

EARLY ADOLESCENTS' INTERPRETATIONS OF TEACHER CARE

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Empirical research suggests that *teacher care* is critical to the success of adolescents in the classroom (Knowles & Brown, 2004). Moreover, teachers' pedagogical approaches to practice can either promote or complicate meaningful student experiences and affect how students perceive those experiences. Therefore, it is important to understand how students perceive specific adolescent-teacher pedagogical transactions in relation to teacher care. The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand the transactions between students and a teacher in the classroom that emerged from the pedagogical practices that early adolescents perceived as a form of teacher care. This investigation focused on how early adolescents made sense of the pedagogical transactions depicted from their classroom in minimally-edited video clips. Six classrooms, grades 4-8, viewed video clips from instructional segments. Early adolescents participated in *co-generative dialogues* to discuss their perceptions of the transactions that occurred during the videos. The data from the *co-generative dialogues* were analyzed case by case and across cases. The following themes were identified as important components of the pedagogical transactions: high expectations, attunement, trust, dialogue, autonomy support, and feedback. The findings from this study can be posited as useful to support professional development, effective teaching and learning practices, and educational policy.

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PREFACE

For many years, I have had a strong interest in learning how effective teacher practice influences student perceptions of their learning experience. With my current study, I feel as if I have taken a tremendous stride forward. Having the opportunity to explore past and current literature and investigate new ideas through a focused study has given me a chance to see how even a small sample of work can have a tangible impact in the world of education.

Without the love and support of my husband Mark and my children, Stephanie and Matthew, the completion of my dissertation would not have been possible. There are many days when I called to say, “Honey, I am going to be late again. Can you pick up the kids, make dinner, and help the kids with their homework?” Without complaint, he always followed through and made life just a little easier. My family has made endless sacrifices to help and support me throughout the entire process. I am so very grateful for their commitment and dedication to giving me the time, encouragement, and support necessary for me to reach the end of my journey.

I would also like to thank Dr. Tanner Wallace, my dissertation advisor and friend. At times, I thought I would never finish. She gave me countless words of encouragement, especially during difficult times. Her guidance and support helped me persevere and trudge

forward in my journey. Her passion for research inspired me to understand the importance of contributing to teacher practice and learning. Without her guidance, I could not have finished.

Also, many sincere thanks to my committee members, Dr. Mary Margaret Kerr, Dr. Michael Gunzenhauser, and Dr. John Lozosky for their continuous support and expectations for quality work. I am very grateful for the time each member spent reading and providing me with feedback to help complete my research. It has been a true honor to work with each of you.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

From the publication of a *Nation at Risk Report* to the reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, and the most recent transition to the *Common Core Standards*, schools have faced consistent and rigorous demands to have all students perform at high academic levels.

Encouraging meaningful academic growth among students who enter school systems with varying levels of participation and vulnerabilities requires tremendous professional skill. Teaching and learning are inherently relational and, as such, the notion of *care* is an important aspect of teaching and learning (Grossman, et al. 2009). Too often, however, notions of care are set aside in favor of things easier to measure and standardize. Thus, a focus on caring teacher practice is often constrained by the nature of large-scale educational policy.

Educational policy mandates that public schools ensure that all children develop to their greatest potential. To determine progress towards meeting that ambitious demand, efficient, cost-effective measures of academic performance have proliferated. Although policies prescribe guidelines and subsequently require the measurement of academic achievement among students, current educational policy fails to adequately recognize the links between vital components of school culture such as *care* and *safety*, and student learning. Yet these aspects of school culture are critical, malleable factors able to be enhanced or reformed to influence global school performance (Fullan, 2004).

The recent *Race to the Top District* (RTT-D) funding competition may be signaling a shift in policy focus. The RTT-D competition named “personalized learning environments” as an absolute priority of the funding stream. This focus suggests that policy makers believe that school culture is amenable to policy intervention and does influence student learning. The highest scorer in this competition, Carson City School District, proposed a plan to restructure educational delivery by providing students with personalized learning experiences based on student need.

In the Carson City proposal, *personalized learning environments* emphasized the importance of caring relationships, knowing student academic and personal needs, and giving students voice in the process. Along with building a data system that measures student growth, the proposal outlined purposeful ways of informing teachers and principals about data to create meaningful instruction applied through a learner-centered approach. Importantly, this school district’s plan included opportunities for common planning time for teachers, specialized professional development, and the creation of small learning communities within classrooms. This type of plan suggests that producing learning conditions that include a shift in classroom culture are important factors in enhancing student learning.

Vastly different from NCLB, which stresses accountability through meeting proficiency in reading and math, the RTT-D competition stressed that a personalized learning environment is just as important as monitoring academic measures to achieve student success. The RTT-D competition focused on positive classroom cultures in which students benefit from teacher support and connection to the learning community in which they participate. The RTT-D competition also demonstrated that schools need to develop and support teachers’ capacity to create teacher-student relationships by providing structures such as strategically designed

professional development and support through common planning, collaboration, and the use of data to guide instruction.

This dissertation study sought to contribute empirical understandings of how a culture of dignity is created and maintained in urban schools. Specifically, it examined how early adolescents' interpretations of teacher care, constituted in pedagogical transactions, functioned to develop a culture of dignity in a classroom.

This investigation focused on how early adolescents made sense of the pedagogical transactions depicted from their classroom in the minimally-edited video clips. I used video clips from instructional segments of six classrooms grades 4-8 as elicitation devices to generate data. During small focus groups, elsewhere called *co-generative dialogues* (LaVan & Beers, 2005), early adolescent students and their teacher rated the clips in terms of teacher care and "talked-aloud" based upon what they observed in the video clips. These small group discussions were audio-recorded, and then audio files were transcribed verbatim. Data analysis focused on identifying how particular teaching practices created pedagogical transactions that made students feel as if their teachers cared for them and that they were in a psychologically safe environment.

This study aimed to produce evidence that can support effective teaching in urban schools – a relevant issue of reforming school culture. By studying how students interpreted specific pedagogical transactions, this exploratory study contributed to building an empirically-based theory about how a culture of dignity can be created and sustained through specific early adolescent-teacher instructional transactions. The findings of this study contribute to understanding how students perceive specific early adolescent-teacher pedagogical transactions in relation to teacher care and to future research aimed at better understanding the links between components of classroom culture and student learning.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

As an educator of nearly 20 years, my interests in school and classroom culture stemmed from my own personal experience and observation in schools and classrooms. Over the past several years, I have visited classrooms across traditional public, private, and charter schools. These observations suggested that although school administrators and faculty may possess similar visions for student experiences, tremendous variations exist in beliefs, pedagogical practices, and teacher-student transactions. Notably, many teachers appear to interact naturally with students in ways perceived as respectful and caring while others struggle to maintain positive and meaningful interactions with students.

Through considerable discussion with other educators, including exemplary teachers and administrators, varying opinions of how highly effective teachers establish a culture of caring and respect with students existed. From these conversations, I found that it is often difficult for teachers to explain the specific actions or reasons behind purposeful interactions with students. Therefore, my next step was to empirically study the types of pedagogical transactions that make a difference in establishing a caring and respectful environment.

Moreover, my own experience, as both a teacher and administrator, helped me to understand that students depend on important teacher practices to help them feel successful within their classroom. The environment that schools create is an essential factor in supporting teachers in the process of creating the capacity for teachers to demonstrate care. Therefore,

further research is necessary to help policy makers and administrators understand what is needed to develop highly effective teaching practices that support teacher practitioners in developing caring transactions between adolescent students and teacher that result in positive student experiences.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's world, the management of student behavior is one of the most significant professional challenges that teachers face. Often filled with additional stress and lack of skills and strategies to attend to students, teachers are often not equipped to meet the competing needs of their students. With increased accountability measures, many schools have opted to provide teachers with professional development that encompasses strategies for test preparation and preparedness to meet the rigorous demand of academics rather than practice-based training focused on robust pedagogical practices that develop a classroom culture of care. Nevertheless, enhancing teacher quality, and thus student learning, requires practice-based training for teachers that emphasizes complex constellations of interactive and adaptive cycles of decision and action (Ball & Forzani, 2009). To address teachers' needs, these training experiences must include ways to address the problem.

The professional development that exists tends to suffer from two related shortcomings. First, current teacher professional development opportunities often lack the necessary focus and attention on real world *pedagogical practices*; too often, professional development focus on teachers' attitudes and beliefs without adequately attending to teacher practice (Ball & Forzani,

2009). Second, the professional development provided at the school level is often adult-centric and neglects student voice as a viable opportunity to learn from student daily experiences in the classroom. Although there has been extensive research about student learning, it is critical to examine how students interact within the demands of the classroom environment (Thiessen, 2008). Moreover, student voice can influence or transform teaching practice when it is at the center of professional development because it has the power to strengthen teacher capacity. Understanding students' needs and strengths along with how students participate in making sense of the natural transactions that occur in the classroom is a logical next step in supporting teacher learning and practice.

One of the challenges in providing these kinds of practice-based professional development opportunities for teachers focused on behavioral interventions and classroom culture is that we lack empirically-based theories of effective teacher practice in this area. So, in other words, despite knowing that tremendous variation exists in teacher practice across classrooms, we are not entirely clear about the sources of that variation beyond simplistic explanations based exclusively on student demographics.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Because of continuous shifts in policy and educational reform, the role of the teacher is ever evolving. Beleaguered by the challenges of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and other state and local policy demands, teachers adhere to a strict set of accountability measures while skillfully balancing other core elements of the classroom. Given the scope and intensity of these

roles, one of the most critical elements often set aside is that of classroom organization and behavior management practices.

A teacher must be prepared to successfully manage a classroom using effective pedagogical practices that result in the notion of teacher care. When students perceive their teachers as caring, the environment is more positive, therefore giving students a feeling of belonging and connectedness to their classroom (Libbey, 2004). Figure 1 depicts a conceptual framework for how building-level culture and classroom culture inform and influence each other and how classroom culture is established and maintained.

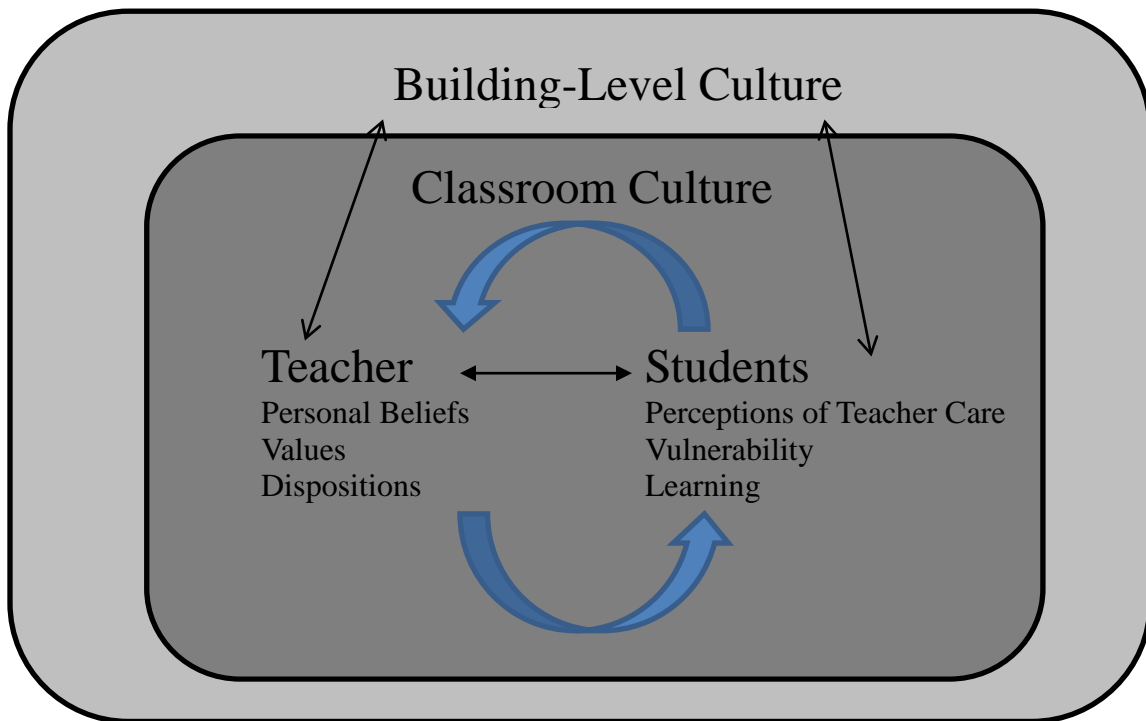


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for understanding the relations between classroom culture and building-level culture and the nature by which classroom culture is established and maintained.

The elements of school culture are intricately linked to classroom culture. The values and goals represented by the larger school culture help shape culture at the classroom level. In particular, school culture helps teachers form perspectives, which subsequently influences teacher decisions and actions in the classroom (Hinde, 2000). Driven by the mission, vision, philosophy, and beliefs of the organization, school culture is the framework that guides and shapes academic and behavioral norms both inside and outside of the classroom. School culture emerges through the elements of norms, rituals, traditions, experiences, and pedagogical practices established. When there are clear expectations of what each of these elements look and sound like, “internal cohesion” (Deal, 2003, p. 15) will exist amongst the staff creating an environment of consistency that reinforces expectations. Culture is constantly constructed and reconstructed based on interactions of the individuals within the environment. As such, when consistent beliefs, practices, and conditions exist, they set the stage for teaching and learning inside of the classroom.

Although the culture established at the school level plays an influential role at the classroom level, the culture inside of the classroom also manifests from a teacher’s personal beliefs, values, and dispositions (Deal, 2003). The norms set by the teacher are critical factors in shaping the daily teaching and learning practices that occurs in the classroom. The transactions between students and a teacher in the classroom emerge from the pedagogical practices that are developed and implemented. The daily decisions made by teachers affect student responses and outcomes. When students feel like they are in an emotionally and physically safe environment and are valued by the teacher, they tend to feel less vulnerable because there is a sense of belonging and care (Libbey, 2004). Once classroom norms are established, they reflect in the broader culture as evidenced through behaviors, interactions, and beliefs.

School culture and classroom culture are fluid. School culture circulates to the classroom environment and in turn the classroom culture flows back into the school culture. It is a “self-repeating cycle” (Hinde, 2000, p. 29). When there is fluidity, the energy from each simultaneously flows in both directions which contribute to either a positive or negative school culture. In other words, when the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices are implemented at the classroom level, they are reconstructed at the school level producing consistent conditions.

In the case that teaching and learning practices align inside and outside of the classroom and school, the culture is more likely to be cohesive resulting in a positive school culture. On the other hand, inconsistencies in alignment between teaching and learning practices between classroom and school may result in a negative culture.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Outlined in my study are the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of pedagogical transactions between teacher and student that early adolescents interpret as demonstrations of "teacher care"?
2. Are early adolescent interpretations of pedagogical transactions consistent across student vulnerability levels?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review is comprised of literature drawn from successive searches of article and manuscript databases including ERIC and Psycinfo. In these searches, I used the following terms: school culture, adolescent development, pedagogy, teacher and student interactions, and student perceptions. Subsequently, I examined empirical research, professional journals, books, and scholarly articles retrieved via Google Scholar and Microforms to provide a broad scope of current and previous research efforts.

I reviewed each publication for important contextual information and empirical evidence to help me frame and conceptualize the nature of my research questions and study design. The subsequent paragraphs describe school culture and teacher practices that contributed to the notion of teacher care. These descriptions provided both conceptual definitions for my key terms, and also provided me with a theoretical framework within which helped me make meaning of the findings. In other words, one of the challenges of interpretatively-oriented studies is that they can devolve into something so local they are not a contribution (Tanner LeBaron Wallace, personal communication, January 14, 2013). To avoid this, I sought to make the links between my findings and existing robust and explicit theory. My review of the literature was the first step in the process.

2.1 BIDIRECTIONAL INFLUENCE OF BUILDING LEVEL CULTURE AND TEACHER PRACTICE

The current literature suggests that school culture is diffuse and, therefore, difficult to comprehensively measure. Moreover, limited progress in the development of school culture measures has made it difficult for practitioners and policymakers to assess aspects of school culture such as caring and respect, those that are often missing in traditional measures (Bell & Kent, 2010). Because of limited research in this area, schools have failed to include ways of developing and supporting teacher capacity in establishing caring and respectful environments in professional development plans. Yet, the environment created and sustained in schools and classrooms, particularly in terms of caring and feeling safe are vital to meeting the individual needs of students.

Dupper and Meyers (2002) suggest that low-level violence in schools influences school culture, which successively diminishes student achievement. Because of the demands of accountability, teachers often surrender their time and effort needed to personalize student experiences and build positive relationships that result in caring transactions. In order to guide and foster a culture to produce positive student outcomes and perceptions, teachers have the right levels and types of support in learning pedagogical practices that result in positive transactions between teacher and student.

Research has shown that teachers participating in professional development with structured, sustained, and supported instructional discussions produce significant gains in student learning (Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008). Collaboration is an integral part of teacher learning and the process of this meaningful discourse may influence other systematic changes including a collegial atmosphere and school improvement. Dialogue between colleagues is critical to transform the learning and to impact classroom practice and student learning. Through the process of ongoing dialogue and inquiry with other colleagues, teachers are able to develop a deeper understanding of their own goals and learning. When teachers understand their own goals or vision, they begin to form a professional identity.

Clearly outlined classroom structures are crucial for developing teacher care. There is solid evidence that suggests that interactions between teacher and student are shaped reciprocally through the rituals and the values established within the structures of the classroom (Deal & Peterson, 2002; Schein, 1995). Coyle (2007) describes the classroom as a social and physical space for learning. Within the context of this space, a teacher's role is all encompassing. The teacher often acts as an organizer, facilitator, manager, instructor, and a caregiver. In order to effectively meet the basic needs of all students, a teacher must learn how to balance all of these roles and more importantly provide a safe space to create a sense of belonging. As such, these roles are often lived within the boundaries of the norms, rituals, and routines that teachers establish in the first few weeks of schools.

Norms created in a classroom are often dictated by the teacher and usually emerge from the expectations set through the larger school culture. Culture is based on normative expectations, which include the quality of relationships and student perceptions as important factors that contribute to the overarching norms (Higgins & D'Allesandro, 1998). Once norms

are created, they can be categorized as positive or negative depending on perceptions, assumptions, or actions. Over time, these norms are shared through the expectations that have been set and the relationships that develop from them.

School culture as a system of shared values and norms indicates that norms are powerful in the construction or destruction of the classroom environment (Cha & Chatman, 2003). Norms reinforce the expectations set. Norms have the power to build trust, loyalty, and community. When a group holds common assumptions, shared learning begins to occur (Schein, 1990). When norms are present and consistently shared over time, changes may occur because these norms influence other elements. Norms are also supported through risk taking (Cha & Chatman, 2003, p. 24). Therefore, interactions may remain the same or shift depending on the actions taken or knowledge perceived. When norms are positive, they communicate a standard set of guidelines which groups or communities of learners are to presumably follow.

When norms are inconsistent, they may create a culture that is toxic or negative. As a result, the inconsistencies of norms may lead to negative attitudes or transactions between teacher and student. Deal and Peterson (1998) present several examples of negative transactions to include disagreement, unfair treatment, distrust, and self-serving.

Another aspect that may influence norms is teachers' personal beliefs. Interactions are often shaped by beliefs. When norms exist, they reside in teacher beliefs and show up in their actions (Saphier, 1985). Beliefs also represent a form of pedagogical thinking (Kansanen, et al., 2000) which contributes to the teaching process. The idea of pedagogical thinking encompasses two important ideas including knowledge of the teacher and personal commitment. Knowledge typically contributes to teaching practice through the types of actions that are represented. Because knowledge continually changes, it can influence interactions in different ways (Cogill,

1995). As such, beliefs most often guide the thinking behind the action and remain at the core of the decision made. Each component is powerful and both implicitly and explicitly shape and influence classroom culture.

Although research broadly defines the characteristics of a *caring teacher*, not all teachers have the willingness, skill, or ability that is essential for caring for their students. Caring involves many aspects some of which are driven by personal beliefs while others are by choice. O'Connor (2006) asserts that a teacher's core set of beliefs stem from her personal values, philosophy of teaching, and humanistic emotions. Beliefs are most often represented through a teacher's professional identity. Previous studies have shown the relationship between beliefs and practices that influence classroom practice are closely related. In any given classroom, patterns of behavior exist. Patterns of behavior often emerge through the norms and expectations set in the classroom.

One way to express beliefs is through routines and rituals (Hobby, 2004). Behaviors are often reinforced through the rituals and routines that teachers establish in the classrooms (Deal & Peterson, 2002). Because rituals are events that follow a certain set of rules, they often give meaning to the participants (Maslowski, 2005). Therefore, common or shared experiences between teacher and student can provide opportunities for members to grow collectively. When common behavior exists among the group, it reinforces the values and expectations set. When new knowledge is constructed, it may change or shape the behavior. Patterns of behavior result from norms over time. Patterns of behavior also emerge through traditions. When traditions are consistent, they may become symbolic. Therefore, these behaviors connect with core values and often lead to sustained relationships.

Personal values also have the power to influence teacher-student interactions as well as day-to-day decisions. In a review of literature, Maslowski (2005) argues that values reflect what is perceived to be important. Actions, emotions, and reflections by the teacher can either be positive or negative which may in turn result in how a student transacts in a situation.

Attitude is an important component within values. Strongly linked to commitment, this element can influence outcomes. Attitudes are part of creating a culture and can be positive or negative. Hamilton and Richardson (1995) found that teacher beliefs and belief systems can influence school culture in relation to staff development in that the effectiveness in the professional development strongly related to the social norms of the school. The empirical interactions between school culture and participation personified within the process and created a sense of empowerment for the teachers (Hamilton & Richardson, 1995). Therefore, positive norms may heavily influence the way educators do things and may strongly impact teaching and learning. When teachers share similar visions and beliefs, members of a team may feel like they can share with others and take risks (Sheetz & Benson, 1986).

The mission and vision of an organization is driven by a set of core values or beliefs that align with what an organization represents. When values or beliefs of the organization are not strongly communicated, it weakens the mission. A strong mission and vision that communicates the expectations and what a school values as it relates to student and teacher learning is vital. Thompson and Miska's (2004) research concluded that those who align their classroom visions and missions with the schools will more likely influence teaching and learning outcomes. Therefore, mission, vision, participation, and level of support may influence and set the stage for the type of environment necessary to secure levels of commitment and strong values within the culture.

Because aspects of school culture are indeed vital indicators of school success, perhaps policy makers should consider the importance of their potential impact on education. Making resources such as professional development that includes how to care for students or how schools can help support teachers in caring for students can influence the capacity for teacher care.

2.2 PEDAGOGICAL TRANSACTIONS AS TEACHER PRACTICE

The importance of a caring relationship between teacher and student is critical to positive adolescent development (Hargreaves, 1998; Knowles & Brown, 2004; Noddings, 1995). In particular, at the adolescent stage, *caring* is an essential component of meeting the social and academic needs of students. It has been noted by many scholars that students need to feel connected to at least one adult in order to feel safe and connected to school (Knowles & Brown, 2000; NASSP, 2006; Noddings, 2005)

O'Connor's (2008) definition of *caring* explicitly links teacher practice and student behavior - "emotions, actions and reflections that result from a teacher's desire to motivate, help or inspire their students" (p. 117). In classrooms, caring can take on many forms including verbal, expressions, listening or body language. Teachers play an important role in supporting emotional development in the classroom (Yan, Evans, & Harvey, 2011) and the emotions that are displayed can influence the outcome of a transaction between teacher and student.

If emotions such as empathy or trust are deeply rooted in a transaction, a student is more likely to perceive the transaction as a genuine act of care because students become more

accepting and begin to feel that someone understands how they feel. When students believe that someone cares, they begin to feel valued and a part of the larger community. A sense of value helps students feel like they are in a non-threatening environment, one that is safe and secure. A feeling of safety can also lead to higher levels of student academic attitudes and values (Klem & Connell, 2003).

Noddings (2005) acknowledges that a part of caring is seeing, feeling, and/or listening to others. She describes the teacher-student relationship as a reciprocal one that often emerges from consistent norms and interactions. Reciprocal interactions may allow for negotiated opportunities between teachers and students. When students begin to feel like there is a balance in determining the result of an interaction, there is a sense of acknowledgement through the emotions conveyed. A teacher-student relationship often develops out of interests or passions. By learning about students' interests, a teacher can set the stage for building and sustaining a culture of learning in the classroom. When teachers understand or have an awareness of a student's needs or desires, they tend to develop a dignity with students in relation to respect and care. This understanding or connection helps students feel like they are in a caring environment where they are valued (Pedro & Miller, 2006).

Purposeful, subtle interactions are critical in developing and fostering relationships. Teachers must be deliberate in their approaches. For example, when teachers listen and monitor students several things occur. First, it builds self-awareness in students because it allows them to identify their talents and interests. Second, it builds a sense of community by letting students interact and get to know each other. Lastly, it helps teachers understand how students think. The act of caring as described by many scholars suggests that multiple meaningful actions or transactions that happen consistently over time may result in the notion of teacher care.

Moreover, when strong social structures are set in the foundation of the classroom culture, then it naturally sets the stage for learning.

Hargreaves (1998) placed attention on care through his description of teaching as an emotional practice. He describes teachers as “emotional, caring, passionate beings that connect with their students” (p. 835). Through his four points of understanding emotion, he describes how teacher emotion develops the relationships and interactions between teacher and student. He concludes that teachers have the ability to either motivate students or disengage students through the types and levels of interactions. For example, when teachers demonstrate caring behaviors such as respect through actions of language, proximity, or tone and consistently model these behaviors, students tend to interact in the same way. When teachers purposefully provide opportunities that include student interests or passions, it leverages student engagement and shows students that teachers are aware of their needs. Through these focused transactions, relationships can develop creating a culture of care and respect.

As evidenced by many scholars, teacher care is represented through examples of pedagogical components such as setting high expectations, respect, interpersonal support, and the commitment to student learning (Miller & Pedro, 2006; Murdock & Miller, 2003; Noddings, 2005). When these types of pedagogical components are consistently represented in a classroom and embedded into the culture, students tend to feel a sense of belonging (Libbey, 2011). The presence of these components in the classroom, along with how students perceive them as such is more likely to increase motivation and engagement in learning.

While a variety of definitions of the term *caring* have been suggested, this dissertation will use the definition suggested by Carter (2012) who saw it as a combination of attitude, accessibility, and creating a sense of belonging through building community and relationships.

2.3 CARING PEDAGOGICAL TRANSACTIONS

The term *pedagogy* takes on many forms in the literature. Complex in nature, it often surrounds a form of inquiry that connects with content knowledge, teaching approaches, and relational knowledge. *Pedagogy* in the most basic form represents three things: the work of a teacher, education, and instructional methods (In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved January 8, 2013, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pedagogy>). In other words, pedagogy incorporates the ideas of teaching, learning, theory, and practice. As described by Cogill (2008), it is the “intersection of experiences, values, beliefs, and educational context” (p. 10). Pedagogy is the main vehicle in which care is expressed and can be a method of intervention for improving teacher quality.

The literature most often utilizes the term *interaction* when talking about learning spaces created in classrooms between teacher and student within the context of classroom management practices. Here, I distinguish between an interaction and transaction in order to add specificity to the nature of what I am studying. Whereas interactions symbolize that two participants in a setting have exchanged information or objects within a setting, transactions symbolize that the participants themselves have been fundamentally changed or altered as a result of the interaction.

Teacher care is frequently enacted through classroom pedagogical practices. Students enter at different levels with varying abilities. It is important for a teacher to acknowledge there are differences in each child. Within a classroom's physical and social space, multiple transactions take place each day. These transactions are often lived through the norms, expectations, and routines set within the boundaries of the classroom environment.

Teachers do not always respond, interpret, or even adapt to students in the same way. Knowledge and beliefs influence how teachers react (Ball & Cohen, 1999) in relation to behavioral and instructional interactions. It is important for teachers to be aware of how students understand, engage, or connect with certain concepts and activities. Teachers' pedagogical approaches to a practice can either promote or complicate meaningful student experiences. If students perceive teacher support as limited, they most likely will feel a sense of disconnect which could affect positive experiences. When these interactions are developed over time through academic and social interactions, stronger relationships between student and teacher begin to form.

2.3.1 The role of the teacher

The role of teachers in the classroom is one of the most salient aspects of the school environment (Juvonen, 2007; Liberante, 2012; Marzano, 2003). Often viewed as an agent of change, teachers have the power to influence teacher-student transactions along with other important factors such as student engagement, well-being, and academic success (Spitt, Rooth, & Thijs, 2011) which may lead to positive student perceptions of school. Within any given classroom, students experience a range of conditions in the learning setting that factor into their daily experiences. As a result, the types of pedagogical practices largely influence the behavior of students, the expectations set, and the subsequent transactions between teacher and student that follow.

Teachers are confronted each day with unique situations that require some type of “in the moment action” (Van Manen, 1994, p. 258) that potentially may result as a transaction between

the teacher and student. Although teachers have a pedagogical repertoire of knowledge to draw from during situations, there is always question on how a student may react or experience that transaction (Ball & Bass, 2000). These pedagogical transactions often relate to the unspoken beliefs (Deal & Peterson, 2001), norms, and expectations set by the teacher. Categorized as positive or negative, these elements are dependent upon perceptions, assumptions, or actions. Over time, these transactions are shared through the expectations that have been set and the relationships that develop from them. Interactions may remain the same or shift depending how that individual perceives them. Creating an experience that is positive between the teacher and student will reinforce the expectations set and lead to a greater underpinning of the transactions.

2.3.2 Creating classroom culture

When creating a culture inside the classroom, there is also this idea of the teacher as a caregiver. A teacher's role is multi-faceted and requires an awareness of multiple dimensions including social, emotional, and academic. Strong teacher and student relationships and educational opportunities in the classroom influence student perceptions of a positive culture (Barr, 2011).

The recent work of Yan, Evans, and Harvey (2011) emphasizes the importance of teachers being able to address student behavior and having an awareness of students' individual needs. The authors' work stressed elements such as relationships, guidelines for expectations, rules, and routines, and teacher awareness of students as essential factors in creating an environment for positive learning. The nature of any transaction usually represents a message or decision driven by the teacher (Kansanen et al., 2000). The type of transaction can either be one

that represents care or potentially lead to classroom management issues if the student feels unsupported or a lack of care. Therefore, teacher transactions with students are pivotal in how students respond or perceive those interactions.

2.3.3 Contextual factors that contribute to caring practices

Based on the literature reviewed, six major themes emerged in relation to pedagogical practices that demonstrate teacher care; these themes include expectations, attunement, trust, dialogue, autonomy support, and feedback. Given the broad nature of pedagogical practices that may contribute to the notion of teacher care, these six practices consistently appeared within the constructs of various theoretical pieces. Therefore, a review of such literature indicates that based on teacher-student transactions, these practices can potentially serve as important aspects of daily experiences that may contribute to student perception of teacher care. Quality of these types of pedagogical practices may result in stress reduction, increased levels of student engagement (Buetel, 2011), a feeling of safety, and a sense of belonging. If students perceive they are in a safe and trusting environment, they most likely will perceive their experience as positive in nature.

Figure 2 outlines the pedagogical transactions that represent teacher care and demonstrates how transactions lead to positive student perceptions.

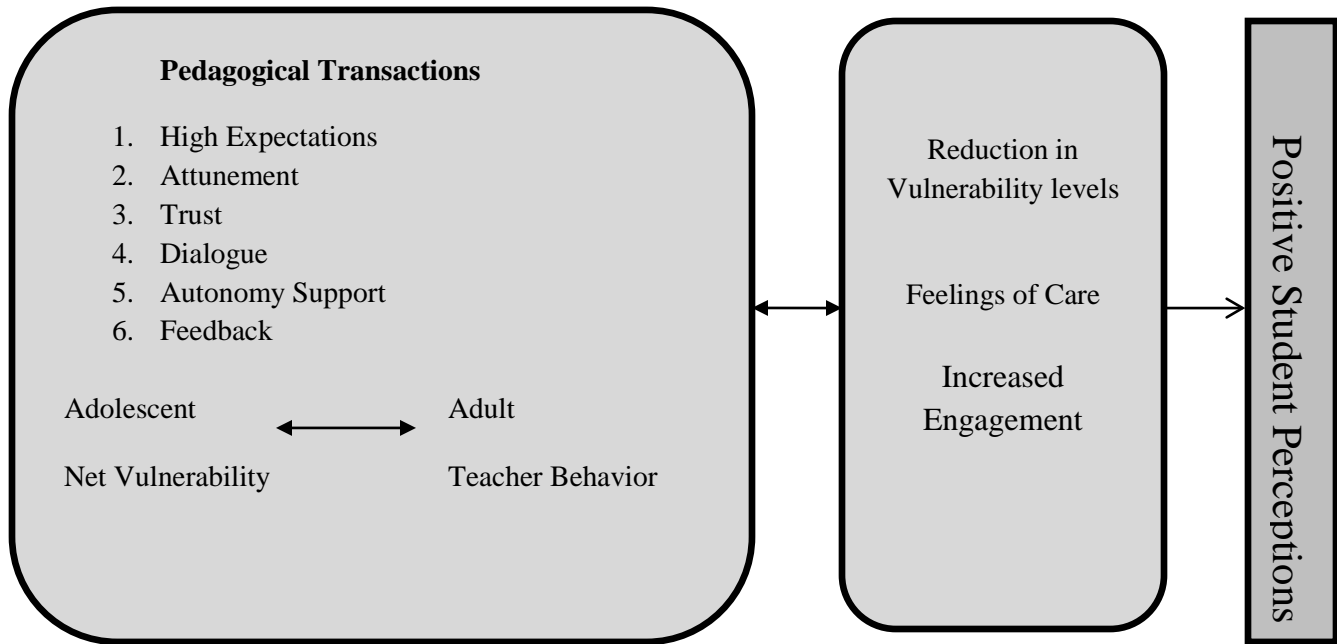


Figure 2. A conceptual model of the emergent theory of caring teacher practice.

Pedagogical transactions are important factors in developing a culture of care. When strong pedagogical practices are consistently modeled and delivered in the classroom, early adolescents are more likely to feel like they are in an emotionally and physically safe environment (Libbey, 2004). These adolescent perceptions then reduce their resistance to learning and increase their levels of engagement. Figure 2 depicts how early adolescent perceptions of care are largely dependent on teacher behavior. In summary, when teachers choose to infuse these fundamentally important teacher care practices into their instructional interactions, students are more likely to engage in any learning opportunity made available to them.

2.3.4 High expectations

Creating community or a culture of learning with high expectations is at the foundation of effective teaching and pedagogical practices (Sewell, 2011; Schein, 1985). Moreover, the establishment of high expectations may be a promising solution space for creating a culture of dignity within a classroom. Conveying high expectations can happen in many ways. This typically begins through establishing a classroom culture that includes practices with consistent routines, actions, and structures that set the tone. Primary examples of practice include organization of materials, morning meetings, quick transitions, dialogue, clarity of instructions, and ownership for learning. Many scholars purport that high expectations that result in transactions between teachers and students are shaped reciprocally through the rituals and the values established in the classroom (Deal, 1990; Sewell, 2011; Schein, 1985). Once classroom norms are collectively established, the transactions between teachers and students are lived through these components. Over time, these norms are shared through the expectations that have been set and the relationships that develop from them.

Highly effective teachers believe in high expectations and most often hold high expectations for themselves (Brophy, 2008). Teachers are confident in their ability and skill to lead a class. Teachers who hold high expectations for students establish clear and consistent routines for academics and behavior. High expectations are strongly related to student academics (Brophy, 2008; Marzano, 2003). Teachers who communicate high expectations demand that students work hard which instills a sense of value and self-efficacy in students. This is evident through the types of activities and assignments given to students. When high expectations are present, teachers insist upon productivity and a high quality of work. They

actively monitor learning and provide consistent feedback to students. Additionally in a classroom environment with high expectations, students often have opportunities to collaborate with others through the exchange of ideas or to think critically through problem solving. There is often an element of choice built into the classroom structure.

Gutiérrez (2008) suggests that expectations seen through the lens of robust instruction are contextual and are effective when students have opportunities to easily access and engage with rigorous learning resources and tools. A teacher must use strategies such as investigation and inquiry in order to provide students with a deep level of instruction (Ball & Cohen, 1999). When students are actively engaged in a deep level of instruction, the culture of the learning expectations is evident through student and teacher transactions.

Moreover, when teachers and students interact with common resources and activities, they begin to build common bonds of knowledge over time (Ball & Cohen, 1999) giving opportunities for students to challenge their own thinking, formulate questions, and work in groups with a clear set of expectations while providing an appropriate level of support contributes to the idea of teacher care. Teachers know their students' abilities and are able to provide personalized instruction (Marzano, 2003). Teachers with high expectations can quickly adapt to student needs and demonstrate flexible rigidity in proactive ways. They are firm, but very explicit about how a message is conveyed. Students know what to expect and therefore, make better choices because the message is consistent and clear.

Consequently, when low expectations exist in classrooms, teachers fail to establish consistent routines and rituals. Moreover, in these types of classrooms, teachers often lack the skill, ability, or even the confidence to address behavior. Behavior is often ignored which sends a negative message to students. When teachers do not respond or adapt well to students, this

often results as a barrier to positive student experiences (Ball & Cohen, 1999). In order for students to be successful, high expectations must exist. High expectations promote a sense of safety, belonging for students in the classroom, and serve as a catalyst for creating a community of culture and learning.

2.3.5 Attunement

A teacher must know more than demographic information about a student; she must understand what motivates a student. Knowing the background of a student, understanding that student's experience with varying external conditions, and how that student may respond in different ways are important aspects of adaptive teacher practice. Each pedagogical transaction requires a unique response by the teacher depending on the student, so that within given context in the classroom, a teacher must be able to transform what she knows about a student into ways that are adaptive in order to meet the specific needs of the student (Shulman, 1987).

When students feel that teachers know them, they feel like they are in a safe environment (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2011). This type of teacher care is referred to as *attunement* in the literature. Attunement, described by MacIntire-Latta (2004), is when teachers are routinely able to take in, receive, and act on a situation in careful response to student input. Fairbanks et. al (2010) asserts that adaptive teachers respond by drawing from a repertoire of strategies. Effective teachers know “when and what to apply” (p. 167) in various situations. Knowing when a child understands and grasps the experience and feels a part of the culture is an intuitive part of the process. For example, if a student is feeling vulnerable based on uncertainty of fitting in with

others or low academics, a teacher's role is to help that student develop a greater sense of belonging.

When students feel that they can trust their teacher because a reciprocal relationship has developed through knowing each other, students begin to feel like they are in a psychologically safe environment. Based on Libbey's research (2004), when a student connects with the experience and feels connected, he or she gains an awareness of self which contributes to personal development. Perhaps, this also means a teacher disclosing a personal experience or sharing something that shows the student that there is a shared interest may contribute to the reciprocal nature of the relationship.

Harvey (2011) suggests that teacher awareness of students is an important factor in creating an environment for positive learning. As such, a rich and positive learning environment is one that provides a sense of freedom that includes giving students opportunities to actively engage and explore. In an environment that students feel a level of autonomy, teacher support is an important means to maintaining this type of atmosphere. The support is most often scaffolded to provide students with opportunities to become independent thinkers and learners. Understanding when and how much support is necessary contributed to the idea of attunement, which shows a strong connection between teacher and student based on the knowledge and actions taken.

2.3.6 Trust

When trust is established, students recognize that the actions of a teacher are a result from of his/her attentive and receptive actions. Johnson (2006) suggests that act of care is demonstrated

through the engagement of three important components: language, listening, and attentiveness. Understanding the value of each is vital for trust to develop. Through the element of language, a student's voice is often heard which creates an opportunity for trust and respect. It also provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and important educational opportunities such as teacher support (Thijs, 2008).

Listening and attentiveness make students feel valued because they are able to freely ask questions or express their opinions or experiences (Cardoso et. al, 2007). Attentiveness means that a teacher listens to students. This can be shown through forms of body language, proximity, or eye contact. For example, through pedagogical transactions such as questioning, communication, setting expectations, or simply giving explicit directions, there is an opportunity to develop a relationship or a form of trust. When a trusting environment has been created, members of a team or learning community feel they can share with others and take risks. Risk taking requires trust which leads to a feeling of connectedness and sense of belonging in the classroom.

Building trust is not always the primary goal of every teacher. Often developmentally inappropriate elements within the classroom structures including teaching strategies, techniques, and activities utilized negatively impact the teacher-student relationship and give students a negative perception of teacher care (Eccles et al, 1993). Noddings (1995) emphasizes the importance of care as critical to all that children learn and engage in at school. With every interaction or transaction, teachers can influence students by acting as a guide to caring.

2.3.7 Dialogue

The literature indicates dialogue is a crucial element that is perceived by both teachers and students as a representation of teacher care (Hargreaves, 1998). When dialogue is genuine and continuously occurs in a personalized way, it is reciprocal in nature. MacIntire-Latta (2004) describes dialogue as teachers giving up exclusive control. Often classes have an environmental structure with little opportunity to dialogue. In traditional classrooms, the teacher asks a question, students respond, and the cycle continues.

Noddings (2005) asserts *interpersonal reasoning* - the basic fundamentals such as communication, decision-making, and compromise – as a source of fostering a community of care. Imagine the difference when the classroom environment is structured on these fundamental principles. Through this type of two-way environment, students have the opportunity to feel connected and serve as active contributors to the pedagogical transactions that occur. As such, an environment with a sense of community or care may result in a sense of belonging or feeling of safety. In Libbey's (2004) review of themes related to school connectedness, she asserts that when students feel connected to school, supported by the teacher, and feel safe, they generally do better in school. Teacher interactions are critical in creating a sense of belonging and the feeling of safety within classroom culture. Through purposeful interactions of care, students learn how to reciprocate the act of caring (Noddings, 2005).

2.3.8 Autonomy support

When students are valued in a classroom, there is often evidence which demonstrates a sense of awareness by the teacher to know when a student needs support. With regard to pedagogical practices, many scholars have identified *autonomy support* as an essential component that promotes a supportive and caring environment (Klem & Connell, 2004; Kilpatrick & Malecki, 2003). Autonomy support is one way that teachers demonstrate care via the provision of meaningful support. Autonomy support is particularly relevant to adolescent students whose normative development has them craving more opportunities for individual experimentation and exploration.

Two main aspects emerged: re-direction and student engagement. Often when one thinks about the term re-direction it is associated with a negative connotation. It implies that students are off-task and need to be re-directed to focus on the activity at hand. But from a positive perspective, re-direction can also represent a means of teacher care. According to Jones (1995), redirection is a subtle approach to remind students about the task rather than harshly pointing out that they are off-task. Re-direction can happen in a number of ways including walking over to the student and giving a quiet reminder, a signal such as a post-it, eye contact, or a simple tap. Redirection can also help a teacher be explicit in her directions without making a student feel she is being humiliated. When students perceive transactions as positive, this promotes higher levels of engagement and motivation to finish a task (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). According to Baumeister & Leary (1995), frequent, positive interactions lead to a sense of belongingness and stronger interpersonal relationships. Positive relationships often have a “protective function” (Thijs et. al, 2008, p. 244) providing a safety net that includes trust and a sense of belonging.

In contrast, redirection does not always take this form. Sometimes it takes on a tone that indicates the teacher is in control. Provoked by uncomfortable feelings, students may perceive a transaction with a negative tone as embarrassing. These feelings may potentially lead to acts of low-level violence in the classroom (Dupper & Meyers, 2002) or cause students to disengage in the activity. In a study conducted by Thijs et. al (2008), the pedagogical practice of social-emotional support by the teacher helped students regulate behavior in a positive way. When the students felt like they were receiving adequate support, they demonstrated more on-task behaviors and less off-task behaviors.

Likewise Klem and Connell's (2004) study revealed that when students felt support by the teacher, they were more likely to be engaged in the activity at hand. This study also supports the notion that the teacher's role is crucial in making students feel a part of a community and connected to the culture of learning. Therefore, the literature indicates that autonomy support through re-direction can have a positive affect when the teacher responds in a way that makes students feel connected, but also can lead to a negative environment if a more control-oriented tone or approach is utilized.

Another important component of student engagement includes the students' understanding of the purpose of the activity and its relation to the real-life context. Although the term explicit is often synonymous with direct instruction, it involves much more when related to teacher care. Direct instruction is simply the teacher giving knowledge to the students. However, explicit direction of purpose involves several important components including short explicit statements, systematic feedback, monitoring, and guiding students (Rosenthal, 1987).

Effective teachers consistently utilize these components as a part of their everyday teaching. Through the course of these interactions, students are more likely to engage in the

lesson or activity. Although explicit purpose may be considered an important aspect of teacher care, there is limited research to support this notion.

2.3.9 Feedback

The idea of student engagement closely relates to feedback. Typically when students are engaged in the active process of learning, feedback is one of the components of the process (Brophy, 1986). There is continual dialogue, interaction, and reaction involved during transactions that include feedback. When the process is connected and intertwined, it helps teachers apply actions to different principles such as questioning, modeling, or providing guidance.

When teachers give positive feedback to students, it shows they care because it instills confidence and builds self-efficacy (Marzano, 2003). Feedback, broadly defined by many scholars, is dialogue between teacher and student that often involves elements of assessing a student performance, providing targeted assistance and helping a student determine future steps. Feedback is oral or written and may happen immediately or long term. Feedback is also related to both academics and behavior. As described by Wiggins (2012), effective feedback contains seven important aspects including: “goal-referenced; tangible and transparent; actionable; user-friendly (specific and personalized); timely; ongoing; and consistent” (p. 12).

An important part of a student’s day encompasses the quality of feedback received both in academic and non-academic transactions. In particular, students at the adolescent stage demonstrate higher self-awareness and self-efficacy when positive feedback is received (Burnett, 2003). A study conducted by Zacharias (2007) demonstrated that 93% of students felt feedback

was important because teachers were knowledgeable. More importantly, it provided a level of security. Brophy (1986) discusses the idea of active teaching. The concept of active teaching includes the ideas that continuous dialogue and feedback happen between teachers and students; and once a lesson is underway, feedback and opportunities for students to apply the newly learned knowledge are important components of the process.

Through the process of feedback, teachers have an opportunity to provide students with individualized attention at their level. As stated earlier, attunement to students' strengths and knowing their abilities can represent the idea of teacher care. Through the relationship built and the opportunities given, students can develop new ways of thinking while learning in the context of a safe environment. When safe and caring environments are evident, social, emotional, and academic learning can develop (Blum et al., 2002; Cohen et al., 2009; & Osterman, 2000).

In addition, effective feedback provides a sense of authenticity and demonstrates the notion that teachers are trying to elicit thinking and listen to the students' perspectives. In contrast, feedback can be negative. When students perceive feedback as criticism or punitive, they have a tendency to be less engaged in the learning process (Brophy, 1986). This strongly correlates with poor classroom management and the teacher's ability to adapt to meet the needs of her students.

Based upon the research cited above, teachers need a wide-range of high-leverage strategies and techniques that lead to positive pedagogical transactions between teachers and students. Teachers must be deliberate in their approaches in order for them to be effective in any given context. Employing such strategies in a positive manner can lead to high levels of student engagement, motivation, and connectedness in the classroom community.

Teachers must also be reflective in their practices. Reflection may help teachers perceive the role differently and enable them to produce change. The role of a teacher is continually evolving and when new knowledge develops, teachers must use it as an opportunity to reflect and develop a stronger bond between teacher and student.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

This study aimed to generate knowledge of effective teaching in the middle grades of urban schools. My primary data collection strategy was *co-generative dialogues* (LaVan & Beers, 2005). Using a set of short video clips of instructional segments as elicitation devices ($N = 60$), small groups of students and teachers ($N = 12$; 4 to 6 students per a group, 2 per classroom) participated in small focus groups, or co-generative dialogues, to “talk aloud” what they thought to be important or meaningful in what they observed in the video clips.

I used emergent theorizing as my primary research strategy. Emergent theorizing as a data analysis technique helped me create conceptualizations of patterns within pedagogical transactions that students interpreted as important (Jaccard & Jaccoby, 2010). I chose this approach because the literature lacked clarity in identifying specificity of pedagogical transactions that created a culture of care and respect. Through the analyses of the data I collected, I mapped out concepts that emerged from student interpretations. Through student interpretations of teacher care, I gained a better understanding of the types of pedagogical transactions that contributed to the notion of teacher care; my explanation emerged out of the data collected from student interpretations in the co-generative dialogues.

As an *exploratory case study* (Yin, 2007), this study sought to understand the lived experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon in its real life context (Yin, 2007).

Yin (2009) described case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth” (p. 18). My corpus of data includes quantitative data that permitted the development of student vulnerability indices giving me an opportunity to conduct *cross case analyses* (Yin, 2009). This type of analysis assisted in identifying meaningful differences in student perceptions of pedagogical transactions across student vulnerability levels. I also employed another case study strategy, the success case method (Brinkerhoff, 2003), to examine the contextual factors that differentiate successful and unsuccessful examples of transactions. I made determinations of *success* based on student meaning making articulated during the co-generative dialogues.

Teacher practice is extraordinarily complex, comprised of moment-by-moment transactions between teacher and students. Thus, video clips of instructional segments provided a common frame of reference for participants to discuss and study the concrete particulars of pedagogical transactions experienced in the classrooms. This design feature aimed to approximate the lived experience in the classroom, but also provided a chance to make transparent and explicit the conclusions and inferences adolescent students made based upon their perceptions of pedagogical transactions. Through the close study of students’ lived experiences, I identified important patterns in the data. People construct meanings in different ways and how early adolescents made sense of it varied based on previous experiences and knowledge. In the following sections, details about the site, participants, data collection procedures, and data analyses are included.

3.1 POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

An in-depth look at early adolescents' perceptions can help support schools in the reflection of teacher practice and moreover, shape daily interactions in the classroom. Furthermore, continuity in teacher practice can help shape educational policy and support teachers' capacity to care. This research can influence practice by providing new knowledge and understanding of early adolescents' interpretations of teacher care.

As a former primary teacher, literacy coach, principal, and most recently Superintendent, I have worked for Propel Schools for the past 10 years. Because of my experience as an educator at Propel Schools, I have an existing understanding of teacher practices within the organization which may provide a more comprehensive look at the data collected for this study. My experience at Propel has helped me to understand the importance of teacher practice, and more importantly how students perceive those practices in their day to day interactions with teachers. My unique, but critical viewpoint shapes my interpretation and helps me to make meaning of both teacher and student experiences. However, I believe it is important to acknowledge that my position as Superintendent potentially may have some influence on the responses of the individual participants.

3.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

Propel Schools serves students in grades K-12 and was initially founded in 2003. To date, Propel Schools has nine schools, seven K-8 and two 9-12 models. This study specifically focuses on the K-8 model. Propel Schools is located in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Propel's mission is to catalyze the transformation of public education so that all children have access to high performing public schools. Propel serves children from high poverty, resource poor communities throughout Allegheny County. The schools within this organization consist of similar demographics and conditions. Across all its schools, 75% of students qualify for the federal free/reduced cost lunch program, 65% are minority and 13% have special needs. Propel is built on the premise that poverty or family structure does not determine education performance or life outcome. The charter management organization has six principles that guide its existence. The principles include (1) agile instruction; (2) embedded support; (3) a culture of dignity; (4) a fully valued arts program; (5) vibrant teaching communities; and (6) a quest for excellence.

3.3 PARTICIPANTS

The selection of participants occurred during the 2012-2013 school year based upon principal recommendation. Principals nominated teachers who demonstrated positive engaging classroom cultures and robust standardized test scores. Participation in the study was optional for teachers. In all cases, nominated teachers agreed to participate. Seven teachers were recruited for this study, but due to scheduling issues only six teachers' classrooms were videotaped.

Student achievement data confirmed the selection of these teachers as their student achievement on the 2011-2012 PSSA assessments exceeded the state average by 10% points in their grade level and subject area. This is especially notable in that 70% of their students are classified as Economically Disadvantaged as opposed to 40% of the students statewide. Table 1 provides teacher profiles.

Table 1. Profiles of Participant Teachers

Teacher name	Education	Years of experience	Grade level	School size	Percentage of students with special needs	Percentage of students with free and reduced lunch
Ms. Adams	Bachelor of Science	5	5	250	35%	78%
Ms. Ball	Bachelor of Science	4	5	400	12%	78%
Ms. Cole	Principal K-12; Master of Education	13	8	387	0%	85%
Ms. Drake	Pursing Master of Education	9	5	396	9%	57%
Ms. Ellis	Master of Education	8	6	400	15%	69%
Ms. Fleming	Bachelor of Science	7	4	275	10%	55%

As you can see from Table 1, grade levels in the focal classrooms span fourth through eighth grades with an average of 25 students per classroom, 13.5% of students with special needs, and 70% of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Teachers have an average experience level of 7.5 years. Once teachers had been consented, students in each focal classroom were recruited for participation. See Appendix F and G for the consent forms.

Students were selected according to the Vulnerability Index scores. Following the calculation of index scores, students in the upper and lower quartiles were chosen to participate. Table 2 provides student profiles.

Table 2. Profiles of Participant Students

Variable Name	Ms. Adams' class	Ms. Ball's Class	Ms. Cole's Class	Ms. Drake's Class	Ms. Ellis's Class	Ms. Fleming's Class
At least once a week, I play sports on a team outside of school.	1.86	3.25	3.27	1.00	3.00	3.10
At least once a week I participate in a youth program.	1.57	2.50	1.73	1.00	1.82	1.90
At least once a week, I attend church, synagogue, or temple.	2.00	2.25	2.09	2.11	3.36	2.36
People at this school are friendly to me.	4.43	3.63	4.18	4.08	4.27	3.70
Other students here like me the way I am.	4.57	4.25	4.90	4.57	4.45	4.55
I can really be myself at this school	4.00	4.71	4.78	4.50	4.00	4.60
I turn to my caregiver for comfort and support when I am upset.	4.57	4.13	4.36	4.35	2.91	3.50
My caregiver encourages me to pursue my goals.	4.43	4.00	4.55	4.33	3.20	3.80
I often go to enjoyable places and have fun with my caregiver.	4.00	3.50	4.91	4.14	3.45	3.89
Free and reduced lunch status	0.43	0.00	0.27	0.23	0.55	3.60
Special ed classification	0.57	0.88	1.00	1.00	0.64	0.80
Absenteeism rate over the first half of school year	1.43	1.75	1.73	1.00	1.18	1.50

Table 2 shows the combined mean scores for the student participants in each class. The mean scores were calculated based on the variables in the Vulnerability Index. See Table 3 for data details in the Vulnerability Index. As you can see from Table 2, some variation exists among vulnerability levels across schools. Free and reduced lunch is similar across all schools except for Ms. Fleming's class. Important to note, opportunities to participate in activities outside of school is much lower in Ms. Drake's class than other classes.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURES

Figure 3 outlines the procedures for collecting and the process for analyzing data for this study.

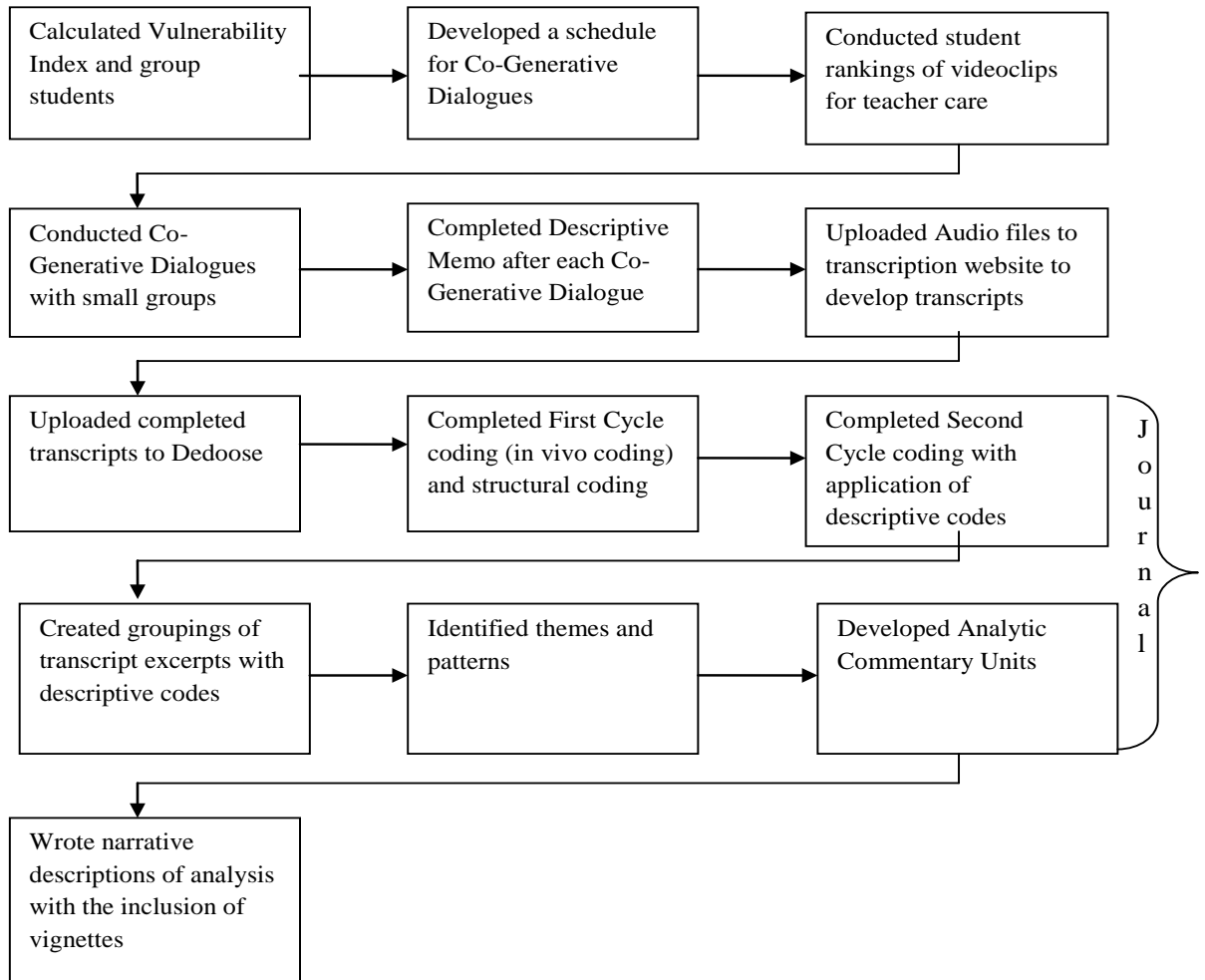


Figure 3. Data Collection and Procedures

3.4.1 Calculating a vulnerability index for subsampling

Because perceptions of teacher care are hypothesized to differ across levels of student vulnerability and to answer Research Question 2, a vulnerability index was developed as a new variable from data as found in student school records and from a student survey administered in January 2013. This student vulnerability index variable allowed me to develop analytic contrast cases prior to the facilitation of the co-generative dialogues. In other words, student vulnerability index scores structured the sampling and grouping of student study participants for the co-generative dialogues. Students' vulnerability index score were used to develop two groups of students from each participating classroom. The top and bottom quartiles of vulnerability were calculated for each classroom based upon student vulnerability index scores. For each classroom, one group of co-generative dialogue participants consisted of 4-6 high vulnerability students and one group of co-generative dialogue participants consisted of 4-6 low vulnerability students. Participating students and their teachers were blinded to this sampling strategy.

This was developed using two sources of quantitative data—school records and survey data. See Table 3 for details of the variables used in the development of the vulnerability index.

Table 3. Details of the data to Create the Vulnerability Index

Variable name	Item details	Variable details	Source
EXCUR1	At least once a week, I play sports on a team outside of school.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	The Youth Activity Survey, 4-H
EXCUR2	At least once a week I participate in a youth program like the YMCA or Big Brothers Big Sisters.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	The Youth Activity Survey, 4-H
EXCUR3	At least once a week, I attend church, synagogue, or temple.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	The Youth Activity Survey, 4-H
PEERS1	People at this school are friendly to me.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale
PEERS2	Other students here like me the way I am.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale
PEERS3	I can really be myself at this school	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale
CSC1	I turn to my caregiver for comfort and support when I am upset.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	Adapted from Network of Relationships Inventory
CSC2	My caregiver encourages me to pursue my goals.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	Adapted from Network of Relationships Inventory
CSC3	I often go to enjoyable places and have fun with my caregiver.	Continuous; 1 not at all - 5 very	Adapted from Network of Relationships Inventory
LUN	Free and reduced lunch status	Categorical; 0=Free, 1=Reduced, 2=No	School records
SPEC	Special education classification	Categorical; 0=Yes, 1=No	School records
ABST	Absenteeism rate over the first half of school year	Categorical; 0=high, 1=mid, 2=low	School records

To combine these variables into a score, I uploaded data into SPSS statistical software for principal components analysis (PCA). This statistical technique allowed me to combine the variables into a single vulnerability index score. The index score resulted in the creation of a new variable, Student Vulnerability. In order to perform PCA in SPSS, I needed to transform my categorical variables into dummy variables. For the categorical variables, I created dummy variables (0,1) for the different levels. So, for free and reduced lunch program participation, a three -category variable, I created two binary variables where a student were scored either 0 1, 1 0, or 0 0 to reflect the three possible values—free lunch, reduced lunch or no participation. PCA gave me a vulnerability index score for each student, listed as the factor or PC score in the SPSS output. An initial review of the quantitative data revealed that less than about five percent of the data is missing. I handled missing data by using listwise deletion.

3.4.2 Co-generative dialogues

For this exploratory study, I had access to video clips of pedagogical transactions from each of the sampled classrooms. These video clips were collected and identified as part of Tanner Wallace's *Establishing Cultures of Respect in Urban Schools: A Case Study of a High Performing Charter School System* study funded by the Department of Education's Dissemination and Replication grant. Tanner Wallace granted me access to this data for the purposes of my dissertation. My dissertation research has been included in this study as an independent validation process.

My ability to access this dataset enabled me to use these video clips of the participants' classrooms as elicitation devices. These minimally edited video clips of instructional practice allowed me to efficiently prompt early adolescents to discuss their perceptions of the pedagogical transactions captured in the video clips.

I first showed video clips to small groups in a sequential order. Students worked silently to initially rank video clips in the order that they felt represented teacher care the most to the least. After students watched the clips, they were given a rank order sheet (see Appendix A) to record their responses on an ordinal scale (Coaley, 2009). I then collected the responses. The ordinal scale gave me a precise measurement to gather information about the initial responses of the participants. I entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet and applied a RANK function to find out which clip was most representative of teacher care.

For my primary method of data collection, I used a technique called *co-generative dialogues* (see Appendix B) to capture participants' perspectives and their understandings of pedagogical transactions. The premise behind this technique was having a teacher and student discuss a shared experience (Tobin & Roth, 2006). This type of process allowed both teacher and student to think through a shared experience together, which illuminated new understandings of the phenomenon. Each participant had the opportunity to voice his or her interpretations or meaning making around a particular transaction. The process also may have given both teachers and students a clear understanding of each other's point of view. According to LaVan and Beers (2005), co-generative dialogues are "a catalyst for improving the learning environment because they create structures in which participants have a voice in articulating and explaining personal experience" (p. 326). For the purposes of my study, co-generative dialogues involved teachers

and a group of their students viewing short video clips of unedited instructional and classroom activities and engaging in a conversation about them.

Participants in each co-generative dialogue included the teacher and some of her students. At the beginning of the process, I used a set of 4 probing questions to assist students in starting the dialogue. I also showed the questions on a poster so that students could refer to them during the co-generative dialogues. I showed each group a set of 6 salient video clips that were approximately 30 seconds to two minutes in length. I showed the 6 video clips to each group in a specific sequential order to provide consistency. During the facilitation of the co-generative dialogues, I tried to make sure all participants had an opportunity to participate and to clarify participant interpretations and perspectives. I told the participants to make sure that everyone had a turn to talk. I encouraged students to identify and discuss issues that were meaningful to them with the group. I also encouraged the participants to request that the videotape be stopped at any point during the viewing so that they could provide their interpretations of what was significant about the transaction or process depicted in the videotape sequence.

To encourage an informal, sharing atmosphere these co-generative dialogues occurred during lunch period for approximately 45 minutes. These dialogues were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were uploaded into Dedoose, an online qualitative software program, for qualitative analyses.

At the completion of each co-generative dialogue, I wrote a descriptive memo (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) to summarize my initial thoughts and insights in relation to student perceptions and the conversations during the co-generative dialogues. These memos informed my coding during data analyses. Memos allowed me to gather theoretical insights and make

connections in written form (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). The memos helped to bring clarity to potential themes and patterns and also supported connections made from the transcripts.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

As noted earlier, I used emergent theorizing as my primary data analyses strategy. The transcripts generated during the co-generative dialogues were my primary source of data. The use of the co-generative dialogues provided the source material for me to explore student perceptions and meaning-making through the thoughts, emotions, and feelings generated during the shared experience of viewing the minimally edited video clips of pedagogical transactions (LaVan & Beers, 2005).

At the completion of each co-generative dialogue, I uploaded the digital audio file on a secure online transcription service website for a verbatim transcription. A transcriber generated a transcript for each file. Transcribers tracked speakers to the best of their ability. Once a verbatim transcript was developed, I uploaded the transcriptions into Dedoose, an online data management and analyses software.

In my data analyses, my primary goal was to develop an evidence-based reason for accepting or rejecting my hypotheses. In the sections below, I state my hypotheses in relation to each research question.

RQ1: What are the characteristics of pedagogical transactions between teacher and student that early adolescents interpret as demonstrations of "teacher care"?

In regards to Research Question 1 (RQ1), I hypothesized that students most likely would perceive pedagogical transactions as caring when teachers provided *feedback* in the form of modeling or provided a student with targeted, individualized support. I arrived at the following sub-hypotheses statements based on my review and understanding of the current fund of knowledge in my literature review. It is important to note, the sub-hypotheses statements are working ideas, but not specifically tested within the data collected.

Sub-hypotheses statements:

1. When teachers show they know something about a student's interest, students will feel like a partner in the learning experience.
2. When positive, reciprocal dialogue occurs between student and teacher, students will feel their teacher is listening and cares about their thoughts and ideas.
3. Students will perceive quiet, subtle redirections as a positive transaction because they will feel the teacher respects how they feel in front of others.
4. When teachers give students choices in activities, students will feel like their teacher trusts them to make good choices inside the classroom environment.
5. When students receive positive, consistent feedback (written or oral), they will feel their teacher cares about how they perform in school.
6. When teachers give a rationale (or explicit purpose) behind what they are doing, students will feel encouraged to work hard.
7. When teachers engage students in consistent routines, students will feel the classroom is safe.

8. When teachers encourage students to work hard (verbally or through actions), students will feel they are supported by their teacher and want to do their best.
9. When teachers give students voice, students will feel they are a part of a learning community.
10. When teachers show students they understand through reciprocal dialogue, students will feel a sense of care and belonging.

RQ2: Are adolescent interpretations of pedagogical transactions consistent across student vulnerability levels?

In regards to Research Question 2 (RQ2), I hypothesized that students with high vulnerability levels would perceive pedagogical transactions associated with *attunement* as highly representative of teacher care. The literature clearly outlined that in order for students to feel successful at school, they must connect with at least one adult (Libbey, 2004). Moreover, students with low vulnerability levels would perceive pedagogical transactions connected with *high expectations* as highly representative of teacher care.

Data analyses of transcripts occurred through several rounds of coding using a process described by Saldaña (2008) as First and Second Cycle coding. First Cycle coding consisted of both *in vivo coding*, or searching for key words or short phrases spoken by study participants during the small group discussions and *structural coding*. During *in vivo coding* participant phrases, I identified symbolically captured salient aspects of participants' meaning-making (Saldaña, 2008). These *in vivo* codes informed a Second Cycle coding process. Starting with *in vivo coding* in First Cycle coding was a strategic decision to attend, first and foremost, to the lived experiences of participants while minimizing the application of externally-generated perspectives (i.e., meaningful teacher practices derived from reviewing the literature). To link

the discussion of the video clips to the clips themselves, I used structural codes. I also utilized video clip identifiers to code portions of the transcripts. For example, in the co-generative dialogues happening in Mrs. Ball's classroom ($n = 2$) any discussion that was in reference to Video clip Two, I coded as Ball2. I used these codes across the two separate transcripts developed from the two different co-generative dialogues that occurred.

I applied a Second Cycle coding process to the following descriptive codes to the transcript text: high expectations, attunement, trust, dialogue, autonomy support, feedback, or other. I outlined each of these descriptive codes with subcategories to help identify characteristics of each.

After two rounds of coding, I created various groupings of transcript excerpts for further analyses. This process of identifying patterns and themes on the basis of my coding provided me with evidence to accept or reject my hypotheses.

First, I looked at the rankings that students made of the video clips. I pulled discussion text from all clips that strongly identified as demonstrations of teacher care (determined via the ranking data) and most weakly identified as teacher care, and I reviewed the teacher practice descriptive codes applied during Second Cycle coding. Within these excerpts, I attended to in vivo codes applied to these excerpts during First Cycle coding to understand the essence of participants' meaning making in relation to these kinds of teacher practices. Questions that guided this examination included, In what ways do participants talk about these kinds of teacher practices? What words or phrases are used within each category of teacher practice? I identified patterns and themes during the integrative process while looking across codes in the First and Second cycles. I compared and contrasted these themes across teacher care rankings in relation to my hypotheses statements.

Second, I separated the data set into two separate datasets. One dataset included the transcripts from the low vulnerability student groups ($n = 6$) and the second dataset included the transcripts from the high vulnerability students ($n = 6$). Using both First and Second Cycle coding, I identified patterns and themes within each dataset. I compared and contrasted these themes in relation to my hypothesis statement.

During this analytic process, I actively wrote in a researcher's journal, so that I could capture my thinking during this integrative process. Looking within these excerpts within the descriptive categories, I developed analytic-commentary units (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Analytic-commentary units furthered the analyses through the formal writing process. These units started to bring together disparate pieces of data to develop a more coherent representation of key themes. These units started with providing orienting information about the excerpt, the details of excerpts, and lastly the analytic significance of the excerpt. These units were the building blocks for the writing the findings, including accepting or rejecting my hypotheses. Finally, I wrote narrative descriptions of the findings to share the analysis of information. I utilized key excerpts in forms of vignettes to provide examples and representation of student perceptions that contributed to the theory constructed.

3.6 METHODS REFLECTION

The technique of using Co-generative dialogues as the primary source of data was pivotal in the learning process. This technique was noted by teachers and students across schools as a positive way to discuss what is happening in the classroom. Students in particular liked seeing

themselves along with classmates in the videos. They commented on specific actions both positive and negative that occurred in the videos. Students were very honest about how they felt and they provided specific information for a comprehensive look at each video clip. Some students stated that they remembered certain parts of the clips happening and identified new information that they had not noticed during the time of the transactions. Students were thoughtful in listening to each other and adding on new information to each other's comments. They respectfully agreed and disagreed about their thoughts on the video clips. At the end of the sessions, most students asked if they could participate in the process again.

Teacher participants stated that the co-generative dialogue process helped them to reflect on specific practices happening in the classroom. Teachers primarily gave input for clarification purposes if students did not remember what was happening in a specific part of the clip. I was surprised that teachers did not contribute more to the conversations. However, teachers noted that listening to their students talk about how they perceived transactions was helpful to gain greater insight about how students felt during transactional times. Some of the teachers asked for transcripts following the co-generative dialogues. The purpose was to re-read what students said and to utilize that information to improve practice.

The co-generative dialogue technique was a very enjoyable process to both teachers and students. The open dialogue proved to be beneficial to all participants involved. Both students and teachers appreciated having a voice. The teachers highly valued the input of their students and respected their opinions. This type of process could lead to possible new models for teacher development. Student voice should be a valued part of teacher development and could lead to improved teaching and learning practices.

4.0 FINDINGS

The follow section discusses the findings from student conversations during the Co-Generative Dialogues and submissions of Rank Order Findings. I utilized a series of short video clips to gather adolescent perceptions of *teacher care*. The themes that emerged from the data aligned with some of the elements of the suggested pedagogical transactions; moreover, early adolescent responses provided a much deeper look at the components with added insight on what comprises a meaningful transaction between teacher and student that genuinely represents *teacher care*.

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSACTIONS

Table 3 depicts the video clips utilized during the Co-Generative Dialogues. A detailed explanation of each clip is located in Appendix E.

Table 4. Video Clip Collection

Video Clip	Teacher	Pedagogical Transaction
IS8_hcs_6	Ball	High Expectations
IS9_hcs_5	Ball	Trust
IS10_jdw_4	Ball	Attunement
IS9_jdw_9	Ball	Dialogue
IS9_hcs_2	Ball	Autonomy Support
IS8_tw_6	Ball	Random
IS10_tw_1	Cole	Dialogue
IS9_tw_2	Cole	Random
IS8_jdw_1	Cole	High Expectations
IS8_hcs_1	Cole	Attunement
IS8_hcs_6	Cole	Trust
IS9_hcs_8	Cole	Autonomy Support
IS9_hcs_4	Cole	Feedback
IS8_jdw_2	Ellis	Feedback
IS10_tw_3	Ellis	Attunement
IS8_hcs_18	Ellis	Trust
IS10_tw_6	Ellis	Dialogue
IS8_hcs_7	Ellis	Autonomy Support
IS8_hcs_4	Ellis	Random
IS9_hcs_1	Drake	High Expectations
IS8_hcs_6	Drake	Attunement
IS8_hcs_2	Drake	Trust

Table 3 (continued).

IS10_hcs_1	Drake	Random
IS10_tw_2	Drake	Feedback
IS10_hcs_10	Drake	Autonomy Support
IS9_hcs_1	Fleming	Autonomy Support
IS8_jdw_1	Fleming	Attunement
IS8_jdw_3	Fleming	Dialogue
IS9_tw_5	Fleming	Feedback
IS10_tw_5	Fleming	Random
IS9_tw_4	Fleming	High Expectations
IS10_hcs_3	Adams	High Expectations
IS10_jdw_2	Adams	Attunement
IS10_hcs_1	Adams	Feedback
IS10_hcs_5	Adams	Autonomy Support
IS9_tw_1	Adams	Dialogue
IS10_tw_1	Adams	Random

4.1.1 High expectations clips

One of the primary findings of this study was that students recognized high expectations as a means of teacher care. Moreover, students appeared to understand the significance behind the transactions that transpired between teachers and students that fostered an environment of care and respect. High expectations set by the teacher often result in better behavioral performance and actions which foster teacher-student relationships (Muir, 2008). In terms of high and low

vulnerability level students, many of the results were comparable. Overall, students noted three main types of transactions that demonstrated ways they perceived as teacher care: a) explicit directions, b) signal words, and c) routines to stay on task. The following depicts an example of what a student deemed as important:

She's giving instructions on what we're supposed to do...She wants us to do the correct thing whenever we're working on something.

Multiple students including both high and low vulnerability levels stressed similar feelings and included phrases such as “giving instructions so we know what to do,” “telling us expectations so that we are clear on what to do in centers,” and “giving detailed instructions so we know what we are doing.” All of the examples point to the value that students placed on knowing what to do, when, and why. Although each phrased comments in slightly different ways, they all recognized the importance of explicit instructions by the teacher. After watching a video clip of high expectations, a student told a story outlining how the teacher taught vocabulary. From this student's perception, the story he told illustrated why the teacher pushed the students to listen as she provided explicit instruction on the importance of learning vocabulary. He indicated that when the teacher is talking, it is important to pay close attention and not to miss what she is saying. He followed up his response by stating that the teacher is “pushing students to do their best so that when they move on to the next grade level, they have the knowledge they need to be successful.” In another example a student described the teacher giving directions in the following way:

Ms. Adams was telling us like the people that – that technology center first should get the computers first, and then if you're done with all your center work, you should wait and see if there are iPads or computers left for the can-do.

This was significant for the student because he felt that he knew what his teacher expected him to do throughout the entire time block. The expectations kept him on track so that he could finish all of his work in a timely manner as well as have choice once finished.

Students also described ways beyond the typical routine of the teacher standing in front of the classroom in which she provided instructions. Other artifacts such as the teacher placing instructions on a website so the students could access the information to complete their assignments, writing on the board to reinforce what has been said, and the teacher giving explicit instructions in small groups and one-on-one were unique ways students identified as important to understanding what needed to be accomplished.

There was one unusual example of when a group of students described the teacher giving instructions about turning in homework. The students appeared to have mixed feelings about why the teacher told the students daily to turn in their homework. Although the students mentioned an incentive, there did not appear to be a clear motivation to do what the teacher was asking.

In all of the other examples, the students indicated that listening to the teacher and paying attention to what she said would help them now and in the future. Students specified when teachers gave purposeful directions, there was less confusion and more time on task. Moreover, teachers were being so explicit because they wanted students to get good grades and do their best.

Students mentioned signal words as clear indicators of high expectations which represented teacher care. Students utilized terms such as “track me,” “SLANT,” “smart spot,” and “can and must do’s.” When students heard these terms, they indicated that they were to follow a specific set of directions or routine. One student gave an example of when the teacher

needed to get the attention of all students and she said, “track me.” After probing for more information on the significance of this term, he shared that this meant that all students were to be at a level zero with their eyes on the teacher. When the facilitator asked why this was important, the student emphasized that students need to listen to what the teacher says in order to know what to do for centers. Another student in the same group added that the teacher utilized this term often and it saved time because the students were able to focus their attention quickly.

In a different group, students mentioned how their teacher utilized finding a “smart spot” as a significant way to show expectations in the class. When probing to find out why, one student mentioned, “Our teacher tells us to find a smart spot when we are going to read.” When asked the question of why, she emphasized how it helped students stay on task and focused. She went on to express that students do not always make good choices. Through the explicitness of the teacher, students knew where to go and what they needed to accomplish. As Sewell (2011) suggested, clarity in directions is an important factor for high expectations. The students perceived explicit directions as a form of care because they indicated that their teacher wanted them to maximize their time and not to get into trouble. This type of clarity made students realize that the purpose behind the directions given supported their learning.

Other students discussed their routines of “can dos and must dos” as ways they are held accountable for their assignments. Students espoused that center routines included what they needed to do before they choose what they wanted to do was important. They described how their teachers expected them to complete certain tasks with added emphasis on expectations for good work. When asked what types of things their teachers did to hold them accountable, they specified finishing independent packets, checking work with a marker, and monitoring to make sure they remained on task. When probing for more information to better understand the type of

connections that students made in relation to teacher care and high expectations, students stressed that teachers wanted them to do their best and make good grades. They also shared that working hard gave them more opportunities to choose what they wanted to do, so managing time in centers was important.

Finally, a different group referred to the signal word of “SLANT.” This meant sit up, listen, ask questions, nod head, and track the teacher. Similar to the word “track me,” SLANT is a term used to get students’ attention and ensure they were on task. When students described this method, they declared the importance of staying on task and following teacher directions. One student described:

Pay attention and don’t do your own thing of what you’re doing, and do- eye contact, following directions, because sometimes you can just miss some things, and then you turn around, and then you forget what she says, and – or he or she forgets what he – they said.

Another student agreed and added that if the teacher was talking, it was important for students to listen and SLANT so that the teacher could solicit the attention of everyone.

Often when thinking about consistent routines, students cited center activities. They described teacher expectations for working independently, with partners, and in small groups. According to the participants, teachers expected them to go to their centers and work following explicit expectations. Similar to above, students mentioned “smart spot” as an important aspect of knowing where to go. Students easily related to the common language and felt confident about the routines because they could organize quickly and follow the expectations of the teacher. Students in other groups also emphasized the importance of being organized and knowing when to ask for help. Although said slightly differently, one student expressed that when students go to

centers and do not know what to accomplish, they have not listened closely to the teacher. This wasted the time of the entire class.

In one class in particular, students did not connect high expectations with their routines. Rather than giving positive examples, the students focused more on the inconsistent behaviors of other students. Although they could state the routines, the language utilized indicated that the routines were not enforced or followed consistently. Interestingly, they mentioned how much their teacher cared and the fact that they were upset because not all students followed the expectations set. This appeared to be different from how other students described high expectations in relation to teacher care.

One significant difference between high and low vulnerability students was confidence. Students with high vulnerability levels specified that although teachers gave directions one time, they were there to answer questions even though they had given directions at the beginning of the lessons. Whereas, students with low vulnerability levels mentioned that teachers gave such explicit directions because they wanted students to do the right thing the first time. The following is one example that supports the feelings of low vulnerability students:

Because it's like whenever you're working by yourself you're not going to have, like somebody to help you with something. You've got to figure it out for yourself. And it's good to just listen to the instructions first and then go on and work on it.

Connections with teacher support in conjunction with the expectations set appeared to be a strong indicator of how students with high vulnerability levels perceived teacher care. When students felt support was available, they took advantage of the assistance of teachers. This also may be a potential way to strengthen current relationships and build bonds within the learning

community. Pedagogical transactions built over time helps to further develop the relationship between teacher and student.

Patterns within specific classrooms and across classrooms existed within the area of high expectations. Themes such as explicit instructions, signal words, and clear routines existed in comments by students of low and high vulnerability levels. The rituals and the values established in the classroom are lived through the day to day interactions that occur (Deal, 1990; Sewell, 2011; Schein, 1985). The students notably recognized the purposeful transactions that teachers did on a consistent basis in order to provide structure and on task behaviors. Students overwhelmingly perceived these transactions as relevant to teacher care.

4.1.2 Attunement clips

The qualitative data from the co-generative dialogues revealed that in clips of teacher attunement, students perceived teacher care based upon encouraging comments and the provision of choice. I selected and labeled the clip as attunement—a specific characterizing feature of “teacher care” based upon prior empirical research and theory. Based on the empirical literature, attunement requires teachers to take in a situation and adapt to it based on the individual needs of the student (MacIntire-Latta, 2004). First, analyses explored whether or not students felt supported by their teachers, and if they did their best when teachers exhibited attunement. Students with both high and low vulnerability levels perceived that within attunement pedagogical transactions that their teachers encouraged them to work hard (verbally or through actions). The majority of students noticed and identified when teachers made

encouraging comments and utilized key phrases such as “try it,” “I know you can do this,” or “push you to do better.” For example, one student noted:

If you're feeling nervous about something in math, like you think "I'm not gonna be able to do this," what would I say to you if you said "I can't do this"? The teacher would say, “Try hard and pay attention.”

The student went on to describe how she felt her teacher wanted her to try hard because she wanted to see if she could do it on her own. When I probed for more information, the student explained that the teacher wanted students to do their best because she wanted them to get good grades and be prepared as they moved into rising grades. Similarly, another student explained that her teacher encouraged students to do their best although it may seem as the student described, she is “on their back” to get something done. Students perceived this gentle push as a means of teacher help and support. Coupled with the feeling of teachers’ willful approaches to moving students forward in the learning process, students perceived this idea of an act of encouragement as one of care rather than a negative interaction. As stated by one participant, “she really wants us to succeed...It is better to have a teacher who cares about the kids instead of having a teacher who just does their job and goes home and does whatever.”

Based on student comments, another theme related to attunement that emerged was the provision of choices. As Harvey (2011) noted, when students feel that they have a sense of freedom through opportunities such as exploration or active engagement, they are more likely to feel like they are in an environment that is positive and one in which there are strong connections between teacher and student. As expected, students felt that freedom to make choices in their classroom empowered them. Students articulated positive feelings in relation to teacher care when their teachers gave them choices to explore and work independently in the classroom. One student illustrated that “students have to show the teacher that they can work by themselves.”

Students looked at choice as a means of opportunity. Some students suggested that choice was something earned and removed from students when they could not handle working independently or in small groups.

One participant described choices in terms of types of books or projects. He concluded that choices given helped him to learn to like reading. He made a clear connection that his teacher purposefully gave choice to help students “like books and things like that.” He extended his explanation by explaining that his teacher knows what “each individual student likes” and that she chose resources for the class to help build student interest. This data suggested that teachers attuned to student interest can use that knowledge to demonstrate care about what students like. Moreover, the data captured that student interest is most likely valued and an important component of creating a culture of dignity in the classroom.

Students with high vulnerability levels revealed that teachers know when students may be tempted to make a poor decision on their own so they are preventative by giving certain individuals less of a choice in particular activities. In addition, less choice was noted by students with higher vulnerability levels and was not mentioned by those identified as low vulnerability. As explained by some students, when teachers know students well and can anticipate how they will act in certain situations, they help them make focused decisions on where or how they will participate in particular activities. For example, one student provided a detailed explanation of why his teacher chose to have him sit in the back of the classroom. He explained: “My teacher cares about me 'cause she keeps me in the back where there's no trouble. And, like, and she keeps me in the back of the room so I don't get in trouble.” He indicated that in previous activities, he had a habit of arguing with other students and his teacher knew that this may impact his ability to get things done. He recognized that his teacher supported him; therefore, he stood by her

decision because it was in his best interest. When I raised the question, “Did this make you feel different from other students?” He suggested that it made him feel good because his teacher cared about his success.

Similarly, another participant commented on how her teacher made students find a “smart spot” in the room. She revealed that students do not always make good choices independently, but the teacher knew students in the classroom well and helped guide them to do what was in their best interest.

Although a transaction as such may seem minimal, early adolescents perceived it as a measure of care. Relationships play a vital role in the outcome of a transaction. When students felt like teachers knew them as individuals, they tended to be more receptive to the decisions made and perceived them to be in their best interest. Given the reactions of the students particularly those with high vulnerability levels, the idea of having the ability to make choices is important. Moreover, when choice is not an option in every situation, students understood why. This most often occurred when the teacher had a conversation with the student to explain the reasons behind the decisions made.

Importantly, the majority of students also made strong connections in relation to attunement with how teachers interacted with students during problem times. There were several instances in which students noted teachers taking the time to talk to individuals rather than making a public display of an issue. To describe further, one student carefully designated a situation when a student in the class was upset about working alone rather than with other students. To address the situation, the student noted the tone and body language of the teacher to share how the teacher treated the student with a culture of dignity. She explained that the teacher bent down to the student level and quietly whispered to the student careful not to embarrass her.

Other student comments supported the same theme. One student compared his previous school with his current classroom. The data captured that the student stated that “unlike other schools, when the kid has a problem, the teacher yells out loud of what’s happening.” Moreover, he pointed out that his current teacher speaks to individuals to “help remove them from a situation.” This finding aligns with the empirical research that described the importance of making students feel emotionally safe in the classroom (Yan, Harvey, & Evans, 2011). Moreover, transactions in the classroom conveyed messages driven by the teacher (Kansanen et al., 2000) and often led to students feeling supported or consequently a lack of care.

Other relevant examples by participants demonstrated that students took note when the actions between teacher and student showed a level of respect. In one case, a student articulated,

Like the way she’s talking to them, like they’re on the same level. And she has that bond and, like, she is not going to go – like after a class is over and tell another teacher, like your business. You can just talk to her when like you have a problem.

According to the student, this action represented respect and care. The bond described by the student signaled establishment of trust. Through transactions as such, the relationship may be strengthened giving students confidence that they reside in a safe and trusting environment.

Other students articulated similar connections as such, “Yeah, in a private conversation, not like, in front of the whole class, ‘cause I think some kids can get embarrassed sometimes if teachers do that” and “The teacher talks to the student individually and like, tells them, like, what should be done to help them, like better themselves or remove them from situations.” These common examples indicated that students felt they were significant because teachers cared about their well-being. Moreover, they connected these transactions with authentic experiences that were relevant to individuals in the classroom. Strikingly, although the interactions may not have

happened with the student who described them, that individual felt a connection because the classroom structure was as a community rather than an individual learning space.

Unlike other findings, there was a single case in which the teacher addressed a student openly in front of others rather than pulling him to the side. When a student walked across a set of chairs during a language arts lesson, the teacher addressed the situation publicly. Although this situation appeared to be an outlier from others, the students still supported the teacher's actions as one of care. One student detailed the situation as one in which the teacher addressed the student to "keep him safe." Given the established environment, the students' interpretations of the experience in their classroom led to the strong relationship built with their teacher. The interactions in the classroom served as evidence of intentionally designed structures that occurred within the context of the classroom on a regular basis.

Based on student comments, another theme that emerged within the context of attunement focused on teachers knowing how students were feeling. The following excerpt captured various ways in which teachers approached students because of how students were acting:

I think she knows how like our body language gets when we give up like and we sit down and lay our heads out. I think she like understands like oh, that person giving up so I should walk over – like I think that's, I think that's what she knows.

While other students perceived similar experiences, they expressed, "She's trying to be more connected with the student, trying to help make them feel better and ___ making them stand out in the crowd," "She'll always give somebody a chance and she cares and, like, wanted to know why they were upset and help them move on so they could finish their work."

Students characterized these transactions as vital to the classroom experience. They felt that the teacher-student relationship was an important part of the learning environment. Worth noting, although students recognized the importance of the transactions, they could not fully describe why they were so important to the learning experience. The analysis of the data revealed that students lacked certainty of the purpose for the teacher interactions. Although students perceived these transactions as positive, it raised the question of whether students and teachers have a shared understanding of the critical nature of teachers explaining the purpose behind their interactions.

Finally, one student remarked:

Everybody in our classroom feels welcome, like because when we were like from the beginning of the year the teachers always taught us to be no matter how you are or who you are or like if you are in like certain things that you should always accept somebody for who they are.

Although this comment did not fit into common strands of what other students identified as significant, it demonstrated that the student felt like the teacher was accepting of students regardless of demographic information. This acceptance led the student to feel like a part of the learning community. Hence, this student suggested that her feelings related positively to her overall experience in the classroom. The data captured here, although not common, exemplified the importance of students' feeling connected within the walls of the classroom. This positively aligns with Klem and Connell's (2004) research that teachers have a crucial role in making students feel like a part of the learning community. Therefore, perhaps when attuned to student needs, reciprocal transactions between teacher and student are more likely to occur.

4.1.3 Trust clips

According to student comments elicited from the video clips of trust, students recognized that teachers were attentive and receptive to their needs. Noted from many of the actions by teachers, students with low vulnerability levels perceived teacher care based on autonomy and empowerment through the recognition of individualized student needs. Similarly students with high vulnerability levels felt autonomy was vital to teacher care, but those students also recognized teacher care as a result of knowing how students were feeling and what they specifically needed to be successful learners.

Students with low vulnerability levels emphasized the importance of autonomy in their classroom. With autonomy came a feeling of empowerment. Most classrooms were set up with a structure for students to work in small groups and within those small groups students felt that they were given leeway to try things on their own without criticism. One student shared:

First she (the teacher) would give you a chance to try it, and if you tried it and you still didn't know it, then that's when she would come over and help you.

Other students agreed and added that they valued having opportunities to try something on their own. Although tasks were sometimes difficult, students felt they could ask the teacher questions if they were struggling. As one student communicated, "If we needed help, got help." From student comments, they felt confident that they could ask teachers questions at any point and not feel embarrassed about what they needed. In addition, students felt that teachers gave them autonomy to ask other students questions. Students felt a level of comfort when they could rely on a partner or check in with someone else. Students are more likely to feel safe in asking for assistance from others when trust is evident. In order for this to happen, the right structures must

be in place. From student perceptions, centers or small group activities were important because it gave them time to work on something independently, but also have an opportunity to freely ask someone for advice or support.

Other students indicated the most important aspect of the trust clips was the ability of teachers to recognize students had differences in the ways they learn. Moreover, when teachers gave personalized support, students felt empowered because they felt comfortable enough to approach learning in their own ways. One student described a writing lesson and shared:

She's talking about how everybody's writing is different and they should each try to find a way that they can write – like set up their prewriting so that it works for them and it's not so difficult, instead of doing, like, it inboxes or in a list, they could do it in a different way.

Other students agreed on the importance of teachers trusting them to work in a way that they felt relaxed and confident in what they were doing. Another student gave the following example:

She gives us a chance to talk about the work on our own. Like, she doesn't tell us that we have to do this one thing. She let us try and figure it out a different way. And if it's a way that she didn't think we could do it, she'd probably be, like impressed with what we're able to do, instead of giving us one way to do.

Others focused on the belief that they felt they were “capable” of completing a task. From comments shared, the students were motivated by how much teachers trusted them to do a good a job. Noted by one student:

Whenever she pushes us to do good things, it's like you know that she cares and you know that's better that we just do it because maybe like if you're learning something new, like a good topic and it's like interesting learning about it, you might become interested in it. And she's (the teacher) pushing you to do more... You could go farther in life if you just put in a little more effort.

Therefore, within this type of environment, as one student stressed, “it is empowerment because it's like going to pay off because it's like we're not going to school for nothing. It's like

something is going to come out of what we do here.” The trust established through teacher-student transactions most likely helped students to believe in their abilities to achieve; therefore, they worked hard because through the trusting relationship established, they felt supported as individuals to accomplish things in ways they felt comfortable. Moreover, motivation to try new things was more likely.

Students with high vulnerability levels primarily perceived clips of trust from the standpoint of the ways in which teachers noticed and supported them as individuals. Many students commented on times when teachers came over to “see what was wrong” or “to see how a person was feeling.” It was important to students to know that their teachers cared for them as individuals and about how they were emotionally feeling. One student shared, “she knows how that person is feeling because like they’re not participating, asking questions either to her or the group.” Other students shared similar experiences by detailing specific examples of stories of how teachers noticed when students were not acting themselves. In one example, Javon shared a story about a student getting mad and throwing a pencil out of frustration. His recollection of how the teacher handled the situation was how she walked over to the student and asked him what was wrong. He indicated the importance of this transaction as a means of teacher care because he felt the teacher took the time to talk to Jamere individually and provided him with help and support to re-engage him in the lesson.

Other students talked about clips of trust from the perspective of independence within the classroom. They felt that when teachers gave autonomy to work independently on a project or task, they trusted students to try it on their own. Very similar to students with low vulnerability levels, students with high vulnerability levels felt empowered through autonomy within the classroom. As one student expressed, “We get freedom. Like, she gives directions and then we

can talk about the topic instead of, like, being quiet and not talking to nobody.” When pressed for more details, he indicated that the freedom to talk about a project with others was important because it made the lesson interactive. It appeared to give him a sense of pride in what he was doing. Knowing that the teacher trusted students to work through a task made students feel like they could grapple through a process and not feel like everything had to be perfect. As one student described, “she encourages us.” With the establishment of a trusting environment, members of a team or learning community feel they can share with others and take risks (Cardoso et. al, 2007). In these examples, students felt like they could take a risk and the teachers would be there to support and guide them through the process.

Although there were many similarities in the findings between students with high and low vulnerability levels based on student comments from the trust clips, the ways in which students with high vulnerability levels described teacher actions were different. In both cases, autonomy was important, but students with high vulnerability levels defined actions such as how teachers addressed students through subtle actions of walking over to a student to see how they were feeling or encourage them to get back on track if they were frustrated. Perhaps students with higher vulnerability levels were more aware of their individual needs and in order to feel safe, trust is a vital factor. Knowing that teachers care was most likely highly valued because students felt safe enough to try new things and take risks without feeling like they may fail.

4.1.4 Dialogue clips

Video clips of dialogue demonstrated that students perceived teacher care to be based upon personalization of conversations, teacher questioning, and tone of the teacher. Dialogue as characterized by the literature emphasized the importance of personalization as critical in nature for reciprocal interactions to occur (Hargreaves, 1998).

Students with low vulnerability levels described clips surrounding dialogue as opportunities between teacher and students to express themselves through sharing personal information and experiences. Many students felt confident that teachers would listen and respond through conversation when students felt anxious about learning new activities. For example, one student shared, “I don’t think I am gonna like algebra. My sister says it’s really hard.” Once this student expressed his fears, other students joined in with similar feelings. The teacher recognized that this as an opportunity not only to address a single student, but to have a conversation with the entire class. Through a series of questions and back and forth dialogue, the teacher dispelled the fears of the students making them feel a level of comfort. Instead of moving forward with the scheduled lesson, she took an opportunity to enhance the learning experience through a personalized transaction.

In another classroom, a student described a unique experience with a classroom project that included working in groups to gather facts about important people. The student’s perception of his experience demonstrated the class sitting in a circle and the teacher writing the responses of students on a whiteboard. The student indicated that this was an easy lesson to talk about because of his and other classmates’ interests in the topic. Given that the teacher chose something interesting, students felt that they could ask and answer questions from teacher to

student as well as from student to student. Others agreed they felt a level of comfort because they could draw from their personal experiences and knowledge about the topic. Conversely, one student described an instance when his teacher chose a book for the classroom instead of giving choice for the book. He expressed that “It wasn’t a good day at all” and shared that the students did not follow the rules because of boredom and difficulty connecting to the experience. According to student responses, personal experiences, connections, and background knowledge contributed to the quality and depth of dialogue that happened in class. Students felt they could contribute more when the topic was interesting or personalized. Moreover, dialogue was easier when students felt confident enough to draw information from their banks of knowledge.

Students identified types of activities as important indicators of teacher care. For example, in some cases, with teacher questioning at the forefront, students related to whole group dialogue. Students felt that when teachers asked a series of questions, they had opportunities to respond to the teacher and to each other. Students perceived teacher care when they could express an opinion or voice a comment. For example, one student shared, “I like how she questions students and makes them think.” Another student added on to say:

She’s kinda testing what you know, cause it’s like say some students don’t really want to speak up because like they might be afraid that people will think they’re like not smart enough to like ask a question. So it’s kinda like if the teacher were to ask if you agree or disagree, then you get kinda calm – in your comfort zone and you’re like able to like say what you think after she questions and explains most of it.

Agreeing with what this student explained, another student added that when the teacher asked questions, she allowed students an opportunity to reply and try to make sense of the topic.

From another student’s perspective, the opportunity to dialogue in different types of settings made him feel comfortable. He expressed that he had a hard time participating in whole

group activities. When his teacher gave him opportunities to work in small groups, he could do so more freely. He shared:

If we're in a smaller group, I'll discuss – like I'm in a group with Abby in *Scorch Trials* now. And I'll talk then because I actually like the book too, but I just don't like big groups.

Other students commented with phrases as such, “I just don't like talking whenever there's a lot of people around” and “I hate to be in circles.”

Lastly for students with low vulnerability levels, tone and proximity of the teacher mattered. When students exited into small groups, they had opportunities to dialogue. They noted times when teachers came over to dialogue and have personal conversations to support students. The students characterized these times with comments such as, “the teacher was trying to get her point and talked about how we add instead of adding the zero” and “if I am having a hard time with something...she will try to explain it in different ways that she can.” One student also stated, “I liked how respectful she was at the board.” Noticing the tone of the teacher made the student want to focus on what the teacher was doing and saying.

Some students appeared to be quite comfortable with dialoguing as a whole, while others felt more comfortable in a smaller group setting. Opportunities seemed to be available to make students feel comfortable in different types of settings. Moreover, one common strand that held steady across schools was the ways that teachers questioned students to increase participation in relation to dialogue. While questioning, the students noted how teachers phrased questions. Moreover, when students were apprehensive, the types of questions, particularly those which captured interest, drew attention. Finally, when the tone of the teacher was calm, students were more likely to participate because they felt comfortable thus increasing the possibilities of reciprocal interactions.

Students with high vulnerability levels seemed somewhat similar to those with low vulnerability levels in relation to the clips of dialogue. They described personalized conversations through types of activities and teacher questioning as important indicators. Conversely, students with low vulnerability levels did not mention tone or proximity as an indicator of teacher care.

Students expressed their level of comfort when teachers helped them feel at ease with a new topic. Through whole group conversation about the start of algebra, several students pinpointed their personalized experience indicating their fear of this new topic. One student revisited the previous unit of fractions sharing his fear of when the class first began and talked about how over time, he felt more comfortable because the teacher supported the class by helping them learn the process. His experience captured the types of conversations that helped students along the way. For example, he shared,

Ms. Fleming would play a game – we play Jeopardy, and we, we do activities, and there are different kinds of thing you do, like adding fractions, mixed fractions, exponent, order of operations, division and multiplication, and things like that.

Another student added, “When we are having a hard time with something and we still don’t get it, she will try to explain it in different ways.” In another class, students talked about their experiences with the teacher during a science experiment. As the class had an opportunity to engage in a tasting experiment, students described the dialogue between teacher and students and student to student. The arrangement of the activity allowed students to freely dialogue about the subject learned. The students perceived this as a comfortable experience that they could think aloud and share their thoughts and reactions to tasting different types of foods and liquids.

In relation to teacher questioning during a whole group dialogue, students perceived their experience as positive because everyone had a voice. One student captured his experience by describing a whole group conversation about a book that the class was reading as such:

We were having a conversation and, like we could say whatever-well, whatever we want about whatever the acronym is, or what we think an acronym is instead of getting____. And we got a chance to talk and be engaged.

Other students expressed similar feelings through describing how students added on opinions to a single question. One student shared, “So it was like everybody was adding what they thought, like, to get the same answer.” Importantly students appeared to understand that teachers wanted to hear their thoughts. For example, one student shared:

Like an open ended question and answer type. Like you got to share your opinions about what you thought the word meant in the book. And the teacher really wanted to hear what you thought. She wasn’t just like, “Yeah, that’s wrong. No.”

As stated in the empirical literature, when students have a voice, they feel empowered fostering a sense of community and care (Noddings, 2005). In another class, students utilized phrases such as “she does that (questioning) actually like opening our minds up a little bit” and “she helps them understand why that person did what they did to solve the problem.” Noticing that the teacher had a purpose behind her questioning such as getting the group to get more involved was an interesting finding which only students with high vulnerability levels noted. The following served as another prominent example:

I like how she asked that question, then she explained – then she explained what she meant by the question, then she took another question from the other kid.

Other students agreed with the response adding that when students contributed by stating their opinions, they felt more engaged in the class. One student shared:

The other thing about the questioning is we all get to say our own opinion because she waits 'till we're done asking questions and we – until – and when we're done saying comments.

Similarly another student from a different classroom noted his experience with whole group dialogue during a math lesson. He stated:

She (the teacher) really helps us because on the one part where she says she was gonna ask that question, like she makes the conversations like more interesting because instead of just the students asking questions, she asks the questions and it also gives like to students, um like something challenging to really do. So if we ever get like in life situations, like we'll be able to actually answer it and solve it.

Given the student responses, it appeared that the students not only valued the opportunity to voice their opinions, but understood that dialogue contributed to an authentic learning experience. Therefore, the ways that teachers set the stage for learning through questioning gave students opportunities to actively engage in conversation. Student felt teachers valued their opinions, therefore, they felt a part of the classroom community. When students felt connected and serve as active contributors to the pedagogical transactions that occur, they are more likely to feel connected to the classroom and a sense of belonging (Noddings, 2005).

Students with low and high vulnerability levels overall perceived teacher care in relation to dialogue as similar. The students in and across classrooms felt that teacher care was represented through personalized conversations which captured students' interest as well as the types of activities in which students engaged. One difference that students with low vulnerability levels noted was the ability to engage in dialogue in comfortable settings such as in partners or small groups. Students with high vulnerability levels primarily discussed their experiences within whole group dialogue. However, no matter the setting, students felt empowered because they had a voice and felt their opinions mattered. Students across both levels

recognized that teachers cared by the opportunities given to freely speak and add to what others were saying. Moreover, students felt comfortable in the environments and appreciated the personalized ways that teachers took a topic that was less comfortable and helped them understand that over time, students would gain comfort.

Students perceived the types of questions teachers asked as relevant and a way to get students more involved. They also perceived that questions led to students adding on to each other's statements and/or comments making the dialogue more engaging for the entire class. It appeared that students felt safe to say what they were thinking and that often their teachers took what a student had to say and utilized within the conversation.

4.1.5 Autonomy support clips

Findings from autonomy support clips recognized this component as an important factor related to teacher care. Students' perceptions of how teachers guide them may promote feelings of positive experiences in the classroom environment. Klem and Connell (2004) suggested that feeling supported in the classroom promotes a caring environment and makes students feel connected to the larger classroom community.

Participants in the study identified as low vulnerability perceived teacher support in three important ways. First, students in the sample identified ways in which teachers set the stage for learning. Significant across student comments were instances of teachers checking in with students, explaining, or modeling important information. For instance, students described the ways that their teachers checked in on students to see if they were on task. For example:

My teacher is scanning the room to make sure everybody's on task. To make sure everybody's doing their work and just waiting for like – not just waiting until she goes and, like, does it herself. Cause she'll come around and check our work and she'll, like she'll do it on the board for everybody to see, like the different things we did.

She supports us, like, she give us, like a certain thing. And she's not standing in one spot, like, yelling, "You've got to do this. You've got to do that." Like, she's talking, like, calmly and, like, telling us what we have to do and, like, is moving around like she's engaged. Like other teachers, they'll stand in one spot all day, or they'll be sitting down and, like, saying, "You've got to do this. You've got to do that." But she cares.

Therefore, students perceived the ways teachers supported them as meaningful. Students noticed the actions of the teachers, particularly the frequency of movement and the tone and proximity during instructional interactions. Similarly another student described the following example:

She kind of pulled a student back to the back of the classroom to have a conversation. She's like helping to try to fix the problem, and so, so he can maybe get back on task, and do what he's supposed to do.

When I probed for further information, the student explained that the teacher supported this student by making her feel comfortable so that she could refocus her attention on the task at hand. Other students utilized phrases such as "walking by with a marker to check on work" and "asking us to look at our notes." Participants noted these subtle actions as ways in which teachers kept them focused and on track. Participants also mentioned how easily it was to "get off track." The literature described subtle re-directions by teachers as a way to support students. Jones (1995) indicated that positive redirection is an explicit strategy to help students stay focused without feeling humiliated. Across all schools, participants felt that when teachers kept students engaged and on task, getting work done was much easier. Because teachers moved about the room and frequently checked in with students, students felt they were more likely to stay on task.

Another way in which students perceived teachers supporting them was through the instructional interaction of modeling. Often students felt frustrated when they could not figure out how to solve a problem or complete an assignment. Across grade levels, students with low vulnerability levels described how teachers modeled strategies such as ways to help students remember how to approach a problem. One student shared that his teacher used the strategy “Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally” which helped him to remember how to begin solving the problem.

Also significant across findings is when students felt that when teachers modeled they helped to motivate students to keep focused. For example, students described the following:

She was like giving the student instructions on how to do the assignment better and, like she was trying to get him to notice why he got certain types of questions wrong so he could be better – like so he could do better on the next assignment or next set of questions.

She’ll give you a chance to try it yourself and then she’ll come back around and explain what you did wrong, like if you’ve got more questions.

In comparison, one student described another class in which the teacher told students they were wrong and then the students shut down. After further probing, he shared that the approach of the teacher made a difference in how students reacted. Aligning with the research, the tone and approach of the teacher can change the outcome of the situation (Thijs, 2008). Furthermore, when students perceived teachers’ attempts to provide the support as negative, they were more likely to get off task.

Giving students clear explanations with support made students feel successful. One student gave this example:

She would like cross some problems out that she thinks are too hard, or she would, like, help – not, like give the answer, but she would help...explain what she needs help on and explain how.

This example was relevant in two ways. It demonstrated teacher support through the modification of work to support the student's needs, but also followed with an explanation of what needed to occur for the student to be successful. Similarly other students stressed the importance of explicit information needed by the teacher in order to understand what to do.

Across multiple grade levels, students mentioned teachers reiterating instructions in numerous ways to make sure that every student understood what to do. Interestingly, students felt confident that even with instructions, they could approach problems in different ways. For example, one student explained:

And I think she was also trying to get to the point that it could be explained in two different ways, because maybe Gina and China did it two different ways but it was important for them to realize that they could get the same, the same answer.

This appeared to make students feel like their teachers knew their ways of thinking and approaching tasks. Knowing that it is acceptable to solve a problem in more than one way and that teachers encouraged students to be creative provided students with the motivation necessary to stay on task and ways to tap into their own potential. According to Reeve (1998), when teachers relinquished control and encouraged students to follow their own agendas, they are intrinsically motivated to work hard because they feel supported by the teacher to pursue their own choices.

For students with high vulnerability levels, motivation was one of the most important factors that made students feel supported. The analysis of data revealed that many students felt like giving up during assignments because they lacked the understanding of what to do. During times of instructional interactions such as working independently or with a partner, students were able to gain confidence through the support of their teachers. One participant shared:

It was like he at the beginning when they first started talking he sort of like it sounded like and looked like on the video that he was ready to just like kind of give up and not worry about it, but then after she like talked it out with him you could tell he started to, um, understand it better and figure out the answer easier.

When the teacher reinforced the concept through simple conversation, the student regained confidence in his ability to approach the problem. Likewise, another student followed up by stating how the teacher supported the student and made him feel good about his answer. Other students characterized this specific video clip as important because of the teacher's explicit actions. Comments of the way in which the teacher addressed the student were significant because even though he lacked confidence, she did not embarrass him. One student specifically noted how the teacher bent down and talked quietly with the student.

Another example that highlighted the importance of autonomy support particularly with students with high vulnerability levels was the freedom for students to approach problems in multiple ways. Often students feel confined by the narrow constraints of approaching tasks in a single way. However, the findings in this study revealed that students felt supported and that their teacher cared when they had freedom to explore problems and tasks in various ways. For example, students exclaimed the following:

She gives us freedom to be creative. Because, like, we've all got, like, different talents, like writing. So she, like, gives us ways to, like, bring it out ourselves. She doesn't give us, like, specific things that we have to do. I mean, she does, but it's like we can go around it, like, we can put our own things into it.

Another student shared:

She's giving them directions on, like, how to start the essay by saying that there's just not one, like, way you can do it. Like, there wasn't a – you have to do it this way. She gave you options, like, how you could do the essay writing.

Focusing on opportunities given through small group and independent work, students felt that they could try new things without feeling like they were doing something wrong. Other examples included:

She's giving them directions on, like, how to start the essay by saying that there's just not one, like, way you can do it. Like, there wasn't a – you have to do it this way. She gave you options, like, how you could do the essay writing.

My teacher says that we – well, when she says that, like, it doesn't have to be perfect or anything, I think she's telling us to try our best, because – 'cause if – like, trying our best is, like, the best thing we – like, let's say we, like – like, how she says – well, what I'm trying to say is that she tells us to try our best in what we do. It doesn't have to be perfect, but if we try our best, that's what's important.

To other students with high vulnerability levels, teachers allowing them to manage their own time made them feel supported and cared for. One student revealed:

We have to stay workin' and just not talk a lot so we could get the work done, because we can't go back to the center work that day. If that – and if we don't finish our center work that will become a can-do to finish after we're done.

After further probing, this student shared that he was motivated to get his work done because he had choice in what he could do next. He revealed that his teacher had confidence in him to “get the job done.” Likewise, other students utilized phrases with “choice and freedom” as key indicators of teacher support. The structure and set up of the classrooms allowed students to easily access resources and tools for learning. Common across grade levels and schools, when students can interact with resources for activities, it helps teachers and students build bonds over time (Ball & Cohen, 1999). The findings revealed that students felt that they received more personalized experiences when they chose resources on their own because teachers had taught them how to utilize them for assignments and tasks.

One common strand between students with high and low vulnerability levels was authentic content that helped students make connections with a real life context. Students felt

very positive about transactions that their teachers could help them relate to something they were familiar with such as when one teacher helped students learn about text structure through examples of building a house. Another student shared, “My cousin said algebra is hard. I don’t think I am gonna like cause it will be hard for me too.” The teacher commented by sharing previous challenging and how students learned over time. She also reinforced the idea that students had learned a little bit of algebra in fourth grade, but they did not know it. As the literature suggested, when students feel connected to an experience, they are more likely to be engaged and feel a part of it (Marzano, 2003).

Instructional transactions such as autonomy support align with what the empirical literature revealed as significant. When there is a provision of choice in some aspect, students most likely will feel more connected to the classroom community. Teachers can promote a feeling of support when they are purposeful in their transactions. All of these findings on autonomy support have strong implications on how teacher-student transactions provided students with a feeling of empowerment through a clear understanding of why teachers support students in various ways such as modeling or taking the time to explain something in further detail. Modeling, giving explicit instruction, or helping students feel confident in their approaches are all ways to enhance student perceptions of teacher support and care. Through frequent and positive transactions, students felt that they received adequate support and more connected to the classroom community.

4.1.6 Feedback clips

Student comments relative to ways in which teachers interacted with students in clips of feedback indicated strong perceptions of teacher care. Among qualities identified by students with low vulnerability levels were listening, expectation of success, and provision of choice.

Listening as captured in the empirical literature make students feel cared about and emotionally connected to the classroom (Libbey, 2004). Students with low vulnerability levels gave some primary examples of how listening was important in the way of helping them work through a problem and cared during instructional transactions. Listening occurred in two different ways. First, listening occurred between teacher and students during small group interactions. For example, one student shared:

We are having a conversation with the teacher about what the scientific method is with, clinical trials and everybody is saying what they think on it is...She listens to why you think that's right or why you think that's wrong and then she shows you how to do it on the Smart Board and so and make sure that you go it right or like if it's a math thing or we'll just talk about how the answer would be.

The students felt that because the conversation was two-sided that it gave them an opportunity to explain their thinking, gather feedback from others, and dispel any confusing parts of the lesson. From the students' perceptions, listening on behalf of the teacher demonstrated for the students she wanted to hear and valued their thoughts. Moreover, throughout the learning process, students had the ability to think out loud while working their way through tasks.

Expectations for success were an area that students felt strongly that their teachers cared. Expectations for success conveyed in multiple ways using feedback as teachers exert influence on student learning is evident through instructional interactions. When teachers encouraged

students to make changes or give more information, students viewed it as positive feedback in which made them work harder. For example, one student asserts, “if you fix your work, it will be even better than the first time.” Giving an example of when the teacher asked her to write additional description for her paragraph, she recognized that the teacher wanted her to work hard because she was capable. She continued by saying, “they’re trying to push you to actually give your effort and trying to get you to do the work right.” Another student later commented on the same video clip stating that the teacher wants students to do their best so that they do not “fall behind.”

In another classroom, a clip captured a small portion of a math lesson where a student was struggling to solve a math problem. The scene showed the level of frustration by the student and the way in which the teacher interacted with him to help him through his struggles. In this clip, the students viewed the excerpt as, “she (the teacher) is supporting him and did not give up on him and not letting him give up.” When asked to give more detail, students explained how the teacher asked questions instead of telling the student the answer and gave him strategies to try so that he could succeed. Based on these characteristics, teachers encouraged students through providing feedback and guidance which helped motivate them to do their best. Rather than viewing it from the perspective of being controlled, students saw these actions as giving them control and teaching them responsibilities.

Access to various resources also played an important role in teacher care according to student comments. Often times, feedback is viewed as a one sided interaction. However, from student perceptions, when given choices of resources, they felt they had autonomy to complete a task independently, but also knew they had the support of the teacher when needed. One student shared, “She let us choose what we are going to do, like our own style.” The student felt

confident that when he had questions, the teacher was there to provide guidance even with autonomy of choice. Other examples included the teacher suggesting the use of highlighters to identify signal words or using notes from a previous lesson. One student shared:

Our binders help us, 'cause we have notes in our binder. We have reading – a reading section in our binder, and we put our – all of our notes that are from reading in our reading slot....we can look back on them and remember what they were.

Indicating that through gentle reminders during assignments, teachers provided feedback by pointing students to accessible tools from previous lessons. It was clear that students were not confined to the use specific tools, but more apt to know that they are available and easily accessible. Although the literature talks about high-leverage strategies in terms of feedback, access to learning tools are not consistent with this component; however, from the students' perceptions, the tools suggested provided them with opportunities to approach learning in their own ways and with the resources they chose while supported by the teacher.

Students with high vulnerability levels perceived the feedback clips from a slightly different viewpoint. They focused more on ways that the teacher helped them to understand a topic or a task and feeling safe to ask questions or for help. Moreover, having personalized time with the teacher appeared to be a significant finding.

When students dialogue about their experiences, their understanding of what happened in one clip signaled small, subtle ways the teacher provided a student with support in understanding the concept of text structures during a whole group introduction of a lesson. In this particular clip, a student indicated a lack of understanding. As the teacher provided information to the student as a response, she gave him guidance on what she was teaching. One student noted,

“She’s helping a student with the understanding.” While another added, “The teacher gave the students special notes to help him remember and utilize while he was reading.”

In another class, students described their thoughts about a clip when the teacher provided the group with instructions on how to do an assignment. Their perceptions indicated that the teacher purposefully asked questions in order to help a student understand what to do. One student shared:

So she was, like, giving the student instructions on how to do the assignment better and, like she was trying to get him to notice why he got certain questions wrong so he could be better – like, so he could do better on the next assignment or next set of questions.

They continued by sharing that the teacher often provided support by walking around and noticing different needs of different students. They gave examples such as how the teacher pointed out certain questions were not correct and how they were required to take responsibility and go back and redo a portion of the assignment. Moreover, they expressed once told to redo a section or a question, they understood the teacher would return to follow up and provide more information. It appeared from their comments that an important aspect of teacher feedback revolved around teacher actions such as walking around and monitoring work. Moreover, the feedback seemed to be immediate and repetitious in the sense that the teacher constantly checked in with students. One student gave the following example:

If you did something wrong, she’ll tell you what’s wrong and she’ll tell you to figure what you did wrong. And then she’ll come back and tell you what you did wrong and help you....It’s like she cares.

In another similar example a student shared:

In this class, she will give you a chance to try it yourself, and then she’ll come back around and explain what you did wrong, like if you’ve got more questions. In other classes, you know, they just keep walking past you. You’ll sit there and get mad. You’ll just stop working. You just don’t care anymore.

Frequent movement and check-ins by teachers mattered to students. Students seemed to value time and personalization given by the teacher in relation to assignments. With frequent transactions, students were more likely to stay on task longer. One student expressed:

Like we do our work and then she'll give us feedback after we have completed it and after whatever mistakes we have. We go fix them, and then she checks it again...She wants us to be independent and learn how to solve problems on our own.

Students made a strong connection between what they needed to accomplish and why. Earning a level of independence appeared to be significant to students. They were motivated to keep working as long as the teacher kept checking in and providing feedback.

Having knowledge about a teacher also appeared to help students understand that the teacher cared. When students felt they knew the teacher in a personal way, they appeared to be willing to give and take feedback. One student described how his teacher tells a new story each week about herself and then expressed how she connected her story with a new project she was prepared to introduce. Another student added the following example:

When she tells us, like, stories that happened to her, it's like it helps us to apply to our life and make our life better. And like, other classes, the teachers, like they – I don't think that they care, because like they're not telling us stuff about them. And then, like, we can like, give feedback to her, and she can give feedback to us, like based on what she told us.

Feedback from this perspective varied from the findings in the empirical literature. Although the literature asserts that care develops through personalization between teacher and student, it does not capture the bond between teacher and student in relation to giving and taking in feedback as a result of a personalized transaction. Perhaps, when students feel a personal connection, they are more likely to respond and participate in a reciprocal transaction.

As demonstrated as significant by students with high and low vulnerability levels, personalization within a transaction is a core element within the component of feedback as students relates it to teacher care. However, students with low vulnerability levels described the transactions with how teachers listened and helped them understand a concept. Whereas students with high vulnerability levels emphasized personalization through the frequency of transactions with teachers, along with the capacity to connect with the teacher based on knowing something about her. Although the personalization is strongly tied to feedback and teacher care, students made meaning of it in different ways.

4.1.7 Random Clips

Each group viewed a single clip randomly chosen in addition to the set of 5 salient video clips shown in relation to caring pedagogical transactions. Because the clips did not have any specific commonalities, it was difficult to compare them across classrooms. Overall, no major findings were discernible. However, one area noteworthy of comments, particularly with students with high vulnerability levels, was teacher support. One participant drew attention to a math lesson where he chose to use a calculator to solve the problem. Earlier in the lesson, the teacher asked students to solve the problem without a calculator. He stated that he felt uncertain about being able to solve the problem independently, but what he noted was that his teacher gives him confidence. He shared:

I think that she knows that we don't need a calculator, 'cause like she said like for – we shouldn't need a calculator for one certain problem. I think that she knew that but I don't think that we knew that in ourselves that we didn't need a calculator.

Another student made a comparison between confidence and courage indicating that sometimes students will “take the easy way out,” but the teacher wants them to be able to solve problems with their own knowledge rather than being dependent on a tool such as the calculator. As another student added comments, she emphasized that “She believes in us more than we believe in ourselves.” Given the comments of students, the perceptions surrounding the event pointed toward a clear understanding from students that their teacher cares and believes in their abilities.

In another class, students commented on opportunities for rewards in relation to good behavior. The motivation for students included tangible items such as wearing jeans for a day or a certificate for most improved. One student commented, “Whenever I get most improved, I just be happy.” Moreover, when awards were presented, other students clapped and were genuinely happy for the students receiving them. Perhaps this level of confidence stems from the environment created in which students learned to care about each other within a community. As stated within high expectations, ways in which students learn to communicate with each other and through consistent routines, they learn how to treat each other with respect.

In the case of students with low vulnerability levels, a lack of consistency existed. While some students pointed out some level of confidence gained in the video focused on the math lesson, others focused more on the negative behaviors that happened. The researcher could not identify specific commonalities within student comments in a single classroom or across schools.

Overall, given students’ different constructions of meaning related to the clips, the findings lacked any type of consistency. Opposite of the clips that were identified with specific actions that had characterizing features of teacher care, the set of random clips appeared to have

little meaning behind them particularly for those of low vulnerability levels. This indicates a need to understand more about specific features in order to disaggregate the larger picture of what happens as a whole.

4.2 RANK ORDER FINDINGS

This section reports on the findings obtained from the 59 rank order sheets collected from student participants of the co-generative dialogues. I showed a series of five video clips to small groups ($N=12$; 4 to 6 students per group, 2 per classroom). Four of the video clips represented theoretically relevant examples of caring instructional interaction categories: high expectations, autonomy support, feedback, and attunement. I randomly chose the sixth video clip. The inclusion of this randomly chosen video clip gave me an opportunity to gather data not guided exclusively by existing theory (i.e., attunement being the most relevant aspect of teacher care). Data analyses involved a review of student written responses to the open-ended survey prompt as well as the numerical rankings of the video clips by students. The primary purpose of this analysis helped me explore students' perceptions, specifically the reasons for why students ranked videos highest to lowest in relation to teacher care.

I entered the information collected from the rank order sheets including the order of rankings and student comments into an Excel spreadsheet. I asked participants to watch a series of 5 clips to determine which one best demonstrated that the teacher cared about the students in her class. I told the students that I derived the video clips from the footage taken in their classroom earlier in the year. Subsequently, I asked the participants to rank the videos from the

most to the least representative of teacher care. I wanted to assess how students felt about specific pedagogical transactions in relation to teacher care as independent observers and experiencers of the classroom. Importantly, this procedure occurred prior to the group discussions of the video clips. I did not give background information about teacher care to the students.

I calculated descriptive statistics using an Excel formula to determine if students ranked the videos in similar or different ways. I reviewed comments line by line using micro-analysis to identify student perceptions of teacher care. During the initial review of data, I looked for key words and phrases that captured student perceptions. I then entered keywords and phrases into a separate column. I completed a second review of the keywords and phrases to look for similarities in patterns across student responses. This was first done by individual groups and then across classrooms. To assess similarities across classrooms, I calculated a percentage of frequency in keywords and phrases.

When conducting the analysis, I found that students focused primarily on specific teacher-student interactions that students described broadly in the emerging categories of listening, supporting, motivating, and providing information. Although participants generally characterized teachers as “nice” or “friendly”, the responses identified the aforementioned categories of description as important factors. Although the results indicated a lack of consistency in responses in ranking videos, they demonstrated some consistency within the overall summary of comments.

When students felt like they had a voice in the classroom and someone valued what they said, they are more likely to develop a greater sense of belonging and feel like they are a part of the classroom community. In students’ descriptive comments, students noted interactions such

as teachers asking for their thoughts, listening to what students had to say, or giving students an opportunity to ask questions as caring moments. Students expressed that certain transactions made them feel like they had a voice in the classroom. From the students' written comments, it is likely that students felt teacher attunement in relation to the desire of students to express themselves during instructional interactions.

Two students placed emphasis on listening through comments such as the following, "Our teacher listens to what we have to say." and "She is taking time to listen to individual students and hear what we have to say." Another student shared, "She cares because she wants to know what the kids thought."

Although not explicitly stated in the student comments, the videos captured various interactions that included different approaches by teachers such as varying forms of body language, proximity, and eye contact. Given the nature of teacher-student transactions, these subtle approaches gave students a feeling of care.

These examples are symbolic of children feeling heard in the classroom. These are small, subtle examples of how students perceived caring interactions in the context of the larger environment, but they represent what students' valued as important factors of teacher care. As noted in the literature, when teachers take in or respond to student input, the child's experience deepens making them feel a part of the culture (Fairbanks et al., 2010). Moreover, listening adds value to how a student feels because they feel there are opportunities to express their opinions.

Feeling supported in the classroom is indicative of the level of comfort students feel in which they can experiment or explore with confidence. Two important ways that teachers showed support included helping students understand a concept via one-on-one conversations or in a whole group setting and through asking questions to help students make sense of something.

One salient aspect from student comments revealed that students made connections to teacher care when their teacher helped them to understand how to work through a task. One student reported, “She questions us to make sure that we understand.” Questioning often requires a unique response from the teacher; therefore, giving the teacher opportunities to adapt to the specific needs of students. When students are engaged beginning with the teacher asking a question to check for understanding, a reciprocal interaction often takes place. Another student expressed, “The teacher helps the students by helping them make sense of what we are learning.”

I hypothesized that these types of transactions allow students to feel like the teacher is adapting to their needs to ensure that the student is on the right track in learning a concept. The teacher’s willingness to be agile and provide students with support at an individual level is a palpable source of evidence to demonstrate her willingness to go in-depth with students to make sure they feel successful in what they are doing. When students feel confident in knowing what to do, it empowers them to feel in control of their learning. This is consistent across research findings in many studies (Ball and Bass, 2000; Pedro & Miller, 2006).

Teacher encouragement or belief that students can be successful instills a level of confidence in students that results in positive feelings of caring teacher-student transactions. The data from student comments provides strong support for what students identify as caring moments. The way in which teachers responded to students with positive words of encouragement gave students a sense of confidence. One student reported: “It can help people to understand and not give up and have confidence in their self.” Others commented on specific interactions that included, “Helping a student make the right decision,” “The teacher cared even more than the student did,” and “Encouraging students to be happy and focus on what they are doing.” Examples like this in which students felt the teacher wanted them to do their best were

symbolic of student recognition of what the teacher was doing to help students feel successful. It is representative of the high expectations that teachers hold for their students. The researcher hypothesizes that when students feel connected to their teacher and sense that she cares about what they are doing, it can influence and shape positive experiences within the environment. If there is a sense of care, students most likely will rise to the expectations set. Also significant across schools, students acknowledged not only their personal experience, but recognized how teachers transacted with other students. This is particularly important because it is a tangible source of evidence that inherently shows the attunement of students in relation to what is happening within the context of their environment.

When expectations are high, a teacher is very explicit about the information that she is conveying to students. Providing students with detailed information can help students feel in control and confident in what they need to accomplish. Among participants, the results most clearly indicated that students felt strongly that the ways in which teachers provided information through explicit instruction both whole group and small group was a form of teacher care. Twelve of the 59 responses demonstrated that students perceived the explicit directions from teachers as a significant indicator of teacher care.

In the context of the videos, various examples exhibited the teacher through the actions and structures of the lessons presented. Although each clip was a short excerpt of a more in-depth lesson, many instructional interactions were evident. One student noted, “The teacher is telling us things that we need to learn.” While another student echoes a similar comment stated, “The teacher explained things and helped understand what was being taught.” Although in most cases, the comments were limited to one or two sentences, they indicated understanding the purpose for the teachers’ explicitness in the messages conveyed.

Conversely, one student connected teacher care with the teacher redirecting him to sit down and listen during a lesson. As indicated by many researchers, redirection with the right tone and stance can result in a positive feeling or interaction (Jones, 1995).

Not surprisingly given the relationship between teacher and student interactions, students were able to make strong connections to the subtle interactions between teachers and students in the classroom and relate them to teacher care. Phrases such as “help” and “care” were incorporated in their comments and consistent within specific groups as well as across schools. At the same time, there was evidence in one particular school that listening, supporting, motivation, and providing information were present. While each school had similarities, the most common response centered on the category of support. The ways that teachers provided guidance to students was important to students.

Although the ranking of video clips from the most to the least in relation to teacher care produced relatively limited results, the student comments provided relevant information about what the students deemed as important teacher-student interactions. How students make meaning of interactions seems relative to what they value.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Success among students who enter school systems with varying levels of preparation and vulnerabilities require skillful management of classrooms and strong pedagogical practices that result in perceptions of *teacher care*. Over the past several decades, *teacher care* has been recognized as a critical indicator of positive adolescent development and as an important element to meet student needs (Knowles & Brown, 2004; Hargreaves, 1998; Noddings, 1995). Many studies have explored the phenomenon of *teacher care* by linking teacher practice and student behavior. Although many have shown promise, most have not adequately recognized the explicit types of pedagogical practices that lead to positive, sustainable teacher-student transactions within the context of school culture.

This study demonstrated that early adolescents perceived specific pedagogical practices as representations of *teacher care*. Through the process of co-generative dialogues, students were able to delineate what they felt were significant characteristics of meaningful transactions that occurred between teacher and student that demonstrated elements of *teacher care*. More specifically, findings supported the notions that (a) students related teacher care to high expectations by way of explicit instruction given by teachers; (b) when teachers were attuned to students beyond simple demographic information, students felt empowered in the classroom and that teachers cared about their well-being because of the types of caring transactions that took

place; (c) trust was perceived by students when there was teacher recognition of student differences; (d) the various ways in which teachers provided support motivated students to approach learning in unique ways and try their best because they felt their teacher wanted them to succeed; (e) when consistent dialogue between teacher and students existed, students felt like they had a voice; (f) students felt emotionally connected to the classroom when feedback was given by teachers in the forms of provision of choice, listening, and expectations for success. The following section conveys how each of these the findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of teacher practice that led to strong pedagogical transactions. Moreover, this study demonstrated an empirically-based understanding of how a culture of dignity may have been established through specific adolescent-teacher instructional transactions.

5.1 WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENT THAT EARLY ADOLESCENTS INTERPRETED AS “TEACHER CARE”?

The first research question examined six components of teacher practice deemed in the literature as important to establishing strong pedagogical transactions between teacher and student. My hypotheses espoused that students were more likely to perceive pedagogical transactions as caring when teachers provided *feedback* in the form of modeling or provided a student with targeted, individualized support. The results suggested that feedback was an important component of teacher practice. Although the results indicated modeling as an important

component, it identified in relation to autonomy support as separate from the component of feedback.

The following discussion outlines the overall findings within the context of each component and demonstrates how students perceived each.

5.1.1 High expectations

When shown small segments of video clips with high expectations, participants identified three important components: explicit directions, signal words, and routines to stay on task. These findings primarily aligned with the literature in terms of strong routines in classrooms were most often visible as a result of high expectations. However, probing to a deeper line of inquiry, participants identified specific signal words that play a role in establishing and maintaining those expectations. Giving examples such as “SLANT,” “smart spot,” or “track me” helped students to understand the expectations of the teacher. Respondents acknowledged that when teachers gave specific signal words, they were more likely to follow the directions of the routine. Moreover, when expected to follow routines, students were more likely to stay on task and accomplish the task at hand. Kansanen et al., (2000) asserts that every interaction conveys a message. For these students, signal words sent the message that teachers expected them to follow specific routines. Through further analysis, students expressed that with clear routines and expectations by the teacher, they felt more confident and that their class was more like a community of learners.

5.1.2 Attunement

This component captured students' perceptions of encouraging comments and the provision of choice. The literature implied that students could take risks when they ascertained that teachers know something personal about them (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2011). From the qualitative data collected in this study, students felt like they could take risks through provisions of choice and teachers would be provide encouragement throughout the process of a task. One of the most striking results was that students recognized elements of *teacher care* through verbal and personal interactions with the teacher. As teachers adapted to individual needs, students felt that they received personalized attention that met their needs. Although students admittedly described teachers "on their backs," they acknowledged that level of persistence as a way in which teachers wanted them to succeed. This realization is important and acknowledged that a level of trust was built through these transactions and students understood the intended purpose behind teacher actions.

5.1.3 Trust

Participants perceived trust as based on autonomy and empowerment through the recognition of individualized student needs. In short, when teachers gave students freedom of choice through center activities or projects, they felt teachers trusted their abilities to make good decisions. Given the research supporting the element of trust within the context of teacher-student relationships, student responses demonstrated that reciprocal interactions occurred because they felt supported by the teacher to independently accomplish a task. Moreover, given decisions of

how to begin a project or choice within the project made students feel that they were connected to the task at hand. Important to note, teachers most often had personalized interactions during the times that students were tasked with independent challenges. Because of how activities were structured, teachers and students had opportunities to transact on a frequent basis according to student comments.

5.1.4 Dialogue

Not surprisingly, personalization of conversations, teacher questioning, and tone of the teacher were evidenced in student perceptions as important indicators of *teacher care*. As anticipated in the sub-hypothesis, when teachers listened, students felt more a part of the conversation as if they had a voice. Evidenced through multiple examples in the co-generative dialogues, students overwhelmingly felt empowered when they had a voice. Giving examples such as teachers adding student comments into the conversation and students ability to think aloud about a topic made students feel connected to the conversation. Interestingly, students identified classrooms beyond the video clips that indicated that this type of dialogue does not always exist. With the ability to recognize the difference in a highly effective classroom, this information was a significant finding which categorized an important component of *teacher care*.

5.1.5 Autonomy support

This component was recognizably one of the most important according to student perceptions. Students impressed the importance of teachers checking in with students, explaining, or

modeling important information. When these types of transactions took place, students felt confident in what they were doing. The interactions appeared to be frequent and students acknowledged how support looked different for different students. Recognizing that students have varying needs, students perceived their teachers to know what individuals needed and shared different approaches utilized for various students. Sentiments described by the students indicated powerful moments in which students could have easily given up, but because of specific teacher practices, this often changed the outcome of the transaction. Within the interpretations of students, when teachers were willing to personalize a transaction, they felt confident in trying new things and approaching tasks in ways they felt comfortable. In addition, students may have also considered this as a way of feeling valued in the classroom.

5.1.6 Feedback

As indicated in the original hypothesis, feedback was an important component of teacher care; however, students did not view in quite the same way. I expected modeling to be a strong indicator of feedback. Surprisingly, students mentioned modeling, but within the context of autonomy support. Among the results, listening, expectation of success, and provision of choice students identified them as important aspects in relation to *teacher care*. Students also denoted that when feedback was repetitious such as instances during small group instruction or centers, they felt supported because of frequent teacher check-ins. Giving continuous, immediate feedback was important because it helped students stay focused and feel confident in moving forward with an assignment.

5.1.7 Random clips

I showed groups of students various random clips of classroom instruction. The findings did not significantly contribute to any particular component of teacher care. Although there were no major discernible findings through the random clips, one area that many students acknowledged was the idea of teacher support. Because I randomly chose the clips, it was difficult to identify specific patterns because the clips did not have the same components present across classrooms.

5.2 ARE ADOLESCENT INTERPRETATIONS OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSACTIONS CONSISTENT ACROSS STUDENT VULNERABILITY LEVELS?

My original hypothesis anticipated that students with high vulnerability levels would perceive pedagogical transactions associated with attunement as highly representative of teacher care and students with low vulnerability levels would perceive pedagogical transactions connected with high expectations as highly representative of teacher care. To my surprise, differences were limited between the perceptions of high and low vulnerability students. Both groups felt that attunement and high expectations were relevant indicators of teacher care. Although the findings were very similar, there were a few perceptions that separated the two groups. The following summary highlights important perceptions by each group.

5.2.1 Low and high vulnerability levels

As primarily evidenced by students categorized as low vulnerability, the majority recognized the ways in which teachers interacted with students during problem times as a result of *teacher care*. When students genuinely felt that teachers cared about their well-being, they recognized actions such as personal conversations during times of frustration as important. Given examples through the video clips, students noted the ways in which teachers bent down to quietly speak to a student or utilized positive encouragement to get students back on task. Students felt that teachers acknowledged their shortcomings during times of frustration and were accepting of their feelings. This acceptance led students to feel like a part of the learning community. Interestingly, students who were not involved in a particular situation were able to express the caring nature of their teachers through the identification of specific interactions such as a simple tap on the shoulder or a quiet voice to think through a problem.

Evidenced in student comments, many perceptions acknowledged autonomy and empowerment through the recognition of individualized student needs. Students primarily connected actions of teachers such as frequent check-ins with students, explaining, or modeling important information as ways that the teacher helped them to understand a topic. Strikingly, students noted that teachers knew what they needed and even if it was different than someone else, they provided support. Participants reported that this type of check-in does not happen in every class. Knowing that support was available when needed, students felt that they could work at a comfortable pace and not have to worry about what others were doing. This raised the question about the importance of classroom structure. Most students recognized they had opportunities to work in small groups or independently with teacher support.

In comparison, students with high vulnerability levels revealed that teachers knew when students may have been tempted to make a poor decision on their own. Moreover, they are preventative by giving certain individuals less choices in particular activities. For example, a teacher may choose to place a student in a certain area of a classroom to prevent him from getting into trouble. This reflected teacher attunement to students. Knowing how students were feeling and what they specifically needed to be successful learners was an important indicator of *teacher care*.

Moreover, students felt when teachers recognized students had differences in the ways they learn, it motivated them to try harder and put forth their best effort. Giving examples such as opportunities to try math problems using an individualized approach or gathering resources such as manipulatives when needed was important to students. They looked at teachers recognizing differences through the lens of opportunity. In other words, they felt like teachers valued their abilities and supported them in trying new approaches. This supported the empirical and theoretical literature which suggests that choice in approaches is important to student success (Brophy, 2008). More importantly, the results indicated that teacher encouragement helped students to remain motivated and try even when frustrated by an activity. In other words, simple encouragement kept students on task and focused for longer periods of time.

5.3 HOW DOES THE CURRENT STUDY EXTEND RESEARCH ON TEACHER CARE?

For this exploratory study, I employed several types of data including co-generative dialogues, descriptive memos, and analytic commentaries. The various sources of data provided multiple perspectives for viewing and triangulating the data. The empirical literature indicated that there has been limited research on teaching practices used to create nurturing and comfortable environments (Cohen et. al, 1995; Schein, 1985), particularly by way of influencing educational policy. This type of research was important to gain a level of depth of student experiences in relation to pedagogical transactions that represented teacher care. The information may be valued as a contribution to our understanding of supporting students' complex needs.

Gaining information on teacher-student transactions may also potentially benefit other schools because it may provide information about positive classroom and school culture. The findings in this study may also be the impetus to further study important teacher-student relational interactions that may influence other educational opportunities such as student self-efficacy, trust, and student achievement.

5.4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE PATHWAYS FOR RESEARCH

This study also had limitations. First, I conducted the study across one charter management organization. Although I included six different schools, there may have been a strong likelihood

that similarities existed because of the mission and vision of the organization. By conducting this research across various organizations, the outcome may have varied and provided a broader sampling that may have been more generalizable. Although multiple schools were involved in the data collection, I conducted the study in a short period. With a longer study, additional types of interactions or a richer understanding of student experiences may have existed.

Second, although the study utilized co-generative dialogues as the primary method of data collection, I also utilized Rank order findings. The Rank order findings proved to have a limited impact on the data collection. Participants ranked 5 video clips without discussion. The patterns of responses were inconsistent making it difficult to capture students' thinking beyond the one or two sentences provided. Although this method did not impact the findings, it did not produce as much evidence as intended.

Given the limitations of the study, future research should employ methods that clearly produce a broad range of evidence. Fortunately, the co-generative dialogues produced a vast amount of information which led to a deep understanding of the phenomenon. The method was easy to utilize and appeared to be comfortable for the participants involved. The importance of carefully selecting methods is critical in the outcome of a study. Upon reflection, if utilizing Rank order sheets again, I would have considered adjusting the sheets utilized according to grade level. Students in grades 5 through 8 appeared to have a better grasp on the procedures to rank order the video clips. For students in grade four, providing a set of cards with numbers one through five may have been easier to manipulate and possibly yielded a different set of results because of clarity in the procedural process.

Lastly, it is also important to acknowledge that I work in the organization. Although I have background information about the schools, I am not in the classrooms day-to-day.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHER PRACTICE

Further research is necessary to explore how student-teacher interactions contribute to creating, sustaining, and transforming classroom and school culture. Deconstructing elements and conceptualizations of culture through student perception of an experience may lead to a greater understanding of school culture as a whole. The literature suggested that teacher interactions with students were pivotal in how students responded or perceived those interactions (Buetel, 2010). Student perceptions of a positive culture are strongly influenced by the quality of teacher and student relationships as well as the educational opportunities in the classroom (Barr, 2011).

Using student voice to further cultivate teacher practice should be a vital part of teacher professional development. Students should be included in the decision making process when it comes to day to day practice in the classroom. Imagine the power of teachers and students working collaboratively in the learning process. Giving students and teachers opportunities to talk about what is happening in the classroom through a process such as *co-generative dialogues* could greatly improve teaching and learning practices. The process involves listening, discussing, and reflection which are important components of teacher practice. Therefore, allowing early adolescents an opportunity to voice their opinions may lead to a greater understanding of the teaching and learning process, and contribute to positive changes in how students perceive the day to day interactions within the classroom.

This research may also serve as an important indicator that targeted, embedded professional development with continuous support and a well-defined environment with a focus on critical pedagogical practices can make a substantial difference in the way that educators view teaching and learning. From my perspective, the majority of school districts fail to thoughtfully

implement a core, foundational plan to improve teacher learning and deeply embed the learning within the context of school culture.

One example is Pennsylvania's new Teacher Effectiveness model, which focuses on Charlotte Danielson's four domains of teaching and learning (Danielson, 2013). Within each of these domains are specific practices. Because the process is so time consuming, administrators engage, but have difficulty balancing and devoting enough time to continuous, personalized professional development. Teachers receive two formal evaluations each year. Professional development must be ongoing and embedded in daily practice in order to have a long term impact. If teachers are being held accountable for meeting the criterion within each domain, then more time and development of specific teacher practices are necessary so that teachers may cultivate themselves in the domains.

Over the past several years, educational funding in Pennsylvania has been cut dramatically. This raises the question of how teachers can be successful when they are not given the appropriate time or resources necessary to achieve success. How can considerable change occur at the school level when the necessary supports at state and federal levels are not available? Learning what types of teacher practices and conditions of teaching and learning are most effective may lead to better classroom environments. Furthermore, understanding the type of support and the role of teacher in daily practice are necessary for real change to occur and also may be considered an essential factor when developing future educational policy. If policy dictates accountability, then there must be a core plan and structure in place to help schools meet the criterion.

Learning the types of pedagogical transactions that students perceived as teacher care provided more information on how a positive school and classroom culture was developed. This

knowledge was vital to understand and describe these teacher practices in ways that may facilitate transferability and replication into other classrooms and schools. With the findings from this study, my hope is to help other schools learn how to develop a culture of respect, constituted in pedagogical transactions, that is central to students' success.

APPENDIX A

RANK ORDER SHEET

Student Sheet: Please take the next few minutes to watch some short video clips. Think about how each clip makes you feel. There is no right or wrong answers. Rank the video clips from 1 (the most) to 5 (the least).

Which videoclip best demonstrates that the teacher cares about the students in her class?

Write 1 or 2 sentences to summarize why you feel this way.

Example of Data Collection:

Student 1	3	1	5	4	2
Student 2	1	5	4	2	3
Student 3	1	4	3	2	5
Student 4	2	3	2	5	2
Student 5	3	2	5	2	4

APPENDIX B

CO-GENERATIVE DIALOGUES

Co-Generative Dialogues

Creating a Culture of Dignity Case Study

Thank you for spending your lunch period with me. What we are going to do today is look at some video clips from your classroom and discuss what we see. I am very interested in learning from you as you all are the experts of this classroom; it is your classroom! I want you to be honest, but also respectful of each other's opinions. For those of you who have not participated in this kind of group dialogue before it is like a small group discussion. You will be discussing things as a group. I will not be writing down who says what, but there is a chance that someone in the group could repeat something that you say to someone outside of the group. Also, this conversation will be recorded, so that I can listen back to it later.

Some basic ground rules-(1)Make sure to let everyone have a chance to talk, (2) Try not to interrupt, if possible, (3) Respect what others say even if you disagree, and (3) Please understand if we have to move on before we are finished discussing something as we only have 30 minutes to talk, and that will go fast!

You each have a piece of paper and a pencil. Please do not write your name on the sheet of paper, but write down your thoughts as you see the video clip. I will be collecting this piece of paper from you at the end of our discussion. This paper can also help you keep track of what you want to say.

As you watch the video clip, I want you to think about these questions. [Questions are displayed on a poster.]

What is going on here?

What do I notice in the video?

What am I doing? What are others doing?

How did I feel when this was happening?

These questions will help us get started, but I think we talk about much more than just these questions. O.K. Let's get started. As we are watching the clip, feel free to raise your hand at any time. When you raise your hand this will signal to me to pause the video, because you have something to say about what you saw. I will pause the video and you can say what you wanted to say. Others can respond to what you said. Are there any questions before I start the video?

APPENDIX C

CODE BOOK

Codebook

Data Analysis of Student Perceptions

Student	School	Grade	Data Excerpt	Pre-code	Analytic Commentary	Final Code

Pre-codes/Codes:

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------|
| 1. High Expectations | 4. Dialogue | 7. Other |
| 2. Attunement | 5. Autonomy Support | |
| 3. Trust | 6. Feedback | |

APPENDIX D

KEY WORDS AND DEFINITIONS

Keywords and Definitions for Codes

1. High Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My teacher sets consistent routines. • My teacher encourages me to do my best. • My teacher expects me to work hard.
2. Attunement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My teacher knows something important about me. • My teacher uses what interests me in the lesson. • My teacher listens to me.
3. Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My teacher respects me. • My teacher tells me about herself. • I can tell my teacher something in confidence.
4. Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My teacher talks to me about an activity • My teacher gives me opportunities to discuss things with her. • My teacher responds to me when I have a question or shares ideas with me during an activity
5. Autonomy Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My teacher gives me support. • My teacher gives me opportunities to work on skills independently, in groups, or choices. • My teacher encourages me through goals, values, and interests. • My teacher allows me to have mobility within the classroom.
6. Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My teacher provides guidance during activities (independent, small group, whole group). • Teacher provides advice, comments, or helps me think aloud.

APPENDIX E

VIDEO CLIP DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYTIC SUMMARIES

IS8_hcs_6 – Ball (high expectations). The teacher is standing in front of the room while the students are sitting at their desks. She asks students to put names on their homework assignment. When a student questions her about why it is necessary to follow that specific protocol, she explained that this is something that is expected every day and reinforces the importance of knowing who submits the paper. She supports her directions by letting the student know that without knowing who turned in the paper, she would not know who to give credit to for the assignment. She laughs subtly and uses her sense of humor to lighten the moment and make the student feel comfortable. Following the homework conversation, the teacher gives her students explicit instructions to clear their desks and prepare for the upcoming lesson. As she is speaking, the majority of students clear their desks. She then introduces a new topic, fractions, that the students will be studying over the next few weeks.

As mentioned by the teacher, this is a routine that is consistently followed in the classroom. By establishing consistent routines and reinforcing them, students begin to understand the structure and expectations that are set forth. Rituals such as homework routines may lead to students taking ownership for what is happening in the classroom. Although this appears to be a simple classroom routine, it demonstrates that the teacher clearly conveys what she expects from her students. Moreover, although a student questions the established routine, a transaction occurs through the open dialogue between teacher and student. Within the dialogue, the teacher reinforces what she expects from the students and provides the purpose for asking students to follow the protocol. Her sense of humor seemingly makes the transaction positive. The student appears to be at ease with her response and subsequently follows the directions after the transaction occurs. Although this was a short clip, it demonstrates two important things: 1) a consistent routine leads to a positive transaction; and 2) the teacher provides purpose for the

expectation set which conveys a message to the student that what is being ask is important. As Fairbanks, et. al (2010) purports, adaptive teachers draw from a bank of strategies and applies what they know about a student to shape the interaction.

IS9_hcs_5 – Ball (trust). This is a very short video clip that captures a student asking the teacher if he should draw or write for the assignment. The student is sitting at his desk which is grouped with a few other desks. The teacher is carrying a clipboard and checking another student's work. She is standing approximately five feet from the student asking the question. The student does not raise his hand, but looks over at the teacher and asks his question. The teacher looks up as she continues to write and responds by letting the student know that he has a choice. He asks her another question to clarify. She encourages him to take whichever approach that he is comfortable with to complete the task. He gives a simple nod and begins to work.

I chose this video clip because it highlights a subtle transaction between the teacher and student. Although the conversation was brief in nature, it demonstrates within the structure of the class that the students have opportunities to dialogue with the teacher. The classroom is set up with desks in small groups while the teacher walks around the room checking in with different students. The occurrence appears to be a natural structure that is established in the classroom in which students feel comfortable asking the teacher a question without a formal signal. The level of comfort by the student may demonstrate a sense of belonging within the classroom culture. When students feel safe within the environment and supported by the teacher, reciprocal acts of care are more likely to occur (Noddings, 2005). The transaction which occurs is reciprocal and helps the student progress forward as he begins to complete the assignment.

IS10_jdw_4 –Ball (attunement). The teacher is standing in front of the room at the Smartboard while the students are sitting in rows facing her. As the teacher begins to introduce

Algebra to her class, one student shares a real life connection. The student reveals her cousin's struggle with learning Algebra. She indicates that because it was difficult for her cousin that she may struggle as well. The teacher acknowledges the student's response by adding that this new concept is going to be challenging and much different than what they had learned previously. She reassures students that although this is a new concept, the class will "get it". She quickly moves on with the introduction of her lesson.

This clip demonstrates a personal connection. The teacher listens to the student and adapts to her fear of beginning the new concept through a simple reassurance of her belief in students to learn the concept. From the student's remark, she appears to feel vulnerable and uncertain of whether she will be able to understand the concept. According to Libbey (2004), when a student is able to connect with an experience, it may contribute to her personal development. By acknowledging the student's fear, the teacher intuitively sets the tone for learning. Without the acknowledgement or reassurance, this transaction may result in increased levels of vulnerability for the student. When a teacher shows support for students through interactions as such, it opens the door for opportunities to build stronger connections between teacher and student.

IS9_jdw_9 –Ball (dialogue). The teacher is stationed at the Smartboard in front of the room as some students are situated in rows while others grouped in pairs. During the introduction of a new math lesson, the students express their concerns about starting Algebra. They convey the level of comfort they had with the previous topic of fractions. One student states that "fractions are easy" and asks why the class has to start Algebra. Another shares that Algebra is going to be "too hard." With a soft tone, the teacher tells her students that they will learn to like it just like they grew to like fractions. She reminds them that a time not so long ago,

they did not want to learn about fractions, but now can do them with ease. The teacher's tone continues to be positive as she reassures students that everything will be okay. Many students are nodding their heads to indicate that they agree with the teacher.

Throughout this clip, the students express concerns about learning something new. Within the open dialogue, listening occurs by both teacher and students. With regard to this two-way interaction, the students are given the opportunity to have a voice to actively contribute by asking questions and responding to the teacher's comments. Also noteworthy is the fact that the teacher appears to acknowledge the students' concerns and begins to reduce the anxiety levels of the students.

IS9_hcs_2 –Ball (autonomy support). In this short clip, the teacher asks students to create their own patterns with geometric figures. The students are sitting in desks which are grouped in sets of fours and fives. A set of pattern blocks in a container is located on each set of desks. The teacher communicates to students that they may approach making the patterns any way they feel comfortable. As students begin, she walks around to check in on students to assess how they are thinking through the process.

Giving students an opportunity to approach a task without explicit directions allows students to freely explore and experiment. Giving students opportunities as such is relative to their normative development which may increase students' desires to engage in these types of activities (Klem & Connell, 2004). Critical to this transaction is the teacher's approach to support. While students have flexibility in trying something new, she can provide personalized support to reinforce taking risks while attempting something new is something safe to do within the structure of the classroom. This type of support is meaningful and through monitoring and providing feedback, the teacher has a real opportunity to connect with students.

IS8_tw_6 Ball (random clip). Both the teacher and a teaching assistant are walking around the classroom checking to see how students are progressing in math centers. Both teacher and assistant ask students a series of questions such as: How do you know? What do you think? Why do you think so? As the teacher walks around, she notices a student in need of support. She stops and asks specific questions about patterns to this student as she looks over his shoulder at his paper. This approach eventually helps the student process his thinking and figure out the answer.

Through a specific line of inquiry, the teacher supports the student through thinking more deeply through a process. Having a sense of awareness about a student's needs is critical to supporting a student. When a classroom environment is structured in such a way that allows the teacher to support students in a personalized way, there is an optimal opportunity for the teacher to make the student feel a part of the learning community and connected to the culture of learning.

IS10_tw_1 – Cole (dialogue). In this clip, the teacher is giving instructions to students during a language arts lesson. The students are asked to make a pie chart or graph using their research. The teacher asks a series of clarifying questions to students to ensure that they understand what to do. Multiple students raise their hands and ask questions. The teacher provides responses and uses what the students are saying to rephrase her directions in a way that the students can relate. Following her instructions, she reiterates what she wants students to do during their work time. She gives a list of four items that the students need to complete and reminds them to stay focused.

An important component of dialogue is engaging the students. The teacher is very purposeful her line of questioning. The phrasing of her questions lead to responses from the

students and additionally raises more questions. The tone of the teacher is very positive which seems to invite students to engage in the conversation. Once students ask questions, the teacher quickly adapts to their line of thinking and incorporates the information into her next response. Producing learning conditions that include student voice as an important part of the culture may be evidence that what they say within the context of dialogue in the classroom is valued. Another important aspect noteworthy of mentioning is the purpose the teacher provides to support why it is important for students to be clear on the expectations prior to engaging in the assignment. She is very explicit in letting students know that now is the time to clarify any misconceptions before they get too far into working on the assignment. Her guidance in supporting the students, including her positive tone and the way she expresses her desire for students to do well, demonstrates a form of teacher care.

IS9_tw_2 – Cole (random clip). In this short clip, the students are working independently and in small groups on a language arts assignment. The teacher is walking around checking in with students. She approaches a student and tells him student that he does not need a computer for the assignment. She tells the student to close the computer without giving a specific reason why. She is brief and to the point. The student follows directions and gives a simple “okay” as his response.

Although the student is compliant in this occurrence, it appears to be a one-sided interaction rather than a transaction between teacher and student. The student is re-directed, but not given a reason or purpose for following what is being asked of him. The student is very quiet in his response. This interaction is brief; therefore, difficult to interpret how the student is feeling. As indicated in the literature, a negative redirection can lead to a feeling of disconnectedness while a positive redirection can make a student feel a part of the learning

community. This leaves one to wonder if this interaction is a missed opportunity to engage the student in a more positive way.

IS8_jdw_1 – Cole (high expectations). The teacher is explaining her expectations for students as they prepare to work on a poetry lesson. She instructs students to use personal thoughts and defend their answers with specific details. She provides explicit directions letting students know that she expects three well-written paragraphs for analysis and for them to take responsibility for completing the assignment well.

This video clip captures the essential elements of high expectations. Explicitness commonly involves short statements that are purposeful in nature. Moreover, highly effective teachers hold students accountable for what they expect them to accomplish. Rather than telling students that three paragraphs are due, she utilizes the term “well-written” and emphasizes her expectations by giving students prime examples of what she deems as acceptable. Importantly she stresses the integration of personal thoughts. Helping students make a connection through a real life context may help them relate to the assignment in a stronger way. The teachers hand gestures, purposeful eye contact, and sense of urgency heard in her voice, almost demands that the students work hard. The students appear to be very responsive and receptive of what is being asked of them. They are attentively looking at the teacher and nodding as she speaks.

IS8_hcs_1 – Cole (attunement). In this clip, a student is emotionally upset. She comes into the class and slams her books on a desk. The teacher walks over and says, “I’m afraid that you are not in control.” She talks to the student and lets her know that she understands that something upset her in the previous class, but now she needs to focus on this class. Close in proximity, she acknowledges the student, and lets her know that she needs to change her attitude

so that she can be successful in this class. The student quietly nods indicating she understands what she needs to do.

Knowing how to respond to individual students in a way that makes him/her feel comfortable is a critical part of being a highly effective teacher. Teachers need to know how to adapt to and respond to students' needs. This may look different depending on the factors of a situation. Apparent from the transaction that takes place in the video, the teacher is very direct with the student about what she expects, but the most striking moment is when she states that her attitude needs to be changed in order for her to be successful in this class. From the student's nod, she acknowledges the teacher's request. This transaction is critical in supporting the student in a way that gives her an opportunity to start fresh in this class. When students feel they can trust their teacher, they are more likely to feel like they are in a psychologically safe environment.

IS8_hcs_6 – Cole (trust). When the students are released into their language arts centers, a student grabs a pair of headphones. The teacher checks in with the student and questions why headphones are needed and the student explained his reason for needing them. She agrees and moves on to provide other students with feedback.

When trust is established in a classroom, students recognize that a teacher's actions are representative of care. In this short clip, a transaction takes place between teacher and student that signals a trusting relationship. The teacher walks over closely to the student and in a very quiet tone asks him why he needs headphones. Although the teacher questions the student, the student gives a genuine response to indicate his intentions. Although the student is the only one asking to use a different learning tool, she extends some flexibility in allowing him to take an approach that is comfortable to him. This is an excellent example that highlights student voice.

The teacher listens to the student and appears to value his judgment in the resource he chooses to approach his assignment.

IS9_hcs_8 – Cole (autonomy support). The teacher is explaining the language arts assignment to her students. She gives students instructions letting them know that she expects three paragraphs with supporting details. She provides examples to the students on how to get started, but also lets them know that they may approach the assignment any way that they feel comfortable. She states that students should, “figure out what best works for you.”

Giving students a choice in how they approach an assignment may help the students relate to the assignment in an authentic way. Letting the students know that there is not one single way to complete a task allows students to take risks and explore new ways of thinking. In a classroom that is designed for experimentation or student exploration, students are more likely to be engaged. This video clip demonstrates that students have a sense of freedom and autonomy to try the assignment their way. Knowing that the teacher is there to provide support may motivate students to take a risk. This type of instructional interaction shows that there is a level of trust between teacher and students which may lead to increased levels of motivation for student engagement. Many researchers contend that choice is something that motivates students to work hard (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

IS9_hcs_4 – Cole (feedback). In this brief clip, the teacher is talking with a student about his assignment. She lets him know that he has one right answer and one wrong. She continues to provide feedback through questioning and tells him to use the resources he has from his notes. The student is receptive and begins to make changes to his paper.

The accessibility of resources in the classroom is relevant to the transactions that take place within a classroom. One way of supporting students is the way that teacher and students

interact with resources (Ball & Cohen, 1999). In this transaction, the teacher provides a student with a reminder to use his notes. From the student's reaction, it appears to be an "aha" moment. Forgetting that he has the tools he needs, the support given by the teacher reminds him of what to do. Without telling him the answer, she guides him in a positive way and provides feedback to keep him motivated to progress with the assignment. This transaction promotes the idea that accessibility of resources affords students with opportunities to think independently while still feeling supported by the teacher.

IS8_jdw_2 –Ellis (feedback). The students are working in small groups of 4-6 on a math assignment related to fractions. The teacher walks around to provide support. She reinforces that students need to be sure of their answers rather than guessing. She provides feedback to one student in particular. She asks a series of questions to help the student think through the process. He finally figures out the answers.

Supporting students with scaffolded feedback is a way of leading students to independent thinking. In this video, the teacher provides feedback for one student in particular, but also gets the attention of other students as she thinks aloud. Because all students are working on a similar problem, they benefit from the feedback and line of questioning as she transacts with the student in need of assistance. Her actions appear to be purposeful. Her voice is loud and she emphasizes certain aspects of solving the problem. Students, in turn, are able to take in the information and when she gets to another student, many questions have already been answered. Purposeful interactions with feedback are twofold: 1) they are personalized to meet the needs of the student; and 2) they demonstrate a proactive approach to guiding and supporting student learning.

IS10_tw_3 –Ellis (attunement). The students are working in small groups on a conversion lesson. The teacher asks a student why he changed his answer. The student questions

himself and she responds by saying that there are two ways to convert the measurement. She stated that his approach was different from others, but a sufficient way of answering the question.

This clip highlights an opportunity that the teacher takes to make the student feel comfortable. The student questions his own thinking and wonders if his answer is correct. Second guessing himself, he begins to change his answer. The teacher quickly notices that the student is struggling to have confidence in himself with that answer he has chosen. Because she is attuned to his lack of confidence, she provides support in her response. By giving the student confidence and letting him know that there is not one correct way to solve the problem, she reinforces his thinking and motivates him to feel good about the approach he has taken. Allowing students to complete assignments from different levels of entry points gives students choice and promotes independent thinking.

IS8_hcs_18 –Ellis (trust). The teacher is walking around checking on students as they work independently on a math lesson. When a student is demonstrating difficulty, the teacher provides support by giving him explicit instructions. She also reassures the student that utilizing a different strategy is okay. She makes the student feel comfortable to approach things in his own way.

The transaction that takes place between teacher and student demonstrates a high level of trust between the two. The teacher is attuned to the student's needs and quickly noticed his frustration. She casually walks over to the student, careful not to alarm him, and looks over his shoulder. She thinks aloud and repeats the instructions given a few moments prior to reinforce the goal of lesson. The student asks if it is okay to use the strategy he started with. Her response is "absolutely." With a smile on the student's face, it appears that his initial frustration

dissipates. When a teacher and student connect through an interaction as such, it most likely builds on the existing relationship only to reinforce the positive exchanges between the two.

IS10_tw_6 – Ellis (dialogue). The students are taking turns explaining their strategies for answering a math problem about percentages at the SmartBoard. As a student explains, s/he allows the other students in the class to ask questions or provide feedback. The teacher also participates and interjects with questions and comments about what other students are saying. The conversation is interactive and all students are engaged.

At a glance, this clip appears to be what may be considered a traditional lesson. However, the students are at the center of attention as they lead a problem solving lesson at the Smartboard. The teacher purposefully gives students an opportunity to take the lead during the lesson while interacting with all students in the classroom. The dialogue that occur student to student and teacher to student is a noteworthy example of authentic engagement between the students and teacher. The teacher gives the students autonomy to ask questions and independently think through and comment on strategies and approaches taken by other students. It is very evident that this is a consistent routine that has been established in the classroom. From the students' line of questioning as well as the responses from others, it appears that students have been taught how to dialogue and challenge each other's thinking. The teacher interjects when she wants to model and think aloud to add to what students are saying and provides positive praise when students surprise her with a new way of thinking about a problem.

IS8_hcs_7 – Ellis (autonomy support). The teacher thinks aloud about solving a math problem as she walks around reviewing what students are doing. As she is thinking aloud, she is providing students with guidance on thinking through their own processes or strategies they are using to solve the problem themselves.

Modeling is a means of support that demonstrates teacher care. This clip typifies the ethos of a consistent routine established by the teacher to support her students. Through the process of thinking aloud, she reaches out to multiple students to help them understand a concept. She provides a detailed explanation that includes making a mistake on purpose to show the students that it is okay to make a mistake and by double checking the work, it will be easy to make changes to errors. The reactions of students are positive and they appear to be receptive to what she is saying. This is evident through student responses (nodding heads and taking notes) as well as the questions asked during the transaction.

IS8_hcs_4 – Ellis (random clip). As the teacher is walking around observing students as they work independently and in small groups during a math lesson, she questions one student about using a calculator. She specifies that he missed the point and that the goal was to use the notes from previous lesson to solve the problem in the lesson.

This clip is not consistent with the other clips in the approach taken by the teacher. Rather than asking a student why he is using a calculator, she informs him that he should not be using one. She may have missed a prime opportunity to “think aloud” in the process to help the student understand why this particular tool is not necessary at this time. Having tools accessible is a way of building a common bond with students (Ball & Cohen, 1999); however, in this instance, this approach is not supported.

IS9_hcs_1 – Drake (high expectations). The teacher shares that she would like her students to make connections of what they are reading to the purpose for reading a particular type of genre. She explains in detail how informational texts can help students get information about a particular time period. As she talks, students listen attentively to her explanation.

During this short clip, the teacher gives explicit instruction about the purpose for reading a specific type of genre. She helps students to understand by giving them a way to authentically connect information. She provides purpose to show the students the importance of learning the topic. Providing explicit information gives the students the knowledge they need, but also clearly defines the expectations for learning. Through the process of giving explicit instruction, the teacher is able to guide the students through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose for learning.

IS8_hcs_6 – Drake (attunement). The teacher explains to one student the choices for reading with a partner or independently. During the transaction, the teacher bent down and quietly spoke to the student. She explains that the student made a choice to work independently rather than in a group and the choices that one makes sometimes impact others. While another group wants the student to join, she chooses not to participate, which in turn hurts the feelings of the others.

This clip is an excellent example that demonstrates the purposeful actions of the teacher. She is careful not to humiliate the student even though the student has made a choice to distance herself from others in a way that makes others feel badly. The teacher quietly bends down to the student level and speaks in a soft tone explaining that the students are given a choice to work independently or with others. Upon the student's own choice, she creates the situation she is in because of her refusal to work with others. Through the conversation, the student realizes that she has made a poor decision. The teacher gently touches her back and says that there will be other times that she can make a better choice. She communicates that the opportunity to choose partners is something that occurs frequently in the class and next time will be a new opportunity.

The transaction that occurs reinforces the relationship between teacher and student. The conversation was private and gave the student an opportunity to express her frustrations within a safe space. The teacher's response was supportive and reinforced the idea that things will be okay.

IS8_hcs_2 – Drake (trust). The teacher gathers the students together after independent work to discuss how different students respond to the prompt about explorers in a language arts lesson. She shares the experience of one student (although he was not willing to share himself). She praises his efforts and let him know that it was okay to change an answer. Although he had the correct answer in his original answer, he questions himself and decides to change his response.

This clip highlights a transaction between teacher and student that represents trust within a learning community. Most often, one may connect sharing a student's personal response in front of the class without his permission as intrusive; however, in this clip the opposite occurs. Because of the relationship established in the classroom and the culture created, the teacher uses the response of the student as a positive way to share with others his response reinforcing that although he changes his answer, he originally responds in the right way. She uses humor and a smile to let the student know that she supports him and that at times, we all question ourselves. The teacher takes this opportunity to emphasize the idea of taking risks is an important part of the classroom culture.

IS10_hcs_1 – Drake (random clip). The teacher is working with a small group of students discussing explorers. While she is working with them, a student from the class walks across a chair. She stops what she is doing and tells the student to go back and do it the right way. Rather than talking to him independently, she calls him out in front of the group without

much explanation. Once she redirects the student, she focuses her attention back to the small group and continues to discuss their work about explorers.

A negative re-direction may lead to feelings of humiliation. Although the student makes a poor decision, the teacher's reaction is impulsive. While many other examples in the class represent consistent expectations and feedback, this example conversely demonstrates the opposite of what is captured in the other videos. Although the student complies and the other students seamlessly transition their attention back to the tasks at hand, this may have been a missed opportunity for a meaningful transaction between teacher and student.

IS10_tw_2 – Drake (feedback). The students are working in small groups while the teacher is walking around giving feedback during a social studies lesson. The teacher asks one student why he responds in the way he does. She thinks aloud for him helping to think about next steps. The student responds by saying “this is a lot of work.” The teacher gives him a compliment to encourage him to keep working. The student smiles and continues with the assignment.

Through a specific line of inquiry, the teacher provides scaffolded feedback to a student to support his learning. During this learning interaction, the student takes in the information by the teacher and decides that there is too much work to make changes. The teacher quickly adapts to the student's needs by providing positive praise turning the interaction into a positive burst of motivation for the student. With a simple compliment, the student is able to refocus her attention and get back to work. This occurrence could have easily taken a different turn if the teacher was not attuned to what the student needed in order to continue engaging in the lesson. The transaction is positive and reciprocal in nature.

IS10_hcs_10 – Drake (autonomy support). The teacher is walking around supporting students during a Social Studies lesson. She interacts with one student and asks questions to help her understand the concept. Through her line of questioning, the student made a connection to what needs to happen next for the assignment.

The approach taken by the teacher in this clip demonstrates a meaningful transaction between teacher and student. The transaction allows the student an opportunity to understand her strengths while being guided by the teacher, and provides a means for her to plan the next steps in the learning process. Moreover, it is a way for the student to reflect on what she has done, and make adjustments as she independently thinks about her response. This reciprocal transaction supports teacher care because it exemplifies a way for the student to confidently move forward in the learning process because of the type of support provided by the teacher.

IS9_hcs_1 – Fleming (autonomy support). In this short clip, the students are sitting in a circle in front of the room. They are preparing for learning centers. The teacher directs students to find a “smart spot” to sit. She follows up by letting them know that she will come to them to pass out additional materials. The students quickly move about to find a place to sit.

In order to help support students in making good decisions, highly effective teachers sometime use signal words consistently to create an established routine as well as a common language for students to follow. In this particular clip, the teacher utilizes the term “smart spot” signaling to students that finding a space where they are comfortable and can concentrate on the assignment is what she expects. Evident from how quickly the students transition, the term “smart spot” is something utilized in the everyday routines within this classroom. This type of support appears to keep students focused and on task.

IS8_jdw_1 – Fleming (attunement). The teacher explains the concept of text structure. She provides students with an authentic analogy to help describe the concept. She compares how a house is built to the way a text is structured within a genre. The students are sitting on the carpet listening and shaking fingers to give a signal of understanding. Their response indicates that they are able to make the connection from the explanation the teacher gives.

Finding ways to help students connect with a concept is best done when a teacher knows information about her students. In this case, knowing that students can relate to a house being built from foundation to the frame, she makes the connection simple for the students to relate to. She takes the information and draws a simple picture to provide a visual understanding of the concept. The students respond with a sign language hand signal to agree or disagree.

IS8_jdw_3 – Fleming (dialogue). As the students prepare to move in a circle at the front of the room, a student asks if she needs to bring a pencil to the circle. The teacher says “yes” please bring it to the carpet.

This is a short clip, but captures an important transaction between teacher and student. The student walks over to the teacher and the teacher slightly bends down to the student’s level. The student asks if she should bring a pencil. The teacher responds positively and lets the student know that students are expected to bring the pencil to the circle.

IS9_tw_5 – Fleming (feedback). The teacher is describing signal words in a text. She explains that signal words are easily identifiable within a text structure. The students are sitting on the carpet as she shares the information. She connects the lesson with a previous lesson giving students feedback on how to strengthen their approach as they begin the activity.

Giving descriptive information with an authentic purpose is a strong approach to helping students connect with the assignment. Through her connection with the previous lesson, students are able to absorb new information and add to their current repertoire of knowledge.

IS10_tw_5 – Fleming (random clip). A student makes a text to text connection. The teacher acknowledges the student, but does not probe to find additional information. She continues with her lesson and explains the main character in the book by thinking aloud and sharing why he is brave.

Giving students a voice in a classroom can make students feel valued. Although the teacher acknowledges the student's comment, she quickly moves ahead with her agenda rather than engaging in further dialogue. This may be considered a missed opportunity for a quality transaction to occur. By moving forward so quickly and not connecting the student's thoughts to what is being taught may leave the student feeling that her contribution is not important.

IS9_tw_4 – Fleming (high expectations). The teacher is explaining how to use signal words in a language arts activity they are preparing to do in groups. She models how a group of 3 would identify the signal words. She gives explicit instructions letting the students know the order of what should happen during the activity.

Giving students explicit information that is tailored to their specific needs while monitoring for understanding is an approach that signals clear expectations for learning have been well established. The teacher's purposeful language while explaining and modeling the use of signal words within a text is an excellent example of giving students an opportunity to actively engage in the instructional interaction. As the teacher models, she walks around the circle with her text in hand making eye contact with each of the students to ensure understanding. She points and interacts with the text in the same way she wants students to interact with it. In addition, she

asks specific questions to clarify student understanding of what they need to do as they begin the task. The students remain focused and keep eye contact as the teacher moves about and provides instructions.

IS10_hcs_3 – Adams (high expectations). As the students sit in small groups at their desks, the teacher is talking to the whole group as she reminds them they need to be prepared with a book for independent reading. She also reminds them to choose some additional things so that they are prepared to work on “can dos” once they have completed the “must do” checklist.

Being prepared with resources at hand can help students stay on task and more actively engaged in a lesson. The transaction that takes place between teacher and students illustrates the consistent routine and expectations set for centers. Her specificity in directions such as make sure you have a book, let’s students know that this is a non-negotiable. In addition, another noteworthy point is the opportunity for students to choose additional materials of interest to utilize when it is time for the “can dos.” This implies that choice is a part of the autonomy students have earned as they engage in centers.

IS10_jdw_2 – Adams (attunement). The teacher is having a difficult time getting students to focus. She asks students to get ready and listen. Once students are focused, the teacher explains the tasks for centers. The students ask questions about what they do when they are finished. One student specifically asks if when done, it would be okay to help others. The teacher asks what “helping” looks and sounds like. She models what helping means through a think aloud to ensure that students have a clear understanding.

In this clip, the teacher takes an opportunity to capitalize on a teachable moment to model for students. As the teacher is attuned to the student comment of “helping others,” she is able to use this information to guide students through what needs to happen during center time. This

comment could have easily gone by without being addressed. This opportunity gave students the guidance they needed to understand what it means to “help others.” By being attuned, the teacher is able to build a common language with students and help students progress in a way that meets her objectives for centers.

IS10_hcs_1 – Adams (feedback). The teacher uses term “track me” to signal the attention of her students. Once focused, she tells students how to “spiral” through science centers. The students ask a series of questions. For example, “what if we finish all of our centers” and “can we read a book if we finish the “must dos.” The teacher responds and asks questions in turn. She then, asks students to prepare by gathering materials and thinking about what they need to do to manage their time.

The teacher provides feedback to the series of questions that students ask about centers. Through the type of feedback provided to students, she helps them manage their time and prepare for the tasks at hand. During this time, the teacher is very caring and supportive as she encourages the students and lets them know that they are going to do a great job. This transaction helps the students organize and prepare for learning. Being prepared may help students feel more confident as they engage in the activity.

IS10_hcs_5 – Adams (autonomy support). The teacher is leading a whole group science activity. She asks students to explain their thinking. She asks “how do you know?” multiple times throughout the discussion. She continues by asking students to write answers in their notebooks as she models what she expects on the smartboard.

In this clip the teacher supports student learning through a rigorous line of questioning. She encourages students to explain their thinking and as they do, she probes further to try to support students in a deeper level of thinking. Of importance in this clip is the way that the

teacher approaches students and interacts with them as they think aloud to explain an answer. One student in particular laughs as she struggles to answer the question, but appears to feel comfortable and gives a valiant effort to answer it to the best of her ability. As she approaches this student in particular, it almost appears that it is a strategic move to help support the student.

IS9_tw_1 – Adams (dialogue). The class is having a discussion about the scientific method. The teacher explains that there are multiple ways to solve a problem. She asks several questions making the lesson interactive for students. She gives them an opportunity to discuss their thoughts with a partner.

This clip is relevant because it exhibits the structure of the classroom which promotes student to student as well as teacher to student dialogue. With a quick turn to a partner, the students all have an opportunity to voice their ideas. Moreover, this approach promotes active engagement allowing all students to feel a part of the learning community. An instructional interaction as such allows students to be involved in a meaningful way while giving them ownership for the learning that takes place.

IS10_tw_1 – Adams (random clip). The teacher lets students know that she would be marking “B Cards” because of the behavior. She states that she hopes that she does not need to do this because students “know better”. Once she gains the attention of students, she begins preparing students for a lab experiment.

In this clip, the teacher responds to students with an explicit statement that implies the students’ behaviors are not meeting expectation. Rather than being specific about the issue at hand or the purpose behind why she is asking student to change their attitudes is absent from her explicit instructions. The tone and facial expression of the teacher is somewhat stringent which may convey a negative message to students. When redirections assume a positive tone, there

may be an increased opportunity to get the same outcome, but more importantly result in a transaction that will contribute toward building a stronger relationship or reinforce common language within the classroom environment.

APPENDIX F

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *Building a Culture of Dignity: A Case Study of a High Performing School System*

Researcher: *Tanner Wallace, PhD*

You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study being conducted by Dr. Tanner Wallace, a faculty member in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. Your child is being asked to participate because s/he is a student of a Propel School and in a classroom of a teacher participating in this study. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to allow your child to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers' create a positive classroom experience for students. Your child will be asked about his/her experience in her classroom at Propel.

Procedures:

The study will last for approximately 5 months. If you agree to allow your child to be in the study, he/she will be asked to:

- Have his/her participation in class activities be videotaped
- Spend several lunch periods, discussing video clips of the class with a group of students and teachers to provide his/her perspective on classroom activities. These discussions of video clips will be audiotaped.

Release of School Records:

To learn about students' academic progress while in Propel, Dr. Wallace requests written permission for Propel Schools to release your child's education record. This would include things like examples of your child's school work, test performance and attendance. By signing this consent form, you are granting this permission.

Risks & Benefits:

Because your child will be attending special lunch discussions, others may know that your child is participating in the research study. There is a small chance that participation in the research study could cause your child minor embarrassment. A breach of confidentiality of the research data is possible, but researchers will take steps to protect confidentiality. Your child will not benefit directly from participation, but the information gathered from students will be used to offer training to Propel Schools' staff as well as used in other teacher training programs around the world.

Confidentiality:

- There is a chance that someone in the discussion group could repeat something that your child says to someone outside of the group.
- Tapes of the video discussions will be transcribed, meaning the words will be typed up, so that Dr. Wallace can review the answers that students provide. No names will be recorded during the discussions, so that answers cannot be personally identified.
- Student names on student records will be replaced with a number to prevent these records from being identified as your child's.
- All data will be stored on a password-protected computer for a minimum of seven years.
- Your child will not be named in any description or publications of this research.
- Video clips of classroom interactions and activities may be used in presentations and will include images of your child. Therefore, his or her participation will not be confidential to those who know your child personally.
- In unusual cases, your child's research records may be released in response to an order from a court of law. It is also possible that authorized representatives from the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office may review your child's data for the purpose of monitoring the conduct of this study. Also, if the investigators learn that your child is in serious danger or potential harm, they will need to inform the appropriate agencies, as required by Pennsylvania law.

Compensation:

During the video clip discussions, your child will be able to select a small snack such as a juice drink, flavored milk, crackers, cookies and/or fruit.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want your child to be in this study, he/she does not have to participate. A decision not to participate will not affect your/your child's relationship to Propel Schools or the University of Pittsburgh. Even if you decide to allow your child to participate, he/she is free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. If your child's teacher withdraws from the study, your child's participation is no longer necessary.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Tanner Wallace at twallace@pitt.edu or 412-624-6356. You may contact the Research Office at 412-692-5551. Questions about your child's rights as a research participant can be answered by the Human Subject Protection Advocate at the University of Pittsburgh IRB Office: 1-866-212-2668.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *Building a Culture of Dignity: A Case Study of a High Performing School System*

Researcher: *Tanner Wallace, PhD*

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Dr. Tanner Wallace, a faculty member in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. You are being asked to participate because you have been identified as an effective teacher at Propel Schools by Propel administrators. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers create a culture of dignity within a classroom.

Procedures:

The study will last for 5 months. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

- Permit the videotaping of your instructional practice and classroom activities.
- Be interviewed by Dr. Wallace three times for approximately 45 minutes each time. The topic of the interview questions include: (1) your professional training and experience, (2) instructional practice, and (3) school culture. The interview will be audiotaped.
- Participate, along with a small group of students, in lunchtime discussions of short video clips of your instructional practice and classroom activities.
- Collect and photograph classroom artifacts such as student work, posters, displays, and planning documents.

Risks & Benefits:

Because researchers will be videotaping your instructional practice and talking to you on a regular basis, others will likely know that you are participating in the research study. There is a small chance that participation in the research study could cause minor embarrassment. It is

likely you will also hear students' opinions and experiences that have been previously unknown to you. There is the possibility of a breach of confidentiality of the research data, but the researchers will take steps to protect your confidentiality. You will not benefit directly from participation, but the information gathered from you and your students will be used to offer training to Propel Schools' staff as well as used in other teacher training programs around the world.

Confidentiality:

- There is a chance that someone in the discussion group could repeat something that you say to someone outside of the group.
- Tapes of the individual interviews and video discussions will be transcribed so that Dr. Wallace can review the answers that are provided. No names will be recorded during the discussions, meaning answers cannot be personally identified or attributed to a particular speaker. All data will be combined across teachers' classrooms, so that even a generic reference to "a teacher" will refer to any one of the participating teachers.
- Student names on student records will be replaced with a number to prevent these records from being identified as a particular students'.
- All data will be stored on a password-protected computer for a minimum of seven years.
- You will not be named in any descriptions or publications of this research.
- Video footage of classroom interactions and activities may be used in presentations. These video clips will include images of you, and therefore, your participation will not be confidential to those who know you personally.
- In unusual cases, your research records may be released in response to an order from a court of law. It is also possible that authorized representatives from the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office may review your data for the purpose of monitoring the conduct of this study. Also, if the investigators learn that you or someone with whom you are involved is in serious danger or potential harm, they will need to inform the appropriate agencies, as required by Pennsylvania law.

Compensation:

You will be provided snacks during the video discussions and interviews.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. A decision not to participate will not affect your employment with Propel Schools or your relationship with the University of Pittsburgh. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. If you withdrawal from the study, your students' participation is no longer necessary.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to Tanner Wallace at twallace@pitt.edu or 412-624-6356. You may contact the Research Office at 412-692-5551. Questions about your rights as a research participant can be answered by the Human Subject Protection Advocate at the University of Pittsburgh IRB Office: 1-866-212-2668.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX H

LETTER OF SUPPORT



June 12, 2012

University of Pittsburgh's Institutional Review Board
3500 Fifth Avenue
Hieber Building, Suite 106
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Please note that Dr. Tanner Wallace, Assistant Professor of Psychology in Education, and her research team have the permission of Propel Schools to conduct videotaped classroom observations, take photographs of empty classrooms, conduct staff interviews, conduct student interviews, facilitate staff focus groups, facilitate student focus groups and collect student-related artifacts at our seven K – 8 schools for her study, "Building a Culture of Dignity: A Case Study of a High Performing Public School System."

Dr. Wallace will collaborate with Tina Chekan, Assistant Superintendent, and me to identify 10 focal classrooms to participate in the study. Dr. Wallace will send out an introductory letter to potential sample classroom teachers introducing the study. For students in these classrooms, parental consent forms will be included in the packet of start-of-school paperwork sent out to parents in late summer. Dr. Wallace will follow up with teachers and parents via email and individual meetings. Dr. Wallace will coordinate with the participating teachers and school leadership teams to schedule data collection events. Dr. Wallace's on-site research activities will be conducted from August 1, 2012 – December 21st, 2012.

Dr. Wallace will also provide Propel Schools with a copy of any aggregate results. She has also agreed to make presentations to our staff, if we desire.

If there are any questions, please contact my office.

Signed,

Carol Wooten, PhD
Superintendent, Propel Schools

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