

TEACHERS' INFLUENCE IN STUDENT LEARNING IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Research Proposal Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for EDMA 5683

Ashley E. Royce
Northwest University
Masters in Teaching Program
July 2012

Abstract

Teachers' Influence in Student Learning in Middle School

Today's generation of students are dealing with a complexity during school. They are so accustomed to receiving instant results, multitasking and constant entertainment that I fear there may be a gap between their ideal classroom environment and what teachers and administrators create.

In order to observe this assumption/fear I created a qualitative project by observing classrooms at a middle school for six months, speaking with students, teachers and administrators, interviewing teachers and administrators and administering the students questionnaires.

My results showed that students want school to be entertaining and fun. They want to be surrounded with friends and learn new ideas. The teachers' main goals are for the students to learn the content and to perform well on the assessments. The administrator puts relationships and students' personal development as the number one priority. Since all of these essential factors are not always present in the typical classroom I believe there is room for improvement.

I came to the conclusion that it is important for teachers to adjust their methods of conveying information to their students based on the following study. When interactive lessons are an option the students are more likely to be attentive. After the teacher gains the students attention it gives them an opportunity to absorb the content and perform better on assessments. It also creates the potential for building relationships due to high frequency of interaction.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	2
Research Questions.....	9
Methodology.....	9
Data.....	14
Analysis.....	19
Implications.....	20
Conclusion.....	21
References.....	22

List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Professor Ratings from Students</i>	1
Table 2: <i>Samples</i>	10
Table 3: <i>Summary of Student Questionnaires</i>	14
Table 4: <i>Summary of Teacher Interviews</i>	16

Introduction

Some of the finest schools provide their students with average teachers.

RateMyProfessor.com is a website that allows students to rank their professors on a scale of 1 through 5, 5 being the best. The rating is based on their helpfulness, clarity, easiness and overall quality. Below is a list of colleges and their professors' average ratings reported in 2011.

Table 1

Professor Ratings from Students

Professor Ratings From Students		
School	# Of Professors	Average Rating
Loyola Marymount University	1,150	3.45
University of California - Santa Barbara	1,934	3.45
Seattle Pacific University	249	3.44
Washington State University	1,389	3.36
University of Washington	2,116	3.30
Brown University	444	3.21
Cornell University	1805	3.17
Texas A&M University - San Antonio	152	3.16
Stanford University	587	3.00
University of California - Los Angeles	1,173	2.91
Columbia University	585	2.37

("Rate My Professor", 2011)

This data comes from a variety of prestigious schools in the United States, and indicates that students believe their teachers are slightly better than average. My main concern that derives from this data is: why aren't these intelligent students provided with the most impeccable teachers? How does a teacher's performance impact the students' learning experience? What contributes to the students' success in the classroom? What is good teaching?

Shulman's definition of good teaching "includes nurturing the moral and spiritual development, the civic engagement, and the socialization of students—a nurturing we usually associate with parents, clergy, social workers, librarians, all the folks who jointly accept the

responsibility for both raising and protecting the young” (as cited in Tell, 2001, p. 6). For the sake of this literature review and study I will define a “good teacher”, “ideal teacher”, and “effective teacher” as a teacher who is likeable amongst their peers (students, colleagues, superiors, parents, etc.); a teacher who is recognized amongst the staff as someone who demonstrates intelligence in their field, exceling in that area; a teacher who would be a potential nominee for a teacher of the year award; a teacher that students favor; and lastly, a teacher that qualifies as a mentoring candidate.

In order to explore these questions, I have read a variety of educational research articles and compiled my findings into the following sub-categories: ideal teacher characteristics from psychologists and experiments, ideal teacher characteristics from student perspectives, ideal teacher characteristics from a teacher’s perspective, key components that maximize students’ achievement and the effects/importance of a student/teacher relationship.

Literature Review

Ideal Teacher Characteristics: Psychologists and Experiments

Shulman states, “at the heart of my work on good teaching is the notion of a teacher as an enlightened, passionate intellectual” (as cited in Tell, 2002, p. 7). He believes the key factors of good teachers include content pedagogy and the ability to deliver the content using various methods. Oh (2011) states, “The results of multiple regression analysis showed that personality characteristics, capabilities, motivation, enactive mastery experiences with social/verbal persuasion, and physiological/affective state were significant predictors of efficacy for classroom management” (p. 238). Similarly, Dressel characterizes ideal teachers as academic experts, who organize the course, clearly explain content, and have the ability to advise their students (1987). Various researchers state the following as being the most

influential qualities that contribute to good teachers: teachers' expectations, motivations, attitudes, instructional practices, alongside other characteristics such as caring and dedication to students' learning (Huang and Moon, 2009). However when Huang and Moon conducted their own experiment they discovered another defining trait of a good teacher.

Huang (2009) focused his study on the performance of teachers who obtained a bachelors/masters degree and/or certification versus teachers who did not. His findings show neither group of teachers significantly out performed the other with regards to student achievement. Instead he found the most important factor involved with improving the students' achievement was the number of years a particular teacher had been teaching that grade level. Do not mistake this with the total years a teacher has been teaching. A teacher who teaches a particular grade level for more than five years was positively and significantly associated with an increase in student achievement. The students' achievement level increased twenty-seven percent. On the contrary, the difference between a "novice" and "seasoned" teacher who taught various courses only had a five percent increase in the students' achievement level, which is too minuscule to draw any conclusions.

Goldhaber and Brewer (1998) researched the impact of teachers obtaining a degree as opposed to teachers that do not have a degree and found, "no evidence that a teacher with an advanced degree in a subject other than the one he or she teaches was any more effective than a teacher without an advanced degree" (p. 137). According to Goldhaber and Brewer the factor that contributes to a student's success is "the individual and family background variables, such as parental education"; this "explained up to 75% of 10th-grade achievement" (p.137). Another take on ideal teachers is with regards to their inner traits.

Lamm categorizes ideal teachers in four major prototypes: acculturation, socialization, individualization and disciplinary expertise (as cited in Arnon and Reichel, 2007). These prototypes come from educational ideologies and emphasize certain aspects. For example, acculturation describes a teacher who has a wide range of general knowledge and is able to express culture. Socialization emphasizes the ability to model social norms and get the students involved with their community. Individualization means the teacher is a role model and a “developer”. They are open to new ideas, not afraid to break the typical mold, and think outside of the box. On the contrary, Arnon and Reichel (2007) claim:

The prototype of a good teacher is one who is an expert in a field of study, who is knowledgeable and proficient in methodology and who researches and continues to study the area they teach. The idea of disciplinary expertise is strongly connected to current research that emphasizes the role of a good teacher as a professional.

This particular ideology is extremely similar to Shulman’s definition of an effective teacher, focusing on the teacher’s intellect.

These are a few findings of the numerous experiments and studies, which have been performed in order to identify the ideal teacher. Research and experiment findings are mandatory in order to define the ideal teacher, but student perspectives are also crucial. Student perspectives help teachers understand where their teaching is not meeting students’ learning. They get insight into what the students are expecting from the teachers and what type of experience they want to have.

Ideal Teacher Characteristics – Student Perspectives

In Murphy, Delli and Edwards (2004) study, they asked the students what good teachers were like. They were able to come up with many characteristics. The most identified

characteristics are the teacher: has control over the classroom, does not have to yell, is fair, is available for students, is kind, is respectful and is willing to take the time to get to know their students and their circumstances. Arnon (2007) found a very similar response from the students in his study. He questioned two groups of education major students and both groups agreed that personality is the most important characteristic of an ideal teacher. In particular, they agree teachers need to be empathetic and attentive (Arnon, 2007). Students' main focus is on the teacher's personality, researchers and psychologists say that intellect is the main factor, and teachers believe there are other significant factors involved with being labeled as a great teacher.

Ideal Teacher Characteristics – Teacher Perspectives

Book, Byers and Freeman produced a questionnaire revealing the top five characteristics of an above average teacher; they are caring or understanding, have the ability to relate to children, are patient, are motivating and maintain discipline (1983). They also add that teachers claim it is important to work with students in a way that will help them address their personal concerns and develop healthy self-concepts. Strickland, J. Page, and F. Page on the other hand, discovered that teachers rate the following traits as the most important: explains subjects clearly, enjoys teaching and is knowledgeable in subjects taught (1986). Dressel's definition of an ideal teacher is "scholarship, academic expertise, delivery: the ability to organize the course and to explain clearly, and advising: interactions between the instructor and the student" (1987). Once again relating back to the importance of content knowledge but he also introduces a need for teacher/student interaction.

When Murphy (2004) compared the students' response to the teachers' response, he found that the only defining characteristic in common was they both valued caring as a

characteristic. Therefore the teachers' definition of an ideal teacher has parallel thoughts to the students as well as the evidence from experiments that were previously mentioned.

To be a great teacher it is essential to compare and contrast teacher and student perspectives in order to find where the discrepancies lie. Another component to consider is what maximizes students' achievement.

Key Components That Maximize Students' Achievement

In a sense student achievement is the ultimate goal for a teacher. Since everything revolves around their learning it is important to understand what helps them obtain their goals and the teacher's goals, simultaneously.

Based on Muijs and Reynolds' study of thirty-six English and Welsh primary schools, they concluded that teachers' behavior is the key component. They found "teacher behavior accounts for 5.6% of the variance in adjusted student mathematics achievement and over 50% of between classroom variance" (as cited in Huang & Moon, 2009, p. 214). Fulton and Britton have evidence that by creating a group of teachers who work together and help each other, they were able to "create a culture of success in schools, leading to teaching improvements and student learning gains" (2011, p. 4). Along with working as a community, it is also important to deliver the information in a way that keeps students interested.

Smith and Cardaciotto (2011) are avid believers in active learning. From their research they find that it leads to better attitudes from students, greater motivations, improvements in students' thinking and writing, memory for information taught, and improved exam performance. Smith and Cardaciotto affirm that when active learning is the delivery method of the course content, students report greater overall retention and engagement. However, in their experiment the students in the active learning group rated

their enjoyment of the course lower than the students who were in the lecture group. Smith and Cardaciotto conclude their experiment stating, “students in the active learning condition reported greater retention of course material for the majority of topics as well as the course material as a whole”, and that “active learning is like broccoli; it is good for you but may not be favorable” (2011, p. 57-58). It is hard to motivate students to want to learn but through active learning he was able to see greater improvements.

Students’ motivation is also a component to student achievement. Goldhaber and Brewer (1998) say motivation, enthusiasm, and presentation skills are what create student achievement. James (1977) exclaims how to intrigue the pupils:

Just so, in teaching, you must simply work your pupil into such a state of interest in what you are going to teach him that every other object of attention is banished from his mind; then reveal it to him so impressively that he will remember the occasion to his dying day; and finally fill him with devouring curiosity to know what the next steps in the subject are. (24-25)

Capturing a student’s attention and keeping it requires an ample amount of experience and skill. When accomplished, that teacher is then able to continue teaching. In order to gain students’ attention, a relationship between student and teacher must develop. Therefore this is another element that should be addressed.

Affects/Importance of Teacher/Student Relationship

Creating good teachers is of great importance because teachers directly relate to student achievement and performance. Van Petegem, Creemers, Rossel and Aelterman (2005) profess:

Teachers have both a direct and an indirect influence on students. As a result they contribute to the learning environment of these students. For example, teaching behavior, teaching styles and students' perception of the learning environment have been studied and have been linked to student learning.

They also address the importance for teachers to "fit" into the school system, allowing him/her to create genuine relationships with his/her students. Once relationships are created, then the potential for a democratic and agreeable classroom exists, increasing student achievement. Wubbels and Levy found that teachers benefit from understanding how their interpersonal behavior impacts the students (as cited in Van Petegem, 2005).

In Van Petegem's study, he found that "interpersonal teacher behavior and the wellbeing of the teacher are important aspects of the classroom environment... Teachers have to endeavor to optimize circumstances so that a powerful learning environment will develop" (2005, p. 42). Interpersonal behavior has not been recognized in most of my research. However, Van Petegem enlightens the importance of it. In his research, he finds that interpersonal behavior positively affects the relationship between teachers with many years of experience and their wellbeing as well as a teacher who perceive himself/herself as helpful (2005). Therefore, by staying in the profession and helping your students, teachers create a higher overall wellbeing. This, in turn, reflects directly on your relationship with your students, creating higher achievement.

Forming a preferred classroom experience has many factors, and the most commonly noted factors throughout my research are: a teacher's knowledge of the course content, their personality (caring, fun, patient, etc.), how many years the teacher has taught that particular grade, the students' motivation, the teacher's wellbeing, and relationships between the

teacher and their students. All of these are incredibly important; therefore I would like to explore this matter further, at a personal level.

Research Questions

Based on this review of the literature, I raise the following question that guides this project: What is the classroom experience like in Middle School, and does it meet the expectations of their students? My secondary questions are: What do the students expect from their teachers? What do teachers do to accommodate their expectations? Lastly, how do students believe they learn the best, and how does that parallel the teaching methods teachers practice?

Methodology

Method and Rationale

I approached my study using a qualitative methodology. Hendricks establishes that the general purpose in qualitative research is to understand and interpret phenomena as they occur in natural settings (2009). The information I believe will be most helpful in my study will be collected via interviews, questionnaires and observations. A qualitative approach is helpful because it allows me to better interpret the experience of students and staff in my classroom. I have specific questions that I asked students, teachers and an administrator in Middle School. I also had ample amounts of face-to-face time with them in order to gather information regarding their individual classroom preferences. In my conclusion, I will summarize my findings and analyze this particular natural setting.

Sample

My cooperating school is in a rural location in Snohomish County. There are twenty-eight teachers and four hundred fifty seven students. Demographically, sixty-seven percent

are Caucasian, twenty-two percent are Hispanic and eleven percent are a variety of ethnicities (“Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction”, 2011).

My data is from six students, five teachers and one administrator. I have chosen six students because I believe feedback from six students will provide me with enough diversity to represent a majority the classroom. I chose five teachers so that I could weigh out an average opinion and hopefully find similarities. I chose one administrator because I wanted to speak with the person who is in charge of hiring teachers in order to find out how he/she defines what type of candidate he/she is looking for during the hiring process and what events lead him/her to letting an employee go. This is an important step because even if I were to figure out an agreeable classroom for teachers and students, it wouldn’t be useful information to pursue unless the administrators approved. They determine what is acceptable and ultimately how a classroom should be conducted, so it is essential to know their perspective. Below is the Samples Chart that represents the candidates I spoke with.

Table 2

Samples

Samples		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Student #1 (S1)	Male	extremely respectful, never disrupts class, received an A
Student #2 (S2)	Female	very social, confident, received an A
Student #3 (S3)	Female	quiet but likes positive attention, received a B
Student #4 (S4)	Female	extremely eccentric, outgoing, energetic, received a B
Student #5 (S5)	Female	very reserved, enjoys helping, received a C
Student #6 (S6)	Male	thrives off attention, has a lot of friends in the class, received a D
Teacher #1 (T1)	Female	teaching for 8 years in Elementary and Secondary Math
Teacher #2 (T2)	Male	teaching for 5 years in Secondary Math
Teacher #3 (T3)	Male	teaching for 12 years in Secondary Math
Teacher #4 (T4)	Female	teaching for 30 years in History and Language Arts
Teacher #5 (T5)	Female	teaching for 26 years in English and Lab Classes
Administrator #1 (A1)	Male	taught Secondary Math and Business Education for 10 years at the High School level and has been an Administrator for 16 years

The students I focused on were chosen because they represent a variety of personalities as well as academic levels. The teachers also represent a wide variety varying on the number of years they have been teaching to the subjects they teach.

Instrumentation

I collected data through a series of interviews, questionnaires and field observations. After the interviews and observations I summarized all my findings with the interviewees via questionnaires. A majority of the information came from my recorded observations of how students react to their teacher's instruction. I watched for key moments in the classroom. For example, a key moment would be when a student begins to understand a concept and what led up to that, as well as when a student got out of hand and what caused that to occur. I focused on any extreme moment that went on in the classroom. The student questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What is your favorite thing about class? Why?
2. What class is your favorite? Why?
3. If you could change anything about school what would it be? Why?
4. Who taught your favorite lesson and what was it about? Why did you enjoy it?
5. If you were a teacher, how would you teach the class? What methods and instruments would you use (movies, white boards, lectures, etc.)? Why?
6. Do you prefer reading individually or being read to? Why?
7. Do you prefer working in groups or individually? Why?
8. What do you expect from your teacher? Do your teachers typically meet your expectations? Why or why not?

The teacher questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What is your main goal of each day (aka what would you like to achieve)? What is your main goal of the year?
2. What element of the classroom do you think is the most important?
3. What do you think the kids thought of you when you walked in the room for the first time? What do you think they think of you at the end of the year?
4. Why did you start teaching? What keeps you in the profession?
5. What is the most difficult part about teaching?
6. What type of teaching methods do you use? Which is most effective?
7. How do you make sure students feel comfortable in the classroom?
8. What advice would you give to new teachers?

The interviews of the administrator included the following questions:

1. What are you looking for in an individual when you are hiring for a teaching position? How often do you find fitting candidates?
2. What do you think teachers struggle with the most?
3. Typically when you let a teacher go, what is the main reason?
4. Do you think personality outweighs intelligence?
5. What is the most important thing for students to learn while they are at your school?
6. What piece of advice would you give teachers in order to help them create the most effective classroom possible?
7. Field observations were conducted throughout the semester. I watched for the following: 1. how the teachers address their students and how the students respond, 2. the type of learner each student appears to be, 3. how students respond when they do not

understand the lessons, 4. how the teachers respond when a student does not understand, 5. when are the students most excited, and 6. when students behave the worst.

I created questionnaires throughout the semester in order to summarize my interviews, field observations, and to obtain additional opinions. The information I collected from these sources helped me understand what it is that keeps students motivated and happy in the classroom, as well as what teachers and administrators are striving for.

In order to protect the students, teachers, and the administrators' anonymity, I used generic labels in my report and compilations. The only place actual names were recorded was in my original notes. Once I start recording the interviewees and making my own notes I used pseudonyms. I will also be sure not to mention any names during discussions of the findings.

Analysis/Validity

I looked for themes and patterns that presented themselves repeatedly in the observations and interviews. I watched for similarities as well as conflicts in answers between the students, teachers, and the administrator. I looked for the desired characteristics of a teacher, as well as what the teachers do to keep the students motivated and excited to be there.

Before I began this project I already had the idea that students learn best through active learning, and that teachers should lecture less and get the students involved in new and different activities. I learn best when I am given the entire explanation of how things work and why we need to do them, and then I get to do it myself. That being said, I think that is the ideal way to teach. I also believe that it is a teacher's responsibility to entertain the students

and gain their trust. If that is not created then I think the motivation from the students will not be there.

In order to maintain the validity of my project and avoid siding with my biases I used a variety of validity methods. First, I compared verbal conversation with questionnaires, and looked for the ways each supported and/or contrasted with each other. Secondly, I observed for prolonged periods of time and took meticulous careful notes. After my observations, I created questionnaires for the data I compiled and gave them to the students to be sure I had come up with the correct conclusions.

Data

I have compiled a summary of the students' responses on the final questionnaire at the end of the six-month observation period.

Table 3

Summary of Student Questionnaires

Summary of Student Questionnaires		
	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Explanations</u>
Question	<i>What is your favorite thing about class?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	work time	less homework
S2	friends	loves them
S3	cool teachers and friends in the class	makes the class fun
S4	learning new things	it is interesting
S5	working with neighbors	they share knowledge
S6	math teacher	makes the class fun
Question	<i>What is your favorite class?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	art	try new things
S2	humanities	likes history
S3	block	projects
S4	band	loud and crazy
S5	math	good at it
S6	math	friends in the class

Question	<i>What would you change about school?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	ZAP	some teachers say they don't accept late work therefore Zeros Aren't Permitted is contradicting
S2	allow gum chewing	
S3	less periods	
S4	STEP policy	we are not little kids
S5	no assigned seats	work better next to friends
S6	more breaks	they are not enough
Question	<i>What would you change about class?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	shorten lectures	gets boring
S2	STEP	pointless
S3	written tests in PE	pointless
S4	more lessons, less homework	to really understand Math
S5	no scantrons	pain
S6	quieter	to get work done
Question	<i>What was your favorite lesson?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	burning calories	interesting and ate cheetos in class
S2	holocaust	shocking
S3	watching Meet the Robinsons	it was fun
S4	play the flute	super fun
S5	learning to play an instrument	permission to make noise
S6	World War II	teacher made it funny
Question	<i>How would you teach the class?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	white board and movies	lectures get boring
S2	one movie a month	for a break
S3	movies and white boards	they are easier
S4	patience, white boards and games	keep students involved
S5	movies and white boards	kids like to watch movies
S6	movies	kids enjoy them
Question	<i>Preference: reading individually or being read to?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	individually	improves reading skills
S2	individually	goes faster
S3	individually	goes faster
S4	individually	doesn't like listening to people
S5	being read to	sucks at reading

S6	individually	picture it better
Question	<i>Preference: Working in groups or individually?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
S1	individually	not everyone participates
S2	groups	more fun
S3	depends	potential group mates
S4	groups	more points of view
S5	groups	learn new things
S6	groups	more ideas
Question	<i>What do you expect from your teacher?</i>	
S1	teach something new	
S2	be nice and allow time to talk	
S3	what my sisters tell me	
S4	to be understanding	
S5	teach something new	
S6	help me understand	

Below is a summary of the teachers' responses that I received when I interviewed each of the teachers.

Table 4

Summary of Teacher Interviews

Summary of Teacher Interviews	
<u>Responses</u>	
Question	<i>What is your main goal of the day? Year?</i>
T1	teach the objectives
T2	performance assessment - students understand the lesson and can perform
T3	organizational habits, study skills, accessing the text book and pass AYP
T4	students are engaged. Pacing one unit to the next
T5	increase their comprehension and vocabulary - pass MSP, improve their GE
Question	<i>What element of the classroom is most important?</i>
T1	management and creating a safe environment
T2	they believe they can succeed
T3	get through the concept
T4	comfortable, welcoming and trusting environment
T5	see the classroom as a place to learn

Question	<i>What do the kids think of you at the beginning of the year? End?</i>
T1	not sure at first, but the end a fair and caring teacher that helps them learn
T2	engaged, by the end caring and tried hard
T3	bald, jerk, at the end they could learn something from me
T4	intimidating, at the end, trusting and integrity
T5	caring and respectful
Question	<i>Why did you start teaching? What keeps you in the profession?</i>
T1	enjoy kids, like a challenge - always changing and keeps you on your toes
T2	enjoyed teaching summer camps - little success, parent appreciation, summers off
T3	previous experiences with teachers - enjoys learning and seeing kids learn
T4	grandma was a teacher - unpredictable, entertaining, something new everyday
T5	likes kids - the opportunity to watch and mold kids
Question	<i>What is the hardest thing about teaching?</i>
T1	clerical work, reaching every students
T2	assessments, finding the appropriate one
T3	classroom management
T4	parents and their lack of involvement
T5	working with other teachers and adults
Question	<i>What teaching methods do you use? Which is most effective?</i>
T1	structured and consistent, and student discovery
T2	combination of everything
T3	lecture, discussions and individual work
T4	lecture and discussions, occasional group work
T5	balanced between individual, lecture, instruction, make everything short
Question	<i>How do you make students feel comfortable in the classroom?</i>
T1	respect them and let them be their selves
T2	
T3	humor, try not to make a big deal when they answer questions wrong
T4	humor, being goofy, singing in class
T5	start with minimum requirements to build their confidence
Question	<i>What advice would you give to new teachers?</i>
T1	stick with it
T2	hang in there, have fun, be firm and fair
T3	stay on top of management, first month is crucial
T4	can't argue with crazy people, speak up and stand up for yourself

Below is a summary of the interview I had with the administrator:

- When hiring a new teacher he looks for a student-centered individual who is focused on the child and relationships. When he asks them what they teach, he would like a response of “I teach children”. Love for the content they will be teaching is important but the number one priority should be the students. Elementary teachers should be all about the students. High school teachers should mainly focus on the content, and middle school teachers fall somewhere in between.
- The teachers’ greatest obstacles tend to be time management and keeping up with the expectations and standards that are continually increasing.
- The main reason he will decide to let a teacher go is because the teacher has poor instructional skills, is incompetent and does not develop relationships. Especially after this is brought to their attention and there is no improvement made. The other reason is because the teacher does not cooperate and will not participate in required events/meetings/conferences, etc.
- The most important thing for students to learn while they are at his school is empathy and to care for their fellow human beings, as well as learning not to laugh at other’s expense. He would like them to develop as fair and kind individuals.
- Future advice to new teachers is to establish relationships and show that they care about the students. Follow the firm, fair, and friendly rule but remember you are not there to be their friend. Once that is established, then focus on the curriculum and make yourself available.

Over the past six months I took notes of when students would disrupt class most frequently. I found most disruptions occurred under the following circumstances: if it was the end of the day, if they did not understand a new concept, if the instructions were not clear or if the school schedule was abnormal. The students were most cooperative during classroom activities, games, revisiting concepts they were already taught, and when a new subject was explained and they thought it was easy. Many students that created distractions most frequently did not receive an above average grade. Also the content that received the highest overall average in the assessments were always either related to a topic that was taught and included an interactive activity, or it was related to a topic they had previously been taught.

Analysis

Since we are looking at how to create an ideal classroom from three different perspectives I would like to summarize each point of view in a more condensed form. Essentially students are stating that the most important aspects of a classroom are the following: it is fun and interesting/entertaining, they are learning something new, their friends are involved, and they would like it to go by as fast as possible. Teachers state that teaching the content, performing on the assessments, classroom management and creating a comfortable environment are the most important aspects of a classroom. As for the administrator, teaching students empathy and obtaining teachers who are focused on developing the students is the most important aspect. There are a few places where these perspectives are agreeable and a couple areas where they are not.

The similarity amongst all three perspectives is relationships. The students enjoy classrooms that are filled with teachers who they like and students that are their friends. The teachers' focus is on creating a comfortable environment and they create that by way of

relationships. Also, the administrator will only hire a candidate who is child and relationship focused. This being said I believe relationships will be the key factor in creating the ideal classroom. It will enable the students to trust the teacher and their fellow students, then group work will be more applicable, friends will be created in the classroom, and a more harmonized environment will be created. Once relationships are established, then the focus can be moved towards content and entertainment.

A major difference between perspectives is the main focus of the classroom. Students would like class to be fun, new, exciting, and interesting. Teachers want the students to understand the concepts and perform well on the assessments. The administrator wants the students to become mature and caring individuals. The goal of obtaining one of these perspectives is achievable; however, obtaining all three of them is more complex, especially since a majority of the teachers give instruction via lectures. Many of the students specified that lectures are boring and they do not enjoy them. This is where I believe interactive learning could be an extremely helpful middle ground. If teachers were to approach each lesson with a goal of creating a game or an activity, I believe it would not only get more students involved, but also help the students retain the information. After reviewing their test results I found that the students scored best on the content that included a game at the end of the lesson. I also found that students excelled in content they had previously been exposed to. That being said, an interactive lesson or a lesson that they could relate to personally, would keep them attentive, entertained, increase their retention, and therefore elevate their academic success. During this process of interaction, relationships will develop even further, and teamwork will be essential which will address the administrator's requirements.

Implications/Recommendations

Teachers should have a desire to create a more active learning environment. Students in this generation are being brought up in a world full of entertainment and instant results. The expectations of students are becoming more and more demanding so it is the teachers' job to get the students' attention and keep them captivated. Lecturing should not be the most common way to teach students. Most of the students gave positive feedback regarding their classroom experience, but they mentioned how boring lectures are and that there should be more movies. The students expect to be entertained and to learn new ideas and subjects in school, but state that they do not like specific subjects because they are boring. My study leaves us with the following questions: Teachers are teaching, but are they doing it in the most efficient way? How would interactive teaching affect the students' memory and assessment results?

Conclusion

This project has helped me understand what it takes to be a teacher that is sought after. Throughout the interviews, questionnaires and observations of students, teachers, and administrators I have been able to formulate some key concepts and techniques that help motivate the students and create a positive classroom environment. The first is to create relationships and focus on the students' mental and emotional needs as a person. The second is to relate the content being taught to what the students are interested in. Teachers always want successful results on the assessments, but not all of them deliver the content in the most effective manner. I believe that in order for the teachers to get the results they want it is necessary to listen to the students and focus on relating the content back to them while making it interesting. If those two key concepts are achieved then administrators will be pleased and everyone will have created an efficient and productive environment.

References

- Arnon, S., & Reichel, N. (2007). Who is the ideal teacher? Am I? Similarity and difference in perception of students of education regarding the qualities of a good teacher and of their own qualities as teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 13(5), 441-464.
- Book, C., Byers, J., & Freeman, D. (1983). Student expectations and teacher education traditions with which we can and cannot live. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(1), 9-13.
- Dressel, P.L. (1987). Mission, organization and leadership. *Journal of Higher Education*, 58(1), 101-109.
- Fulton, K., & Britton, T. (2011). STEM Teachers in Professional Learning Communities: From Good Teachers to Great Teachers.
- Goldhaber, D. D., & Brewer, D. J. (1998). When should we reward degrees for teachers? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 134.
- Hendricks, C. (2009). *Improving Schools through Action Research: A comprehensive Guide for Educators* (2nd ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Huang, F. M., & Moon, T. R. (2009). Is experience the best teacher? A multilevel analysis of teacher characteristics and student achievement in low performing schools. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation, & Accountability*, 21(3).
- James, W. (1899). *Talks to teachers on psychology: And to students on some of life's ideals*. New York: H.Holt and Company.
- James, W. (1977). The principles of psychology, In J.J. McDermott (Ed.). *The writings of William James: A comprehensive edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Murphy, P., Delli, L. M., & Edwards, M. N. (2004). The good teacher and good teaching: Comparing beliefs of second-grade students, preservice teachers, and in-service teachers. *Journal Of Experimental Education, 72*(2), 69-92.
- Oh, S. (2011). Preservice teachers' sense of efficacy and its sources. *Psychology, 2*(3), 234-239.
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2011). Retrieved November 21, 2011, from: <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=5128&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=5128&yrs=&year=2010-11>.
- Rate my professor. (2011). Retrieved November 12, 2011, from: <http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/>.
- Smith, C. V., & Cardaciotto, L. (2011). Is active learning like broccoli? Student perceptions of active learning in large lecture classes. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 11*(1), 53-61.
- Strickland, J. F., & And, O. (1986). *Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching as a Career*.
- Tell, C. (2001). Appreciating good teaching: A conversation with Lee Shulman. *Educational Leadership, 58*(5), 6-11.
- Van Petegem, K., Creemers, B. P. M., Rossel, Y., & Aelterman, A. (2005). Relationships between teacher characteristics, interpersonal teacher behaviour [sic] and teacher wellbeing. *Journal Of Classroom Interaction, 40*(2), 34-43.