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SUCCESSFUL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

---

by

Kimberly Owen Pickles

Spring 2014

SUCCESSFUL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

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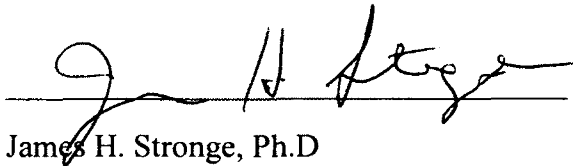
Approved April 2014 by



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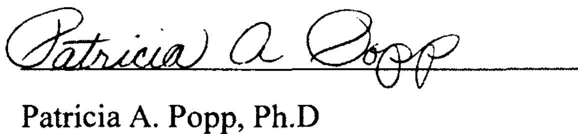

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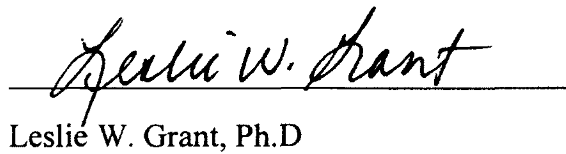

Leslie W. Grant, Ph.D

DEDICATION

To all of my family for all of their support. To my husband, Tim, for his patience, support, and love. To my son, Ethen, for giving me the time to complete assignments and always giving words of encouragement. To my parents, Steve and Sharon, for all of their support over the years and their unending faith in me.

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SUCCESSFUL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study is to examine the instructional practices of teachers who are currently teaching homeless students in their classroom. This study identified eight teachers in two suburban elementary schools that have students in their current classrooms that are experiencing homelessness. In addition, the research study explored the needs considered and strategies that teachers use to differentiate and accommodate their instructional practices to maximize achievement for these students. Qualitative data was collected by a study of teacher interviews through collective ethnographic case studies. Additionally, quantitative data was collected through evaluator observations of the selected classrooms to observe the differences between the identified students and the students not experiencing homelessness. Additional artifacts were submitted from teachers to support data collection. This study revealed key themes of successful pedagogical practices of elementary teachers with instructional strategies and non-instructional strategies. These themes included instructional strategies of planning, learning groups, and homework modifications. Non-instructional strategies included themes of relationships, supports, and needs.

SUCCESSFUL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Homelessness among families in the U.S. has increased drastically which, in turn, is having a profound effect on the education of our children. For families experiencing homelessness, the *U. S. Conference of Mayors Study* (2008) states, "the three most commonly cited causes of homelessness were lack of affordable housing, cited by 72 percent of cities, poverty (52 percent), and unemployment (44 percent)" (p. 19). According to an article by Schwartz-Henderson (2013), the Children's Defense Fund *State of America's Children 2012 Report* stated statistics related to children who are experiencing homelessness, high levels of poverty, and high mobility that bring the most recent concerns for our children into clear focus. The statistics include:

- An estimated one in 45 children – or 1.6 million - children was homeless in America each year between 2006 and 2010, and the numbers are growing.
- Approximately 40% of those children, or 640,000, who were homeless were five years or younger.
- From 1967 to 2010, the poverty rate for young families with children soared from 14.1% to 37.3%.

- There were over one million children and youth who were homeless enrolled in public schools during the 2010-2011 academic year.
- In 2010, one in nine children – 16 million in total – were in households that struggled to ensure that their children did not go to sleep or to school hungry.
- Children who are homeless are twice as likely as other children to repeat a grade in school, be expelled or suspended, or drop out of high school.
- Poverty is linked to a number of negative outcomes for children, including completing fewer years of schooling, working fewer hours and earning lower wages as adults, and a greater likelihood of reporting poor health. (p. 48)

According to the National Center for Homeless Education (2014), during the 2011-2012 school year, 15% of our homeless children lived in shelters, 75% were doubled up with other families, 6% lived in hotels or motels and 4% lived in unsheltered locations such as cars, park benches, parks, or any other places that are not meant as places to sleep or live (p.14). Half of the school-age homeless children suffer from anxiety, depression, and emotional problems that require professional support. It is estimated that "within a single year, nearly all (97%) homeless children have moved, at least 25% have witnessed violence, and 22% have been separated from their families" (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009, p. 1). Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcohol, drugs, violence, and chronic medical problems are also not uncommon.

It is for these children that the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001 – Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act was created. It is one way that the government can support and provide for the homeless children of the United States to provide them with the support and protection to allow them to attend school and have an opportunity to be successful.

Rationale of the Study

With the continual increase in homelessness among families in America, educators are finding the necessity to learn how to best serve these children and youth in the public schools. Instructional delivery and strategies must be determined that will best meet the needs of this unique population when they are in the classroom regardless of how long they are in a classroom whether it is a week, a month, a school year, or longer. Student success and learning is the basis of all educational programs.

Children in poverty situations enter school with many odds stacked against them and it is the job of their teachers to provide them with an educational opportunity that will lead them to success. Teachers have a strong influence on the success of their students and the effectiveness of their instruction in the classroom especially when working with students of poverty or low-income. Gibson and Dembo (as cited by Tucker et al., 2005) stated "Teachers who believe that student learning can be influenced by effective teaching despite home and peer influence and who have confidence in their ability to teach persist longer in their teaching efforts, provide greater academic focus in the classroom, give different types of feedback, and ultimately improve student performance" (p. 29).

Haberman (2010) believes that there is a core of teacher acts that defines excellence in teaching pedagogy when working with students experiencing poverty. This set of acts occurs when students are:

- Involved in issues they see as vital concerns;
- Involved in explaining human differences;
- Seeing major concepts, ideas, and principles;
- Involved in planning what they will be doing;
- Applying ideals (fairness, equity, justice);
- Actively involved;
- Involved in real-life experiences;
- Involved in heterogeneous groups;
- Thinking of ideas that question common sense or assumptions and creates new ideas;
- Involved in revising, rewriting, perfecting their work
- Involved with technology;
- Involved in reflecting on their lives and why they believe what they believe. (p. 85-86)

When these actions occur within the educational setting, chances are very good that good teaching is occurring for these children. "The few urban schools that serve as models of student learning have teachers who maintain control by establishing trust and involving their students in meaningful activities rather than by imposing some neat system of classroom discipline" (Haberman, 2010, p. 85).

It is important for effective teachers to truly understand where their students are coming from and facts surrounding their living conditions. Many children of poverty are coming to school with no health insurance, which result in medical conditions such as asthma, low birth weight, lead poisoning, and iron-deficiencies. They lack receiving the medical treatment that could help them physically. They may not have been read aloud to as a child, experience family stress, be exposed to crime and drugs at home or in the neighborhoods, or have other situations that arise that lead to behavior problems or personal stress due to their home life. Rothstein (2008) suggests that we can go beyond the classroom and look toward social and economical reforms that will further support the effective instruction by classroom teachers to promote academic success. Suggestions include:

- Ensure good pediatric and dental care for all students, in school-based clinics.
- Expand existing low-income housing subsidy programs to reduce families' involuntary mobility.
- Provide higher quality early childhood care so that low-income children are not parked before televisions while their parents are working.
- Increase the earned income tax credit, the minimum wage, and collective bargaining rights so that families of low-wage workers are less stressed.

- Promote mixed-income housing development in suburbs and in gentrifying cities to give more low-income students the benefits of integrated educations in neighborhood schools.
- Fund after-school programs so that inner-city children spend fewer nonschool hours in dangerous environments and, instead, develop their cultural, artistic, organizational, and athletic potential. (p. 12)

Many teachers around the world speculate and question why their students struggle in school. They base these ideas on their own assumptions and perceptions from their personal beliefs. Sometimes they use what they believe is the student's background to determine the success or failure of the students in their class based on whether they know they are low-income, poverty, or homeless. These perceptions or assumptions can be referred to as "deficit thinking". Walker (2011) defines deficit thinking as a "theory that blames school failure for these students on the students' lack of readiness to learn in the classroom, the parents' lack of interest in their education, and the families' overall lifestyle" (p. 577). Essentially, deficit thinking is a way of casting blame or making excuses for school failure due to a student lacking in some area due to their home life or background and not the blame of the educational system. "This bureaucratic culture fosters the pervasive assumption that when students misbehave or achieve poorly, they must be "fixed" because the problem inheres in the students or their families, not in the social ecology of the school, grade, or classroom" (Weiner, 2006, p. 42).

"Teacher perceptions of children and families who are homeless are especially difficult because our culture tends to see homelessness as a reflection of individual

weakness and defect rather than symbolic of social injustice" (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008, p. 241; Kozol, 1988). Many times teachers blame the child's situation on the parent without looking any further into the reasons or circumstances. They assume that the parent does not care or does not try hard enough to get themselves out of their situations and that the child is paying the price. They blame the behavior of the child, the condition of their clothes, or the lack of their food on the parent and then they pigeon hole the child into the slot that they cannot achieve because there are too many things in their life stacked against them to be able to succeed.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be investigated in this study is what are successful pedagogical practices of elementary teachers of homeless students. According to the Virginia state education agency, McKinney-Vento subgrantees within the Consolidated State Performance Report for school year 2009-2010, reported the following services were provided to students with subgrant funds:

> Tutoring or other instructional support, expedited evaluations, staff professional development and awareness, referrals for medical, dental, and other health services, transportation, early childhood programs, assistance with participation in school programs, before and after school/mentoring/summer programs, obtaining/transferring records necessary for enrollment, parent education related to rights and resources for children, coordination between school and agencies, counseling, addressing needs related to domestic violence, clothing to meet school requirement, school supplies, referral to other programs and services, and

emergency assistance related to school attendance. (The United States Department of Education, 2010-2011, p. 66)

Thus, the school is the one "safe" place for children who are homeless. When they attend school, there is the security of routine, a hot meal, friendship opportunities, and a place to seek trust in an adult if they are willing to reach for it. The teachers and the schools have the resources to help these students. "Teachers of highly mobile students must develop the skills to make them feel welcome while quickly weaving them into classroom routines" (Holgersson-Shorter, 2010, p. 33).

Other studies look at the understanding of stress from the impact of poverty. Schwartz-Henderson (2013) references research being conducted at Harvard's Center for the Developing Child. One of the most relevant findings is related to the impact of toxic stress on the executive functioning of the brain. This function of the brain is what controls the ability to multi-task, prioritize, and follow through with a directive (p. 49). Damage to this part of the brain has implications on how homelessness and poverty impact the lives of young children and how educators can help them to be successful in the classroom.

As mentioned previously, the teacher of a homeless student has the opportunity to make a lasting impression and provide the opportunities for the student to reach their maximum potential and success within the safety of their classroom. Powers-Costello and Swick identify four steps that teachers can take to provide support to the students who are suffering poverty and homelessness. The first step is with "heightening their awareness for the dynamics of the lives of children and families who are homeless (Powers-Costello

and Swick, 2011, p. 210, Swick, 2000). The second step is "engaging in experiences that deepen their sensitivity to the contextual elements that are pervasive in being homeless" (Powers-Costello and Swick, 2011, p. 2010; Powers-Costello and Swick, 2008; Swick, 1996, Sleeter, 1993;). The third step is "developing an action plan that provides some cohesive direction to their work" (Powers-Costello and Swick, 2011, p. 2010). Finally is "helping teachers become active in building relations with students, parents, colleagues, and community that promote school success" (Powers-Costello and Swick, 2011, p. 210; Swick, 2000).

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the instructional and classroom management practices of elementary teachers who have students identified as currently in a homeless situation in their classrooms?
2. To what degree do elementary teachers differ in instructional and classroom management practices for homeless students and regularly housed students?
3. Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he change instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?
4. Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he

change non-instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?

Significance of the Study

This topic fits within the context of the educational field and the use of a critical theory approach as school accountability continues to rise. Schools are more accountable for the success of various subgroups to include low socioeconomic students. Critical theory examines the changes and interactions related to the improvement of the educational impact of students who experience homelessness. In reviewing the diversity of this group, there are key features of the advocacy/participatory view that have been identified by Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) that help to identify the theoretical lens that drives this research. Their research, noted by Creswell (2008) identifies the following four key features of this view:

1. Participatory action is recursive or dialectical and focused on bringing about changed in practices. Thus at the end of advocacy/participatory studies, researchers advance an action agenda for change.
2. This form of inquiry is focused on helping individuals free themselves from constraints found in the media, in language, in work procedures, and in the relationships of power in educational settings. Advocacy/participatory studies often begin with an important issue or stance about the problems in society, such as the need for empowerment.
3. It is emancipatory in that it helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-

determination. The advocacy/participatory studies aim to create a political debate and discussion so that change will occur.

4. It is practical and collaborative because it is inquiry completed with others rather than on or to others. In this spirit, advocacy/participatory authors engage the participants as active collaborators in their inquires. (p. 10)

Children who are classified as homeless fall within the low socioeconomic status subgroup, which can directly impact school accreditation. Many supports and provisions have been included in the legal protections through the McKinney-Vento Act as well as through the No Child Left Behind Act. Given the challenges through the years since the homeless act was introduced to Congress, changing situations among those seeking educational support due to homelessness has changed as well. It is necessary to understand the causes and student needs in order to provide for the instruction and to provide for their academic success.

The significance in regard to this research can take several different directions. The basic understanding of educators and how they teach children in their school and their ability for students to be successful despite their circumstances is one such direction. The laws that exist to provide assistance to these families will continue to change and evolve in many different ways. Another important area of consideration is in looking at what teachers and educators are doing to provide the support in addition to what is already provided to help these children close the achievement gap, beat the odds that they have virtually no control over, and to be academically successful.

Definitions of Key Terms

Absolute Poverty: This "equates to a focus on sustenance and the bare essentials for living with no extra resources for social and cultural expenditures" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p.105).

Barriers: Barriers are obstacles that are in place that prevent a student from having access to their free and appropriate education. According to the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth NAEHCY (2007-2009), barriers include "being unable to meet enrollment requirements (including requirements to provide proof of residence and legal guardianship, and school and health records); high mobility resulting in lack of school stability and educational continuity; lack of transportation; lack of school supplies and clothing; and poor health, fatigue, and hunger" (p.1).

Deficit Thinking: A "theory that blames school failure for these students in their education, and the families; overall lifestyle" (Walker, 2011, p. 577). This theory casts the blame for school failure due to the student lacking in some area and not to the educational system.

Effective Instructional Practices: Marzano (2009) identifies nine strategies that relate to effective teaching. These strategies include lessons involving new content, practicing and deepening content that has been previously addressed, involving cognitively complex tasks (generating and testing hypotheses), communicating learning goal/tracking student progress/celebrating success, maintaining classroom rules and procedures, engaging students, recognizing adherence and lack of adherence to classroom rules and procedures, maintaining effective relationships with students, and communicating high expectations

(p. 33). These nine categories, in all, break down into forty-one separate strategies that educators can consider as effective strategies. Hattie (2009) defines the act of teaching as "requires deliberate interventions to ensure that there is a cognitive change in the student: thus the key ingredients are awareness of learning intentions, knowing when a student is successful in attaining those intentions, having sufficient understanding of the student's understanding as he or she comes to the task, and knowing enough about the content to provide meaningful and challenging experiences in some sort of progressive development" (p. 23).

Generational Poverty: This is "an ongoing cycle of poverty in which two or more generations of families experience limited resources. Generational poverty is described as having its own culture, with hidden rules and belief systems" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 105).

Homeless: The term "homeless children and youths"—

> (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 11302 (a)(1) of this title); and
>
> (B) includes—
>
>> (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 11302 (a)(2)(C) of this title);

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 6399 of title 20) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii). (M-V: 725(2)(B)(i-iv), 2002)

Poverty: "Extreme poverty is defined as living with an annual income of less than $7,870 for a family of three" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p.104). In a report by The World Bank: Working for a World Free of Poverty (2013), "721 million fewer people lived in extreme poverty in 2010 – defined as under $1.25 a day – compared to 1981. But it also concluded that a disproportionate number of children were among them: Children accounted for one in three of those living in extreme poverty around the world in 2010, compared to only one in five living above the poverty line" (para. 2).

Situational Poverty: One form of poverty that is "caused by specific circumstances, such as illness or loss of employment, and generally lasts for a shorter period of time" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 105).

Transient: There are varying definitions of transient or highly mobile students. "Some researchers have included students who change schools more than six times in their K-12

education; others included students who moved more than once a year. Many highly mobile students move even more frequently than the baseline accepted by researchers" (Grant et al., 2008, p. 8)

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to note within this research. This study focused only on selected teachers in two elementary schools located in a school district in the eastern United States. The sample was a convenience sample that was relatively small and included teachers who currently have students who are experiencing homelessness in their classrooms at the time of the study and have been working with them longer than nine weeks or one academic school quarter.

One potential limitation of the study was the possibility of the homeless student in any of the observed classrooms moving out of the school before the completion of the study. Eight teachers were identified between two schools but any transient movement of the students out of the classroom had the potential to affect the results of the study.

A second potential limitation of the study was interview and observation data were limited to two interviews and two observations per teacher. This may not have provided the researcher the time necessary to build the rapport with the teacher participants to receive as rich an interview. The observational tool may also limit the researcher, as the tool may not have as many options as what the interviews may lead the researcher to needing to observe. In other words, during interviews with the teachers, certain information may have been shared that would benefit the researcher through observing but the tool may not have included that specific information or option.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The following chapter explores the current literature regarding the needs and supports for homeless students in the educational setting. Current literature provides the background information and history of the laws and legal process that provide homeless students access to their educational supports. The history of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is discussed. This is followed by legal and educational challenges to the McKinney-Vento Act. One of the key provisions of McKinney-Vento is to provide educational access to homeless children and youth. Therefore, barriers are discussed in this chapter as well as the effects of poverty on children and youth. Finally, the literature review addresses the current research regarding programming, policy supports, and instructional practices of students experiencing homelessness in the classroom.

Background

Development of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. Homelessness in the United States can be traced back to colonial times as early as the beginning of the 1600s. "As early as 1640, "vagrant persons" were listed among the social outcasts that peace officers in Boston were charged with apprehending. The decades immediately before and after the American revolution witnessed a substantial increase in homelessness." (Kusmer, 2002, p. 13). Associated with the concept of homelessness comes not only the number of families that are transient, out of work, living on the streets, or in temporary housing, but also the number of children who go

without food and shelter and struggle to continue to receive a quality education while their parents try to provide for them.

Prior to the introduction of the *Homeless Person's Survival Act*, which was introduced to Congress in 1986, many of the governmental supports that provided for persons experiencing homelessness were at a minimum or nonexistent. In 1987, when the Act passed and was renamed the *Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act,* it was noted that the dynamics of homelessness were increasingly becoming divided by gender and age. As more and more homeless children become documented within the educational system, it has become evident that this situation is developing a significant impact on the success and learning of children at all educational levels due to an increase in barriers that are a challenge to their opportunities for an education.

Since the 1600s, homelessness has continued to increase, but finally was addressed in 1986 with the *Homeless Person's Survival Act*. Later renamed the *Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Act* in 1987, it was revised in 1990 as barriers, that prevented a free and public education, came to light. Schumack (1987) noted Congressional policy that "homeless children have access to a free, appropriate public education on an equal basis with non-homeless children, and that the state residency laws not be used as a tool to bar homeless youngsters from school" (p. 3). Subsection Part B Education for Homeless Children and Youth specifically states that the

> McKinney Act requires that states receiving funds under the McKinney Act assure that each homeless child shall have access to a comparable free, appropriate education in the mainstream school environment... including

transportation services, gifted and handicapped educational services, school meal programs, vocational education, bilingual programs, and before and after school programs. (Aviles de Bradley, 2008, p. 266; Dohrn, 1991, McKinney, 1987)

Additional activities and programs were included to provide housing assistance, healthcare and outreach to at-risk and homeless children, and "obligations of states and local educational agencies in assuring the access of homeless children and youth in public education" (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006, p. 3). It was amended again in 1994 as part of the reauthorization of the Improving America's Schools Act (P.L. 103-382) and further addressed legal protection for educational access in the use of funding. It provided for the "rights of homeless preschoolers to a free and appropriate public preschool education; gave parents of homeless children and youth a voice regarding their children's school placement, and required educational authorities to coordinate with housing authorities" (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006, p. 3). The law was reauthorized in 2001 and was renamed to the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act* as part of *The No Child Left Behind Act* by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. These changes focused on preventing the segregation of homeless children from their non-homeless peers, as it was discovered that some districts across the United States were keeping homeless students separate from their same age peers in different programs. Further rights allowed where students may stay at their "school of origin" when they move around a district, out of district, and where it is reasonable for continuity of education. Immediate enrollment provisions and the addition of homeless liaisons were also added to the legislation at this time.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act defines "homelessness" as individuals who "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (M-V:725(2)(A), 2002). These are people who have experienced economic hardships or housing loss. They survive by sharing housing (double up), living in motels/hotels, travel parks, campgrounds, emergency shelters, transitional housing, awaiting foster placement or abandoned in hospitals, or are living in places that are not designed for sleeping such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or bus/train stations. Homeless can be migratory students, unaccompanied youth or those that have been affected by disaster (M-V:725(2)(B)(i-iv), 2002).

The main goals of the McKinney-Vento act are to: 1) increase access to school, i.e., remove barriers that would prevent homeless children from receiving education, 2) increase success in school, and 3) ensure and increase attendance. In terms of increasing access, homeless student have two options available for attending a school. The first option is to attend a school in the local attendance zone to where they are currently staying. The local attendance area school is defined as "any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend" (M-V: 722(g)(3)(A)(ii), 2002; NCHE, 2006). The second option is to attend their school of origin. The school of origin is defined as "the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled" (M-V:722(g)(3)(G), 2002; NCHE, 2006). Parents are allowed to request that their child "stay in a school of origin for the entire time they are homeless. When they find permanent housing, they can remain in the school of origin

until the end of the school year" (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2007, p. 12).

Transportation must be provided to the school of origin whether or not it is provided to other students within the district that are not homeless or from city to city, county to county. Other key mandates of the McKinney-Vento Act include that students must be enrolled immediately into a new school even if they are without the required records. These records include, but are not limited to, birth certificates, proof of residency, immunizations, and school records. If these records cannot be obtained, the student must be allowed to enroll. Additional provisions must be made to provide access to special education, gifted education, after school summer programs, referrals for appropriate service, Head Start, Even Start, and other preschool programs (M-V: 722(g)(4)(A-E), 2002; M-V:722(g)(6)(A)(iii), 2002). School districts are prohibited from separating students into separate schools or programs within schools. They must be allowed the same opportunities as those students who are not homeless. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) require that schools and school districts must protect the confidentiality of the families. The school or liaison may ask questions to get an idea of the specific situation of the family. If the family does choose to provide this information, the school must protect that confidentiality.

Table 1. Summary of components of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

Component	***Date***	***Key Provision***
Homeless Person's Survival Act	1986	• Emergency relief, prevention opportunities, and long-term planning
Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act	1987	• Dynamics of homelessness became more stratified by gender and age • Identified the success and learning of children is now being impacted
Amended	1988	• Expand provisions related to funding
The Stewart B. McKinney Act (Amended)	1990	• Provided that homeless children have a free, appropriate public education on an equal basis with non-homeless children. (Schumack, 1987) • State residency laws will not be used as a tool to prevent homeless youngsters from attending school. (Schumack, 1987) • $12.5 million, two-year grant program to assist states and localities in implementing Congressional policy through study, planning, and the provision of education to homeless children. (Schumack, 1987) • Requires that states receiving funds under the McKinney Act assure that each homeless child shall have access to a comparable free, appropriate education in the mainstream school environment... including transportation services, gifted and handicapped educational services, school meal

		programs, vocational education, bilingual programs, and before and after school programs. (Aviles de Bradley, 2008) • Additional activities and programs were included to provide housing assistance, healthcare and outreach to at-risk and homeless children
Amended	1992	• Expand for shelter and housing provisions
Amended as part of the Improving America's Schools Act (P.L. 103-382)	1994	• Addressed legal protection for educational access in the use of funding • "Rights of homeless preschoolers to a free and appropriate public preschool education; gave parents of homeless children and youth a voice regarding their children's school placement, and required educational authorities to coordinate with housing authorities" (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	2000	• President Clinton renamed the legislation
McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act as part of The No Child Left Behind Act	2001	• Signed by President George W. Bush on January 8 2002. • Focused on preventing the segregation of homeless children from their non-homeless peers • Allowed students to stay at their "school of origin" when they move around a district, out of district, and where it is reasonable to allow them to remain at their original school, or "school of origin" for continuity of education • Transportation must be

	provided • Students must be enrolled immediately even without required records • Access to special education, gifted education, after school summer programs, and referrals to appropriate services must be made • Segregation from peers is prohibited

Legal and educational challenges of McKinney-Vento. The purpose of McKinney-Vento was to provide safeguards to support and protect the educational rights of children and youth. Unfortunately, not all localities follow the guidelines as mandated, which leads families to face both legal and educational challenges. Of these challenges, there are two primary situations that families face. These challenges include denial of enrollment into their school of origin or their zoned district school and denial of transportation to and from their school of origin.

A primary legal challenge most commonly noted is the denial of enrollment into the student's school of origin. McKinney-Vento defines "school of origin" as "the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled" (M-V: 722(g)(3)(G), 2002). The descriptor "according to the child's or youth's best interest" (M-V: 722(g)(3)(A), 2002) is the requirement some districts use to avoid meeting the student's needs by saying that the school of origin is not in the child's best interest. Rafferty (1995) notes that the law requires

> the revision of residency requirements and provides that homeless children and youth may either continue to attend their "school of origin" ... through the end of

the current school year, regardless of where the family is temporarily staying, or transfer into "any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance are in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend, whichever is in the child's best interest" [§ 722(e)(3)(A)] (p.40)

Several legal cases have occurred regarding the rights of parents to allow their children to attend their school of origin. Of the most notable have been *Richards v. Board of Education of Union Free School District Number 4* (1985), *Salazar v. Edwards* (1992), *Delgado v. Freeport Public Schools (1988),* and *Mason v. Board of Education, Freeport Union School District (1987).* All of these court cases have dealt in some way with residency, denial of school of origin, or refusal of enrollment in any district.

Richards v. Board of Education of Union Free School District Number 4 [No. 11490, N.Y. Department of Education (1985)] was a case in which a family was removed from their apartment when "Westchester County Department of Social Services decided that the apartment in which they lived was too hazardous, and relocated them" (Schumack, 1987, p. 5). The denial of enrollment was based on the children no longer meeting the residency requirements of the school district. The New York Commissioner of Education found on behalf of the plaintiff based on existing law "a residence is not lost until another residence is established through both intent and action expressing such intent" (Schumack, 1987, p. 5).

The second case *Salazar v Edwards* (No. 92 CH 5703 Ill. Cir. Ct. Cook County Aug. 3, 1999) was filed against the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in 1992. The purpose of the lawsuit was

to avoid unnecessary changing of homeless students from schools. It sought emergency relief from the court to allow homeless students to be re-enrolled in their school of origin and obtain transportation to and from school. It also sought far reaching systemic change with regard to the treatment of homeless children.

(Aviles de Bradley, 2008, p. 269)

The identified problems relating to this case included the failure of Chicago Public Schools to

1. Allow homeless children to remain in their neighborhood schools when they lost their housing, 2. Allow homeless children to enroll without production of records or proof of immunizations, 3. Allow homeless children to attend the schools and activities that other children attend, including preschool and kindergarten, 4. Provide transportation assistance to students, 5. Forbid discrimination in services to homeless children, 6. Notify homeless families of their educational rights and provide a system for homeless parents to appeal any decisions the schools make which may be unfair to homeless children. (Aviles de Bradley, 2008, p. 269; Circuit Court of Cook County, 2004)

This court case continued to go through various settlements. Legislation would pass but CPS would still fail to provide the required services to homeless students. Further complaints would continue to be found, including a segregated classroom that was operating within a homeless shelter. A settlement was agreed to by both parties in 1996 and approved by the courts in 1997 in favor or the plaintiffs with directives issued to both

ISBE and CPS to correct their policy on homeless students. Even though there were improvements made, full compliance still had not been achieved in 2005 (Aviles de Bradley, 2008, p. 271; Heybach personal communication, 2005).

Unfortunately, several cases have not allowed children to stay in their school of origin, as they were decided on a case-by-case situation. *Delgado v. Freeport Public School District* [499 N.Y.S.2d 606 (1988)] was a case in which both the school of origin and the zone school both refused enrollment of the children. The family had originally lived in Freeport and was forced into temporary housing in Roosevelt. Roosevelt argued "that the family had established no permanent residence within its jurisdiction and Freeport asserting that the children had lost their residence status when they lost their home" (Schumack, 1987, p. 6). In this case, it was ruled that the Delgado family failed to establish permanent ties to Freeport and were ordered to attend school in Roosevelt. A second case, *Mason v Board of Education, Freeport Union School District* [No. 2865/87. N.Y. Sup. Ct. Mem. Op. (April 22, 1987)] also was found in the same situation. The family had lived in Freeport for ten years but due to homelessness in 1986-1987, they moved eight times into five different school districts. Even as the lawyers attempted to prove that they had intended to move back to Freeport, at the time of determination, they were living in Long Beach, New York and the courts found them as residents within that community regardless of their intention of returning to Freeport.

Directly tied to denial of enrollment is the denial of transportation services to and from school. In the case of *McCain v. Koch* [117 A.D.2d 198 (1st Dept. 1986)], New York City failed to provide transportation for children traveling to and from school. Not only did this court case provide for a transportation allowance for children traveling to

and from school, it also provided for the parents of those children too young to travel alone on public transportation. Rafferty (1995) cites "even when public transportation is available, parents may not have the necessary funds to access such services. Consequently, transportation is the most frequently cited barrier to school attendance by state education agencies nationwide" (p. 46; U.S. Department of Education, 1989; 1990; 1992). This becomes a contributing factor to poor school attendance.

According to the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty document, *The Most Frequently Asked Questions on the Educational Rights of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations* (2009):

> School districts must provide transportation to the school of origin upon the request of a parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, upon the request of the McKinney-Vento Liaison. 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(l)(J)(iii). That is true regardless of whether the district provides transportation for other students or in other circumstances. Second, for other transportation (as opposed to the school origin), the McKinney-Vento Act requires districts to provide transportation comparable to that provided to housed students. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(4)(A). Therefore, if the district transports housed students to the local school or to a summer program, it must also transport students experiencing homelessness. (p. 13)

Providing transportation to and from school not only includes those living within the district but can also be provided to families who move outside of the district. This

includes families that may move over the state line. It is the responsibility of both districts to determine how transportation will be handled to provide students with the ability to attend their school of origin. In a study by the Institute for Children and Poverty (2003) on the transportation of students in New York City, many parents were choosing to keep their children in their school of origin as opposed to attending a school within their shelter zone. This increases the time it takes for students to get to and from school. The study cited the transportation of students from the Saratoga Family Inn where "thirty-four percent (34%) of school-aged children spend one hour or more traveling to and from school" (p. 1). The impact this has on children must be weighed as to whether it is truly beneficial for them to travel this extensive distance just to remain in the same school. Due to the hour plus amount of traveling, they are often returning too late to the shelter to complete homework or to participate in programs that will help support math, literacy, and social skills (p. 2).

Table 2. Summary of legal and educational challenges

Legal Cases	***Findings/Purpose***
Richards v. Board of Education of Union Free School District Number 4 [No. 11490, N.Y. Department of Education (1985)]	Residency: "a residence is not lost until another residence is established through both intent and action expressing such intent" (Schumack, 1987).
Salazar v Edwards (No. 92 CH 5703 Ill. Cir. Ct. Cook County Aug. 3, 1999)	Failure to provide required services: To avoid unnecessary changing of homeless students from schools, the case sought emergency relief from the court to allow homeless students to be re-enrolled in their school of origin and obtain transportation to and from school. It also sought far reaching systemic change with regard to the treatment of homeless children. (Aviles de Bradley, 2008)
Delgado v. Freeport Public School District [499 N.Y.S.2d 606 (1988)]	School of Origin/Denial of Enrollment: Both the school of origin and the zone school both refused enrollment of the children. The children were not allowed to stay in their school of origin.
Mason v Board of Education, Freeport Union School District [No. 2865/87. N.Y. Sup. Ct. Mem. Op. (April 22, 1987)]	Schools of Origin/Denial of Enrollment: Transient family moved eight times into five different school districts in one year. The courts ruled they attend in the most recent residency they obtained.
McCain v. Koch [117 A.D.2d 198 (1st Dept. 1986)]	Denial of Transportation Services: New York City failed to provide transportation for children traveling to and from school. Not only did this court case provide for a transportation allowance for children traveling to and from school, it also provided for the parents of those children too young to travel alone on public transportation.

Barriers. There are many barriers that impact the education of students experiencing homelessness. According to the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) (2007-2009), barriers include "being unable to meet enrollment requirements (including requirements to provide proof of residence

and legal guardianship, and school and health record); high mobility resulting in lack of school stability and educational continuity; lack of transportation; lack of school supplies and clothing; and poor health, fatigue, and hunger" (p.1). Additionally, NAEHCY (2007-2009) identifies that the results of these barriers not being addressed result in children who are "unable to attend, or even enroll in, school, which prevents them from obtaining the education that is both their legal right and their best hope of escaping poverty as adults." (p. 3)

According to the Consolidated State Performance Report cited by the National Center on Homeless Education Data Collection Summary (2014), in Virginia alone, there have been great increases in the number of homeless students enrolled in LEAs with and without McKinney subgrants. In the 2009-2010 school year, there were 14, 223 enrolled homeless students. 2010-2011 saw an increase to 16, 420 enrolled homeless students. Finally, school year 2011-2012 recorded 17, 940 students in the schools experiencing homeless (p. 13). The State Report Card on Child Homelessness: America's Youngest Outcasts (2009) identifies barriers that have been reported by school districts. Overall during the 2005-2006 school year, 42% of subgrantees reported transportation as the highest at 42%, immunizations and school records at 28% each, eligibility for homeless services and other barriers at 27% each, school selection at 23%, and other medical records at 19%. 78% of all subgrant districts reported transportation as the most commonly reported barrier (p. 44). In Virginia specifically, the State Report Card (2009) identifies the following barriers reported by McKinney-Vento subgrantees: eligibility (27.6%), immunizations (31%), other medical records (0%), other barriers (0%), school selection (17.2%), school records (20.7%), and transportation (27.6%) (p.145). Clearly

the United States has work ahead to help these children and to make sure that they have everything they need educationally.

Table 3. Summary of barriers

Study	***Key Findings***
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth NAEHCY (2007-2009):	• Being unable to meet enrollment requirements (including requirements to provide proof of residence and legal guardianship, and school and health record) • High mobility resulting in lack of school stability and educational continuity • Lack of transportation • Lack of school supplies and clothing • Poor health, fatigue, and hunger
National Center on Family Homelessness' State Report Card on Homelessness: America's Youngest Outcasts (2009):	• Virginia barriers reported by subgrantees o Eligibility (27.6%) o Immunizations (31%) o Other medical records (0%) o Other barriers (0%) o School selection (17.2%) o School records (20.7%) o Transportation (27.6%)

Poverty. Poverty can be defined in a number of ways. "Extreme poverty is defined as living with an annual income of less than $7,870 for a family of three" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 104). In a report by The World Bank: Working for a World Free of Poverty (2013), "721 million fewer people lived in extreme poverty in 2010 – defined as under $1.25 a day – compared to 1981. But it also concluded that a disproportionate number of children were among them: Children accounted for one in three of those living in extreme poverty around the world in 2010, compared to only one in five living above

the poverty line" (para. 2). There are three different identified characteristics of poverty. These include *situational poverty* that is "caused by specific circumstances, such as illness or loss of employment, and generally lasts for a shorter period of time" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 105). A second type of poverty is *generational poverty.* This is "an ongoing cycle of poverty in which two or more generations of families experience limited resources. Generational poverty is described as having its own culture, with hidden rules and belief systems" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 105). When educating children in the generational poverty category, it is important for an educator to remember that these children tend to take on the role of a parent in their family unit.

> The children are "little parents" and speak like parents. These children often develop the adult voice. Teachers must adapt to addressing the children in generational poverty with the adult voice. Both the parent and the child voice are in conflict with the child's role at home. Responses in voices other than the adult voice may be considered a threat to their personal roles. Using an adult voice assists in showing the child that the educator understands the responsibilities that the child has as well as demonstrates the expectations of the educator within the school system. (Jagt & Madison, 2005/2006, p. 318)

Finally, the last form of poverty is *absolute poverty.* This "equates to a focus on sustenance and the bare essentials for living with no extra resources for social and cultural expenditures" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 105).

Ruby Payne (2008) identifies specific ways to define poverty and wealth in terms of the access that student's have to eight specific resources. Schools do not have the capacity to provide a large amount of necessary resources. Making the school and teachers aware those students who are considered "at-risk" for lack of these outside resources may help with providing specific interventions. The eight resources she cites are:

- Financial: Money to purchase goods and services.
- Emotional: The ability to control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. This internal resource shows itself through stamina, perseverance, and good decision-making.
- Mental: The mental abilities and acquired skills (such as reading, writing, and computing) needed for daily life.
- Spiritual: Some belief in a define purpose and guidance.
- Physical: Good physical health and mobility.
- Support systems: Friends, family, and resource people who are available in times of need.
- Relationships and role models: Frequent contact with adults who are appropriate role models, who nurture the child, and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior.

- Knowledge of unspoken rules: Knowing the unspoken norms and habits of a group. ("Assess Each Student's Resources," para. 1)

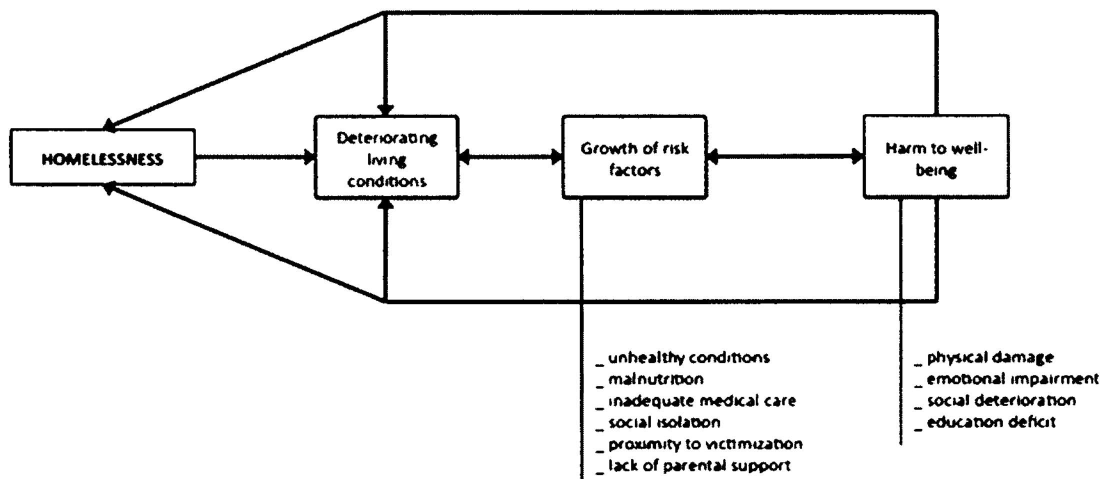
Researchers and advocates break individuals experiencing homelessness into various groupings. Homeless are initially separated into two groups, adults and young persons. Within young persons, the group is divided again into two groups: "children (from birth to age 18) with their family, or part thereof, and unaccompanied "youth" out on their own" (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 33). Unaccompanied youth are then separated into three types of homeless: "runaway" homeless, "throwaway" homeless, and "system" homeless. "Those in the first group leave home of their own volition; those in the middle group have been asked to leave and are actively prevented from returning; the final group includes youngsters who have been in and out of government programs such as foster care" (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 33).

In addition to having their daily lives bound by the circumstances related to poverty or homelessness, the effect on learning for children is significant. These children attend school but the weight of their personal lives can bring down their success in the classroom. "Impoverished students are far more likely to enter school as linguistically disadvantaged because they have not had experiences that promote literacy and reading readiness" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p.105; Strickland, 2001). Other studies show that "47% of children who are homeless are anxious or depressed, 20% of preschoolers have emotional problems requiring treatment by age eight, and 33% have at least one major mental disorder" (Schwartz-Henderson, 2013, p. 49).

The Homelessness Impact Model cited by Murphy & Tobin (2011) demonstrates the effects of homelessness in Figure 1. It is important to note the impact of homelessness for the youth. Homeless almost always translates into few opportunities for learning due to the time they lose with high mobility, new schools, and trying to connect every time they reach a new "residence" (p. 33).

Figure 1. The Homelessness Impact Model

The Homelessness Impact Model



(Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 33)

Figure 1 is explained by homelessness (point 1) opens the door to conditions that often amplify problems already at play in the lives of children and youth (e.g., abuse at the hands of parents/guardians, struggles in school). More expansively, homelessness leads to living conditions (point2) that fuel existing problems and power up new ones. Homeless minors enter a world of enhanced risks (point 3) (e.g., social isolation). At the same

> time, they often find themselves enveloped in environments marked by violence that encourages the formation of dysfunctional social relationships. The result is often severe physical, emotional, and educational damage (point 4). (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 33)

Various studies have been conducted over the years to determine what strategies will best benefit children experiencing poverty or homelessness in our schools. In one study by Heinze (2006), the researcher began by comparing the homeless student to the more socially adjusted non-homeless student. Eight areas of positive youth development included physical and psychological safety, clear and consistent structure and adult supervision, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts (p. 5). For many of the homeless youth and children, one or more of these positive youth development opportunities were missing. Within the study, researchers reviewed programs that work with youth to identify service characteristics that were designed to assist homeless students or at-risk adolescents. The results showed a common number of barriers that homeless students experience. These barriers included "lack of knowledge; concerns regarding agency comfort and getting along with youth and staff; waiting lists; irritating, disrespectful, intrusive, or threatening peers and staff; and excessive program requirements" (Heinze, 2006, p.71). Facilitating factors included "comfort, good food, small groups, opportunities to meet and interact with others, and friendly and helpful peers and staff" (Heinze, 2006, p. 71).

Another study consisted of looking at students from schools considered a 90/90/90 School. This goes back to research that was conducted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1995 that identified schools with the following characteristics:

- More than 90 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, a commonly used surrogate for low-income families.
- More than 90 percent of the students are from ethnic minorities.
- More than 90 percent of the students met or achieved high academic standards, according to independently conducted tests of academic achievement. (Reeves, 2003, p. 2)

From these studies, five characteristics were identified that were common with each of the schools that met the qualifications of a "90/90/90 School". These characteristics included academic achievement, curriculum choices, frequent assessment, emphasis on non-fiction writing, and collaborative scoring of student work. These characteristics will be further discussed within this paper as a strategy to assist students in these situations.

> The consistent message of the 90/90/90 Schools is that the penalty for poor performance is not a low grade, followed by a forced march to the next unit. Rather, student performance that is less than proficient is followed by multiple opportunities to improve performance. (Reeves, 2003, p. 4)

The driving force is that students that do not do well the first time the information is presented have opportunities because they do not move forward until they understand it. There are further opportunities to improve.

"According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2011), a child is considered at risk for developmental delay in oral language if they do not speak at least fifteen words by the age of eighteen months. Since children develop their understandings of the written word based on oral language skill and their knowledge of the world around them (Hanning, 1996), the very first teacher for any child is a parent" (Willard & Kulinna, 2012, p. 15). For homeless youth and children, this factor alone may be the beginning of their difficulty depending on their situation they are in and the parents' ability to provide them with assistance. "Homeless parents may not be able to offer assistance in one-on-one instruction or reading support or modeling. The typical home literacy environment may be far from ideal. First, there is no stable home environment, but instead a transitory existence that consists of moving from shelter to shelter or place to place. Parents may be more concerned with obtaining food or tracking down other basic necessities than assisting with reading and homework" (Willard & Kulinna, 2012, p. 16).

When faced with working in the educational system with students who fall into the categories of poverty, homeless, and highly mobile, it is important to understand that moving a youth or child out of a low socioeconomic class, is one of the most difficult tasks. If educators understand the class and the basic principles associated with the class, they can assist with this process. "One overall guiding principle is that we can improve the education of all children, particularly those from generational poverty by addressing curriculum through strategies that reflect their customs and values" (Jagt & Madison,

2005/2006, p. 317; Payne, 2004). Jagt and Madison (2005/2006) state that a secondary effect is that the family structure can be improved upon through relationships with school professionals and that children experiencing poverty need to learn in the abstract terms instead of concrete in order to move into the middle class (p. 317). It then falls on the shoulders of educators to model these skills for them to see, experience and practice in order to be successful.

It is necessary for educators to have an understanding between the wealthy class and the poverty class. Each class has a different set of expectations or rules in how they function in society. Jagt and Madison (2005/2006) go into the beginning comparison between the two classes by describing what rules they live by to maintain their socioeconomic structures (p. 318). "As a member of the wealthy class there is an emphasis on detail, one is required to be perfect, have verbal skills to disseminate important information, has to have skills or expertise, and social exclusion is the method of rejection" (Jagt & Madison, 2005/2006, p. 318). However, a person that is from the poverty class, has a set of "rules" that is completely different. "Adults and children from poverty receive information non-verbally, need to be personally strong, have the ability to entertain, generate high noise levels, and have a wider range of behaviors that are acceptable" (Jagt & Madison, 2005/2006, p. 318). Although this makes the task of educating every child more difficult at the onset, the educator that understands these various social "rules" can have a better understanding of the strategies and instructional techniques that can assist in making all of their students successful by identifying the best approach to instruction for each child.

Table 4. Summary of poverty studies

Study	*Key Findings*
Cuthrell, Stapleton, & Ledford (2010)	• When educating children in the generational poverty category, it is important for an educator to remember that these children tend to take on the role of a parent in their family unit. • Impoverished students are far more likely to enter school as linguistically disadvantaged because they have not had experiences that promote literacy and reading readiness.
Payne (2008)	• Eight resources "at-risk" students lack: Financial, Emotional, Mental, Spiritual, Physical, Support Systems, Relationships and Role Models, Knowledge of unspoken rules
Schwartz-Henderson (2013)	• 47% of children who are homeless are anxious or depressed, 20% of preschoolers have emotional problems requiring treatment by age eight, and 33% have at least one major mental disorder. • One of the most relevant findings is related to the impact of toxic stress on the executive functioning of the brain. This function of the brain is what controls the ability to multi-task, prioritize, and follow through with a directive.
Heinze (2006)	• Eight areas of positive youth development included physical and psychological safety, clear and consistent structure and adult supervision, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts.

	• A common number of barriers in the study included "lack of knowledge; concerns regarding agency comfort and getting along with youth and staff; waiting lists; irritating, disrespectful, intrusive, or threatening peers and staff; and excessive program requirements" • Facilitating factors included "comfort, good food, small groups, opportunities to meet and interact with others, and friendly and helpful peers and staff"
Reeves (2003)	• Success of 90/90/90 schools had characteristic of academic achievement, curriculum choices, frequent assessment, emphasis on non-fiction writing, and collaborative scoring of student work
Jagt & Madison (2005/2006)	• "One overall guiding principle is that we can improve the education of all children, particularly those from generational poverty by addressing curriculum through strategies that reflect their customs and values" • A secondary effect is that the family structure can be improved upon through relationships with school professionals and that children experiencing poverty need to learn in the abstract terms instead of concrete in order to move into the middle class. • "As a member of the wealthy class there is an emphasis on detail, one is required to be perfect, have verbal skills to disseminate important information, has to have skills or expertise, and social exclusion is the method of rejection" • "Adults and children from poverty receive information non-verbally, need to be personally strong, have

	the ability to entertain, generate high noise levels, and have a wider range of behaviors that are acceptable"

Programming and Policy Supports

Programming and policy supports provide a continued growth toward the framework of support for homeless children, youth, and families. The following section supplies an overview of the programming and policy supports that have developed over time and where programs need to develop to better meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Hughes, Stenhjem, and Newkirk (2007) cite a study that was conducted in 2004 by Richter which identifies four themes that are related to the combination of being from a high poverty background and the result of school failure and dropping out. These four themes include criminalization of youth, pessimism toward society, need for belonging, and need to increase cultural competence. During the interviews conducted by Richter (2004), those that responded noted that there is a connection among students who drop out and eventually end up being incarcerated as youth. These respondents also noted that although children can start being optimistic about their abilities, eventually they turn pessimistic due to the obstacles they have little control over. There appears to be a relationship between having success in their education and having a relationship with a positive role model and mentor. Youth have a strong need to be in a relationship with the adults around them to provide them with the feeling of belonging and to believe in their abilities. Finally, the adults in their lives need to understand the culture that they are part

of and the role that they play in their success. Understanding these children, their lives, and their barriers is critical to making a change in their lives that will lead to success (p. 24).

The United States has made attempts to help those children that are below the poverty line. "As part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, the Head Start Program was established in 1965 to increase the readiness for school of low-income children from birth to age five" (Taylor, 2005, p. 53). "Title I, the first section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, allowed for the provision of funds to schools with large numbers of low-income students" (Taylor, 2005, p. 43) in that same year. In addition to these programs, public schools continue to exhibit needs to support those children in need. Taylor (2005) further urges "well-considered reforms must be made, including more equitable funding for public elementary and secondary schools, the offering of financial incentives to attract and retain excellent teachers, multicultural and technological curricula, high standards, and academic support programs for students in grades K-12" (p. 54). Research further discusses the benefits of full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten and "play based learning to more didactic forms of learning" (Froese-Germaine, 2009, p. 191). Class size reduction has shown to be another benefit toward educational improvement for student learning. This "must go hand-in-hand with class composition, giving special consideration to the degree of student diversity including factors such as socio-economic status, language and cultural background, and numbers of special needs student." (Froese-Germaine, 2009, p. 193).

Although we have placed several national programs into place to help students in schools that are experiencing poverty, more national programs need to be considered to

address this growing need. The National Council of Welfare (2007) has proposed four elements that would benefit the development of a national anti-poverty strategy. These include:

- A long-term vision accompanied by measurable timelines and targets;
- A plan of action to coordinate initiatives within and across government departments and other partners, with the necessary human and financial resources for its implementation;
- A government accountability structure for carrying out the plan; and
- A set of accepted poverty indicators to measure results

(Froese-Germaine, 2009, p. 196; NCW, 2007)

Setting these strategies in place with the addition of effective strategies within school districts can have the potential effect of increasing the educational opportunity of children in schools with the additional benefit of lowering the number of families that are suffering below the poverty line across America.

In later research conducted by Powers-Costello & Swick (2011), they furthered their look at teacher perceptions of homeless students to identify important implications and recommendations for programming that will create a framework for creating success in school for these low-income/poverty/homeless students. This list was compiled from other researchers to create an encompassing set of recommendations to provide success in school.

1. Create school and community environments that support and encourage teachers to be more sensitive to the contexts and needs of students who are homeless (Anooshian, 2000).
2. Promote more awareness of the needs of homeless students within the school community (Swick, 2000).
3. Educate teachers about the dynamics of the lives of homeless children and their families (Swick, 2005).
4. Provide teachers with needed resources and support so they can respond effectively to the needs of their students (Milenkiewicz, 2005).
5. Engage teachers in developing positive relations with the families of children who are homeless (Swick, 2005).
6. Encourage and support teacher involvement in mentoring, tutoring, and other support roles (Milenkiewicz, 2005).
7. Involve teachers in community advocacy to promote prevention strategies that seek to reduce homelessness (Nunez, 1996).
8. Support teacher collaboration with shelters and other community groups to help homeless children and their families (Swick, 2005).
9. Provide continuing education for teachers to update their knowledge and skills for supporting children and families who are homeless (Swick, 2000).
10. Encourage school-wide attention to positive ways that everyone can help and support children and families who are homeless (Milenkiewicz, 2005).

(p. 211)

There continues to be many additional factors that affect the education of children impacted by homelessness. There are many problems such as chronic health issues, lack of proper health care, exposure to smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, physical and mental abuse. Housing conditions are poor and often these children are exposed to many situations that they would rarely be exposed to otherwise, such as crime and violence. These situations can lead to behavior problems in the classroom, low self-concept, depression, and low expectations by themselves and the educators around them. Therefore, it is important for administrators and school districts to have an understanding of the legislation, as well as, the best practices of implementing the McKinney-Vento protections that provide a free and appropriate education for these youth.

Murphy and Tobin (2011) identified an educational framework that would help to support homeless children in the classroom. These same elements would also work with the impoverished children in the school. These seven elements include: developing awareness, attending to basic needs, providing effective instruction, creating a supportive environment, providing additional supports, collaborating with outside agencies, and promoting parental involvement (p. 34).

In the area of developing awareness, it is important for the staff that is working with these families to understand what they are going through outside school walls. Understanding their everyday lives, the impact on their education, and what the teacher can do to understand the effect that it has on their ability to learn is very important. An additional awareness that is not often expressed is the need for their peers to understand what poverty and homeless means for their fellow classmates.

Table 5. Summary of programming and policy supports

Study	***Key Findings***
Hughes, Stenhjem, & Newkirk (2007)	• Identifies four themes that are related to the combination of being from a high poverty background and the result of school failure and dropping out. • These four themes include criminalization of youth, pessimism toward society, need for belonging, and need to increase cultural competence.

Froese-Germaine (2009)	• Full-day kindergarten benefits versus half day kindergarten
	• Class size reduction has shown to be another benefit toward educational improvement for student learning. This "must go hand-in-hand with class composition, giving special consideration to the degree of student diversity including factors such as socio-economic status, language and cultural background, and numbers of special needs student."
	• Four elements that would benefit the development of a national anti-poverty strategy
	    o A long-term vision accompanied by measurable timelines and targets;
	    o A plan of action to coordinate initiatives within and across government departments and other partners, with the necessary human and financial resources for its implementation;
	    o A government accountability structure for carrying out the plan; and
	    o A set of accepted poverty

	indicators to measure results
Taylor (2005)	• Head Start Program established in 1965 o Increase readiness for school of low-income children birth to five • Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act o Provision of funds to schools with large numbers of low income students • Recommendation for reforms o Equitable funding for public elementary and secondary schools o Financial incentives to attract/retain excellent teachers, multicultural and technological curricula, high standards, and academic support programs K-12
Powers-Costello & Swick (2011)	• Review of teacher perceptions of homeless students to identify implications and recommendations for programming to create a framework for success in school
Murphy & Tobin (2011)	• Seven elements to support homeless children in the classroom involve developing awareness, attending to basic needs, providing effective instruction, create a supportive environment, provide additional supports, collaborating with outside agencies, and promoting parental involvement

Instructional Practices and Strategies

As educators working with students that may be experiencing any level of poverty, high mobility, or homelessness, it is important to know strategies that will help to provide more opportunities for success when working with students who do not

experience these additional barriers. Classroom strategies that work for the general population will work for these students, however, there are additional techniques and strategies that will help promote higher success for these students that are already experiencing difficulty outside of the school environment.

Effective instruction. Providing effective instruction to children experiencing poverty or homelessness is an absolute priority. There are two instructional approaches that Murphy and Tobin (2011) mention as being a priority. These approaches include:

> First, individualized instruction appears to help these highly vulnerable students. Second, cooperative learning platforms allow homeless students to master important academic content while developing much-needed social skills as they interact with peers from a range of economic and social backgrounds. (p. 35)

Given this, it is recommended that teachers should break lessons into small pieces, complete lessons in one day to take into account absences, and continue to provide instruction that is the same curriculum as their peers. "Schools should be willing to restructure schedules, social organization, and functions in order to best meet the needs of students who have no idea of place" (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 35; Quint, 1994, p. 15)

Kennedy (2010) conducted a study that focused on improving the literacy achievement in schools that experience high levels of poverty. Within this study, teachers that were identified as having the ability to assist students in performing better in literacy often had "excellent classroom management skills, implement a balanced literacy framework, take a metacognitive approach to instruction, emphasize higher order

thinking skills, teaches basic skills in meaningful contexts, and use a range of formative assessment tools" (p.384). Through this study, the researcher identified six areas in which improvements in literacy were consistent among impoverished students.

The first area was to provide professional development to the teachers working with these students to address the underachievement in the area of literacy. The professional development must be personalized toward the students ability levels that they are working with, take place over time, and focus on research based instructional strategies. The second area of focus is through the teacher creativity and individuality. This allowed the teacher to follow the research based strategies and curriculum but to also continue with their own creativity to work with the students within their classrooms. The third area discussed was to introduce change at a slow and consistent pace so that success can be felt early in the process. This will support the teacher self-confidence in the lesson they are instructing while working with the children. The fourth recommends a "systematic, coherent, integrated, and cognitively challenging curriculum" (Kennedy, 2010, p. 386). This creates an instructional setting that will motivate and engage students to provide for positive gains in their literacy achievement. Blocking off time and creating the opportunity for "push-in" collaboration was the fifth improvement that had a strong impact on the improvement in literacy. Parental involvement provided the sixth area of improvement.

Another strategy for strong teacher effectiveness is to teach up. "Too often, students in lower-level classrooms receive a level of education that ensures they will remain at the tail end of the learning spectrum. High-end students may (or may not) experience rich and challenging learning opportunities, and students in the middle too

often encounter uninspired learning experiences that may not be crippling but are seldom energizing" (Tomlinson & Javius, 2012, p. 31). The challenge for teachers and administrators is to not group students according to their economic level and provide the opportunities that will allow for students to be educated at a pace that will allow them to accelerate regardless of the living situations. Tomlinson and Javius (2012) present seven principles of teaching up. These principles provide all students with access to an education that provides the opportunity for excellence. These seven principles include:

1. Accept that human differences are not only normal but also desirable.
2. Develop a growth mind-set.
3. Work to understand students' cultures, interest, needs, and perspectives.
4. Create a base of rigorous learning opportunities.
5. Understand that students come to the classroom with varied points of entry into a curriculum and move through it at different rates.
6. Create flexible classroom routines and procedures that attend to learner needs.
7. Be an analytical practitioner. (p.30-32)

In the first principle, teachers are encouraged to create a community of learners where students will participate as a group and utilize the differences of their group to benefit the class as a whole. Teachers want students to understand that even though everyone has differences, these can benefit each other when you put them together. The second principle stresses that "a teacher with a growth mind-set creates learning experiences that reinforce the principle that effort rather than background is the greatest determinant of success" (Tomlinson & Javius, 2012, p. 30). In principle three, a teacher would benefit from knowing their students' learning styles and teaching in ways that

benefit how they learn. Examples of rigorous learning opportunities in the fourth principle encourages teachers to teach students to "connect what they learn to their own lives, address significant problems using essential knowledge and skills, collaborate with peers, examine varied perspectives, and create authentic products for meaningful audiences" (Tomlinson & Javius, 2012, p. 31). In the fifth principle, teachers must also remember that students are coming into their classrooms at different learning points. They are responsible for providing opportunities to shine so that they will begin taking risks and volunteer what they have to share with others in their classes. Teachers monitor and use data to develop plans that will push students to exceed beyond their expectations. Given the various learning levels of student ability, principle six states that a flexible classroom and procedures will help meet student needs. A teacher in a class with multiple ranges of student abilities and needs will find flexibility a necessity to promote growth as a group and individually. Finally, principle seven encourages a strong teacher to always be reflective. If a teacher teaches up, they must "consistently reflect on classroom procedures, practices, and pedagogies for evidence that they are working for each student – and modify them when they're not" (Tomlinson & Javius, 2012, p. 33).

Supports. Much research has been conducted that support the need of children experiencing poverty living conditions to have supports beginning in preschool up through first or second grade. National programs have been put into place, such as Head Start and Title I, to help prepare and support them as they begin the early stages of their education. Stanley Pogrow (2009) presents a side to a different group of students that he views is in need of support at another point in their education. His focus is on fourth and fifth graders that are born into poverty. His belief is that when these students who are in

poverty situations reach the fourth and fifth grade, they hit a new set of boundaries in their development that cannot be addressed in the same ways that we address the supports in their much younger counterparts. His research has shown that the same techniques that children receive in K-2 stop working due to "reliance on remedial basic skill/test prep instruction" (Pogrow, 2009, p. 409. After students finish third grade, the type of curriculum becomes much more complex and students are no longer building on previous knowledge but instead everything is content based and no longer builds on the topics that they learned in lower grades. They now need the skills to take the information and apply it and synthesize it in new ways and these are not skills that these students have obtained. Students must now use the information that they receive, retain the information, and be able to apply it. Just re-teaching the information over and over no longer works for these upper elementary students. Teachers also must understand that students born into poverty have the same ability to learn that their peers have and that their life at home has nothing to do with their ability to succeed.

Instructional strategies. Two areas that have been found to succeed with these older students are providing the opportunity to have small group Socratic conversations and encouraging higher order thinking skills. Many of the deficit areas for these children include lack of conversational skills. These conversations encourage thinking and processing skills that lead to higher order thinking. Pogrow (2009) found that if a teacher conducts 35 minutes of daily small group discussion for 1 ½ to 2 years with 4th and 5th graders, it is possible to develop their sense of understanding (p. 410).

> The two interventions together provide a basis for creating a renaissance of learning after 3rd grade for children born into poverty by enabling them to learn to

their full potential, make sense and meaning around what they are learning and thinking, retain content, and increase their desire to engage in what is being taught. (Pogrow, 2009, p. 412)

McDaniel (2012) conducted a qualitative study using a critical theory framework to determine, "How do teachers develop an understanding of and address the educational needs of homeless children" (p. 25). To address the questions regarding teachers and their understanding of working with these children, the researcher shares research supporting teacher beliefs, resiliency, empowerment theory, the influence of human, cultural, and social capital, and the impact on homelessness in the classroom in regards to influence, challenges, and barriers to instruction. The researcher observed teachers for five weeks in a center that provided programs for homeless students in after school and summer enrichment environments. He then combined phenomenology and critical theory to gain understanding from the teachers who are working with these students and how it affects their beliefs, pedagogy, and effectiveness. Through results obtained, four themes appeared. These included "knowledge of students and their needs", "how students learn", "the intersection of beliefs and pedagogical practice", and "teachers learning in community" (McDaniel, 2012, p. 163). These results are evident in the following strategies obtained from other studies that have been conducted regarding teaching homeless or at-risk students in the classroom.

There are many research based strategies that can be implemented in the classroom that will help students who are homeless, experiencing poverty, or are highly mobile to be more successful. Jagt and Madison (2005/2006) provide a list of different

teaching strategies that will help students from low socioeconomic environments to understand content information. These include:

- Graphic organizers – help to identify and compare plots, main ideas, concepts, and to sort relevant and non-relevant cues.
- Coding – helps identify main ideas, details, for the who, what, why, and when parts of a story.
- Draw comparison charts of different geographical phenomena such as weather, seasons, rocks or plants.
- Compare characters in literature according to values, ambitions, and personalities.
- Compare note-taking procedures to select what fits best according to content.
- Uses of language-determine which word and/or gesture is suitable for different contexts or situations. (p. 319)

Another strategy that is useful is to provide materials that can go home and stay at home to help build connections to class experiences. This can also be obtained by teachers reaching out to local organizations or shelters and providing support. "As human resources, teachers can be involved in and support local events held in homeless shelters or community centers that engage parents and children in reading and writing activities (e.g., producing a newsletter, sharing books at home) or can offer tutoring" (Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008, p. 85).

One of the most important strategies is helping a child become part of the classroom. As mentioned previously, it is important for the school to reach out to the families and the community, but for the child, it is important for the teacher to reach out to the child and make the classroom become a place for them where it is safe and secure and where they can learn. "Teachers' expressions and modeling of genuine caring, coupled with compassion and safe classroom spaces, can change unengaged, disruptive children into active group participants" (Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008, p. 84; Noddings, 1992). Schwartz-Henderson (2013) shares that for children to heal, "children must feel safe in their bodies and have a connection to a safe and available adult. It is important to promote a safe environment. The most effective way to do this is to provide stable buffering relationships with adults" (p. 50). Among strategies for building relationships in the classroom, Cuthrell et al. (2010) suggests that:

> It is important to learn names quickly. Teachers can have children use each other's names positively and often in the classroom. Integrating quick team-building exercises throughout the week to establish positive relationships among the children is also key to reinforcing a positive classroom environment. Something as simple as tossing a smiley face beach ball into a circle of children and telling them they are responsible for keeping the beach ball happy and off the ground unites children and make them feel like they belong. (p. 107)

Above all else, it is important that the teacher models acceptance to all of the children and a genuine wanting of all the children in the classroom. "By believing in a

child, cultivating positive relationships, and offering meaningful activities, teachers can build positive classroom environments that affect the child for much longer than a single school year" (Cuthrell et al., 2010, p. 107). Payne (2008) states, "The nonverbal signals a teacher sends are a key part to showing respect. Nonverbal signals communicate judgment, and students can sense when a teacher's intent is to judge them rather than to offer support" ("Build Relationships of Respect", para. 3). If the teacher is sending out nonverbal and verbal signals of support and not judging the student, the relationship between both teacher and student can grow into a relationship of respect and trust.

In a study conducted by Quinn-Schuldt (2010), the researcher set a purpose to "identify and explore the teacher-homeless student attachment relationship as it is perceived by the teacher and generate a theory surrounding the dimensions of such relationships" (p. 6). The researcher's significance of looking at this problem is based on the idea that a homeless child experiences so many uncertainties in their world that the educational setting may be one of the only places in which they experience stability. The results of the study "highlighted the characteristics of teacher-homeless student attachment relationship that consist of: (1) the need for teachers to be more than educators; (2) the need to understand the plight of homeless students; and (3) the need to relate to these students, all adding up to the teacher-homeless student attachment relationship" (Quinn-Schuldt, 2010, p. 143).

Another study with the purpose of identifying the strategies implemented in Nebraska Title I schools that address the needs of highly mobile students resulted in research based practices that transition mobile students into elementary schools. The schools that participated in the study were identified as Title I schools within Nebraska,

which totaled 211 schools. Categories that were surveyed included enrollment, academic placement, student placement, classroom connections, family connections, unique needs, school/community connections, and exit transitions (Stavem, 2008, p. 32). The results of the study identified several themes. One area is that there must be a climate that cares about these students. It is not about saying that they are going to do something to help these children but the act of doing it. Best practices for success were identified to include:

- Solid practices and procedures for transitions were consistently followed.
- Office staff or other staff members are designated to assist with registrations and do so as a calling, not a requirement or part of a job description.
- Availability of quality programs before, during, and after school that support student learning by meeting multiple needs – academic, social, physical, and emotional.
- Continuous improvement was a mindset in all areas of meeting the needs of the students.
- Staff members were willing to do whatever it takes to do what's best for students including classroom placements, academic interventions, and basic human needs.
- Administrators who created a culture of caring in their buildings and had zero tolerance for anything less from staff.

- Strong community partnerships that resulted in effective programs and opportunities for students.
- Specific ongoing training for staff members that focused on meeting the needs of highly mobile students who often came from a poverty culture.
- Connecting students with caring adults and fellow students for the purpose of helping them to acclimate to the new school.
- Consistent communication with families, letting them know about opportunities, services and programs available to address parting needs, student academic needs, and provide family support. (Stavem, 2008, p. 90-91)

In addition to the relationship between student and teacher, the relationships that students build with their peers should be nurtured. "Teachers should help all students feel part of a collaborative culture. Intervene if you see an elementary student always playing alone at recess or a middle or high school student eating lunch alone. Whenever possible, introduce new learning through paired assignments or cooperative groups" (Payne, 2008, "Making Beginning Learning Relational," para. 1). For students who are struggling with the external environmental factors, they may be missing the ability to develop those relationships or may be hesitant to create new relationships knowing that they may move in a short period of time and sometimes it is safer not to develop the friendship to keep them emotionally safe. It is important for educators to encourage and help to foster relationship building to help them to socially grow. Within the study from Heinze (2006), mentioned earlier, empowerment was a key characteristic that showed

through as a main effect. The researcher suggests that "the combined effect of feeling accepted and comfortable (Belonging), having positive relationships with caring supportive staff, and feeling successful, valued and responsible (Opportunities for Efficacy) predict overall agency satisfaction above and beyond demographic factors, time in program, response to characteristics, and safety" (p. 106).

Effective instruction is essential to meeting the needs and growth of children in the classroom. Murphy and Tobin (2011) identify two instructional approaches that benefit homeless children and youth. The first is individualized instruction and is very helpful to these vulnerable students. The second is cooperative learning platforms which allow homeless students to master important academic content while they develop social skills through interactions with peers of various economic and social backgrounds (p. 35). Due to their high mobility, lessons should start and stop on the same day and any contracts with the child should be set on a short-term time frame instead of a long-term on the chance that they may not be in the school for a long period of time. Despite what may be thought about changing curriculum for homeless students, "scholars conclude that homeless youngsters don't need a different or separate curriculum. They need access to the same high-quality curriculum available to their peers" (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 35).

In a study conducted by Sanderson (2003) on engaging highly transient students, she identified strategies that teachers found worked in engaging highly transient students that passed through their classrooms. One such strategy involved adapting lesson and delivery. "Changes referred to lowering the number of students they instruct at a time. Another teacher alters her delivery of instruction by breaking it down. 'Chunking the

curriculum into smaller, more manageable pieces so it is more palatable for all the children'" (p. 604). Another strategy shared in Sanderson's (2003) research "centered on various ways students are grouped for instruction, both in the classroom and across the grades. 'Basically, what we do is group within the fifth grade. We group for math and language arts, so they are leveled for both subject areas'" (p. 604).

Tableman (2004) created a list of characteristics of effective teachers who work with students who are in areas of high poverty. Some of these characteristics of effective teacher practice include:

- Awareness of purpose: Clear understanding of intent of practices; strong sense of task and direction.
- Task orientation: Conveying the goal of every lesson and why the lesson is important to students; introducing lessons with an overview.
- High expectations for students: Expecting that every child can improve and move forward
- Enthusiasm
- Clarity, directness
- Positive Classroom climate
    - Strong classroom management skills
    - Lessons consistently well prepared
    - Predictable routines
    - Effective use of praise
    - Students on task

- Systemic curriculum-based assessment to monitor student progress (p. 3)

In the final characteristic of systemic curriculum-based assessment, it is recommended that the assessment be conducted 3-5 times a year, providing benchmarks and then that this information is shared with the principal and other teachers to refine the program (Tableman, 2004, p. 3).

Another recommended strategy for working with students is requiring written responses in assessments.

> The use of written responses appears to help teachers obtain better diagnostic information about students, and certainly helps students demonstrate the thinking process that they employed to find a correct (or even an incorrect) response to an academic challenge. Only with a written response from students can teachers create the strategies necessary to improve performance for both teacher and learner" (Reeves, 2003, p. 5).

One suggestion is to take the scoring rubric that is used to score all student writing and apply this to every piece of written work that the students create. This sends the message that the expectation is that all writing in all subject areas is always set to a high standard. There are two identified benefits to using this concept. The first is "students process information in a much clearer way when they are required to write an answer" and "teachers have the opportunity to gain rich complex diagnostic information about why students respond to an academic challenge the way they do" (Reeves, 2003, p.

5). Writing allows teachers to identify if the misunderstanding is due to their direction, reasoning, or other factors that cannot be identified through a typical assessment.

Cross-disciplinary integration is a strategy that is of benefit to students of all levels of disadvantage. Integrating other disciplines into the learning platform opens up a whole different level of opportunity for students. These areas include music, art, computer, physical education, media, and other areas of specialty found in many schools but left out of the academic instruction of students. Integrating the involvement of these areas into the instructional process can allow for areas of difficulty to be immersed into other subject areas where children may have difficulty. For example, after meeting to discuss difficulty with a language concept, each of the specialty areas can plan their lesson around that language concept so that children are reintroduced to it in an art lesson, or a music lesson, or a computer lesson. The possibilities are endless.

A final set of strategies can be applied toward teaching literacy to students. Tableman (2004) provides a list of effective instructional strategies that will assist with the approach to teaching literacy. These strategies include:

- Redoubling teaching efforts when student has difficulties
- Emphasis placed on both basic skills and higher order comprehension skills: higher level questioning about content, meaning-oriented not skills-oriented instruction
- Teaching strategies, not skills
- Instructional balance: integrating skills instruction and whole language practices

- Integration of reading and writing activities
- Instructional density: literacy instruction integrated with the rest of the curriculum
- Encouragement of self-regulation: students monitor their own progress
- Ability-based group assignments: change as assessment shows improvement
- Use of coaching and scaffolding
- Activities appropriate, meaningful and challenging (p. 3)

Although some of these suggestions could be considered far reaching, they are things that could be implemented to assist students and families to allow them the time to focus on the children and their growth and to provide them with a greater opportunity for success. As the number of students that experience life under the poverty line continues to increase, teachers must continue to reach for new ways to be effective in their student learning. Not only do we need to support very young children, but we need to focus on our older children to continue to narrow the gap and provide opportunities to keep them going so that when they reach high school, they have a feeling of success and accomplishment and not the feeling of failure which leads to dropping out.

Table 6. Summary of instructional practices and strategies

Study	***Key Findings***

Murphy & Tobin (2011)	• Two instructional approaches
	  o Individualized instruction
	  o Cooperative learning platforms

Kennedy (2010)	• Improve literacy achievement in schools that experience high levels of poverty
	  o These teachers have: excellent classroom management skills, implement balanced literacy framework, metacognitive approach to instruction, higher order thinking skills, basic skills in contexts, and uses formative assessment tools
	• Six areas consistent in improving literacy
	  o Professional development for teachers
	  o Teacher creativity and individuality
	  o Introduce change at slow and consistent pace
	  o "Systematic, coherent, integrated, and cognitively challenging curriculum" (p.386)
	  o Blocking off time to allow "push-in" collaboration
	  o Parental involvement

Tomlinson & Javius	• Strong teacher effectiveness is to teach up to allow students to accelerate regardless of living situation • Provides seven principles of teaching up
Pogrow (2009)	• Focuses on needs of 4th and 5th grade students • Believes same techniques for K-2 students no longer work and we

	need to change how students receive information and apply it • Recommends 35 minutes a day for group discussion with 4th and 5th graders to develop a sense of understanding
McDaniel (2012)	• Four themes from qualitative study of teachers working with homeless students and how it affects their beliefs, pedagogy, and effectiveness o Knowledge of students and their needs o How students learn o Intersection of beliefs and pedagogical practice o Teaches learning in community
Jagt & Madison (2005/2006)	• Provides a list of different teaching strategies that help students in low socioeconomic environments to understand content information
Walker-Dalhouse & Risko (2008)	• Caring, compassion, and safe classroom spaces can change unengaged, disruptive children into active group participants
Schwartz-Henderson (2013)	• Children must feel safe and have a connection to a safe and available adult to promote a safe environment
Cuthrell et al (2010)	• Learn name quickly • Integrate team building exercises to establish positive relationships • Model acceptance to all the children • Believe in the child, cultivate positive relationships, offer meaningful activities • Use non-verbal and verbal signals of support and not judging to grow relationship of respect and trust
Quinn-Schuldt (2010)	• Characteristics of teacher-homeless student attachment relationship o Need for teachers to be more than educators o Need to understand the plight of homeless students o Need to relate to these

	students (p143)

Stavem (2008)	• Study to identify strategies to implement in Nebraska Title I schools
	• Themes identified:
	  o Must be a climate that cares for students
	  o Consistent practices and procedures
	  o Staff designated to assist in registration
	  o Quality programs to support student learning (academically, socially, physically, emotionally)
	  o Continuous improvement mindset to meet needs
	  o Staff to do what is best for students
	  o Administrative culture of caring
	  o Strong community partnerships
	  o Ongoing training for staff on highly mobile students from poverty culture
	  o Connecting students with caring adults and students
	  o Consistent communication (p.90-91)

Payne (2008)	• Develop collaborative culture • Introduce new learning through paired assignments or cooperative groups
Heinze (2006)	• Empowerment is key characteristic • Belonging and Opportunities for efficacy provide satisfaction above demographics, time in program, response to characteristics, and safety

Sanderson (2003)	• Identified strategies to engage highly transient students
	  o Adapting lesson and delivery
	  o Lower number of students at a time

	o Break down delivery of instruction into chunks
Tableman (2004)	• List of characteristics of effective teachers who work with students in areas of high poverty • List of effective instructional strategies that will assist in teaching literacy
Reeves (2003)	• Require written responses in assessment • Set all writing in all subject areas to a high standard

Summary

A great deal of research has been conducted that addresses the educational opportunities of children and youth who are experiencing homeless situations. In the literature review as presented in this chapter, the legal implication and the current legislation are discussed. Educational accessibility is still a forefront issue to meeting the needs of homeless students. With access addressed through legal mandates, it is time to delve into the success of students in the classroom after they receive the accessibility of education. This begins with the instructional practices of the teachers in the classroom and how they change their instruction to support the success of all of their students, especially those who are in homeless living situations.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Overview

This chapter presents the research design of this study, addressing its theoretical perspective, research strategy, sample and participant selection, data generation and collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. This study is based on a mixed methods ethnographic case study design that will use semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis utilizing an advocacy/participatory framework. This design makes it possible to compare the effective instructional practices of teachers currently instructing students in their classroom experiencing homelessness.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the instructional and classroom management practices of elementary teachers who have students in their classrooms identified as currently in a homeless situation?
2. To what degree do elementary teachers differ in instructional and classroom management practices for homeless students and regularly housed students?
3. Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he change instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?

4. Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he change their other non-instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?

Theoretical Perspective

A mixed methods research approach was proposed for this study. Collective ethnographic case studies were utilized as the theoretical perspective in this research study utilizing the advocacy/participatory framework noted by Creswell in 2008. Ethnography means to "write (or represent) a culture. Ethnographers look for patterns, describe local meanings (tacit and explicit), and try to make sense of a place and a case in relation to the entire social setting and all social relationships" (Parthasarathy, 2008, para. 4). For this study, the researcher used the framework of ethnographic case studies to research the teacher instruction and pedagogy of working with students experiencing homelessness while utilizing the research design for advocacy/participatory research.

In justifying the theoretical perspective of advocacy/participatory framework for this research study, Creswell states:

> An advocacy/participatory worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. Thus the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which the individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed that speak to the important social

issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. (Creswell, 2008, p. 9)

The issue of homelessness, as the focal point of this research study, met the definition of advocacy/participatory framework in the identification of a group of individuals that are faced with the social issues of the day and in which an action agenda for reform within the schools would change the lives of the homeless children in the classroom.

This study focused on a case study of eight teachers in two local elementary schools, four teachers per school, who currently taught one or more homeless students in their classroom. An initial interview was conducted with each teacher individually to discuss his or her experiences in working with students who are homeless prior to the classroom observations. The researcher observed the teachers while they conducted a lesson, a minimum of twice each, utilizing the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale (DCOS). Finally, an open ended follow-up interview was conducted with each teacher after the observation. The research questions were framed to learn how they changed and adjusted their instructional practices to differentiate for the student's needs in the classroom and to promote the optimal learning environment for the child(ren) in their classroom that were experiencing homelessness. Following these interviews and observations, the researcher used the information to identify successful practices that are helpful to providing effective instruction when working with these children successfully. Previous literature reviewed within Chapter Two will assist in determining the effectiveness of classroom pedagogy within the study.

In researching the impact of homelessness in children and their success in school, it was necessary to look at where they have been, what provisions have been put in place, and what educators can do to bridge the achievement gap, provide children with the positive supports for success, and determine what additional facets need to be examined. According to Creswell (n.d.), the advocacy/participatory paradigm of research should "contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers' lives." (p.21). In considering this topic, becoming involved with the participants and making sure that their "voice" is heard through the research process, points toward this paradigm.

Sample and Participant Selection

Participants selected for this study consisted of a convenience sample of eight elementary school teachers in a suburban school district. Each participant currently had a student classified in his or her classroom experiencing homelessness. The students have different living situations that may or may not affect their school performance and engagement. Four of the classroom teachers were located at one elementary school and the other four were located at a second elementary school within the same school district. The common factor between the two schools was the school social worker. The school social worker was assigned at both schools and could assist in choosing student situations in which the students were referred through the classroom teacher or the parent had provided consent to the social worker to inform the teacher of their living situation. The selection of classroom teachers was initially determined by identifying the students within each building that were experiencing homelessness by the school social worker. The principal in each school then identified the teachers that could be considered for the

study. Teachers received the option of participating in the study. In the case of a teacher who declined to participate, the principal would choose another teacher to consider. In order for the success of this study, the teacher must be aware that they are teaching a student who is homeless and not be excluded from this knowledge due to confidentiality in which the parent does not wish the teacher to be aware. The criterion for teacher selection was that they were: 1) currently teaching a student who is experiencing homelessness, 2) an elementary school teacher, and 3) had worked with homeless students longer than nine weeks or one school quarter.

Research participants were recruited through recommendations made by the school social worker for both schools, principal approval, and the requirement of having a student that was currently experiencing homelessness in their classrooms. Participants completed a consent form prior to the interview. All eight participants completed a member check of the interview transcription following the interviews and provided feedback to the researcher of any adjustments or additions to their interview. Additionally, all eight participants consented to two classroom observations of a length approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes utilizing the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale Protocol (DCOS), which consists of an observation in five-minute increments and evaluates the homeless student against the non-homeless students in the classroom.

Data Generation/Collection

Triangulation. Given the importance of triangulating data, multiple types of data were generated and collected. Data generation and collection involved two one-day visits

to each site to conduct a minimum of one half hour of a formal observation utilizing the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale (DCOS). A 30-minute to one-hour interview occurred prior to the classroom observations and a second 30-minute to one-hour follow-up interview occurred after the classroom observations. Selected artifacts were reviewed for each of the observed lessons to include lesson plans and handouts. The data types for triangulation of information included teacher interviews, classroom observations, and instructional artifacts. The observations and artifacts for each lesson enabled the researcher to understand what was occurring in the classroom as the instructional strategies were unfolding in the lessons. This was then compared to the teacher interviews that occurred prior and post to the observations to gain any additional information and to verify the strategies through the observations.

Additionally, through the use of different participants in the study, two different locations, and multiple age groups within the elementary school, the data sources were triangulated. Each participant brought a different experience and viewpoint that could be compared to the other participants within the study. This provided a richer presentation of the different case study situations.

Interviews. Data was collected using semi-structured interview questions. All eight interviews were conducted face-to-face between the researcher and the participant. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions designed to determine the teachers existing pedagogy of instruction, how they adjusted their instruction for students experiencing homelessness, and what recommendations they would make to improve the academic success of those students who are in elementary school and experiencing homelessness. Elaboration and clarification were requested as appropriate following each scripted

question. Due to the semi-structured format, flexibility was allowed to ask follow-up questions that may encourage the participants to respond with deeper thinking ideas from the basic interview questions. Interviews were scheduled to last between thirty minutes and an hour but were determined by the information that the participant was willing to share. It was possible that the interview could be shorter than thirty minutes if the participant was not willing to share as much information. This is where the second interview was beneficial after the researcher had an opportunity to develop rapport through the two classroom observations. The teacher saw the member checking script from the first interview prior to the second interview. Through member checking, the participant was provided the opportunity to read their transcripts of the interview and provide any additional thoughts, corrections, or verifications to the researcher/interviewer. All eight participants provided member-checking feedback to the researcher.

The following interview protocol was used to prompt participants' responses:

Demographics

- Name
- Where and What Taught
- Years Experience
- How many students currently teach?
- How many homeless students have you taught in the last three years that you know about?

Background Questions

- Describe for me your background in working with homeless students (i.e., training, classroom experiences, etc).
- Upon learning the living status of a student, in what ways, if any, do you attempt to engage the student in the classroom and why?

- What do you view as the challenges of working with a homeless student in your classroom versus regularly housed students?

Instructional Questions

1. What is your philosophy of teaching that you follow in working with students?
2. Describe for me your instructional and classroom management practices. For example, describe how you determine your daily routine. How do you plan to reach all of your learners?
3. Describe your instructional planning process. What key features do you include in your planning (i.e., strategies, planning for assessment, etc).
4. Upon learning the living status of a student, in what ways, if any, do you change instructional classroom practices to meet their learning and emotional needs to promote academic success?
5. Describe for me the differences, if any, between working with homeless students and non-homeless students with instruction and classroom management.
6. If you knew that you had unlimited resources to work with a homeless student in your class to change your instructional practices, what types of things would you need in the classroom to provide the best instructional opportunity?
7. Thinking from an instructional point of view, what instructional strategies do you believe work best for homeless students versus regularly housed students?
8. How do you differentiate your instruction for students who are regularly housed and those that are at risk or homeless learners?
9. How do you handle homework, class work, and projects for your homeless learners versus regularly housed students?

Social Support Questions

1. What do you view as being the main social barriers for homeless students in the educational environment?
2. Upon learning the living status of a student, in what ways, if any, do you change your non-instructional classroom practices to meet their learning and emotional needs to promote academic success?
3. How do you help homeless children feel "normal" at school?

4. What experiences have been most valuable to you in your own professional development in working with homeless students versus regularly housed students?
5. What suggestions would you make to other teachers who work with homeless students about how to work with homeless students to promote academic success either instructionally or non-instructionally?

Table 7. Table of specification for interview and research question correlation

Interview Questions	***Research Question Correlation***
Describe for me your background in working with homeless students (i.e., training, classroom experiences, etc)	1, 2, 3, 4
Upon learning the living status of a student, in what ways, if any, do you attempt to engage the student in the classroom and why?	3, 4
What do you view as the challenges of working with a homeless student in your classroom versus regularly housed students?	1, 2, 4
What is your philosophy of teaching that you follow in working with students?	1, 3, 4
Describe for me your instructional and classroom management practices. For example, describe how you determine your daily routine. How do you plan to reach all of your learners?	1, 3
Describe your instructional planning process. What key features do you include in your planning (i.e. strategies, planning for assessment, etc)	1, 3
Upon learning the living status of a student, in what ways, if any, do you change instructional classroom practices to meet their learning and emotional needs to promote academic success?	3
Describe for me the differences, if any, between working with homeless students and non-homeless students with instruction and classroom management.	2
If you knew that you had unlimited resources to work with a homeless student in your class to change your instructional practices, what types of things would you need in the classroom to provide the best instructional opportunity?	3
Thinking from an instructional point of view, what instructional strategies do you believe work best for homeless students versus regularly housed students?	2, 3

How do you differentiate your instruction for students who are regularly housed and those that are at risk or homeless learners?	3
How do you handle homework, class work, and projects for you homeless learners versus regularly housed students?	2, 3
What do you view as being the main social barriers for homeless students in the educational environment?	1, 4
Upon learning the living status of a student, in what ways, if any, do you change your non-instructional classroom practices to meet their learning and emotional needs to promote academic success?	4
How do you help homeless children feel "normal" at school?	2, 4
What experiences have been most valuable to you in your own professional development in working with homeless students versus regularly housed students?	1, 2
What suggestions would you make to other teachers who work with homeless students about how to work with homeless students to promote academic success either instructionally or non-instructionally?	3, 4
DCOS Categories	***Research Question Correlation***
Instructional Activity Observed	1, 2, 3
Student Engagement, Cognitive Activity, and Learning Director	1, 2, 3
Holistic Observational Ratings (Identified group vs Not Identified Group)	1, 2, 3, 4

A variation of this interview protocol was developed and field-tested in a small-scale, preliminary field investigation utilizing three teachers located within the same elementary school with three students in three different homeless situations by this researcher a year prior. The findings of this field investigation focused on the interviews conducted with these three teachers that centered on the research questions of identifying the pedagogical practices of teachers who are currently working with homeless students and identifying what practices work in providing the necessary supports for success. Four primary categories were identified as affecting a teacher's pedagogy and providing for the success of homeless students in the classroom. These four categories or themes

included the challenges that homeless children may have dealt with when applied toward the educational setting and everyday functions. The second category referred to the instruction of homeless students in the classroom. The third category referred to social supports available or recommended for success within the classroom and school. Social supports also refer to the emotional and social concerns that homeless students and families face on a daily basis. Finally, the fourth category identified strategies that were recommended by teachers for success in the instructional classroom to promote a positive learning experience. Within these four categories, subcategories defined the specifics and relationships that provided success for a homeless student in the elementary school level. The protocol was found to be effective in encouraging the participants to explore and communicate their perceptions of homeless students in the classroom that resulted in these initial findings.

Observations. In addition to conducting individual teacher interviews, the researcher utilized an observation tool to conduct a classroom observation of each teacher's instruction with the homeless student present for the lesson observation. For the purpose of this study, the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale (DCOS) (Cassady et al., 2004) was utilized. This instrument requires a classroom observation with five-minute intervals of recording data. The observer recorded the instructional strategies/activities that were used in each interval, the level of student engagement, the levels of cognitive demand, and the director of learning for that period of time (teacher driven or student driven). Under student engagement, the observer used the coding of L – low engagement (20% or fewer of students engaged in learning), M – moderate engagement (21-79% of students engaged in learning), and H – high engagement (80% or

more students engaged in learning). The observer used a set of provided codes to identify instructional strategies used in the lesson. Six levels of cognitive demand were recorded on a low, medium, or high level. These included: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. For director of learning, the observer recorded on a scale of 1-5 as to the level of teacher driven to student driven instruction. The observer was answering the question: "Who directs the learning, or makes the decisions about the learning activities." The scale codes the observer with a 1 – teacher directs all learning, 2 – teacher directs most of learning, 3 – teacher and student share learning decisions, 4 – student directs most learning, and 5 – student directs all learning. The data collected using the DCOS was recorded for the whole class together (non-identified group) and for the homeless student in the class (identified group).

Artifacts. Participants within this study were asked to provide samples of artifacts that would best show depth to the data generated through the interviews and observations. Examples of these artifacts included lesson plans, handouts, student notebooks/workbooks, or other artifacts that present instructional strategies that the teacher felt benefits a student within their class experiencing homelessness. The participant was given an opportunity to share these artifacts following the classroom observations or during the second interview meeting. The benefit to this was that the participant had an opportunity to show other accommodations or strategies that they used that are of benefit but may not have been observable on the two days the researcher observed within the classroom.

Data Analysis

This section addresses the methods of data analysis that moved the raw data obtained through the interviews, observations, and artifacts to the findings through researcher interpretation and explanation.

The interview findings related to this research emerged through categories/themes as the data information was analyzed through key word coding. In identifying the categories/themes, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts verbatim line-by-line and code the key words from each participant interview. Utilizing these codes, the main categories/themes will emerge from the sixteen interviews, two interviews per teacher, showing commonality between each of the eight classrooms and student situations. To ensure credibility in representing the participants' perception, after interview transcription was completed, the draft was given to each participant to review and provide any corrections. Necessary corrections will be made to the interview transcripts based on their feedback. Coding was then conducted after the participant review.

Once the observation data, utilizing the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale (DCOS) was collected, it was evaluated to provide a representation of what was observed in the classroom during each observation. The data contained information recorded for the entire class (non-identified group) and for the homeless student(s) in the class (identified group). Data was obtained during the observations that identified the instructional strategies/activities that were used in each interval and analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the most commonly used classroom strategies among the identified and non-identified groups.

In the data reviewing the instructional activities observed in the classroom, the researcher used a set of codes for the different types of instructional activities that could occur during the observations. The level of student engagement was interpreted using an observation of four minutes and thirty seconds within a five-minute time period. The remaining thirty seconds was used to record the level of engagement that was observed. This engagement is coded as low (1), medium (2), or high (3). In the final portion, the researcher will determine the direction of learning for the time of the observations. The learning director was scored on a five-point scale. This scale coded as: 1 – teacher directs all learning, 2 – teacher directs most learning, 3 – teacher and student share learning decisions, 4 – student directs most learning, and 5 – student directs all learning.

Peer reviews were provided by faculty members from the School of Education and are members of my dissertation committee that provided assistance in strengthening the research design, procedures, and analysis of my study. Raw data that was collected through the interviews, observations, and artifact reviews confirmed neutrality of the researcher interpretation of results. The results from the study provided an understanding of the effective strategies that teachers can provide in the classroom to reach success with homeless students in the elementary school.

Ethical Considerations

To follow required procedures for conducting research at The College of William and Mary, a proposal for this study was submitted to my Dissertation Committee for review. The study was then be submitted to the Human Subjects Review Committee for review and approval. Within the school district, a procedure for guidelines for research

was submitted and approved before a study could be conducted within the school district. A Research and Evaluation Application Form was completed and submitted to the Department of Accountability, Quality, and Innovation. The package included: (a) a copy of the proposal, (b) a copy of the Application for Research and Evaluation form, (c) a copy of the Principal Agreement to Participate form, (d) teacher consent forms, (e) all instruments (interview protocol, observation forms, and (f) Data Collection Completion Notification Form with a summary of the methodology and a copy of the completed dissertation. After the approval from the school district, the researcher followed the procedure of selecting the classroom teachers to observe in the two identified elementary schools.

Once the teachers were selected for the study, the researcher met with each of the participants to obtain their informed consent and to set the time and duration of the initial interviews, observations, and follow-up interviews. Consent forms included that participation is voluntary and that the participant can withdraw from the study at any time, information will be taken in confidence, anonymity will be extended to any verbal or written reporting of findings, participants will have an opportunity to review their transcribed interviews, and all participants will receive a copy of the final report. Due to the nature of the study in working with a confidential class of students, information that was collected was protected so as not to breach confidentiality. All sites and participants were identified by fictitious names. All identifying information was changed to ensure confidentiality.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This study explored successful pedagogical practices of elementary teachers of homeless students. Data was collected or generated through classroom observations, interviews, and artifacts. Eight elementary classroom teachers participated in this study. The participants were diverse in their years of teaching experiences and the grade levels in which they taught. Classroom observation data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. The data generated by interviews were examined using ethnographic case studies using an advocacy/participatory framework. Artifacts were analyzed to support the classroom observations and teacher interviews. In this chapter, results of analyses will answer the following research questions:

1. What are the instructional and classroom management practices of elementary teachers who have students identified as currently in a homeless situation in their classrooms?
2. To what degree do elementary teachers differ in instructional and classroom management practices for homeless students and regularly housed students?
3. Once an elementary teacher learns that she has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he change instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?
4. Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a students who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he

change non-instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?

Demographic Information

The participants were eight teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade located at two local elementary schools within a suburban school district. Four teachers were located at each school and currently teach one or more homeless students in their classrooms. After identifying each teacher, it was determined that only one student experiencing homelessness was in each classroom. All of the participants have worked with their students a minimum of nine weeks of school or one academic quarter or more. All of the teachers in this study were female. The teachers that participated had a wide range of background in their experiences with homeless students. Several of the teachers have several years of past experiences working with homeless students. One teacher was previously out of state and had experience with several previous students who became homeless due to Hurricane Katrina. One teacher was in her first year of teaching and had no experience with homeless students in addition to being in her first year. One teacher was very seasoned but had never had a homeless student identified within her classroom. Finally, one teacher had "looped" her students and had worked with her homeless student in two consecutive years. Table 8 presents demographic information of the participants by frequency and percentage.

Table 8. Participant Background Information

Item	*Category*	***Total*** ***Frequency (Percentage)*** ***N=8***
Gender	Female	8 (100%)
	Male	0 (0%)
Teaching Years	<5	2 (25%)
	5-10	1 (13%)
	>10	5 (63%)
Grade Level	K	2 (25%)
	1	1 (13%)
	2	0 (0%)
	3	2 (25%)
	4	0 (0%)
	5	3 (38%)

Findings for Research Question 1:

What are the instructional and classroom management practices of elementary teachers who have students identified as currently in a homeless situation in their classrooms?

The purpose of the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale (DCOS) is to yield data regarding the instructional strategies, student engagement, and teacher-directed/student directed learning between an identified group of students and a non-identified group of students. Within this study, the identified group of students is the homeless students within the classroom. The findings of this measure are presented in descriptive statistics of means and percentages. The findings from interview data regarding instruction and classroom management practices of elementary teachers are also provided to show what the participants view as successful practices within their

classrooms. Additional anecdotal notes were taken during the classroom observations to obtain details as to how each instructional strategy was used during the observation.

Number of Instructional Activities and Student Engagement

All instructional activities were recorded in five consecutive five-minute segments using codes determined and established by the DCOS to total a 30-minute observation. A total of 80 segments observed the homeless students in the classroom and the regularly housed peers in the classroom simultaneously. As presented in Table 9 below, the number of instructional activities teachers used for homeless students, on average, was 4.5 different instructional activities during an entire observation with a standard deviation of 1.52. The number of instructional activities teachers used for regularly housed students, on average, was 5.6 different instructional activities during an entire observation with a standard deviation of 1.67. There is a difference in the mean number of instructional activities. Regularly housed students are engaged in one more activity on average. Thus, there were observed only minor differences in the number of activities per lesson between the instructional practices for the identified group and the non-identified group within the observations.

Table 9. Results from the Differentiated Observation Scale, Number of Instructional Activities by identified group and non-identified group

	Identified Homeless Students N=8			***Regularly Housed Students N=183***		
Number of instructional activities per classroom observation	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
	4.5	1.52	2.6-7	5.6	1.67	3.4-9

Table 10 shows the instructional activities used most frequently for students experiencing homelessness and the frequency compared to those students who are regularly housed. The percentages show the average number of times the instructional strategy is used across all of the 5-minute segments of observations. Figure 2 shows that the instructional activities are all used between both groups of students but to a slightly higher degree for the regularly housed students as compared to the homeless students. This could be due to the majority of the classrooms using learning centers and students working through a variety of different activities where the observer only observed the homeless students working through one or two of the centers. However, all of these instructional activities were used to some degree with the highest number of activities being with questioning by teacher, student responding, technology use by teacher, teacher interacting with individual student, anchoring activity during lesson, small group discussion, lecture, and learning centers. Comparatively these techniques were used for all students during observations.

Table 10. Most Used Instructional Activities with Homeless Students Compared to Regularly Housed Students

Instructional Activity	***Percentage of Times Used Across Observation Segments Homeless Students N=80***		***Percentage of Times Used Across Observation Segments Regularly Housed Students N=80***	
	f	***%***	***f***	***%***
Questioning by Teacher	52	65%	56	70%
Student Responding	36	45%	44	55%
Technology Use – Teacher	26	33%	26	33%
Teacher Interacting with Individual Student	23	29%	25	31%
Anchoring Activity during Lesson	23	29%	24	30%
Small Group Discussion	23	29%	21	26%
Lecture	22	28%	22	28%
Learning Centers	20	25%	25	31%

Figure 2. Most Used Instructional Activities with Homeless Students Compared to Regularly Housed Students

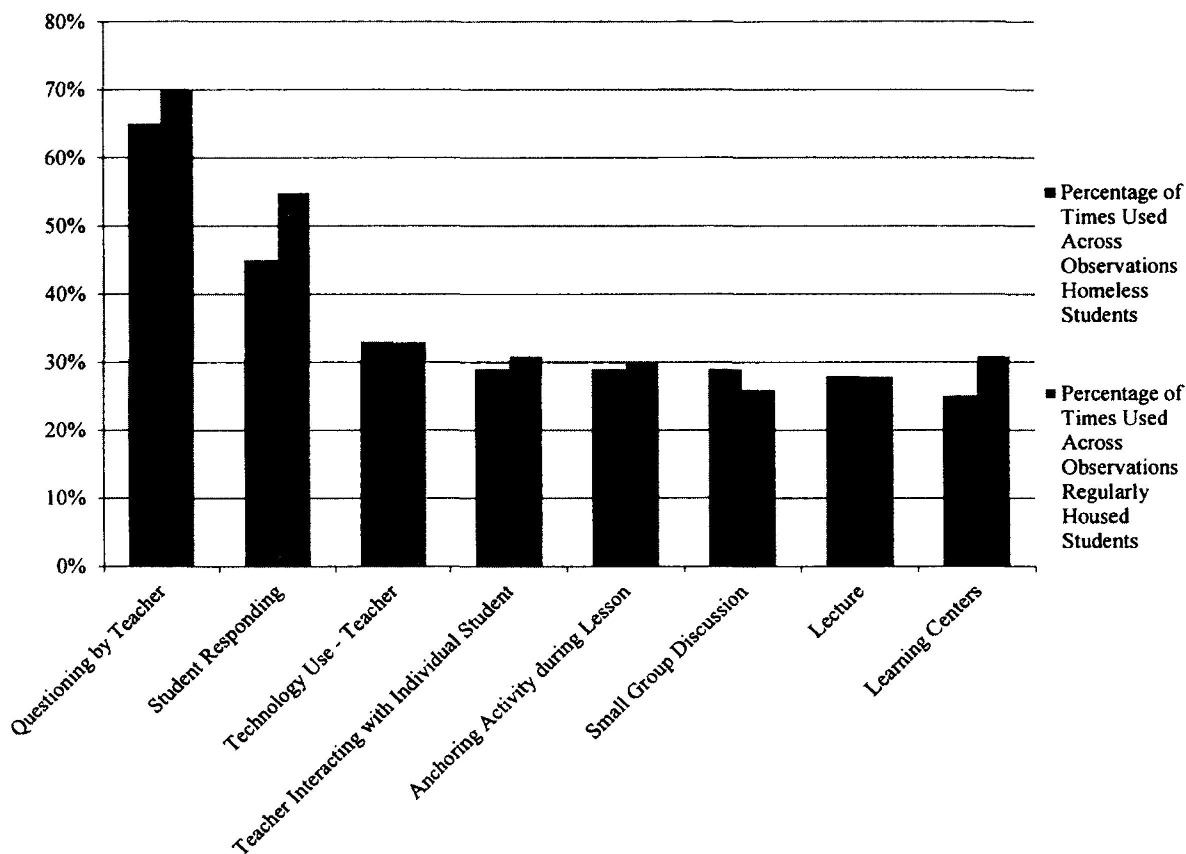
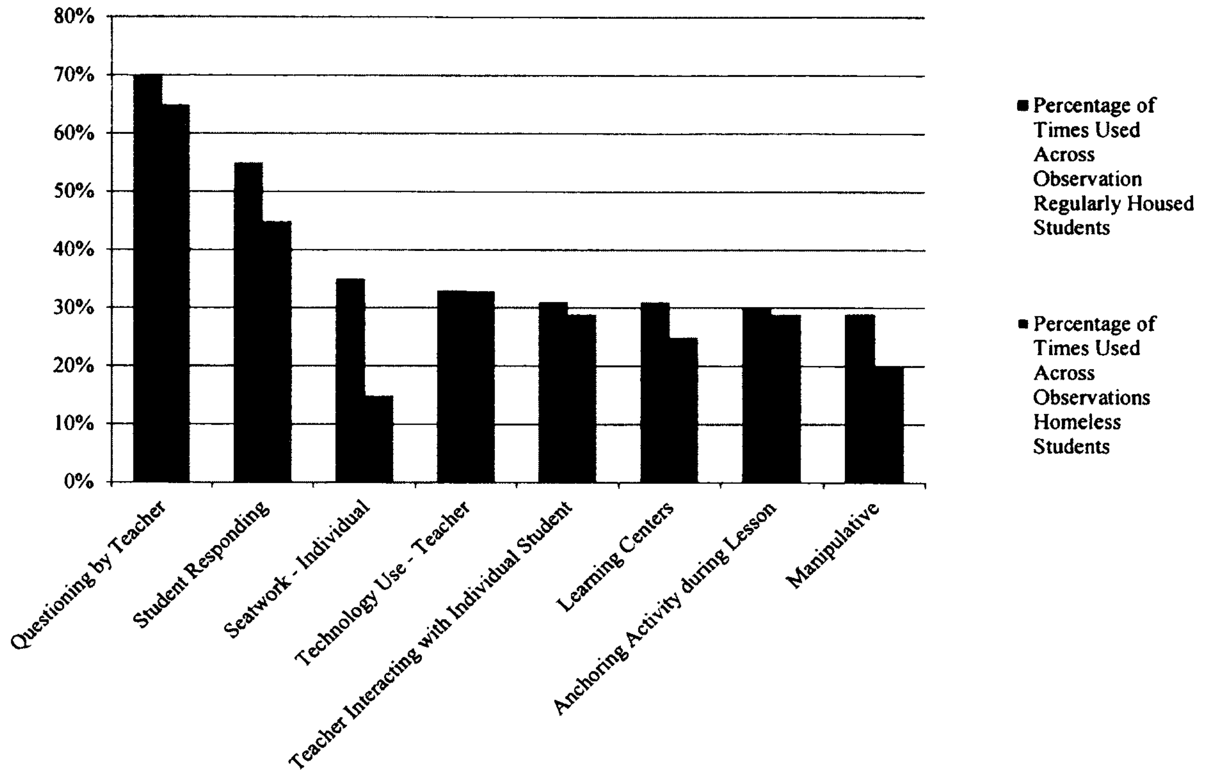


Table 11 and Figure 3 show the instructional strategies most used with regularly housed students compared to homeless students. The teachers most frequently used questioning by teacher, student responding, individual seatwork, technology use by teacher, interacting with individual students, learning centers, anchoring activity during lesson and manipulatives. Although most percentages are comparable, it is important to note the use of individual seatwork was significantly higher for regularly housed students as opposed to homeless students which could infer that the classroom teachers do not provide homeless students with as much individual seat work as their peers. This activity was not identified in the comparison of homeless students to regularly housed students noted in Table 10.

Table 11. Most Used Instructional Activities with Regularly Housed Students Compared to Homeless Students

Instructional Activity	***Percentage of Times Used Across Observation Segments Regularly Housed Students N=80***		***Percentage of Times Used Across Observation Segments Homeless Students N=80***	
	f	***%***	***f***	***%***
Questioning by Teacher	56	70%	52	65%
Student Responding	44	55%	36	45%
Seatwork – Individual	28	35%	12	15%
Technology Use – Teacher	26	33%	26	33%
Teacher Interacting with Individual Student	25	31%	23	29%
Learning Centers	25	31%	20	25%
Anchoring Activity during Lesson	24	30%	23	29%
Manipulative	23	29%	16	20%

Figure 3. Most Used Instructional Activities with Homeless Regularly Housed Students Compared to Homeless Students



Findings for Research Question 2

To what degree do elementary teachers differ in instructional and classroom management practices for homeless students and regularly housed students?

Questioning by Teacher. All of the observed teachers asked questioning throughout their lessons. Of the regularly housed students, 70% were questions asked by the teacher and, of the homeless students, 65% were questions asked by the teacher. In comparison, all of the students received questions that would allow for student thinking and to solicit responses from the class as a whole. This is an important assessment tool used by teachers to determine student understanding of basic skills as well as

understanding of new concepts. Questions were asked at multiple levels of difficulty to acquire information on a basic level and to provide questioning at a higher, deeper level of thinking. Questioning is also a means to gauge student participation and to clarify their understanding. All of the teachers who were observed used questioning in all of the observations that were made in their classes.

Student Responding. As with questioning by teacher, student responding ranked high in both groups with 55% of regularly housed students responding and 45% of homeless students responding. Questioning techniques provided opportunities for all students to respond and was used as a means of assessing student understanding of the concepts being taught. Of the 16 observations made, 11 observations of homeless students had examples of student responses, whereas 12 observations had examples of regularly housed peers having student response opportunities.

Technology Use by Teacher and by Student. The use of technology by the teacher was equal among working with both homeless students and regularly housed students at 33%. The majority of the use of technology was with either use of a document camera to present a lesson or the use of a video to present concepts to students. Student use of technology was observed predominately with the use of learning centers where students worked on their own with a computer program and during most observed lessons with learning centers, the teacher was directly working with a group that contained the homeless student. There were very few opportunities, 0.4%, in which the observer had the opportunity to observe a homeless student working with technology on their own. Students who were regularly housed had 20% opportunities to work with technology on their own.

Teacher Interacting with Individual Students. In comparison between the two groups, the percentages were relatively close with homeless students receiving support and interaction for the teacher 29% while their peers received individual interactions 31%. Many of these instances occurred during whole group instruction when the teacher or a teacher assistant provided support during the instruction or during learning centers while the teacher had a small group of students and provided individual interactions with the student while in their small group.

Anchoring Activity During Lesson. The purpose of an anchoring activity is to provide for independent work before, during, or after a lesson. During the classroom observations, the observer noted anchoring activities occurring at various times throughout lessons but predominately during a lesson. This was especially true during lessons that involved learning centers in which students were split into groups of 5-8 students working on various activities simultaneously. 30% of the regularly housed students worked on anchoring activities while 29% of the homeless student worked on anchoring activities during the lesson, which shows very little difference between the two comparison groups.

Small group discussion and learning centers. Small group discussion was used 29% of the time with homeless students and 26% of the time with regularly housed students. Similarly, 25% of the homeless students participated in learning centers while 31% of the regularly housed student participated in learning centers. Of the eight teachers observed, 50% of the teachers utilized learning centers and small group discussion within their lessons during observations.

Lecture. Lecture occurred within the other 50% of the classroom observations with 28% of the time for homeless and regularly housed peers equally. Lecture was noted to occur at the beginning of those lessons, followed by independent practice or small group activities.

Seatwork by Individual Students. Seatwork by individual students was noted to occur most often as a part of a learning center rotation. In classroom setup, one group worked with the classroom teacher, one group had a technology component, and one group had a small group, paired, or individual assignment to complete. In these scenarios, 15% of homeless student were working on individual assignments and 15% of regularly housed peers were working on individual assignments. Within these assignments, 50% of the students had the opportunity to choose their center rotation and chose to work independently and in the other 50% the students were in a rotation in which their next activity was an assignment to be completed independently.

The DCOS predominately identifies instructional strategies within the classroom. Table 12 presents instructional strategies identified most used from the classroom observations. This table presents the successful instructional strategies performed in the classrooms in which observations were conducted. This will be discussed within Chapter 5.

Table 12. Instructional practices with homeless students compared to regularly housed peers

	Percentage of Times Used Across Observations Homeless Students		***Percentage of Times Used Across Observations Regularly Housed Students***	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*
Questioning by Teacher	52	65%	56	70%
Student Responding	36	45%	44	55%
Technology Use by Teacher	26	33%	26	33%
Anchoring Activity During Lesson	23	29%	24	30%
Small Group Discussion	23	29%	21	26%
Lecture	22	28%	22	28%
Learning Centers	20	25%	25	31%
Manipulatives	16	20%	23	29%
Seatwork by Individual Students	12	15%	12	15%
Technology Use by Student	3	0.4%	16	20%

Table 13 below shows the results in reference to student engagement between the identified students and the non-identified students. Engagement was ranked by low (1), medium (2), and high (3) and was recorded at the end of each 5-minute segment. In reviewing the differences between the identified group and the non-identified group, there was low variability between the two groups. Both showed a mean of 2.71 and 2.93 that showed a high level of student engagement among all of the students. A standard deviation of 0.46 and 0.18 shows little difference between the students who were being observed. Therefore, among all classroom observations, all students exhibited a high level of student engagement.

Table 13. Results from the Differentiated Observation Scale, Student Engagement by Identified group and Non-identified group

	Identified Homeless Students N=8			***Regularly Housed Students N=183***		
Student Engagement	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
	2.71	0.46	1.4-3	2.93	0.18	2.4-3

Table 14 presents non-instructional classroom management practices identified from the classroom observations. These practices were identified as three areas of the DCOS that also can be used as part of a teacher's classroom management practice. Students' choice of rotations allow for the students to have choice in what they want to do and how they want to spend their time during rotation. Teacher interacting with individual students may be instructional, but also could be during teacher monitoring, redirection, and facilitation of movement. Teacher interacting with small groups may be with instruction, but also can be part of classroom management by redirection, facilitating student interactions, and movement. These areas may be seen as instruction but during specific classroom instruction may also fall into classroom management practices as well.

Table 14. Classroom management practices with homeless students compared to regularly housed peers

	Percentage of Times Used Across Observations Homeless Students		***Percentage of Times Used Across Observations Regularly Housed Students***	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*
Student Choice of Rotations	40	50%	40	50%
Teacher Interacting with Individual Students	23	29%	25	31%
Teacher Interacting with Small Groups	9	11%	23	29%

Findings for Research Question 3

Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he change instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?

The interviews conducted with these eight teachers centered on the research question of identifying the pedagogical practices of teachers who are currently working with homeless students and identifying what instructional classroom practices they use in providing the necessary learning and emotional needs of students for success. The findings related to this research question emerged into three separate themes/categories as the data information was analyzed through key word coding. The three categories/themes identified through interviews consisted of: 1) planning for instruction to meet student needs, 2) learning group instructional styles, and 3) how teachers

accommodate homework for their homeless students. Furthermore, subthemes emerged within several of the major themes. The data generated through artifact collection, field notes, and coding were included as a means of triangulation to provide a richer description from the data collected. The categories and themes are listed in Table 15.

Table 15. Major Categories and Themes in Instructional Classroom Practices

Categories	**% of Teachers Identified these Themes N=8**	**Themes**
Planning	7 (88%)	• Planning based on assessments
	8 (100%)	• Planning using background knowledge and differentiation
	5 (63%)	• Planning backwards
Learning Groups	6 (75%)	• Allows for ability grouping
	4 (50%)	• Increases confidence levels for students in each learning group
	4 (50%)	• Promotes collaborative learning differentiation
Homework	6 (75%)	• Provide supplies for home
	6 (75%)	• Complete assignments at school
	6 (75%)	• Time extensions
	5 (63%)	• Simplify/modify for success

In identifying the categories/themes, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts line-by-line and coded key words from each participant interview. Utilizing

these codes, the three main categories/themes emerged from the eight interviews showing commonality between each of the eight classrooms and student situations in determining instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success.

Planning. The first main theme/category that became evident through the interviews was related to the planning process that teachers of children experiencing homelessness face in regard to planning effective instruction to reach their students. In discussing the planning process, the following teachers shared how assessment informs with their planning:

> *We have a lot of collaboration that goes on. Collaboration both for math and for our reading in English/Language Arts. We sit down about a week before each of our content area subjects and we plan through those as well. In our individual plans, our plans include the activities, for example, in math, of our three individual differentiated groups, how they're going to be different, and what assessment comes into play, if any? It could be a ticket out the door. It could be a formal assessment.*

Another teacher shared in regards to assessment planning:

> *We plan together as a team and we usually like to start off with looking at an assessment of what we need to be working towards. So we try to start with an assessment and study guide and then work backwards. We plan out a unit at a time and always look for different strategies. In the classroom for assessment, I do regular assessment on just their participation, anecdotal, notes, etc. I do look*

at their journals because that's all of the class work on things that would be necessary to study for a test. We do have a unit test in every unit and then quizzes in between.

Overall, the planning process is very important in planning for differentiation of various learning groups. Many teachers focus on planning backwards from the assessment of content to the beginning and where they know students have the background knowledge. In some cases, due to mobility, it is difficult to know what background knowledge homeless children bring to the table in a classroom. In these instances, teachers plan for ways to assess the background knowledge at the beginning of a lesson. The following statements support this finding:

My instructional planning practices begin with what I want students to know. So I typically plan backwards, beginning with the assessment piece. I think providing hands-on opportunities to reach those goals are important. Providing background knowledge is important and providing opportunities for conversation to see, think, and wonder.

Taking into account that strategies for instruction is important for all grade levels, what is needed for one student may not be what is needed for another student. In these instances, it is important to plan for strategies and how to reach all of the students in the classroom to meet their various needs when planning.

Planning for strategies... it is more innate that it is that I'm specifically planning strategies. I look at the skill that I'm supposed to teach a child and try to work backwards into what I imagine their background knowledge is and take into

account their situations and what background knowledge they have coming at that skill and try to plan for any barriers in their way. I start the skill and work backwards rather than trying to plan 25 lessons for 25 children.

A second teacher shared her team's planning in regard to strategies:

We plan as a team and we plan to try to get lots of different activities in there. We try to give the students things that you know are real experiences that they can take away and remember. As far as science and social studies goes, they have their interactive notes that we try to make interactive where they can kind of have the freedom to take notes on the side or to make drawing to show the notes so that they take ownership of it. So we plan around that and add extra activities to really get them thinking or to really assess them.

From these interviews with teachers, all realized that there are different challenges in planning for homeless students. These challenges spread from the information they are lacking to having deficits academically and socially. It is important to remember to be sensitive in what is assumed that the child knows and to always be aware in class discussion to make sure that all of the students have an equal opportunity to be a part of the conversation and to keep that idea in place when planning for each lesson. It takes remembering that they may have very different experiences and they may be lacking many things that their fellow peers have and take for granted. From day to day, they have different concerns and worries that their peers may not have because they know where they are going that night and the homeless student is not certain. Additionally, it was shared that teachers plan and discuss data on a regular basis. At one of the schools,

data discussions are held every other week at all grade levels. On the opposite weeks, planning is held to discuss instruction for upcoming lessons. These meetings are facilitated by the building math and reading specialists. This allows for teachers to plan deeply, utilizing student achievement scores and performance levels with the assistance of a specialist. Because these meetings are held every week (one week for data and one week for instruction) the conversation has an opportunity to continue to build with support from their teams.

In reviewing lesson plan artifacts that were submitted to the researcher, lesson plans addressed planning differentiation opportunities for student as well as planning for assessment and pretest data to determine instructional objectives. One teacher's plans include the required Standards of Learning goals that are of focus for the lesson, procedures, differentiation opportunities for the students, assessment plans, and homework assignments. Another teacher uses a weekly plan for each subject area and includes plans for students that are on-target, those who need re-teaching, and those who need extension instruction. Opportunities for assessment and ongoing data collection are also included in her plans. Finally, another teacher includes essential knowledge skills to support working backwards in her instruction, vocabulary, activating prior knowledge, providing background knowledge, strategies, remediation, modification, enrichment, and assessment.

Learning groups. Learning groups were observed in most classes during the classroom observation portion of data collection and are the second category. Within these observations, teachers worked with students in small groups or taught with students clustered in small groups around the classroom to perform various tasks. Collaborative

grouping and rotations are becoming commonplace in elementary classrooms. This technique allows teachers to group students by ability levels or needs to work with them in small groups and to provide remediation or to provide more in depth, slower paced instruction, and, in some cases, to provide enrichment to students who are moving at a much faster pace than their peers.

The following statement made by one of the teachers during their interview supports this theme. This teacher breaks her students into three groups. One group is her slower students, in which, she spends a longer amount of time helping them to learn a skill. While she works with this group, the other students are either working on a technology based skill or an independent practice skill at their desks. When the teacher completes working with the first group, they rotate so that she has an opportunity to work with each student and then each student has an opportunity to work at one of the rotation stations. This also allows her to assess all of her students individually while she works with them in a small group and further helps with her future planning of instruction. Homeless students may fall into any of the learning groups depending on their strengths, weaknesses, or needs.

> *Math and English/language arts are all small group instruction activities. So in math, for example, we use pretest data on each of our subjects and we organize the kids from there into three different groups. The first group is typically my lower students that are struggling a little bit more and they're allotted more time with me than my other two. My third group is typically my highest group. Each group is paced along according to their own strengths and weaknesses. And they are not pushed through until they have mastery. So we take time in order for*

them to make sure that they gain the concepts that they need to gain and the confidence along the way.

Another benefit to placing students in ability level groupings is that students have an opportunity to increase their confidence levels. The instruction that the teacher is providing is at their level and increased enough to challenge them and still allow them to be successful. This technique allows the teacher to increase the student's self-confidence because they feel successful. This is especially important for students who are experiencing homelessness because they may not be feeling the success when they are with their families and may be feeling the frustrations from their home situation. This provides an area of control and success for the student while they continue to learn at a steady rate.

> *Confidence is such a huge part and so it's done the same thing for reading in the afternoon based on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores. They're put into their word study groups and their DRA guided reading groups. Then they'll rotate with their peers throughout the activities in both sets. So it's completely meeting their needs because the individual instruction in happening at their individual levels and within their small groups.*

Another teacher states:

> *I think working with small groups, I would even love to get them a little bit smaller. I try to keep the group that has my at risk students down to four or five. Right now it's five. I've tried to switch a couple out but based on my class size and how they interact with each other, it is better to keep them at five. Keeping*

them in a small group and keeping with me, I can give them that kind of instructional support.

Relationship building is a definite benefit to creating learning groups. Placing students into groups where they have something in common with their peers helps to promote relationships. The students move at approximately the same pace, they are performing at the same level, and are participating in the same activities. This provides them with opportunities to communicate within the group as well as a common ground of communication outside of the group. The first teacher uses her group time, not only for instruction, but an opportunity to have talk time to share ideas and stories among their peers. This is beneficial for students who do not feel that they have any common ground with their peers when they are dealing with potential chaos and instability in their own lives. The second teacher provides cooperative grouping to allow time for students to develop relationships and learn how to work together with others.

And so, getting them to open up, getting them to talk to people, just kind of changing it a little bit to where they're able to have that talk time, especially for my student in particular, they're not really getting a lot of talk time just to share stories to share ideas and things like that. I've been a little bit more leaning into, just getting that student into different groupings, getting them into different situations, talking to different people, because I feel like that's a way that he learns really well.

Another teacher stated:

What's been my experience that working one on one with students, and creating those relationships is important. And providing those cooperative learning experiences where they can work with others are also important in my teaching. We work in small groups often. So, cooperative learning groups at times and one on one as well. I do not differentiate differently because the student is homeless.

Generally, for core areas of instruction, teachers that were interviewed promote the small group instructional opportunities that learning groups provide. As long as they are kept small, they allow a level of control for the teacher to create specific differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of all of their learners both academically and socially. It allows for grouping similar students together and covering more ground that is not possible through whole group instruction. The following statements from teachers support this:

To reach all learners, it really helps to have that small group time with me. I don't like to have more than six kids sitting down with me at the table and we're working on things. I think that works a little bit better than, you know, doing whole group math or whole group reading. I can really get to the kids. They're close to me and it gives the kids an opportunity to work together. To kind of cooperate with each other, we use the technology in the classroom or have the independent practice that we can go over together at the end to see what they've learned.

Regarding her learning groups, this teacher shared:

I'm big on differentiation. My lesson plan book has charts full of this group, this group, this group... what this group needs and what this group needs. I use groups for everything. I have groups for math, groups for reading, groups for writing, everything. I don't know if you can say that you reach all of your learners all of the time, but I do my best to focus in on one thing that I know that student needs and grouping them with students that are similar.

Additional reviews of teacher artifacts show various types of designs for learning group set up. One teacher utilizes five groups within her class where students rotate through various activities during instruction. Her groups consist of the student reading to self, the student reading to someone in the class, the student listening to reading, word study activities, and writing. Additionally, the teacher has a small group or individual conferencing going on simultaneously while the students work through their learning groups. This provides for an opportunity for the student to work at their pace but also for the teacher to pull specific students or groups of students to work with her on specific skills. During both observations of this teacher, the student who is experiencing homelessness was working with her either in a group or individually at some point during the observation.

In another set of artifacts, the teacher submitted their learning group plans to the researcher. These included four groups of students that are ability grouped in four rounds of centers. These centers included a teacher station where the teacher worked with students on reviewing skills that need more practice based on formal and informal assessment and an introduction to new skills and topics while differentiating to each groups specific "needs" and pace. The second station focused on computerized fact

practice program that included multiplication practice. When students meet 85% accuracy, they move onto the next level of difficulty. The third station was a games group where small group games or activities are in place where students are interacting and having discussions about math. Work is recorded in journals for students to regulate and self-assess their understanding. The fourth station is set for deskwork where students work on a review skill that they can perform independently. It may be a small informal assessment to help support the teacher station or it can be a hands-on activity with manipulatives from the students' toolboxes or review work to check with the class. Regardless of the way the groups are set up, these are two different scenarios where the teachers have felt the benefit of learning groups outweighs the strategy of whole group.

Homework. The third theme that emerged during the interviews was the need to make accommodations to homework and projects that are assigned for completion when at home. For students who are experiencing homelessness, this can be an unnecessary stressor in an already stressful life. All the teachers interviewed strongly felt that homework needed to be modified in a large way for students who are experiencing homelessness. They all felt that the additional remediation that homework provides is necessary, but all felt that there are other ways around it to reduce the stress of the student and the family and still be able to complete or modify the assignments. This additionally extends to project requirements that are usually meant for home. This teacher states:

> *If there is an academic impact, then we can look at tutoring sessions between the student and myself in order to try to help. I have facilitated by giving them bags of books that I have for my library that are extras that I can donate along the way just so that they can have something extra at home. If they're working on, for*

example, vocabulary words from the content area, I can provide them with cards that they can make and try to give them some of those tools in which an average student might have at home. I provide supplies for at home for doing any of the homework assignments, those types of things that would be the extra things along the way that we would do.

A second teacher shared:

I differentiate instruction to address the homework. I think that needs to be addressed. I think that we either need to, you know, modify it somehow or help them do it in class, you know, provide that information for them to take home like the study guide but just not expect them to be able to necessarily to complete work outside of the classroom and be attentive to that.

Projects are found at all grade levels at the elementary school level. Many projects can be quite extensive in their requirements. Common themes in working with students run the range of completing all projects at school to providing all of the supplies for the child to complete when they are at home so the family is not responsible for finding and purchasing the supplies for the student. One teacher commented:

Most of my projects are all in class projects so that you totally level the playing field and so that you don't have to worry about not having the resources at home type of thing. We're going to be doing a biography project shortly. Everything's going to be here. I'm going to give every student everything that they need in order to complete the project. Homework... it's honestly something that I do not put a lot of pressure on my students in their homeless situation. If they're able to get to it, they get to it. If they're not, I'm understanding of that.

Finally, teachers are understanding of the difficulty of getting homework back in when it has been assigned or making sure that the homework is something they can complete on their own if their parent or guardian is not available to provide the support and assistance. The following teacher provides an extended time to get assignments turned in if it does not come in when it is due:

> *I give him a little more leeway on homework. I know it's hard for his mom and his grandma to get it done or to help him get it done. But he's actually been pretty good. He usually brings it back. They have a weekly packet. So if he doesn't bring it back on Friday, I'll encourage him to bring it back on Monday. If he doesn't bring it back on Monday then I kind of drop it. But then I'll make sure I get those sheets and we kind of do it together in class just to make sure that he gets it done.*

This teacher requires that all students are expected to complete their homework but understands that frequent reminders are necessary and they may need more encouragement than a typical student to get it completed. She highlights:

> *Homework is given as a "one stop shop" for all that are expected to do it. But as it comes in, I might have to frequently remind the homeless student that I need to get it, I need to get it, I need to get it... it might not come in for two weeks, but that is okay. It is the constant reminder that they need to get that for me. Homework is limited to math and reading, maybe a science every now and then, but limited math and reading, the subject areas where everybody generally tries*

to struggle or does struggle. They get the blanket homework and I think there is more flexibility with them.

Lastly, the following teacher understands that there may not be anyone at home who can help with completing the homework so it may need to be modified to the point the student can complete it on his or her own and still be successful. The importance is that they feel that they have accomplished the assignment successfully and feel that they have done a good job at what they were required to do. She states:

I think for homeless students, it's just that home life; you never know if there's going to be someone there to help them when it comes to homework. So of course giving homework is something that you kind of have to modify a little bit, because you want to make sure they're still practicing, but you want to give them something that they can be independent on. Just in case there is no one there, you don't want to give them anything too challenging to where they couldn't finish it themselves and feel like they accomplished their homework.

In one set of artifacts, a teacher included a binder setup that involved assignments, communication, and homework that moves between home and school each day. In reviewing her plan for homework, she has a designated place where homework is located and a place for the parent to sign off each night. Any books to be read go home in the binder and homework is designated for Monday through Thursday's only. She provides opportunities for optional family homework as well. By providing this formal organizational tool, it makes it easier for families to locate and expect materials each evening and an opportunity for communication when necessary. Although modifications

can be made for returning of homework, it is her hope that this routine will encourage daily return of homework or communication between home and school. When it cannot be done at home, she or her assistant works with the student at school.

The bottom line in looking at instruction with homeless students and their typical peers is that regardless of the philosophy and instructional process that a teacher subscribes, they must keep in mind how to meet the unique needs of a child who may not fit into the stereotypical mold. Each of the interviewed teachers subscribes to various philosophies in their instructional practices. However, all have found a way to meet their needs of a homeless student while maintaining their beliefs in what works for the students in their classroom to promote successful instruction.

Findings for Research Question 4

Once an elementary teacher learns that s/he has a student who has been identified as currently in a homeless situation, what ways, if any, does s/he change non-instructional classroom practices to meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success?

The interviews conducted with these eight teachers additionally centered on the research question of identifying the pedagogical practices of teachers who are currently working with homeless students and identifying what non-instructional classroom practices work in providing the necessary learning and emotional needs of students for success. The findings related to this research question also emerged into three separate themes/categories as the data information was analyzed through key word coding. The three categories/themes identified through interviews consisting of relationships between

the student and the teacher and the family and the teacher, supports needed by the student to be successful in the classroom, and the needs for homeless students in the classroom. Furthermore, subthemes emerged within several of the major themes. As with the last research question, the data generated through artifact collection and field notes, as well as coding, were included as a means of triangulation to provide a richer description from the data collected. The categories and themes are listed in Table 16 below.

Table 16. Major Categories and Themes in Non-Instructional Classroom Practices

Categories	**% of Teachers Identified these Themes N=8**	**Themes**
Relationships	5 (63%)	• Builds from the very beginning
	6 (75%)	• Build trust
	8 (100%)	• Welcomed and loved
	6 (75%)	• Build home communication
Supports	7 (88%)	• Providing extra assistance
	5 (63%)	• Monitoring/Checking in more
	4 (50)%	• Assist with social behaviors
	7 (88%)	• Connections/Support system
Needs	6 (75%)	• Awareness
	8 (100%)	• Physical
	8 (100%)	• Emotional

Relationships. Teachers need to know that there are many challenges that face their homeless students in addition to incorporating them into the classroom. They need to be able and willing to make accommodations and build the communication with the parents to be able to provide the child with the best possible academic environment.

Further, there are strategies that are particularly beneficial to working with homeless children and at-risk children. Time must be spent getting to know the students and having an open mind to learn what will make them "shine". Developing a relationship between the teacher and the student as imperative as building a relationship between a teacher and the parents. One hundred percent of the teachers in this study identified some aspect of relationships as being important to the success of a student experiencing homelessness.

One of the first strategies that are beneficial is to begin building the relationship with students from the very beginning. Many times, the teacher is the first person that can identify that something may be missing for a student. Having the trust built from the very beginning will make it easier on the child, the family, and the teacher if the relationship is built on trust from the start. The following teacher notes that in many cases, due to the relationship that she has spent time fostering, accommodations have already been put in place from the very beginning prior to finding out that there is a living situation for the child and family. She shares:

> *Typically, I found that there's a lot of little signs that tend to pop up before you actually find out that or confirm they are in a homeless type situation. And by building that comfort level in the communication, the community within the classroom and with each individual child, I find that a lot of the accommodations that they need within the environment are actually given well before based on their individual learning needs at the time. So in my room, it doesn't change when I find out that individual is immediately homeless because the things that they need have been put in place well before. And it's just observation and*

having that relationship with the child and with the family that allows me that opportunity to know that "Okay, yeah here's my sense but I've already given you all the materials that you need in order to do this at school or at home."

Additionally, taking the time to build trust, promotes the relationship building process necessary for children to feel safe enough to open up to the teacher. If the teacher knows the situation that is going on in a child's life, it is easier for them to make changes and to provide the necessary support to the child and their family. In the quotes below, teachers share the benefits of developing the trust with the children in their classroom and their parents that support this belief. One teacher states:

I would suggest (to other teachers) being open and just being a good listener first of all. But in order for that to happen, you have to have the relationship with the child. You have to build that community relationship with the child and with other peers in the classroom in order for them to be open enough to come to you and discuss things. But then, in turn, it also comes down to having that relationship with the parents and making sure that they're comfortable enough talking to you and understanding that you are there to help them out along the way with anything that you can possibly do. In order to help a student... it's no different than, you know, a student that comes in with a broken arm, or a student that has a learning disability. We're still going to take them in and make sure that they're part of the community and do anything and everything that we can do to help make them be as normal as together with 23 students in the class for the 10 months they're going to be here.

The following teacher shares:

> *I think it's important that you establish a relationship with a student who has any type of circumstances where, whether it be homelessness or that they don't have a coat on for that day of recess, building a relationship so that they feel like they can trust you and that they know that they can come to you for anything and that... and it takes time to build that relationship. But, in working with students, it's establishing that environment also where they feel comfortable and where they feel safe... a risk free environment.*

This teacher highlights the following daily occurrence in her classroom:

> *The non-academic things, that's just... That's when they come in with a story and morning work has to be done, but I take that little extra time and I sit and I say, "Hey, how was your weekend? Oh okay, did you do this?" Ask about you know brother, sister, whoever. "Oh, that's great. Okay, well we'll talk a little bit more, okay? Go back and do your morning work that you need to be doing." Whereas some students, "You need to do morning work. You need to keep with your routine". But I get a little bit more lenient with my homeless students, because I know they're not getting that talk time at home.*

Finally, this teacher states:

> *I think as far as learning about their situation and changing it in a classroom, I think what I do is I try to get that particular student to kind of open up a little bit more. I realized that you know their home life will be a little bit crazy and they*

might withdraw a bit from their friends because they might be feeling a little bit inadequate.

Having this understanding of students and really knowing them and spending the time building the relationship is something that will go far for a teacher in the classroom and encourage a student to continue to move forward academically and socially.

Another component to relationship building is making sure that the student feels welcomed and loved. The majority of the teachers who participated in the study mentioned this need to make students feel that they belong in the class. When students spend time with a teacher and learn to open up, the teacher develops a caring level for their students and wants the student to feel welcome in the classroom and loved. This is true of students who start the year out in the class and those who are highly mobile and come in and out of classrooms. The challenge for the teacher is to make sure the student feels safe and welcome regardless of the length of stay in the classroom.

He needs a lot of support, but I don't think I changed it in any way. It was more just the social, like making sure that he feels welcome and loved in the classroom and making sure that he knows I'll always be there for him.

The following teacher has a student that has constant uncertainty as to the daily routine. The student seeks the teacher out at the end of the day for the reassurance that they will see each other the next day:

He wrote me a note the other day just saying that he loved me and I was the best teacher that he has ever had. And it just made me feel so special. And every day, before he leaves, he always looks at me kind of like, "Will I see you tomorrow?"

and I just say, "Bye! I'll see you tomorrow. You'll have a good night and I'll see you in the morning." So he just makes you feel so special and you want to do the same for him.

Communication is another area of social supports that was mentioned as a necessity for helping students and their families educationally. Communication was noted as being important by all of the teachers that participated in this research. Having an open dialogue with the parent and their support at school allows a teacher to provide more for the student in the classroom setting. Lack of communication and support creates a battle that will provide a negative impact on the child's emotional needs and academic progress. This goes against the social supports that students have access. Each teacher stressed the importance of the communication between home and school and the communication being positive with the parent. They believe that communication with a homeless family has to occur more often than with their regular students. This teacher shares the following challenge for her:

My biggest challenge is getting the communication back and forth between home and school because home is experiencing such chaos often times, that being able to sign the agenda on a nightly basis is not a priority, which I completely understand. So, in my case, that just kind of slides by the wayside... If there is something important, I'll always advocate for the child and find a way to communicate with home, i.e. a home visit via the social worker.

An additional statement shared:

My experience would be more with their parents and not necessarily always with the student initially. Because I found that at conference times, when you approach a parent with respect and you're open and listen and you engage in the conversation, they will tell you a lot of information. And then that, in turn, I can transfer to the child. But, if that parent is open and honest with me and allows me to help them along the way, then I find out new information that it can in turn help their child which I find is very, very valuable and special. If that parent trusts me enough to share really some of their deepest, darkest secrets on being homeless and living in a house or a hotel with "X" number of other people... If they're comfortable enough sharing that with me, I feel that that's a true gift and then I can take that information and help facilitate things as much as possible for the child socially, academically, physically, emotionally...whatever they might need so I can help get things established on our end.

Communication was additionally supported through several artifacts that were submitted for review. One teacher provides a weekly reflection that goes home every Friday. It includes a daily report from the week for the student, an end of week report, and a place for a parent signature. The daily report gives a quick glance at how each day was for the student. The end of week report allows for the student to be rated as outstanding, satisfactory, or needs practice in the areas of following directions the first time, demonstrating self-control, producing neat, quality work, working independently and using time wisely, raising hand to speak and taking turns speaking, and staying in personal space at their table and on the carpet. A second artifact included a parent correspondence log in which the teacher keeps a regular log of communication between

school and home. This includes the form of communication, comments, and any follow-up required to maintain the documentation of contact with the family.

Supports. The second common theme for non-instructional classroom practices that meets the academic and social needs of students is through the provision of supports. All of the teachers that participated in this study reiterated the need to provide supports in the classroom for their students experiencing homelessness in some way. The specifics of these supports are varied. These teachers identified extra supports as defined by providing extra assistance for students, checking in with them more often, assisting with social behaviors, and creating the connections and being their support system. The following quotes represent the areas of importance for providing a variance of support to the students and families in their classroom. The first teacher, quoted below, has a student in her class who not only deals with homelessness but also deals with special needs. Additional accommodations are required as well as a great deal of support for him to be successful. She makes many on the spot accommodations as well as providing extra supports that other students do not receive:

> *I think it really depends on the student. This year, the student has some other special needs and so demands a lot of extra assistance. So for example, the things I do this year with this student are make sure that his binder and his folder has the proper papers in it. I help him with his interactive journal and make sure that all the papers are in there and are completed. He has a very difficult time writing the notes down for the journal and so lots of times, I take my handout that I'm doing, like with the document camera, and he's trying to write down his own notes, but then I will give him my notes. I also will help by giving, providing a*

completed study guide because I know that it's difficult for him at home to get the study guide done. So just extra kinds of support especially for things that have to go home. That's the most difficult because I know that there's not gonna be the ability for him to do those things on his own at home.

The second teacher provides support with directions and expectations and checks in with the student to see what additional academic needs they may need to be successful. She provides the materials for completing projects and notes to the student completed to make it easier to study at home. If her student is missing paper or pencils, she provides those as well, so that the student has the necessary tools to be successful in class and out of class. She states:

The most important thing to provide, I think, is just sensitivity and flexibility and to assist the families in providing what is needed to complete the projects successfully. Providing explicit directions and expectations is also important. Also providing a clear purpose for each instructional activity and checking for understanding in providing those supports, whether it be tools in the classroom or peer/teacher supports.

Another common theme is checking in with students and monitoring the students experiencing homelessness in the classroom. Most teachers interviewed acknowledge that they tend to check in with their students more to determine their understanding of information and to check for needs. This also goes back to the support of communication and building relationships. The teacher spends a significant amount of time developing

the relationship so that the students feel comfortable sharing their needs and the teacher can provide the supports. To support this:

> *I check in with my homeless kids more. I check in with them probably the same amount that I know anyone who has any emotional challenges. Like, students whose parents are deployed... I have a student now whose mom is in the hospital. So, I give her just as much emotional attention as I do with my homeless students. It's just you're always going to have those kids that need a little more.*

Further, this teacher states:

> *It goes back to making sure that environment is what they feel comfortable in and if they need a hug, I give them a hug. If they need breakfast, I give them breakfast and send them to the cafeteria to make sure they've got something in their stomach so that they can learn. I make sure that they are just like all the other children and mark themselves here, put up their backpack and all the things they need to do. I might remind a homeless child more or so if I notice that they are not able to keep up with the tasks that need to happen before we leave for centers. Overall just making sure that frequent check-ins happen, are you caught up? A pat on the shoulder and making sure that they are keeping up with where we are, what we're doing, and constant affirmation that they are where we need to be...*

Some students that are facing homelessness may be missing components in the development of their social skills. One area that was mentioned was the support that teachers need to provide to help a student understand the social interactions occurring around them. In the quote below, the teacher discusses the support she provides to the student in her class. Understanding other students and their point of view can be a

struggle. The student is coming from a completely different background where certain social expectations are different from what his understanding in the classroom. This requires the teacher to become a type of counselor at times to help the student to continue to develop socially among his peers. Consider the following statement:

> *The social piece. I think I have to help him work through when he does get into a social situation and help him realize the other person's point of view. Because I don't think he sees what they see. He may not see the other person's point of view. That's a very hard skill for him to understand that there is another side to it and what he sees is not what this other person sees. That the attack that he feels may not be a true attack. But it is how he feels and how to work through that and how to help him understand that everything may not be what it feels like. There is another side to it and perspective has something to play in it, and that is a hard skill for children to learn at an early age. So to answer your question, helping him to understand prospective, helping him to understand and walk through a process with him so that he can try to see different ways, different views. We struggled with that at the beginning of the year making friends, keeping friends, now, or sort of struggling with the reaction to that perspective piece. It comes down to making them feel like, you know, put my arm around him and say, "It's gonna be okay," while we are walking to lunch.*

Social skill difficulties may also encompass acting out and showing respect or lack of respect to the peers or adults around them. One artifact submitted was a goal sheet for one of the students who has difficulty with making the best choices with the peers and adults around them and can become defensive or angry. For this teacher, the

solution was creating a goal chart in which the student and teacher monitor the completion of assignments in the expected time and whether they are showing respect to their peers. Each subject area has an opportunity for the student to earn points depending on their performance and attitude. Working with the student and providing them with opportunities for success, assist this teacher in supporting the student in developing appropriate social skills with those around them.

Finally, teachers have a responsibility to make connections and become a support system for their students. Homeless students may have a lack of a support system at home. Many may feel that they are on their own because their families have so many other concerns that school is not on the top priority. Teachers take on that role to keep students moving and to help facilitate success. Additionally, they can provide supports to the families to take one piece of stress away. Families and students need to feel that they have a support system. The quotes below support that agreement from teachers.

> *My mission is to really connect with my students and let them know that I'm the person in their life that remains constant and that I'm there to support them through their educational career. But also on a more personal level. So I want them to know that they can trust me and that our relationship is built on respect, love and kindness.*

> *Letting the family know that you're part of their support system can eliminate some of those barriers between parent and family and school. Showing the families that you truly care about the child's overall well-being is crucial to me.*

Needs. Needs can include the relationship development and the support system between the teacher and the child/family. In most cases, a student or family will experience many needs in all cases. For those dealing with the additional stress of homelessness, needs reach a completely different level. As identified within this research, needs have several subthemes. Of these subthemes, awareness of a student's needs, to include physical needs and emotional needs, are identified.

Awareness. Being made aware of a student or family's needs is the first step. Through building the relationship and communicating with the student, the teacher can begin determining early on what the student needs to be successful. This can be physical items or emotional support. The teacher must first become aware of the need. The below quote shows that becoming aware of the students' needs are very important to the success of the student and providing the necessary supports.

> *I think constant and consistent awareness of a students' needs is important regardless of their housing. If a student needs supplies or extra support to complete homework or a project, I always provide it. I think it's important to establish a positive home-school connection, and facilitate where applicable. Letting the family know that you're a part of their support system, can eliminate some of those barriers between parent and family and school. Showing the families that you truly care about the child's overall well being is crucial to me.*

Physical. Once the teacher has become aware of the needs, identifying what supports can be provided to meet those needs are the next step. In some cases, it is a simple physical need in which the student needs some "thing" to be successful. This can

be clothing, backpack or food. Anything that will make it easier to function and remove a stress from them so they only have to think about learning.

> *I guess really, from my perspective, it's just making sure that they're coming in that they're happy and if they're not, what can I do to help make them happy for the time in which they are going to be here in our building. Do they need anything physically, do they need clothing, do they need backpacks. You know, is there a hole in the backpack? Has the brother given his new backpack to the sister type of thing... replenishing those supplies again.*

A second teacher shares:

> *I think constant and consistent awareness of a student's needs is important regardless of their housing. If a student needs supplies or extra support to complete homework or a project, I always provide it. I think it's important to establish a positive home-school connection, and facilitate where applicable.*

Emotional. In other cases, the need may be purely emotional. In the below quote, it is very important for this homeless student to have his own space and his own things. The teacher recognizes this and supports what the student needs. The student is very routine oriented and has established his own space within the classroom. The teacher explains what happened when another student moved in on his place and how it was handled:

> *It varies on their particular need. This year, my student comes in and he doesn't want to sit in the regular desks with the other kids. He's kind of off by himself at the back round table. So I've asked him, "Do you want to have a desk?" "No, I*

like it here." He'd rather separate himself. So today, another student came in and sat at the round table, and he came up and asked me, "I... can I... I want a table to myself." So I was absolutely. It was a temporary thing anyway, but he came up and that is his table. That is what he needed. That was his need. It messed up his routine and it is his space and his stuff and that is what he wants and needs. And to articulate that... it was important to him.

Another emotional need is providing the attention that the student needs. The student may not have the attention that they crave from home so, in some cases, the teacher has to understand that the attention may need to come from them. The following teacher understands that at home, the parents have other things going on and may not be able to fulfill the need of providing attention. The teacher provides this within the classroom to meet that child's need:

> *My experience has been that with my homeless students, there is very little follow through at home and tends to need more attention. So, in planning, I know that I am going to have to call on that particular child more often than I would say another child because they need the constant redirection, they need the affirmation, they need the check in more than the average child does.*

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the results from the study and answered the research questions. In summary, all students observed were highly engaged in the instruction occurring in the classroom. Many of the instructional strategies that occurred with homeless students also occurred with their regularly housed peers. These included questioning by the teacher and student responding. Major categories identified in instructional classroom practices included planning, learning groups, and homework. Planning included themes of: 1) basing it on assessments, 2) using background knowledge and differentiation, and 3) planning backwards. Themes of learning groups included: 1) allowing for ability grouping, 2) increasing confidence levels, and 3) promoting collaborative learning differentiation. Homework themes included: 1) providing supplies for home, 2) completing assignments at school, 3) time extensions, and 4) simplifying/modifying for success.

The major categories that were included in non-instructional classroom practices included relationships, supports, and needs. Themes of relationships included building relationships from the very beginning, building trust, making the student feel welcomed and loved, and building home communication. Themes from the category of support included providing extra assistance, monitoring and checking in with the student more, assisting with social behaviors, and connections/support system. Finally, themes of needs include being aware of the needs, physical needs, and emotional needs.

CHAPTER 5

Summary of Findings

This mixed methods collective ethnographic case study explored the patterns and reflections of teachers who work with homeless students in their elementary classrooms on a daily basis. Utilizing an advocacy/participatory framework, patterns and meanings were identified to make a sense of place and the entire social setting and social relationships of a culture (Parthasarathy, 2008, para. 4). The framework of ethnographic case studies used teacher instruction and pedagogy to identify instructional methods that benefit students experiencing homelessness in the classroom. Research in understanding what teachers do to provide instructional and non-instructional strategies for the success of their students academically and socially is essential to their effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers in this study showed similarities while working with students experiencing homelessness in the areas of instructional and non-instructional practices in the types of practices they use and the changes they make to meet the learning and emotional needs of their students. The discussion section within this chapter addresses the links between the areas of successful pedagogy and current research. Within this study, I focused on the instruction that is occurring in the classroom and what the teacher feels are beneficial strategies, instructional and non-instructional, that work for students experiencing homelessness. This particular study did not evaluate the success that the students were experiencing; however, current research supports that the strategies being used are successful for the students within the classroom.

Use of Instructional Activities for Homeless and Regularly Housed Peers

The teachers that participated in this study used a wide variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of their students. There were no significant differences noted in the number of activities that were used in a lesson between the two different types of students in the classroom. The two most common activities used with all students, including students experiencing homelessness, were questioning by the teacher and student responding. It is important to note that learning centers were emphasized in interviews but do not show as high in the observational data using the DCOS. It should be understood that the instructional activities that ranked higher than learning centers occurred within many of the learning centers. For example, in most learning groups, students utilized questioning by the teacher, student responding, technology use, teacher interaction with the individual student, and small group discussion. Therefore, although it is lower on the scale, the other higher identified activities occurred within the smaller groups.

Planning. Planning was found to be an essential practice in improving the academic success of students experiencing homelessness instructionally. Common themes associated with planning include basing the instruction on assessments, using background knowledge and planning backwards. Teachers that participated in the study generally participate in a team and collaboratively plan to develop their lessons and then highlight areas for differentiation within their own classes. They use assessments in the form of tests, quizzes, participation, and classroom monitoring to determine levels of understanding. Planning backwards was commonly mentioned as teachers start with where they want to end and work backwards with their planning. Background knowledge

is further used within planning to determine the strategies for instruction. This is particularly useful with students experiencing homelessness as their background knowledge may be limited or quite varied as compared to their peers.

Learning groups. Learning groups are an instructional strategy that has three themes that emerged through this study. The first theme is the allowance of ability grouping. Teachers group students according to reading scores or ability levels that allow for more support during instruction from the teacher's vantage. By placing students in groups with other students at the same ability level, the teacher can adjust their instruction to provide the necessary skills for each group to be successful. Increasing confidence levels for students in each learning group is a second theme. Students who are grouped with others of the same ability level have an opportunity to shine and to be successful by being grouped with peers at the same level they are performing. This increases their confidence level by providing opportunities of success and the development of peer relations with others on their same level. The third identified theme is the promotion of collaborative learning and differentiation. Students who are performing at various levels move at different paces and create a difficulty in working together collaboratively or in whole group. By creating learning groups, students move with students of their same ability, which allows for collaboration opportunities between students where each can experience success or can work together to problem solve an activity at their same or equivalent levels.

Homework. Homework was considered by all of the teachers as being an area where the most modifications can be made instructionally for students experiencing homelessness. Providing supplies for home, completing assignments at school,

provisions for time extensions, and simplifying/modifying homework for success were all identified as themes under homework. Remediation is necessary for all students and especially for students who may be experiencing gaps due to mobility and environmental difficulties. However, adjustments to how that remediation is executed can make a huge difference. These adjustments can include working with the teacher to complete the assignments before they go home in the afternoon or working with the teacher first thing in the morning if it has not been successfully completed at home. Allowing for extensions to turn in the work beyond the due date can assist a student that has various situations that occur when they leave school with the understanding if the extensions do not work, the child will complete the work at school. It is also understood that the caregivers at home may not have the ability to provide assistance with homework and modifying or simplifying homework, to a level where the child can complete it without assistance, will increase the opportunity for success and a higher confidence level for the student.

Use of Non-Instructional Activities for Homeless and Regularly Housed Peers

Relationships. One non-instructional category that presented itself through this research is in the development of relationships between students and teacher and between parents and teacher. Common themes were to build the relationship from the very beginning, build trust, provide a welcoming and loving environment, and build home communications. These themes help to provide a benefit to working with homeless children and at-risk children by creating a relationship and support system for the student and family. The positive relationship between the teacher and the student or family allows for the teacher to gauge what accommodations can be made to increase the

success levels for their students. The trust in the family and student to share their difficulty allows the teacher to provide the opportunities for academic success through their understanding of what they are going through.

Supports. Another non-instructional category that presented itself was the practice of creating supports. These themes included providing extra assistance in the classroom, monitoring and checking in with homeless students more than their peers, assisting with social behaviors and experiences, and creating connections and a support system for the child and their families. Lack of support or a feeling of lack of support can be typical for students who are experiencing homelessness due to the chaos they may be feeling outside of school. Teachers provide the stability and support system that can create a safe place for the student to learn. Simply providing for extra assistance on learning experiences or monitoring and checking in with students more help the student to feel more secure and allows the teacher to keep a constant check on the success level of the student. It also helps to create a level of trust where the teacher can assist the students with social and peer difficulties to create meaningful learning experiences.

Needs. Needs were the third category that ranked high among classroom teachers in the area of non-instructional classroom practices. Becoming aware of a student's needs was the first area teachers recommended a classroom teacher focus on with a homeless student. Knowing what a student needs and the fact that they need something that other students do not need is important. Physical and emotional needs are the two areas in which it was cited by teachers that students need the most support. They may need just physical items to get through the day such as food or supplies in the classroom.

However, they may have emotional needs, such as support or the idea of their own space for their own things for a sense of ownership.

Discussion

Through an examination of the pedagogical practices of teachers who instruct homeless students, the research study findings show areas of consideration that will benefit the academic learning of students and provide positive results between the teacher and student and the teacher and parent. There are key findings from the results of the interviews that will assist teachers in their classrooms in developing a plan to include instructional approaches when working with homeless students.

The results of this study identified three main instructional strategies and three main non-instructional strategies that are beneficial and effective in supporting the instructional practices within a classroom. Homeless children have needs that extend beyond the needs of the average student. Teachers also need to know that there are many challenges that face their homeless students in addition to incorporating them into the classroom. They need to be able and willing to make accommodations and build the communication with the parents to be able to provide the child with the best possible academic environment. Furthermore, there are strategies that are particularly beneficial to working with homeless children and at-risk children. Time must be spent getting to know the students and having an open mind to learn what will make them "shine". Developing a relationship between the teacher and the student is imperative.

One main question asked is how do we know that the strategies that were identified are successful strategies? How do we know that if we put these into place our

homeless students will perform to success? Much of the research discussed in chapter 2 helps to identify the known research based strategies that are proven to allow for opportunities for success. This specific study did not evaluate the further success of the identified homeless students but instead specifically identified the areas that these teachers have found are successful techniques in their instruction. Through a comparison of the reports from the teachers and the identification of the proven strategies through other avenues of research, the identified instructional and non-instructional strategies within this study provide additional support to previous research to verify that these strategies will provide success for homeless students in the classroom.

Communication was noted as being important by all eight of the teachers that participated in this research. Having an open dialogue with the parent and their support at school allows a teacher to provide more for the student in the classroom setting. Lack of communication and support creates a battle that will provide a negative impact on the child's emotional needs and academic progress. This goes against the social supports that students have access. Powers-Costello and Swick (2011) conducted studies that identified important implications and recommendations for programming that create success in school for low-income/poverty/homeless students. One of these recommendations included "engage teachers in developing positive relations with the families of children who are homeless" (p. 211). Stavem (2008) identified strategies that were implemented in Nebraska Title I schools that found best practices for success include "consistent communication with families, letting them know about opportunities, services and programs available to address parting needs, student academic needs, and providing family support" (p. 90).

This particular research study brings up questions that could be carried forward in future research. For this researcher, this is the third study conducted that had a focus of teacher pedagogy with students experiencing homelessness. What was found most interesting is that the main categories that were found in the pilot study are very similar to the categories found with this study consisting of more in depth research. The pilot study, conducted a year ago, involved three teachers that were interviewed and observed once compared to the eight teachers across two settings that were observed and interviewed twice in this study. Themes identified in the pilot study consisted of challenges, instruction, social supports, and strategies. This research takes these four initial themes to a much deeper level. Challenges, instruction, social supports, and strategies are all identified within this study but in more specific terms to better support teachers who are working with homeless students in their classrooms. Observations, interviews, and work samples such as lesson plans, behavior plans, and family communication provided the researcher with specific areas of focus to improve the academic success for homeless students in the classroom.

As already mentioned, through the initial literature review and having conducted a pilot study, many of the categories/themes that were identified in this research support previous studies and support that the pedagogical practices identified through this study. Previous studies identify the successful practices for homeless students. For example, Kennedy (2010) identified that a successful teacher must have "excellent classroom management skills, implement balanced literacy framework, take a metacognitive approach to instruction, emphasize higher order thinking skills, teaches basic skills in meaningful concepts, and uses a range of formative assessment tools" (p. 384). These

support the instructional strategies that were observed during classroom observations and through teacher interviews as well as the artifact review. Further, Tomlinson and Javius (2012) include "create flexible classroom routines and procedures that attend to learner needs" and "understand that students come to the classroom with varied points of entry into a curriculum and move through it at different rates" (p. 30-32) to further support the third research question that identifies instructional classroom practices that meet the learning and emotional needs of the student to promote academic success. This supports what the research saw during classroom observations and through the interviews with the research participants.

One area that the researcher found most surprising was that the learning group category was not as high on the DCOS protocol as expected. Several previously mentioned studies support the use of learning groups within classrooms to achieve success for homeless students. Pogrow (2009) shared that it was found that if a teacher conducts 35 minutes daily of small group discussion for one and a half to two years with fourth and fifth grade students, it is possible to develop their sense of understanding. Tableman (2004) stated that effective instructional strategies should include ability based group assignments that change as assessments show improvement of skills. Further, Murphy and Tobin (2011) identified two successful instructional approaches as being a priority. These two approaches included individualized instruction and cooperative learning platforms. This allows homeless students the opportunities to receive and master content but to also develop their social skills through peer interactions. Through the use of the DCOS protocol, learning centers were observed with 25% of the homeless students and 31% of the regularly housed students. However, many of the higher-ranking

strategies appear within learning center or learning group activities. Questioning by teacher, student responding, technology use, anchoring activities, and small group discussion occurred in most small learning groups. Additionally 75% of the teachers stated in interviews that they use learning groups for ability grouping, 50% use to increase confidence levels, and 50% use for collaborative learning and differentiation. Therefore, although it did not rank as high in the classroom observations strictly as "learning groups", within the interviews and coding, it is one of the top instructional practices that the teachers identified as successful with both their homeless students and their regularly housed students. Combined with the interviews and observations as well as the identified background research, the use of learning groups in a classroom is a successful pedagogical practice.

Another area of interest to note is in the results that compare use of manipulatives and individual seatwork. These two results showed up when looking specifically at the results of most used instructional activities with the regularly housed students compared to the homeless students. They did not show up in the top activities when looking at the homeless students compared to the regularly housed peers. Individual seatwork was used in 35 percent of the observation segments in regularly housed peers and 15 percent with homeless students. Manipulatives were used at 29 percent with regularly housed students and 20 percent with homeless students. The use of manipulatives and individual seatwork could be explained in that during the majority of the classroom observation segments, students experiencing homelessness were usually working with the classroom teacher in small group or individually. Therefore, the regularly housed peers were the ones who were working independently on seatwork or using manipulatives while

working individually, in pairs, or small groups. Longer observations during a classroom rotation of learning groups may show homeless students participating in more individual seatwork, however, in most interviews with teachers, it was stressed that homeless students were usually placed in larger chunks of time with the teacher to assist with instruction.

One area that was of no surprise to the researcher was the importance of relationships, supports, and student needs. This is an area that is heavily supported through literature studies as well as surfacing in the researcher's prior pilot studies as a support to the success of student experiencing homelessness. The importance of relationships can be supported by Schwartz-Henderson (2013) by stating, "children must feel safe in their bodies and have a connection to a safe and available adult. It is important to promote a safe environment. The most effective way to do this is to provide stable buffering relationships with adults" (p. 50). Relationships were heavily supported through the teacher interviews. In all eight interviews, 100% of the teachers referenced the strength and benefit of developing a relationship benefits the success of the student. This relationship was supported by 63% recommending building a relationship from the very beginning, 75% building trust, 100% making the student feel welcomed and loved, and 75% reinforcing the benefits of building home communication. "Teachers' expressions and modeling of genuine caring, coupled with compassion and safe classroom spaces can change unengaged, disruptive children into active group participants" (Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008, p. 84; Noddings, 1992). Cuthrell et al. (2010) further supports this successful strategy by stating, "By believing in a child, cultivating positive relationships, and offering meaningful activities, teachers can build

positive classroom environments that affect the child for much longer than a single school year" (p. 107). This statement suggests that not only are the relationships a positive affect on the present, but also they have the potential to carry on much longer for the student in need.

Finally, needs and supports for students are supported within prior literature as well as within the interviews with these teachers. "Provide teachers with needed resources and support so they can respond effectively to the needs of their students" (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011, p. 211; Milenkiewicz, 2005). As with the area of relationships, both the category of supports and the category of needs were mentioned by 100% of the teachers interviewed. The researcher expected that a high percentage of teachers would reference these areas but for all three to be mentioned by all eight of the teachers reinforced the importance of the non-instructional strategies that go along with the instructional strategies. As mentioned earlier within this dissertation, Murphy and Tobin (2011) identified an educational framework that support homeless students in the classroom and provide academic success. Within this framework, there are seven elements that include: developing awareness, attending to basic needs, providing effective instruction, creating a supportive environment, providing additional supports, collaborating with outside agencies, and promoting parental involvement. These elements that have been mentioned as support for success are also supported by the statements made by the research participants, observations, and artifacts that were provided.

Overall, the researcher did not find any overwhelming surprises to the study as the results continue to support previous background literature and research studies. The

success of this study was the opportunity to drill down deeper into previously identified categories to further support the needs of homeless students and to identify the areas that will provide the most success for this population of students at the elementary level.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study demonstrated that there are common components of practices that provide success for students that are experiencing homelessness. Teachers have identified themes that, when taken into account, promote instructional and non-instructional strategies for academic success. These include: using a variety of instructional strategies to encourage student success, involvement, and participation in class, planning for instruction that promoted collaboration and accommodations, instructing through the use of learning groups to allow for ability and collaborative grouping, modifications to homework, building and strengthening relationships between teacher and the student and the teacher and the family, providing supports to students and their families, and taking into account the needs of the student.

Teachers who work in the public schools are seeing an increase in the number of homeless students that are entering into their classrooms. These teachers identified areas of their instructional philosophy in which their pedagogy in the classroom is beneficial to providing success for their students. They must be aware of the various challenges that homeless children may deal with when applied toward the educational setting and everyday functions. They must be aware of the instruction that they are providing to their students in the classroom and adopt modification to their own teaching philosophy that will promote the success of their students. They need to be aware of the social supports

that are available or recommended for success within the classroom and school. This also refers to the emotional and social concerns that homeless students and families face. Finally, they need to utilize strategies for success in the instructional classroom to promote a positive learning experience. Schools have many services and supports that are available due to the McKinney-Vento Act. Increasing awareness of these supports and becoming creative toward each individual case will promote increased success for these children that are torn between wanting and needing to learn and surviving through their personal situations.

This mixed-methods case study explored the patterns of teachers and the successful pedagogical practices that they employ in the classroom when working with students who are experiencing homelessness. There is compelling research evidence to support the strategies mentioned within this study to support the effectiveness of instructional practices in the elementary classroom and supporting the academic success of homeless students. This study used quantitative classroom observation data to identify the practices that teachers are using successfully with their students on a daily basis and the differences that they are providing to a specific population within their classes. Additional qualitative interviews data was used to identify their perceptions of homeless students and how they promote success of those students within their classes compared to their regularly housed peers. The observation protocol utilizing the DCOS focused on the process of teaching rather than the student products.

Implications for Future Research

In continuing forward with this topic, it would be beneficial for future researchers to obtain data from an even larger participatory group. In identifying the group, this researcher recommends being aware of the various living situations of the families and children for more in depth cross referencing of the students to align any similarities and differences that may be related to what caused their homelessness, where they are living now, and if there is an alignment related to the children in those living conditions. It is also recommended to continue with interviewing teachers that currently have homeless students in their classroom, as it appears the feedback in the interviews is more current with trending instructional practices. A further consideration would be to make a comparison between teachers who are working in suburban schools versus teachers who are working in urban schools to determine correlations between the strategies related to teachers in both geographical or environmental settings.

Another area of future research that would be beneficial would expand on the success of the students receiving these strategies. A longitudinal study that would follow students through high school and track students who receive these strategies to determine success would be highly beneficial to providing additional support. On-time graduation rates are already improving for homeless students. Identifying if this is due to the instructional and non-instructional strategies would provide more in-depth supports for teachers and future professional development to move their students to higher success. Even at a mid-level, following a student through an entire year to evaluate her or his success while receiving these strategies would provide a greater level of validation of the

success the practices provide for the student and would help to standardize what really works best for these students in need.

The findings of this study confirm that specific strategies and themes of instruction exist to promote the academic success of students that are currently experiencing homelessness. The researcher recommends further research in the field to explore deeper into the complexities and additional specific strategies, instructional and non-instructional that will benefit the academic gains of this population of students. I believe that the findings of this study will create a richer understanding to the needs of homeless student success.

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Appendix A Informed Consent Form

February, 2014

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided to you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at anytime without affecting your relationship with this researcher.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a dissertation research project in a doctoral level program. The procedure will be a single, holistic case study design. At this stage in the research, the process will be conducted to look at the instructional practices that occur in a classroom that has one or more homeless children to determine what pedagogical practices will provide the most benefit for the child.
Data collection will involve two interviews and two observations. Transcripts of interviews between the researcher and teachers who have students in their class that have experienced homelessness will be provided to the teacher to review. One interview will occur before the classroom observations and one interview will occur after both observations have occurred.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about this study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research is completed. However, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity as a participant.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information about the experiences in a mixed methods research and the opportunity to participate in a mixed methods research study.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep. In signing this consent form, you agree that:

"I am aware that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will remain so through its duration. Should I wish to withdraw at any time, I may do so by calling or emailing the lead researcher. No questions will be asked pertaining to a participant's reasons for withdrawal, and there is no consequence for choosing not to participate in the study.

I am aware that I may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this experiment to the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects committee at 1-855-800-7187 or rwmcco@wm.edu."

____________________________ __________________

Signature of Participant Date

This project was found to comply with appropriate ethical standards and was exempted from the need for formal review by the College of William and Mary Protection of Human Subject Committee (Phone 757-221-3966) on 2014-02-05 and expires on 2015-02-05.