. I'm not just going to use words though.  
97 Just words. Just saying. Yeah. Um...A fair amount of the teachers here are pretty cool,  
98 they were actually pretty nice, and they actually cared. Instead of just calling us out, like,  
99 yes, we're not cool, well [inaudible], like, they actually had enthusiasm, motivated.  
100 Whereas most of the teachers I have had throughout my years them just, like, oh more  
101 kids, yeah.  
102  
103 Interviewer: I, like, that you said that: enthusiasm. And when you say motivated,  
104 motivated?  
105  
106 Robert: They were actually, like, excited to come. Weirdly enough because most of the  
107 teachers  
108 I've had over the years basically have been, like, 'What? Another day in a shit hole.'  
109  
110 Mason: That's true. Teachers don't really like their job. I don't know, mostly don't.  
111  
112 Robert: If you think, It's, like, I became a teacher to get money. Obviously, you didn't  
113 because when you started out, I think everyone gets paid very little -  
114  
115 Interviewer: What? Cyan?  
116  
117 Cyan: Sorry, like, I don't know. I've had that, too. I had a science teacher and he was like,  
118 kind of, "I'm just here for the paycheck" kinda thing not, like, [for] the students. I would  
119 kind of, like, "Okay." Then he would treat the students, like, really crappy, like, if they  
120 did something wrong they would, he would make you do paragraphs and stuff like that.  
121  
122 Colton: Or if you forgot a textbook he would have go and keep you writing: "Next time  
123 around I'll remember my textbook." [Sighing].

124

125 Robert: Kind of like the thing on like, the Simpsons where Bart Simpson was just writing  
126 something on the chalkboard over and over?

127

128 Colton: Yes.

129

130 Interviewer: Did that seem, like, relevant learning?

131

132 Colton: Or if, like, the whole class has done something, and you had to stay there for like,  
133 an extra few minutes...

134

135 Robert: Oh, yeah, those teachers.

136

137 Colton: They changed your break for only a few minutes so if you had to stay in you  
138 were - Interviewer: When one or two people are doing something, yes?

139

140 Robert: Those are fun. Stay another five minutes. 'It's not even that long. Stay.' [using  
141 dramatic teacher, like, voice]. It's, like, 'ok.'

142

143 Interviewer: So Mia, what's an example of...can you think of qualities or a teacher that  
144 you had that and what qualities did they demonstrate?

145

146 Mia: I like when they are understanding, and when they can cope. Not cope, but when  
147 they can, like, they can basically connect with you.

148

149 Robert: They actually care about the students. The fact that they actually care about their  
150 job: That probably be the best thing. Just say that and that covers everything. Just saying  
151 they actually care about their job.

152

153 Interviewer: Okay, thanks.

154

155 Mia: In eighth grade I think I have this teacher she was from Britain just recently got  
156 there, so she had the accent she was really energetic and made fun of her cooking a lot  
157 and she wasn't all that I guess business like, and she gave her students, like, one of her  
158 students had committed suicide years prior, so she gave out her phone number and told  
159 the students to text her if they needed help or, but it wasn't like, 'Text me if you need me'  
160 and then no one actually texted her. She was kind of like, more of a friend than a teacher,  
161 so we would actually text her.

162

163 Interviewer: Did you text her?

164

165 Mia: Yes she is and...

166

167 Robert: Everybody text their teacher.

168

169 Mia: She I guess pushed for good learning. Learning. Because she would buy, like, five-  
170 dollar gift cards and then if someone improved, even if they weren't best in the class, if  
171 they improve in what they used to do, then she'd give them a little treat and they would be  
172 able to go and get some snacks.

173

174 Robert: Merry Christmas and to all a good New Year.

175

176 Interviewer: That is pretty cool. That is, like, you know.

177

178 Mia: It wasn't compared to other students.

179

180 Interviewer: Just compared to you. Your progress. Your personal progress.

181

182 Robert: That's actually pretty cool. I haven't heard of a teacher doing that.

183

184 Mia: Yes, that was awesome.

185

186 Interviewer: Yeah, that's good teaching.

187

188 Robert: I have heard of a teacher rewarding you but not in that way. It's actually really  
189 cool.

190

191 Interviewer: Okay, let's see. Who haven't we heard from? How about you Samuel? Can  
192 you describe a teacher or qualities that they demonstrated?

193

194 Samuel: Bad or good?

195

196 Interviewer: We're talking about good qualities. I want you to try to identify some of the  
197 good qualities and strengths of teachers that have helped you learn, or stay in school, or  
198 felt, like, they cared for you, or you know whatever.

199

200 Samuel: Up until I got in the [Alternative High School], they were all, like, kind of  
201 capitalists. They wouldn't really, like, care too much. Like they, well they would, but to  
202 an extent, they would just be, like, 'Well ok I'll show you how to do this and if you don't  
203 figure it out at that point, then I won't help you anymore?'" [Miffed].

204

205 Robert: Like if you don't get that the first time, I'm not helping you again.

206

207 Samuel: And like, you can just tell by how they act. And like how controlling they are,  
208 that they would basically be just there for the money. And then when you get to  
209 [Alternative High School], you get the supports, which is, like, actually they care for you,  
210 like, there's a few teachers, they'll, like, ask how you're doing, what you did on the  
211 weekend, and like, back in those old schools, they'd have like thousands of students, and



212 they wouldn't really take their time to care and they'd just get through their day and go  
213 home.  
214  
215 Interviewer: Do you feel like you could have been a bit invisible sometimes in those  
216 schools?  
217  
218 Samuel: Yeah, okay. Considering there are, like, fifteen hundred students at [Mainstream  
219 High School] and there's like four or 3000 at [different Mainstream High School]. It's  
220 pretty easy to be invisible. Whereas here it's, like, a hundred and eighty.  
221  
222 Colton: But even if a teacher...  
223  
224 Interviewer: That's a voice for small schools. Right?  
225  
226 Student: Yes.  
227  
228 Interviewer: But this one is also unique.  
229  
230 Robert: The one funny thing about big school though is you could slip out of a classroom  
231 and literally no one would notice. Not even the students. You could come back and  
232 they're like, the end then they'd be, like, wait: You left?  
233  
234 Samuel: Unless you're a heart throb at school...  
235  
236 Colton: I, my teacher at school...  
237  
238 Interviewer: Right, yes then, if you're already caught.  
239  
240 Colton: If they consider students' history and you know all the classes we were in were,  
241 like, the worst, so if we were gone or, like, missing they would be everywhere. It's  
242 horrible. They're, like -  
243  
244 Robert: It's, like, a police search.  
245  
246 Interviewer: I think that's what they would say so unless you're a high risk or something.  
247  
248 Mia: I guess in a big school even if you have the best teacher ever they can't really take  
249 notice of every student because it would take every single second of their day to learn  
250 about every single student to actually form a relationship if there are hundreds going in  
251 and out of a classroom each day.  
252  
253 Robert: Yes. I was going to say; especially how middle schools and high schools work  
254 here. It's, like, moving between multiple classes, so your teachers, like, have sometimes a

255 hundred and fifty students a day and they don't even remember your name half the time  
256 because they have to remember everyone, or mostly every student's name ...  
257  
258 Colton: Like at [Mainstream High School initials].  
259  
260 Mason: Yes at [Mainstream High School initials].  
261  
262 Robert: Or, like, at smaller schools in general – its just -  
263  
264 [Everyone talking at the same time]  
265  
266 Mason: Like Mr. Wilson couldn't remember my name the whole time I was there -  
267  
268 Robert: The thing about this school is it's a first off I've noticed a lot of the alternative  
269 school they actually have teachers who give a shit, pardon my language, but it's true.  
270  
271 Mason: Way better teachers...  
272  
273 Robert: And then they also have, like, a smaller population.  
274  
275 [Crosstalk]  
276  
277 Interviewer: Wait - I'm sorry guys because of my recording thing if more than one person  
278 is talking, I won't be able to hear. So, you just add. I know it's hard sometimes coz I, like,  
279 that you guys were are giving me really great feedback, but I just have to just have one of  
280 you talk at a time.  
281  
282 Robert: But yeah, they also have a low population of students which is also helpful  
283 because it gets the staff that actually care to actually know people, like, all the staff know  
284 us fairly well by now.  
285  
286 Interviewer: Right. Yeah.  
287  
288 Mia: I like teachers with a sense of humor.  
289  
290 Robert: Yeah, they're fun  
291  
292 Mia: Like Mr. Andrews, he's just... [Positive sounding]  
293  
294 Robert: And then there are teachers who are just...  
295  
296 Interviewer: Have you ever felt like teachers have ever misused their sense of humor?  
297  
298 Mia: Yes.

299

300 Robert: Yep.

301

302 Interviewer: I was just thinking, like, sometimes sarcasm can, you know, it's funny unless  
303 you're the butt of it.

304

305 Robert: It's funny the first time. It's not funny the 50 millionth time.

306

307 Interviewer: Yeah, uh huh. Ok let's see. So, Alexandra, how about you what's the quality  
308 of a teacher that you're on?

309

310 Student: Your eyes.

311

312 Alexandra: The skills.

313

314 Interviewer: I'm sorry I just want to make sure everybody gets a chance to share because I  
315 figure because you're willing.

316

317 Alexandra: So, like, the great the experience I've had with a teacher?

318

319 Interviewer: Yes.

320

321 Alexandra: Well, there's somebody at my old school, Mr. L, would personally take out  
322 the time and after school to meet students and help them understand what they did in  
323 class. So, he didn't have to, like, push them during class.

324

325 Interviewer: Umm... So isn't this a cool idea you guys, if I create a paper, and I get your  
326 feedback on there, and other teachers get to listen to what you're saying that 'This is what  
327 works for me.' I mean, that's where you as youth - because I think sometimes you don't  
328 feel like you have a voice. Right? And that's kind of the point.

329

330 Robert: Well, especially in schools, cause that's the whole thing: the teachers don't care.  
331 You say something, or, like, you get in trouble, and you try to explain yourself, and the  
332 teacher says, "I don't care! Just go there!" [Pointing toward the office]. It's like, oh well,  
333 all right fine -

334

335 Alexandra: Or, like, when they accuse you of lying right away.

336

337 Robert: Yes.

338

339 Alexandra: And when you're trying to tell them your perspective, and then there like,  
340 'No, that's wrong.'

341

342 Robert: Or it's, like, whenever you get into a fight and because you don't wanna  
343 obviously get the crap kick out of you, you fight back, and then they end up worst for  
344 wear. So they take their side of it cause they actually have bruises and something. So  
345 there's stuff, like, that. And then it's just, like, well I may not have bruises but still, he's  
346 the one who started it. 'No, you did it.' It's, like -  
347

348 Alexandra: You just have to learn how to fight properly. It's not hard to fight without  
349 leaving bruises.

350

351 Interviewer: [Laughs] And I appreciate the segue from the conversation but I'd, like, to  
352 actually bring it back to the quality of teachers. I'm really not trying to figure out how - I  
353 mean you can do that on your own time: How to fight without hurting.

354

355 Robert: You don't care about the other person at that point. When they piss you off that  
356 bad it's just sometimes you crack your skull open. It's all I'm saying [Laughing]

357

358 Interviewer: Samuel? Can I ask a huge, respectful favor that you maybe you keep your  
359 phone out of it just for right now? Because I have this thing when people are talking, if  
360 somebody is texting, they might be texting about somebody here in the room, in this  
361 space? And when I leave you can text all you want. Would you mind? Thank You. Is that  
362 ok?

363

364 [Everybody murmuring something]

365

366 Student saying to Samuel: Yeah, put it away, I don't want that stress on me [sort of  
367 joking]

368

369 Interviewer: All right how about you, Mason, what a quality what a teacher, that what are  
370 some characteristics that teachers that you....

371

372 Mason: I don't know... teachers, I don't know the teacher that, like, cares about you and,  
373 like, I don't know, like, they give time, they get to know you, and actually know you for  
374 you not just, like, you're their student.

375

376 Robert: [inaudible]

377

378 Interviewer: Robert, can Mason just talk thanks.

379

380 Mason: I don't know it's, like, a lot of other people said that teachers that care and not just  
381 give you the work. Like I don't know I went to a, like, few different schools before this  
382 school and, like, I don't know. The two schools that weren't alternate schools, I don't  
383 know, the teachers really didn't care. I don't know. They said that they're going to help,  
384 and they said that they're *going* to - but they never really did anything.

385

386 Interviewer: Can you think about any teacher of that school or, like, anyone that made it  
387 in a different school for you stood out that they might care maybe more in some way or  
388 acted in a certain way that?

389

390 Mason: No one at the moment. Not at the normal schools. I can't think of anyone.

391

392 Robert: The worst part of this when, like, alternate schools have a bad reputation, but a  
393 lot of the time they end up having the much better staff and the much better learning  
394 experiences. So, you get this situation where it's, like, [As another student might say]  
395 "Oh, all the bad kids go there." Have you been there for more than five minutes? Have  
396 you seen this learning environment? [Incredulous.]

397

398 Colton: Especially at a place like [Alternative Middle School] because the main building  
399 is - the only time kids get in there is that very pouring raining outside.

400

401 Robert: Or when they get in the kitchen.

402

403 Colton: Or when they're in trouble.

404

405 Robert: Yeah or if you're in the kitchen. Like especially here, like, hell. Do you have a  
406 freakin' carpentry side? You have, like, a carpentry class. I don't think most schools have  
407 that unless it is an elective. We have that as a thing you can just do all day, like, most  
408 people would actually love that. But yet no one cares, because no one knows what goes  
409 on here. All they know is apparently all the bad kids go here.

410

411 Mason: Yeah. It's a pretty good school. You can... I don't know, you have the option of  
412 learning at your best, like, learning ability. Like if you're good at hands-on learning. You  
413 can have opportunities for that, but if you're not, if you're more like the type that can just  
414 sit there and get work done: be quiet in a quiet environment? They have that if you, like...

415

416 Interviewer: So, it's flexible.

417

418 Mason: Yeah, normal school aren't that flexible. It's normally just sitting there, do your  
419 work quietly, like, yeah.

420

421 Alexandra: And if you don't do your work, you automatically fail. Or they keep rushing  
422 you or, like, they don't help you.

423

424 Mason: They, like, keep putting stress on your back and you can't really just get it done,  
425 but, like, here they actually help you, they're, like, 'Here, you're going to do this and this  
426 and this and this day', and then you can't get it done by the end of the year. Stuff.

427

428 Interviewer: So, they can create a plan for you -

429

430 Mason: Yeah, set you up with a plan –

431

432 Interviewer: - but then it's your own timeline kind of. Okay.

433

434 Alexandra: And then usually they'll come, and you ask for help, but then they don't really  
435 help you. You just sit there, like, helpless.

436

437 Robert: Or they walk right by you and, like, 'Oh, you're on this part? That!' [Pointing]  
438 and they just walk away. It's, like, 'Read that really quickly and once you solve that  
439 question, you understand everything!'" [Sarcastic tone]

440

441 Alexandra: And then, like, the teachers here, like, actually check on you, once and a  
442 while, to see if you're doing well or need help.

443

444 Samuel: Yeah, to see if you need help.

445

446 Robert: Or, like, if they notice you're struggling, they'll come by and be, like, "You need  
447 help there?" and then I'd say, 'Yes, I kind of do actually. I need help with this. I think I'm  
448 doing it wrong. Can you help me with that note?' Yes, and they actually know their doing  
449 which is really great, because I've seen some teachers - they try to help but don't know  
450 what the hell they're doing.

451

452 Cyan: Um, in mainstream schools, teachers kind of look at the back of the class and they  
453 see students that are kinda zoned out or listening to music, and them just kinda send them  
454 away because they are not good students or they're working bad.

455

456 Mason: Yeah. They're not paying attention.

457

458 Cyan: Yeah, but all they needed, once they got here, they actually kind of bloom, and all  
459 they needed is just a little bit of focus and attention and everyone has a different learning  
460 strategies. Like in math: some people need to think of it as a pie, some people need to  
461 think of it as money. All you need to do is just kinda work around and... I mean with  
462 math, everyone clicks. You just have to find how they click. And then it will be super  
463 easy but...

464

465 Brian: And then if you're really stupid: its math you just refuse to do. [Ironic tone]

466

467 Cyan: But, like, in mainstream, you just tell the students the answer when they're getting  
468 stuck on it, but if you just tell them the answer, you are not telling them how to get to it.  
469 They're not going to learn.

470

471 Brian: But I'm okay with them just giving me the answer.

472

473 Robert: But then there's a situation when they give you the answer for the one question,  
474 but they won't explain to you how to do it. So, then they're, like, 'All right you need to  
475 show me the work on this.' It's, like, 'Well all you did was give me the answer, so I don't  
476 know how to show the work.' I don't even know what to do.

477

478 Brian: Google

479

480 Cyan: Yes, the teachers will rush you and, like, if you need a moment, they just keep  
481 going.

482

483 Interviewer: Yeah, That's hard. So, for a second can you walk it in a shoe of a teacher?  
484 For just a second? Okay, so now you're a teacher, not the student. All right. Let's go back  
485 and be a mainstream teacher.

486

487 Mason: Oh God, please don't make this do this. I think we all agree they're horrible  
488 people.

489

490 Interviewer: Come on, come on. Because what do you think might be going on for that  
491 mainstream teacher for those students? I'd love your answers, Cyan. I loved your answer  
492 about talking about the kids at the back of the room, being able to be seen, and having  
493 somebody actually...

494

495 Cyan: ...Pay attention to them

496

497 Interviewer: Take the time. Yes, pay attention to them.

498

499 Robert: You know. That kids just fired a spitball. Go to the office. Right now. That's what  
500 I can think of right now. [inaudible]

501

502 Cyan: I used to do the spitball thing for a while.

503

504 Interviewer: [Laughing] I didn't know people still did spitballs, I thought that was just  
505 something from my ...

506

507 Robert: Remember during the break, you hit me in the back of the neck with one.

508

509 [Crosstalk]

510

511 Cyan: Oh yeah...

512

513 Interviewer: So, you now are in charge of designing a school, but your school has a  
514 thousand kids.

515

516 Cyan: Are they in a classroom?

517  
518 Interviewer: No. So your school has a thousand kids, so your classrooms are, like, thirty  
519 per class or whatever.  
520  
521 Mason: Twenty per class  
522  
523 Interviewer: Twenty per class. Okay?  
524  
525 Mason: Twenty per class. Okay. [Thinking]  
526  
527 Samuel: How many kids do we have?  
528  
529 Interviewer: You got a thousand in the whole building.  
530  
531 [Crosstalk]  
532  
533 Robert: That's going to be, like, six times ten.  
534  
535 Mason: Six times ten is sixty. That's would be, how many classes would be [inaudible]  
536  
537 Robert: That's 1000 students.  
538  
539 Samuel: Yes.  
540  
541 Interviewer: I guess what I'm saying is you get to be the coach of these teachers to make  
542 them better in working with more kids.  
543  
544 Robert: No assholes. No! [Referring to teachers]  
545  
546 Interviewer: So what would you what advice would you give teachers that...  
547  
548 Robert: Go 'on the kids  
549  
550 Interviewer: What did you say?  
551  
552 Samuel: Go easier on the kids.  
553  
554 Interviewer: One at a time, Robert. What does that look like?  
555  
556 Samuel: Like some teachers, like, if the kids act up but then there are some kids who,  
557 like, if a teacher walks up to them, and like, calmly tries talks to them and then they're  
558 fine.  
559  
560 Interviewer: So be calm.



561  
562 Robert: Don't jump to conclusions just because of that doing one thing. Cause I've got a  
563 situation where I did that one thing and that teacher literally branded me as, like, the  
564 horrible kid in this school just like, that because I did one thing to defend myself or  
565 something.  
566  
567 Mia: And teachers also need to realize mental health issues are still a huge problem.  
568  
569 Samuel: Yeah, like anxiety.  
570  
571 Mia: Whether you can see it or not, like, you never know what they are going through.  
572  
573 Robert: Like if you miss school because of anxiety, and then you come and then they  
574 come, and they just lecture you about it. 'Like you don't need to be missing school'-  
575  
576 [Crosstalk]  
577  
578 Interviewer: Hey guys...sshhh. [Quieting side conversation].  
579  
580 Robert: It's, like, really annoying ...  
581  
582 Interviewer: That's good advice. That's good advice. What about you? What about you,  
583 Mason, those teachers with a thousand kids?  
584  
585 Mason: Oh, just, like, tell them to just let them explain themselves. Oh, I don't know,  
586 like, they'd have a problem and, like, then they'd have a solution, but they'd never let  
587 them explain themselves...  
588  
589 Mia: [Interrupting] I think they should do surveys...  
590  
591 Interviewer: Wait, wait. Could you let Mason finish? I want to hear your answer, but just  
592 wait. [Back to Mason]. Let them explain themselves? When a kid has a problem...  
593  
594 Mason: Yes, like, he has an issue or something or, like, he did something, too, like, that  
595 kind of scenario, too, so he does something bad, but he doesn't explain why he did that.  
596  
597 Robert: ...or he doesn't think he needs explaining...  
598  
599 Mason: Yeah, he punched that kid in the face. He's in trouble, no explaining. [Agreeing –  
600 with example]  
601  
602 Interviewer: Given an opportunity to tell what the story is.  
603

604 Mason: Yes, it could be a good reason, like, that kid tried to beat up a blind kid, and so  
605 they stood up for them, so that kid punched him back.

606  
607 Robert: ...I've been at schools, like, that where...  
608

609 Mason: But it's, like, 'You hit a kid, you are suspended, no talking!' [Visibly angry]  
610

611 Interviewer: So that lack of zero tolerance thing. That's pretty bad.  
612

613 Interviewer: Okay, I see your hand, Cyan, but was it you Mia, that was saying...?  
614

615 Mia: I think they like to manage us, but I feel they should do like a survey. For, like, all  
616 the students at the beginning the year, like, to kinda, like, get to know, like, what their  
617 learning is, kinda like, a visual or, like, a hands-on or, like, what their work ethic is. And  
618 I think they should be able to work around how that is.

619  
620 Robert: Oh yeah, and um. My Blueprint does something that...  
621

622 Mia: Yeah, but that's just My Blueprint. They should do it so you could be placed in a  
623 certain classroom that is maybe more suitable for you -  
624

625 Robert: Oh, a much more in-depth kind of analysis – not, like, you need specific,  
626 specifics, like, you need this kind of help with this and that, but more...  
627

628 Interviewer: Okay, Cyan, what were you going to say?  
629

630 Cyan: I guess for a teacher advice would be to actually smile, and, like, actually learn  
631 about students. Like, if you go up to a student whose having trouble and you scowl at  
632 them, they're gonna freeze up and have no idea what they did wrong -  
633

634 Robert: Or just stone face them every day -  
635

636 Cyan: But if you smile then they're gonna relax and they can explain what went wrong.  
637 Or...And there's, like, this thing where, you should learn how to help your students. Like  
638 'Every time before a test, you should study and chew an odd flavor of bubble gum. And  
639 then right before the test chew that same flavor of bubble gum.' [Using a teacher voice].  
640

641 Colton: Yeah, but they don't let you chew bubble gum -  
642

643 Cyan: Yeah, but teachers - teachers should research that and put that into action in the  
644 classroom.  
645

646 Robert: [cynically] But then the teachers would be, like, 'Oh, you are blowing bubbles  
647 too much. We're not allowed to have gum anymore.'

648

649 Interviewer: Robert, we are talking about the advice you give them?

650

651 Samuel: Robert, stop talking.

652

653 Mason: I would give them the advice not to call them names. I don't know. I just got in  
654 trouble a couple of times – and in elementary school, too. And like there was this one  
655 teacher... uh, Mr.

656 Linder. He would sit me down at his desk. And, like, half the time I didn't do what he  
657 said I did.

658 And he would sit me down and call me rude, disrespectful, ignorant, and he would just  
659 keep calling me those names until I admitted to whatever I did. And I was, like, 'Oh  
660 yeah, okay, I did it, I guess,' cause I didn't want to fucking listen to this bullshit...

661

662 Interviewer: Wow. That's trauma.

663

664 Cyan: Are you talking about that tall bald guy?

665

666 Mason: Yeah, I hate that guy.

667

668 Cyan: I had him in grade five.

669

670 Mason: I had him in grade five, too. I hate that guy.

671

672 Robert: [trying to interrupt] I had a guy call me [inaudible]

673

674 Interviewer: That pisses me off. Wow. I have been an educator for 34 years and that just  
675 makes me so sad. Thank you for sharing me your truth right now. But that just breaks my  
676 heart. I mean, if I was your teacher, how would, Mason, how would that ever get you to  
677 buy in to what I want? And in that situation would I lean in and go, "Oh, well now that  
678 you have told me I am rude and disrespectful, I'll be kind and respectful. And now I'm  
679 totally..." [Sarcastically].

680

681 Cyan: I'm cured! [Agreement laughter]

682

683 Interviewer: Sorry – I just had to comment on that – yes?

684

685 Colton: These three teachers at our school were horrible. Like the art teacher when she  
686 got mad enough, she would start swearing at the class. It was...

687

688 Interviewer: [interrupting] What advice would you give, Colton, because that is where I  
689 had started? What advice would you give to these teachers in this mainstreamed school,  
690 what advice would you give them –

691

692 Colton: Like give them respect. Like, even we had an old teacher who got fired, or  
693 whatever. He was such a perve on like students. [Sounds of other students agreeing] He  
694 made us do yoga.  
695  
696 Robert: Oh, I think I heard about that.  
697  
698 Colton: Mason might remember him?  
699  
700 Mason: Oh, Mr. Holt? Yeah, I remember him.  
701  
702 Colton: Yeah, Mr. Holt. He made us do yoga. And like he got really mad in the middle  
703 school and he started ripping stuff off the walls in his class and stuff, and -  
704  
705 Interviewer [redirecting]: So what other advice – you had said give them respect, so what  
706 else would you say?  
707  
708 Colton: Yeah, and give them their privacy and don't go look -  
709  
710 Mia: Have some sympathy [Quietly].  
711  
712 Mason: I remember Mr. Holt, he was like –  
713  
714 Interviewer: What did you say, Mia?  
715  
716 Mia: Have some sympathy, kinda.  
717  
718 Samuel: That saying, “Respect is earned.” Respect is earned once, like for me, if I don't  
719 get respect, I am not going to respect somebody else.  
720  
721 [Crosstalk]  
722  
723 Interviewer: Wait, slow down. You guys are saying fabulous stuff, but I just want to  
724 make sure I get the person who just said that. That was Samuel. Can you say that again,  
725 Samuel? That was great. If you don't get respect...  
726  
727 Samuel: Yeah, if I don't get respect, I'm not going to give respect. Like people always  
728 say, “Respect is earned,” but that's a two-way street. Like if someone comes up to me  
729 and disrespects me right away, I am not going to be respectful to them. [Sounds of other  
730 students agreeing]. Whereas if they come up to me with the same amount of respect that  
731 they want, then there gonna get the respect.  
732  
733 Interviewer: The dang Golden Rule, right?  
734

735 Robert: Samuel, this reminds me of a conversation that David had with Jared on the bus.  
736 This exact thing you are saying is a conversation that they had on the bus!  
737  
738 Mason: Yeah, I remember Mr. Holt. He was messed....  
739  
740 Samuel: Yeah, I kinda remember that...  
741  
742 Cyan: Like I had this marker that I got from home, and he took it from me -  
743  
744 Mason: He took... I had a snack one time. I was eating it in his Metals Shop class - no, I  
745 was eating it in his homeroom, and he took it and ate it. Never gave it back. [Shaking  
746 head angrily]. Straight up.  
747  
748 [Crosstalk]  
749  
750 Robert: He could give it to you from a bowel movement.  
751  
752 Mason: Yeah, I was pretty pissed.  
753  
754 Interviewer: He ate your food? [Incredulous]  
755  
756 Mason: Yeah, he ate my food.  
757  
758 Cyan: And, like, if you have a marker that is like school related or something, Mr. Holt  
759 would take it. 'Um, where did you get this marker?'" [Acting out the scene] and I'd be  
760 like 'I got it from home', and he'd say, 'No, you probably actually stole it.' I *never* stole  
761 any markers!" [Still angry]  
762  
763 [Overlapping voices]  
764  
765 Interviewer: [Redirecting] Hey, guys. So, can I toss out an idea that if you were creating a  
766 new school that another idea might be that don't have to be defined by your mistakes.  
767  
768 Robert: Can you just kill the assholes?  
769  
770 Mason: And put the school's names on all the school's items [not letting go of theme  
771 here].  
772  
773 Interviewer: Well, that's an easy way that the school could solve that problem in a  
774 heartbeat. But the reality of that is what does that have to do with your education? So  
775 what I want to say is that it is freaking remarkable that you are all here considering the  
776 series of bad experiences where people weren't encouraging you, weren't establishing  
777 trust with you, weren't pushing you for your learning...  
778

779 Mia: I had a teacher call me a whore once.

780

781 Interviewer: Oh, Gosh.

782

783 Robert: I had a teacher call me [inaudible]...

784

785 Mia: I thought I was pregnant and asked to be taken to the clinic, and they're said, "Oh  
786 what are you being a whore again?" And I was, like, "Oh thanks for that..."

787 .

788 Robert: I had a teacher call me a dumb retard once. I was off by two and they just kept  
789 calling me a dumb retard.

790

791 Samuel: I was just called [inaudible] because I was in the lower reading group....

792

793 Interviewer: Hey gang – can we stop here? We are nearly out of time and I want to teach  
794 you something

795

796 [Lead into activity; recording stopped here].

797

## Appendix F

**Post-training Middle School Educator Verbatim Feedback**

Gathered by district on the day after the professional development training on NHA (November 2016)

Participants were asked to write the answer to the following prompt on post-it notes and place on the wall in the faculty room:

**What is one idea or thought that you remember from your training yesterday?**

1. Finding something to focus on or compliment in a child (challenging child) even if it is “I liked the way you closed the door.”
2. “Intensity” as a description of how some children can be described.
3. Sense of a community. Amazing School Culture!
4. Many of these ideas are similar to previous ideas.
5. Finding our greatest greatnesses.
6. Everyone has value.
7. Focusing on greatness. What strengths that are brought to the table.
8. Three-legged table.
9. How do you use “Absolute No” without sounding like an absolute jerk?

## Appendix G

**Nurtured Heart Approach® End of Year Feedback Sheet**  
Reflection Questions

Grade/subjects taught \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

Years at this school \_\_\_\_\_ Years as an educator \_\_\_\_\_

*Please take a few minutes to consider these questions regarding your implementation of some of the tools of the Nurtured Heart Approach® and give some thoughtful responses to the following:*

1. What has been easy for you in regard to adapting positive recognition, resets, consistent rules and quick consequences, and stepping away from lengthy consequences?
  
2. Teachers have their own style. How have you adapted NHA strategies to match your own style best – and where has it made a positive difference for you? (e.g. classroom, individual students, rules, consequences, energy, home, etc.).
  
3. If you use these, what does a Reset/ take 5/Try that again - look like in your class? If not, describe how you pull a distracted student back on task.
  
4. What has been the most challenging for you in adapting these ideas to your teaching and relationships?
  
5. In which areas, if any, do you think you could benefit from more practice, training or strategies?
  
6. Finally, any burning question or feedback that you want to share here:



## Part 2: Nurtured Heart Approach® End of Year Feedback Individual Responses

Distributed by district staff to Alternative Middle School Educators (May 3, 2017)

Respondent	Role in School	Years as Educator	Years at Alternative Middle School
1	School counselor	26	5
2	Classroom teacher	22	10
3	Aboriginal support worker	1 year	1 year
4	Classroom teacher	15	7
5	Vice-Principal	25	3
6	Classroom teacher	5	4

1. What has been easy for you in regard to adapting positive recognition, resets, consistent rules and quick consequences, and stepping away from lengthy consequences?

1. *Giving positive recognition; looking for opportunities to recognize students' strengths.*
2. *Positive recognition is something I enjoy doing ...and being consistent much easier, less confusing*
3. *Positive recognition generally works very well, something I've practiced before Nurtured Heart. I find sometimes there is no way to avoid lengthy consequences.*
4. *The easiest thing has been to give the student two choices when they are stuck. There is not wrong or right choice. It's just a choice that will yield a result or consequence that they have [illegible].*
5. *Nothing. I have to make an effort to remind myself.*
6. *Quick consequences > that's always been my style anyways.*

2. Teachers have their own style. How have you adapted NHA strategies to match your own style best – and where has it made a positive difference for you? (e.g. classroom, individual students, rules, consequences, energy, home, etc.).

1. *I use the strengths list every day in my practice as a counselor. Each action a student does, I connect to the strengths board. I do this in every of the school, playground, in bike shop, hallway, etc.*
2. *Yes, I have used the NHA and I find it works when I am assisting students with their work in the classroom.*
3. *Positive difference at the individual level, recognition has always had positive impact.*
4. *The big idea is to create an atmosphere in the classroom that is warm, welcoming, and positive. A place where staff and students feel safe and want to be.*
5. *Can't really say. I tend to think about more at home and seem calmer around my own kids.*
6. *It helped me make a positive connection with a very difficult student.*

3. If you use these, what does a Reset/ take 5/Try that again - look like in your class? If not, describe how you pull a distracted student back on task.

1. *Don't use it.*
2. *Sometimes a reset could be just letting the student vent first, before continuing with the task/work!*
3. *I do not use this method.*
4. *I have staff sit beside me with the student and quietly redirect them to the task and support them in their learning.*
5. *Reset- kid goes home and we try again the next day. A way of avoiding suspensions.*
6. *I remind them of their goals. Offer them a break or a chance to reset.*

4. What has been the most challenging for you in adapting these ideas to your teaching and relationships?

1. *Quick consequences are hard for me.*
2. *There's the odd time I forgot and I realize I'm focusing on the negative things the student does more than the positive.*
3. *In some situations, I feel that nurtured heart approach is not applicable. Sometimes lengthy consequences are necessary.*
4. *Speaking in a language that only accentuates the positives when there are none apparent.*
5. *I want to scream! Trying to find something positive to say when a kid is acting like an ass.*
6. *Remembering to act on it! When I am teaching my brain is being pulled in 6 directions at once!*

5. In which areas, if any, do you think you could benefit from more practice, training or strategies?

1. *I would like ALL the training!*
2. *Skipped*
3. *Skipped*
4. *Being less resistant to using positive talk when the behaviors require it.*
5. *I just need to be more stern and quick with the rules and expectations.*
6. *How to always find the thing that is going right.*

6. Finally, any burning question or feedback that you want to share here:

1. *Skipped*
2. *Skipped*
3. *Skipped*
4. *Skipped*
5. *NHA is hard in a place where the kids – some kids try to beat you down – break you down day-after-day.*
6. *Skipped*

## Appendix H

**Beliefs and Actions Educator Survey Part 1: ACTIONS**

*Distributed through Survey Monkey*

Let's Get Started!

In an effort to continue to support your efforts in teaching, please take a minute to honestly reflect on the statements below. In considering each question, the intention is thoughtful reflection and self-awareness. While many of these are behaviors or beliefs we KNOW we should be demonstrating, your honest responses are critical in developing an efficacious and strong research-supported teacher-student relationship system in your programs and schools. Thank you in advance!

**Q1** If you are an educator, please indicate the number of years you have been working in this profession: 0-3; 4-10; 11-15; 15-20; 20+;

If you are not an educator, please indicate your role here:

---

**Q2** If you are an educator, please indicate the grade level(s) you teach: (*\*multiple selections possible*) 7 8 9 10 11 12

---

**PART ONE: My response to difficult behavior or relationship problems**

For each of the three statements, please indicate the response which best reflects your current and most frequent response when working with youth and in other professional relationships. 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always

**Q3** I give brief and mild consequences without explanations, lectures or questions. (e.g. "Take a seat," "Try that again," "You need a reset," "Take a minute outside and complete this reflection sheet" etc.)

---

**Q4** I am able to give consequences without anger, frustration, tone, glares, sarcasm, or punitive measures.

---

**Q5** I am aware of my triggers and am able to reset and calm myself when I get frustrated, Angry, or negative.

---

**PART TWO: My intentional focus and response to students**

For each of the three statements, please indicate the response which best reflects your current and most frequent response when working with youth and in other professional relationships. 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always

**Q6** I regularly call attention to student success in the moment with details and genuine recognition.  
e.g. *“Mya, I see you are ready to work, with your rough draft in hand.”*

**Q7** I name and label positive behaviors that I describe to provide meaning and depth.  
e.g. *“Aiden you came over and sat down, clearly ready to join the group; you are being so responsible.”*

---

**Q8** I proactively notice and describe the student challenges of self-control and recognize good choices of students who follow rules, manage frustration, and show self-restraint. e.g. *“Jackson, you are demonstrating immense self-control right now even though you are clearly frustrated.”*

**PART THREE: My clarity and communication around my expectations, rules, and consequences.**

For each of the two statements, please indicate the response which best reflects your current and most frequent response when working with youth and in other professional relationships.

1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always

**Q9** I consistently enforce limits with immediate brief consequences each time a rule is broken instead of letting things go, giving warnings, or threatening larger consequences.

---

**Q10** After a brief and unemotional consequence, I am able to let go of what just happened and look for an opportunity to shift the student back to being more positive.

---

## Appendix I

**Beliefs and Actions Educator Survey Part 2: BELIEFS**

In an effort to hone our training to our greatest needs and understandings, please take a minute to honestly reflect on the statements below. In considering each question, the intention is thoughtful reflection and self-awareness. While many of these are behaviors or beliefs we KNOW we should be demonstrating, your honest responses are critical in developing an efficacious and strong research-supported teacher-student relationship system in your programs and schools. Thank you in advance!

Please reflect authentically on the following statements, and indicate your level of agreement with:

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree Somewhat 3 = Often Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree

**Q1** All children are capable of success, without exception.

---

**Q2** My relationship with my students can impact how they perceive their own ability to learn.

---

**Q3** Despite all efforts, some students are simply not able to be truly successful.

---

**Q4** My students would say I treat all of them with equal respect.

---

**Q5** In order for my students to be successful, it is important that my students like and trust me.

---

**Q6** Like it or not, there are some students that only respond to negative consequences.

---

**Q7** While my job can be challenging, I feel like I make a difference every day in the lives of my students.

---

**Q8** OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE: Please clarify any of your answers here or add any questions, thoughts or feel above. Thank you for taking the time to reflect honestly on your practice and for completing this survey!

---

**Q9** My role here at the school is one of:

1. An educator 0- 3 years
  2. An educator 4 -10 years
  3. An educator, 11 - 15 years
  4. An educator, 15+ years
  5. Not an educator but working in schools for 0 - 5 years
  6. Not an educator but working in schools for 6 + years
- 

**Q10** If you are an educator, please indicate the grade level(s) you teach/support: (*\*multiple selections possible*) 7 8 9 10 11 12

## Appendix J

**Student Belief Survey**

*Distributed through Survey Monkey*

**What I Believe About Myself as a Learner**

The purpose of this anonymous survey of student perception is to gather information to better understand your personal and collective perspective and to use this information to inform our teaching strategies for increased student success. Thank you for taking a few minutes to honestly reflect and answer this short survey. The final question allows for comments and clarifications of your answers, too.

**PART ONE: Demographic Data**

**Q1** What grade are you in?

---

**Q2** Approximately how long have you attended this school?

This is my first year; Over one year; Two or more years; Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART TWO: Belief Statements**

Please reflect authentically on the following statements, and indicate your level of agreement with:

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree Somewhat 3 = Often Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree

---

**Q3** I belong in this academic community.

---

**Q4** My learning ability and skills grow with my effort and hard work.

---

**Q5** My teachers make it clear to me that they believe in my ability to learn.

---

**Q6** The work I do here has value to my future.

---

**Q7** My teachers treat me with empathy and respect.

---

**Q8** I can succeed here.

---

**Q9** I have positive relationships with most of my teachers here.

---

**Q10** Please add any confidential comment, clarification or detail here to help us better understand any of your above answers: