EXAMINING THE (FALSE) DICHOTOMY BETWEEN "CARE" AND "EDUCATION"

IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS:

A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

WITHIN A STANDARDIZED CURRICULUM MODEL

BY

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Abstract

Public preschool programs using standardized curriculum models are increasing rapidly, and while research has shown that teacher-child relationships have been used successfully as an intervention and compensatory measure, it is unclear what influence the public preschool setting and the use of a curriculum model have on teacher-child relationships. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe how teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs while working within the parameters of a standardized curriculum model. The research questions guiding this study were:

1) How do preschool teachers build relationships with children while working within a standardized curriculum model?

   a) What opportunities exist for relationship building?

   b) What strategies do teachers employ to build relationships with their students?

2) What are teachers' beliefs about relationship building in the early childhood classroom?

3) What do teachers believe impacts upon their abilities to successfully build relationships with their students?

The participants were two public preschool teachers, working within the Curiosity Corner curriculum model. Data sources included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document review. Data was analyzed using the Dedoose data analysis software to look for patterns and themes. Analysis took place within each case and across cases as well. Findings showed that the participants recognized their job to

include both care and education. They believed that establishing comfort would create

feelings of emotional security that would set the stage for learning. These teachers

prioritized relationship building and relational activities in their classrooms, despite

the pressures and constraints faced; however, each teacher confronted these

challenges differently, as their teaching environments varied. The Curiosity Corner

model did not appear to have a great impact on teachers' relationship building

abilities, although extended periods of time allotted for Learning Labs and Gross

Motor Play did seem to provide opportunities for longer, more sustained interactions.

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Acknowledgements

For as long as I can remember, I've always wanted to be a teacher. I used to happily tag along with my father to his fifth grade classroom, play school with my sister and neighborhood friends (even during the summer), and take any opportunity available to work with children. And much like the teachers in this study, I fell into early childhood education and I could not be happier to have taken the leap. But it wasn't until I finished a year of teaching second grade in the Newark Public Schools that I truly understood the impact that education has on the future, and the opportunities and possibilities that exist as a result of a high quality education, which includes caring and invested teachers.

So first and foremost, I'd like to thank the teachers who participated in this study. These two teachers exemplify excellence in teaching and serve as a model for teachers to follow. It was my pleasure to spend time in their joyful and loving classrooms, where everyone felt welcomed, included, and cared for; being able to revisit my time spent with them via my data analysis and writing reminded me of how generous and open and honest they were with their time, with me, but more importantly, with their students.

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Chapter 1: Statement of Problem

Early childhood education has long been viewed as a compensatory measure that

can be used to ameliorate some of society's larger problems (Goffin & Wilson, 2001;

Ryan, 2004) and at this moment in time, perhaps more than ever, early childhood

education, and the promises that it holds, have become thrust into the national spotlight.

In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was passed by Congress and

signed by President Barack Obama and in this act, early childhood education was

targeted as a means of improving the educational outlook for all children; $5 billion were

designated for early learning programs, including $2 billion for the Child Care and

Development Block Grant and over $2 billion for Early Head Start and Head Start

(United States Federal Government, 2010). In 2011, Congress authorized the Race to the

Top Early Learning Challenge program (RTT-ELC), a program jointly administered by

the United States Department of Education and Department of Health and Human

Services, to reform early learning education and improve the quality of early childhood

programs to help prepare the country's youngest students to enter kindergarten ready to

learn; since that time, over $1 billion has been awarded to early learning programs in 20

states (U.S. Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services,

2013; 2014a). In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama called upon

Congress to expand access to high quality preschool to every child in American and in

2014, $226 million in Preschool Development Grants was awarded to 18 states for

expanding and developing high quality preschool programs to serve an additional 18,000

children in the first year of the program (U.S. Department of Education and Department

of Health and Human Services, 2014b).

Record numbers of children are attending early childhood programs and state-

funded preschool programs are continuing to grow, with 40 states, plus D.C., spending

more than $5.5 billion on preschool during the 2013-2014 school year (Barnett, Carolan,

Squires, Brown, and Horowitz, 2015). In 2010, 74% of all 4-year old children in the

United States attended either a center-based public or private pre-K program, and

although the numbers are smaller, even America's 3-year olds are attending preschool in

growing numbers (Barnett & Nores, 2012). However, when it comes to preschool, the

focus should not simply be limited to the number of available programs or dollars spent

or children served; it's not enough to merely create classrooms. These programs must be

thoughtfully created by policymakers who understand the need for high quality programs,

and staffed by specially trained educators who clearly understand best practices in early

childhood education and the critical role that they, as teachers, play in determining the

level of quality of their classrooms.

Research has demonstrated that "…quality is linked to effects on children's

development, academic success over time, and other outcomes that yield economic

benefits to society" (Barnett, Epstein, Friedman, Sansarelli, and Hustedt, 2009, p. 11).

However, regardless of the fact that publicly funded preschool is only valuable if it is

effective, "…it is noteworthy that most states fail to set program standards consistent

with programs that have demonstrated strong effects on learning and development"

(Barnett, et al., 2009, p. 9), and that even then, "standards alone do not guarantee quality"

(p. 11). With this increase in preschool attendance, availability, and access, demands

must be made to insist upon high quality early childhood programs for all children.

Early Childhood Classroom Quality

Early childhood classroom quality is often broken down into two components.

Structural quality is concerned with the regulatable aspects of care, such as class size,

teacher-child ratio, early learning standards, and teacher qualifications. Process quality,

on the other hand, is concerned more with those components of the early childhood

program that directly influence the daily workings of the classroom, such as materials,

activities, learning opportunities, health and safety, and teacher-child interactions

(Espinosa, 2002; Howes, Philips, & Whitebrook, 1992; Howes & Smith, 1995). These

indicators of quality are often related. For example, small class size, low teacher-child

ratios, and specialized teacher training lead to richer teacher-child interactions, which

positively influence children's learning (Barnett, et al., 2009; Espinosa, 2002).

Yet, despite what we know about the benefits of high-quality early childhood

programs, there continue to be great disparities in early childhood programming across

the states. As such, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has set

benchmarks for quality to insure that programs meet at the very least, minimal

requirements for quality. One of the areas where the states fall short, however, is that of

the requirements for teacher preparation and training.

Role of the Teacher

While it should not be considered as the sole factor in determining classroom

quality (Whitebrook & Ryan, 2011), it is well-documented that in order for early

childhood experiences to be high quality, teachers must have the educational background

consisting of a four-year college degree and specialized training for working with young

children in order to be able to provide appropriate programming and caregiving (Barnett,

2003; Espinosa, 2002; Howes & Smith, 1995; Pianta et al., 2005). One of the most

critical research-based benchmarks set by NIEER is that of teachers' professional

qualifications. As part of the NIEER Quality Standards Checklist's minimum criteria for

effective preschool programs, teachers must have at least a Bachelor's degree and

specialized training in early childhood education and must receive fifteen hours per

school year of professional development; teaching assistants must have earned a CDA or

equivalent. Yet, of the 53 public Pre-K programs across the country, only 30 meet the

benchmark for teacher qualifications and just eighteen meet the benchmark for teacher

assistant qualifications (Barnett et al., 2015). The role of the teacher is critical in

determining classroom quality (Pianta et al., 2005), and if the majority of state-funded

preschool programs do not even require basic training or educational requirements for

those who work directly with children, the effectiveness of these programs must be

questioned.

In addition, teachers need appropriate supervision, support, and mentoring to

ensure appropriate practices (Friedman et al., 2009; Whitebrook & Ryan, 2011;

Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Yet, in a study of preschool programs in New Jersey, Friedman

et al. (2009) found that most school administrators do not even have early childhood

experience or training; childcare and Head Start administrators were more likely to have

experience in early childhood but fewer than one-quarter of principals and not even ten

percent of district administrators who were responsible for supervising public early

childhood programs had the background necessary to do so. Research has shown that

teachers who do not feel professionally supported are less likely to build positive

relationships with their students (Mill and Romano-White, 1999); if the role of the

teacher is critical in determining a child's future school successes (Birch & Ladd, 1997),

then the relationships that she builds are that much more important.

Teacher-Child Relationships in Early Childhood Education

Care in the classroom can have a significant impact on both student success and

students' perceptions of school (Alder, 2002; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 1995;

Wentzel, 1997). The work of Noddings (2015; 2014; 2013; 2012; 2005; 1995) posits

caring as a relational activity, and suggests that in schools, caring can be translated into

making connections and forming relationships with students, in an individualized,

responsive, and respectful manner. Research has shown that teachers can use

relationship-building as a tool to foster motivation and success in their students (Elicker

and Fortner-Wood, 1995; Howes, Phillipsen, and Peisner-Feinberg 2000; Wentzel, 2002;

Furrer & Skinner, 2003). These relationships can also be viewed as an intervention or

compensatory measure for children who are at risk of school failure (Baker, 2006; Lynch

& Cicchetti, 1992; Mantzicopoulos, 2005; Meehan, Hughes & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor &

McCartney, 2007; Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes, and Reiser, 2007; Stipek & Miles,

2008). Relational negativity between teachers and students predicts not only lower

academic achievement for the student, but behavioral issues as well (Hamre & Pianta,

2001). In addition, children's negative perceptions of their relationships with their

teachers are associated with lower academic achievement, increased discipline problems,

and lower social skills (Murray, Murray, and Waas, 2008). Further, children's

perceptions of teachers' social support are related to their liking of school; not

surprisingly, those who like their teachers also feel positive about school in general

(Valeski & Stipek, 2001).

While it is clear from the research that building positive relationships in the early

childhood classroom should be a priority for early childhood educators and policymakers,

many factors can impact upon a teacher's ability to successfully build relationships with

her young students. In particular, with the recent and rapid expansion of public preschool

programs, there may be a shift towards the academic, neglecting the need for care in the

early childhood classroom and ignoring what research has demonstrated about the

importance of the teacher-child relationship.

The Changing Face of Early Childhood Education

There is growing concern that despite what we know about the critical role that

the teacher plays in determining the level of quality of her classroom, with the rush to

meet the need for public preschool programs, the focus may shift away from the everyday

life of the early childhood classroom, including teacher-child interactions, to a focus on

outcomes (Ryan, 2004)—a shift away from a program that meets the needs of the whole

child to a program that focuses solely on academic achievement, putting cognitive

outcomes first (Miller & Almon, 2009).

There has been a propensity in our schools to separate care and education into

separate compartments—with relationships, interactions, and social/emotional needs on

the "care" side of the coin and "academics" and cognitive needs on the "education"

side—a split which Graue (in Gullo, 2006) calls a "false dichotomy". In the National

Research Council Report by Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2001), it is explained that

"*care and education cannot be thought of as separate entities in dealing with young*

children" (p.2). The report goes on to state that "adequate care involves providing

quality cognitive stimulation, rich language environments, and the facilitation of social,

emotional, and motor development. Likewise, adequate education for young children can

occur only in the context of good physical care and of warm affective relationships"

(Bowman, Donovan, and Burns, 2001, p. 2). According to McNamee & Mercurio

(2007), caring is "both an emotional and an intellectual act". In addition, Yoshikawa et

al. (2013) note, "Children benefit most when teachers engage in stimulating interactions

that support learning *and* are emotionally supportive" (p. 1). Yet with the rapid expansion

of public preschool programs, particularly those that do not meet the suggested quality

benchmarks, there may be an increased emphasis on inappropriate teaching practices in

an effort to achieve academic outcomes, further widening the gap between care and

education and placing the need for care and relationships between teachers and children

on the back burner.

It cannot be ignored that the role of the teacher and the relationships that she

builds with her students play a large part in determining the level of quality of the

classroom and the outcomes of any early childhood program, and that caring for young

children should be a given part of any program serving the needs of young children. Yet,

states have begun creating early learning standards and requiring the use of standardized

curriculum models which raises a question as to how these new initiatives will impact

upon issues of care in the early childhood classroom (Goldstein & Bauml, 2012). Goffin

& Wilson (2001) state that "appreciation for the social nature of child development

highlights the importance of contemplating early childhood curriculum models in terms

of the relationships they foster among and between children and teachers" (p. 206). But

is this what is happening in the current educational context? Will the definition of care in

the classroom, specifically, or the definition of early childhood education, in general,

change along with the educational climate? With a focus on accountability and

standards, will early childhood education be further broken down into separate

compartments of "care" and "education"?

Ryan and Goffin (2008) recognize that caring for and instruction of young

children go hand in hand when it comes to their education but what of programs that

insist upon the separation of the two and shift the focus to the academic? Further, with

such a shift, what happens to the relationship between teacher and child? As preschool

programs continue to make their way into the public sector, standardized curriculum

models are becoming more accepted, and often required, by the larger systems that

govern them. Does the implementation of a standardized curriculum model allow time

and space for these teacher-child relationships to be built or does the requirement to use a

curriculum model encourage the teacher to focus primarily on the academic? Does the

curriculum model limit a teacher by forcing her to work "within the box" or does it give

her more freedom and time to build relationships with her students? Does a pre-planned,

"one-size-fits-all" curriculum (Goffin & Wilson, 2001) allow for a teacher to be

responsive to her students or does it force children to fit into a pre-determined mold? As

Noddings (2012) notes, "Good teachers must be allowed to use their professional and

moral judgment in responding to the needs of their students" (p. 774). It is critically

important that research provide a clear picture of what is actually happening in these

classrooms. Two sides of the care/education coin that must be examined are teacher-

child relationships, as interpreted through Noddings' lens of care, and the use of a

standardized curriculum model, which tends to imply a focus on academic outcomes, and

the interplay between these two sides.

Curriculum Models in Early Childhood Education

In an effort to improve early childhood program quality and produce better

outcomes, early childhood programs have utilized various curriculum models over the

years, ranging from teacher-designed curriculum to research-based, scripted curriculum

and various iterations in between (Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Ryan, 2004). As early

childhood programs have entered the public sector, however, there has been increasing

pressure to show accountability for these programs and the promises that they hold

(Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Ryan, 2004). It's not enough to say that high quality produces

better students; these programs must deliver measurable results. Further, for programs

that employ teachers and supervisors who do not have any formal training in early

childhood education, there is the need for more explicit guidance as to what should be

taught in the classroom. For many public early childhood programs, this has resulted in

the standardization of a curriculum and the implementation of a "teacher-proof" model to

ensure that all children are receiving the same potential benefits and are, indeed, learning,

thereby justifying the investment (Goffin and Wilson, 2001)

There are a number of challenges to the assumption that the implementation of a

curriculum model will guarantee quantifiable results. Ryan (2004) notes that this idea

"assumes a direct relationship between these curricula and improvements in teachers'

instructional practices" but that given the disparities that exist among teachers when it

comes to preparation and experience and the little that we know about the factors that

influence the implementation of a curriculum model, "…current preschool policies are

operating on a logic that may not hold up in practice" (p. 664). In addition, Goffin &

Wilson (2001) warn that "curriculum models also are vehicles for lowering expectations

regarding the professional responsibilities and possibilities of early childhood teachers"

(p. 226) and that a pre-determined curriculum shifts a teacher's focus away from the

complexities of teaching and solely towards the issue of implementation. Further,

Noddings (2014) notes that "[p]lanning is part of the creative aspect of teaching. Creative

teachers reject the search for pedagogical panaceas and take joy in planning a variety of

lessons (p. 17)", leading to the question of teacher morale that may be associated with the

lack of control over curricular decisions. What is most problematic, however, is that the

majority of studies that have been conducted regarding curriculum models focus solely

on outcomes (Chambers, Cheung, Slavin, Smith, and Laurenzano, 2010; Preschool

Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium, 2008); very few studies exist that look at

how teachers function within these particular curriculum models.

       The goal of most curriculum studies is to evaluate the effectiveness of early

childhood curricula and a number of studies have shown quantifiable results in terms of

outcomes (Barnett et al., 2008; Chambers et al., 2010; Campbell, Pungello, Miller-

Johnson, Burchinal & Ramey, 2001; Imholz & Petrosino, 2012; Marcon, 1999; Marcon,

2002; PCERC, 2008; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997; Stipek et al., 1998). However,

limiting the evaluation to primarily academic and cognitive outcomes and the inclusion of

only quantitative data does not show the whole picture of what's happening in these

classrooms. As Barnett (2010) notes, this type of analysis stands to "provide useful

information but remain[s] incredibly narrow" (para. 5). The lack of information

regarding what teachers actually do within these curriculum models does little to provide

a picture of what is happening in these programs and how these outcomes are being

achieved. Further, disregard for the social and emotional outcomes continue to create a

false divide between "care" and "education" in early childhood.

Research Questions

Very few qualitative studies exist that focus on teacher-child relationships in the

early childhood classroom; further, little has been done to examine the impact of the

implementation of a standardized curriculum model on a teacher's ability to build

relationships with her students. We know that teacher-child relationships impact upon

children's school success; what we don't know is what part a standardized curriculum

model plays in influencing that relationship. As public preschool programs and the use

of curriculum models continue to grow, it is critically important to examine what is

happening in these classrooms between teachers and students; more exploration needs to

be done to fill in the current gap in the literature regarding the descriptive nature of these

relationships. It is imperative to understand what teachers are actually doing to create

high quality experiences when working within a framework of state mandates and

standardized curriculum models.

The aim of this study was to utilize a case study approach to examine how public

preschool teachers build relationships with their students while working within the

parameters that come along with being a publicly-funded early childhood program,

namely the need to work within a standardized curriculum model. The research questions

guiding this study were:

1) How do preschool teachers build relationships with children while working within a

    standardized curriculum model?

    a) What opportunities exist for relationship-building?

    b) What strategies do teachers employ to build relationships with their students?

2) What are teachers' beliefs about relationship-building in the early childhood

    classroom?

3) What do teachers believe impacts upon their abilities to successfully build

    relationships with their students?

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This review of the literature will start by exploring the limited research base that

exists on care in education. I will then briefly examine major events in the history of

early childhood education in the United States to explore how care in the early childhood

classroom has changed over time from the 19th century up through the present day; this

will include the philosophical underpinnings of the era and an analysis of the role of the

teacher and the curriculum. In the latter part of this section, special attention will be paid

to the use of standardized curriculum models and their impact upon what happens in the

early childhood classroom given the current educational context and the expansion of

public preschool programs. Finally, the review will conclude with an exploration of an

area of research that demonstrates how the act of caring is enacted in the classroom

through teacher-child relationships.

Care

In 1995, Lipsitz boldly stated, "Why should we care about caring? Because

without caring, individual human beings cannot thrive, communities become violent

battlegrounds, the American democratic experiment must ultimately fail, and the planet

will not be able to support life" (p. 1). Being in a responsive relationship is crucial to our

feelings of security and belonging and being able to reciprocate another's acts of caring

affords us the opportunity to do the same for someone else. While this basic need for

care is true of adults, the same holds true for children.

The most influential pieces in the current body of literature on care in schools are

those of Nel Noddings (2015; 2014; 2013; 2012; 2005; 1995), whose body of work has

informed practically all writing and research in this area. In the preface to the most recent

edition of her book, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*,

Noddings (2013) explains, "The formation of caring relations is central to both teaching

and life itself"(p. xix). For over thirty years, she has written about the importance of

caring in education and the tensions and obstacles that may exist in providing a learning

environment based on caring. Caring is viewed as a relational activity, a connection or

encounter between two human beings in which both parties are contributors with specific

roles. The role of the carer is to show engrossment, or attention, to the cared-for, and

exhibit motivational displacement towards him; the carer takes the other's needs into

consideration and wants to further his purpose. The cared-for plays a part in the act of

caring as well. His purpose is to demonstrate reception and recognition of this display

and to respond to the carer. But how does this translate to a school environment?

Noddings (2005) explains that in schools, "caring teachers listen and respond

differentially to their students" (p. 19); put another way, "receptive listening is the very

heart of caring relations" (Noddings, 2012, p. 780). This ethic of care is need and

response based and rejects universalizability (Noddings, 2005). Using Noddings' model,

care focuses on individualization and personalization; it is about relationships and

connections. Care is established through interactions and conversations that show respect

and attention to the cared-for and it is shown through responsiveness and reciprocity from

both parties. It is Noddings' perspective of care, demonstrated through relational,

responsive, and respectful interactions, that helped to shape this study and its focus on

teacher-child relationships; my interpretation is that relationships are at the core of care

and lay the foundation for learning to occur.

Noddings views care in schools as a critical piece in school reform and improvement. She puts it simply, but strongly, when she states, "My contention is, first, that we should want more from our educational efforts than adequate academic achievement and, second, that we will not achieve even that meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others" (Noddings, 1995, p. 1). Noddings believes that care should be at the heart of all that happens in schools and that without care, the United States cannot have success in its educational system and beyond.

For Noddings, however, it is not enough to simply care for students; it is imperative that schools should be structured and organized in such a way to promote continuity of care and are supportive of the need to build caring relationships between teachers and students. She wonders, if there are "ways in which we might structure our schools so that teachers and students could spend more time together" (Noddings, 2013, p. xix), giving the example of allowing elementary school teachers and students to spend more than just one year together. Noddings (1995) believes that "…what children really need is the continuing compassion and presence of adults who represent constancy and care in their lives" (p. 5). Teachers must be engaged in and responsive to their students' lives, both in and out of school, so they can best meet the multi-faceted needs of their students, not just their cognitive growth and development. Noddings (1995) described that type of singular focus as "artificially separating the emotional, academic, and moral care of children" and believes it "contributes to the fragmentation of life in schools" (p. 5).

Noddings (1995) stated, "Care must be taken seriously as a major purpose of schools; that is, educators must recognize that caring for students is fundamental in teaching and that developing people with a strong capacity for care is a major objective of responsible education" (p. 5). *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine felt strongly enough about the subject to devote an entire section of the May 1995 issue, including the Noddings article cited above, to the importance of caring in schools. Yet, there still continues to be quite a small research base on care in schools. What does exist, in addition to the work of Noddings, tends to be mostly philosophical or theoretical pieces (Goldstein, 1999; Lipsitz, 1995; Noblit & Rogers, 1995), in addition to a handful of studies that focus on caring in middle or high school (Alder, 2002; Wentzel, 1997) and an even smaller group of studies that explore care in early childhood settings (Baldwin, DaRos-Voseles, and Swick, 2003; Freeman, Swick and Brown, 1999; Klaar & Öhman, 2014). This next section will intertwine the theories with the research to show what is currently known about how these philosophies are enacted in classrooms.

Theory into Practice

Similar to Noddings, Wentzel (1997) referred to caring in schools as "pedagogical caring" and identified its characteristics, in addition to examining the link between perceived caring and motivation to achieve, for both academic and social outcomes for students. Wentzel's study was based on the belief that "students will be motivated to participate in classroom activities if they believe that teachers care about them" (p. 411). Three hundred seventy-five suburban eighth grade students participated in the study which found that characteristics of pedagogical caring included modeling caring

behavior; engaging in dialogue that led to shared understanding; holding high

expectations for students and encouraging excellence; setting rules; and expressing

warmth. Findings also showed that students' perceptions of caring teachers were related

to academic efforts and prosocial/social responsibility goals, demonstrating that when a

teacher takes the time to invest personally in a student, there are positive outcomes

associated with the student's perception of that relationship. Further, as Noddings (1995)

would say, caring is not demonstrated through a singular focus but instead, includes a

focus on both a student's cognitive development and social and emotional well-being.

Alder (2002) also believed that students value care in teachers and will work

harder for teachers who they perceive to care about them; this is especially true for

children of color. For this study, Alder chose not to operationalize a definition of care

but instead, left this to the students to define. Two teachers in a low-socioeconomic

(SES) district were purposely selected by principals based on their level of caring and

were observed in the classroom, in addition to participating in interviews; twelve

predominantly African-American middle school students from their classes were

interviewed individually and participated in two focus group discussions.

Through their interviews, teachers expressed that they valued getting to know

students and families and felt communication was key. Students agreed with this idea

and believed teachers to be caring if they took the time to see them as "whole people"

and took a personal interest in them. Care was also shown by teachers exhibiting

strictness; controlling student misbehavior; encouraging student work; helping students

gain mastery and answering questions; talking individually and privately with students;

and involving parents. Caring teachers also made learning fun and interesting. Similar to

previous findings (Wentzel, 1997), teachers exhibited caring by meeting the emotional needs of their students, in addition to their cognitive needs.

It is noteworthy that both of these studies (Alder, 2002; Wentzel, 1997) resulted in findings that support Noddings' philosophy that caring for students is not limited to one aspect of a child's development; caring in schools cannot be an "either/or" prospect but instead, must meet the needs of the whole child. Noblit and Rogers (1995) agree, stating, "Caring cannot be separated from all that teachers do in school. Caring must be embodied in interpersonal interactions and in the everyday life of the classroom" (p. 6). Goldstein's (1999) analysis of caring through the lens of social constructivism concurs that cognition and affect are "integrated and interdependent". In her analysis of Lev Vygotsky's theory, which Goldstein views as "co-construction of mind", she posits that the role that affect plays through the "high degree of interpersonal connection" is central to Vygotsky's theory and to successful learning environments.

Vygotsky's (1978) key idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD)—in which an affective space, in addition to an intellectual space, is shared between teachers and students—can only be formed through relationships. Goldstein (1999) goes further by stating that it's "the affective qualities of the relationship between teacher and student…[that] allow the zone of proximal development to take shape in any given situation" (p. 654). She compares the work of Vygotsky to Noddings, specifically the idea of student as apprentice. Goldstein also speaks to Noddings' concept of receptivity as being critical in establishing care—and the ZPD—between teachers and students by explaining,

An interaction in the ZPD is both intellectually rewarding and emotionally

satisfying for the adult and the child involved. Adults and children are motivated

to enter into teaching-learning encounters by the pleasure, the growth, and the

interpersonal connection they provide (p. 665).

An important point to note is that the teacher must make the decision to enter into

this type of relationship. This can be viewed as both a moral and professional duty on the

part of the teacher; she must be responsible for providing these types of interactions and

experiences for her students. She must make the choice (Goldstein, 1999). However,

this decision cannot always be made by the teacher alone. Too often, schools are not

structured in such a way to support this type of learning and these types of interactions

(Noblit & Rogers, 1995). A higher priority needs to be placed upon creating spaces that

facilitate relationship-building between teachers and students. As Noddings (2012) urges,

"A climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for all teachers and

educational policymakers. In such a climate, we can best meet individual needs, impart

knowledge, and encourage the development of moral people" (p. 777).

There are few studies that look specifically at caring in early childhood settings.

In a study on science education in a Swedish preschool, Klaar & Öhman (2014)

videotaped children between the ages of one and three years during outdoor programming

at preschool to examine what happens during lessons about nature; the intent was to

explore the relationship between teaching care and teaching content. Findings showed

that while teachers did focus on science content, during these outings, teachers also spent

time on moral issues regarding respect and caring for nature; respect and caring for

others; and engaging in appropriate behavior, demonstrating the intertwined nature of

care and education. The authors state,

> Keeping the plurality and complexity by combining teaching and caring
>
> encourages children's growth in moral, aesthetical, cognitive and physical ways.
>
> There is a danger that this characteristic preschool multi-dimensional teaching
>
> practice will disappear if the focus on conceptual and cognitive development
>
> increases and natural scientific knowledge is prioritized (p. 54).

This is one of the only studies that was found to examine the intersection between care

and education in the preschool setting; further, the observational data provided in this

study helps to create a fuller picture of what is happening in early childhood programs.

In a descriptive case study, Baldwin et al. (2003) provided observations,

reflections, and opinions of their own nursery school program where caring was highly

valued. In this program, teachers greeted children by name; rules encouraged children to

care for one another; and small group or one-on-one interactions were emphasized.

Priority was placed upon responsive interactions between teachers and children and

teachers were expected to engage in conversation with, provide comfort to, and answer

questions from children. The authors believe that this is how trust and caring

relationships are established, leading to self-regulation in children. Unfortunately, while

it is encouraging that a program such as this one exists, it is the only study of its kind,

identifying a gap in the research base on how caring can be enacted in early childhood

programs.

Baldwin et al. (2003) recognized that building trusting and caring relationships

take "time, attention, and mindful involvement" on the part of the teacher. While it is

necessary for schools to provide time and space for teachers to care, it is equally as

important that teachers understand why and how to do so since according to Goldstein

(1999), it is their moral and professional duty. Freeman et al. (1999) provided a

description of a constructivist early childhood teacher education program that was

designed to help students become caring teachers. The authors believe that it's not

enough to expect early childhood teachers to exhibit caring but that it should be "an

integral feature of every facet" of the profession, speaking to the need to include it in the

teacher preparation process. A child study assignment required students to focus on

child-child and teacher-child interactions and "how the prepared environment supports or

hinders the creation of a caring community" (p. 3). Discussions during seminars focused

on levels of caring, the impact of culture and environment on caring, and the role that

teachers play in children's views of and attitudes towards caring. While these are

excellent recommendations for an early childhood teacher preparation program,

unfortunately, not all states require such a program for their public early childhood

teachers and as a result, many teachers lack specialized training.

Despite these few positive examples of caring programs, Noblit & Rogers (1995)

believe that caring continues to take a backseat to academics and other "curricular and

policy concerns" and that schools have a tendency to exhibit control over students

through a fixed, predetermined curriculum; to use competition as opposed to cooperation;

to choose punishment over discipline; and to implement structural elements, such as

scheduling, class size, and paperwork, which do not lend themselves to effective

relationship-building between teachers and students. They would say that teachers and

schools have gotten it wrong if they simply focus on the mechanics of teaching while

leaving out the most obvious piece of the puzzle.

> …[T]he focal point around which teaching should be organized is not the
>
> instrumental but the relational. Without this connection, a teacher may have the
>
> subject-matter knowledge and the technical ability to teach, but the opportunities
>
> for real learning will be scarce, because what the teacher does not have is the
>
> student (Noblit & Rogers, 1995, p. 6).

What may seem like such an obvious observation has a great deal of strength in its

simplicity. Lipsitz (1995) suggests that caring is at the core of everything that happens in

schools, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not; it is in the spoken rules and in the

unspoken rules of how schools are structured.

> …[T]he presence or absence of caring determines everything relational in
>
> schools: what, how, and whom we teach and discipline; why and how we group
>
> students and organize the school day; whom we hire and how we prepare them;
>
> what and how we assess; whom and how we reward; and myriad other policies
>
> (Lipsitz, 1995, p. 2).

The above-mentioned works are important in exploring how and why teachers

should express care for their students. The argument has been made that caring for

students is critical but that the structural elements present in schools--such as grouping,

scheduling, curriculum demands, and expectations for learning--must allow teachers to

feel free to engage with their students without having to feel the pressure to shift their

focus away from care (Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 2013; 2012; 1995). The

limited research shows that if students feel cared for, they are more likely to work harder

and set more challenging goals for themselves; they are also more likely to feel positive

about the school experience in general (Alder, 2002; Wentzel, 1997). The affective

qualities of the relationships that are built between teachers and students allow for

students' growth and development in all domains and any attempt to create a divide

between academic growth and social and emotional growth is an artificial separation, a

false dichotomy; these pieces go hand in hand (Alder, 2002; Goldstein, 1999; Klaar, &

Öhman, 2014; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 1995; Wentzel, 1997). It is clear that

care—meaning a responsive and reciprocal personal relationship between teacher and

student—should be an integral part of any educational setting. However, even as these

studies offer a valuable contribution to the field, they also speak to the gap that currently

exists in the literature on caring; very few studies exist that truly explore and describe

care in schools, particularly in the early childhood sector. The proposed study aims to fill

that gap.

Mantzicopoulos (2005) explains that "…pedagogical caring comprises not only

nurturance, but also concern for the student as a learner, instructional competence,

effective communication, and democratic interactions" (p. 130). However, a number of

tensions and factors play a part in how care is enacted in schools. The next part of this

paper will first take a look back at how care has been enacted in the early childhood

programs of the past and subsequently, will explore how care is being enacted in the early

childhood classrooms of today. It is important to note that during each of these time

periods, there were often competing or parallel viewpoints in early childhood education

but this historical review will simply focus on those which had the greatest impact and

are most relevant to the proposed study.

History of Care in Early Childhood Education

Historically, the relationship between teacher and child has fluctuated in its role in the early childhood classroom, as has the role that the teacher has played in exhibiting responsiveness and individualization towards her students and the impact that the curriculum plays in designating her role in the classroom. When the first nursery school programs were created in London in the early 1900s, Margaret McMillan chose the word "nursery" to show the physical care and emotional nurturing that the children would receive and "school" to represent teaching and learning, stressing that these pieces must be intertwined; however, this view has shifted throughout time in response to "the social, political, economic, and scientific milieu from which they arise" (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 401). The first period to be explored is that of the 19th century and early 20th century.

Romanticism vs. Science

In the 19th century, the Romantics, including Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, greatly influenced education for young children. Relationships and responsiveness were key in the educational setting and the teacher's role was to "observe and gently guide but not to interfere with children's creative processes" (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2000, p. 10) so that a natural unfolding of development and spiritual unity could occur within the child. However, even going back two centuries to the birth of early childhood education, care was not just comprised of meeting a child's social and emotional needs but instead, involved meeting the needs of the whole child. Materials and activities were specified in the form of Froebel's "gifts" and "occupations"; these

"gifts" were introduced via direct instruction and were intended to be used in a specific

way, demonstrating the need for clear objectives in teaching young children.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Romantic view began to fall out of favor and

science began to impact early childhood education, an influence that would be felt

throughout the next century. As Goldstein (1997) notes, early in the 20th century, early

childhood teachers were supposed to be seen as experts; "caring and love were very nice

but they were not as impressive as scientific knowledge" (p. 27). G. Stanley Hall (1907)

believed that education should follow development and that scientific observation and

research on children should influence the early childhood educational experience and

thus, the nursery school movement in the United States was born, out of a growing

interest and advances in scientific research. It was the start of a professionalization of the

field of early childhood education and the first nursery schools in the United States were

mostly private, philanthropic, or university-based, run by highly-educated teachers.

John Dewey and the Progressives. In addition to being influenced by the child

study movement, the early 20th century programs were greatly influenced by John

Dewey and the Progressives and provided children with real, meaningful experiences;

cooperative learning opportunities; constructive and make-believe play; and experiences

in the community. Froebel's gifts and occupations were removed and replaced with more

open-ended activities, which encouraged freedom and choice such as arts and crafts,

dramatic play, and blocks. Dewey (1916) wanted to shape American society by starting

with its children. He believed in curriculum integration in order to bring meaning to what

was being learned. Growth of the whole child was key and the role of the teacher was to

provide a prepared environment, observe children's play, and extend children's learning.

Asking questions to further children's understanding and working to integrate the

curriculum were also tasks for the early childhood teacher. Dewey's influence would be

long-lasting and far-reaching; his view of early childhood education as encompassing all

domains of a child's development would influence later programs, despite the fact that

the pendulum was about to start swinging in a seemingly different direction.

The Cognitive Revolution

Along with the rest of education, early childhood, in the second half of the

century, was greatly impacted by the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 and the prevailing

belief that the United States was falling behind other nations intellectually. In order to

correct the situation, there was a push for a more rigorous and academically challenging

educational system. In early childhood, the Progressive viewpoints of Dewey began to

be seen as too permissive and not structured enough since these programs' goals were

often interpreted as primarily child-directed and involving play, with an over-emphasis

on children's social and emotional development.

This new focus on the academic brought a shift in the field away from the

emotional aspects of psychology and towards theorists like Jean Piaget whose focus on

cognitive development began to have a significant impact on early childhood education.

Piaget demonstrated that intelligence was malleable and that cognitive development

happens in stages. He believed that children construct knowledge through play; however,

while play may have been utilized for free emotional expression or social development in

early childhood programs of the past, those in the field began to interpret Piaget's

theories as requiring a shift in focus towards play as a vehicle for cognitive development.

Early childhood teachers were encouraged to observe and ask questions of children to better assess their developmental level and provide appropriate instruction (Piaget, 1969). This need and response-based instruction showed a different type of responsiveness and form of caring from classrooms of the past, in that there was a greater focus on responding to children's cognitive needs, as opposed to seeing their social and emotional needs as inseparable from learning.

Along with the knowledge that intelligence could be shaped came the civil rights movement which prompted a level of the government's involvement in early education that had not previously been seen; Head Start, a publicly-funded, comprehensive early childhood program, was created to serve as a compensatory measure for children who were at risk of school failure. Head Start was the first large scale attempt by the government to provide a quality early childhood program to meet all of a child's developmental needs. While there was a focus on cognitive development, a child's social and emotional needs were addressed as well through healthcare, proper nutrition, social services, and parent involvement.

In the 1980s, the report, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), was published which again warned of the United States falling behind other countries, resulting in a rush towards more academically directed early childhood programs and an increase in full-day kindergarten programs leading to a disappearance of affection and emotion in the early childhood classroom. A backlash against this report was about to delivered, one that would change the course of early childhood education up through the current day.

The Birth of Developmentally Appropriate Practices

In response to *A Nation at Risk* and its influence on education, the National

Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published *Developmentally*

Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through

Age 8 (DAP) in 1986 to speak out against the "push down" curriculum and changing

focus of early childhood education. DAP, which was comprised of guidelines for best

practices in early childhood education, was based on child development research,

including that of Piaget; encouraged a child centered-curriculum, filled with active

learning experiences; and was based on the belief that children learn through play and

active exploration of their environment and their interactions with the people around

them (Bredekamp, 1986). One of the requirements of a developmentally appropriate

program was that adult-child interactions were crucial and that adults should be

responsive to children's needs. While DAP might have been created to try to swing the

pendulum back towards a child's social and emotional needs, it can also be viewed as an

attempt to bring the act of caring for the whole child into early childhood classrooms.

Whereas in the past, the pendulum often swung between caring for children's social and

emotional needs versus caring for children's cognitive needs, DAP attempted to address

caring for all of a child's needs by reminding policymakers that cognition was only one

piece of the puzzle.

DAP is, arguably, still the single largest influence on early childhood programs to

date. However, it is not without its critics and in the 1990s, the Reconceptualist

movement criticized DAP and urged the need to explore new ways of examining and

understanding curriculum with a focus on social inequality, race, class, and gender

(Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). DAP clearly delineated

"appropriate" practice and "inappropriate" practice, by setting up an "either/or"

dichotomy throughout the book. By urging cultural relevance, the Reconceptualists

forced a critical look at what DAP was suggesting with its "either/or" philosophy. Was a

child-centered program with open-ended learning experiences truly responsive to all

children's needs? If a child's cultural background required more of a need for explicit

instruction than DAP espoused, did that mean that the program was "inappropriate" or

uncaring? If caring is enacted through responsiveness to children's needs (Noddings,

2005), would a program based on DAP truly be considered a caring program if there was

only one way of teaching that was considered the "right" way? These criticisms led to an

eventual revision of the book in 1997 and again in 2009. In an attempt to make the

guidelines more culturally relevant, the authors turned to the theories of Lev Vygotsky

and the idea of sociocultural learning.

      As mentioned in the previous section on caring (Goldstein, 1999), Vygotsky

(1978) illuminated the importance of social context to learning and the need of the

classroom teacher to support and extend children's learning beyond what they can

accomplish independently. The field of early childhood education interpreted this to

mean that a teacher should exhibit care by observing the child's level of functioning and

responding by personalizing her interactions with him to take his learning to the next

level by working within his zone of proximal development (ZPD). The teacher should

understand the role that culture and background, or history, play in determining the

child's level of development and subsequently, plan appropriate activities to meet his

needs, rejecting a more universal curriculum. The interpretation of Vygotsky's theory

allowed for a merging of the social and the cognitive, an attempt to close the divide

between care and education in early childhood.

Early Childhood in the Public Sector

As the number of dual-working families increased into the 1990s and beyond,

private childcare centers proliferated and in response to the need for child care,

kindergarten programs continued the trend towards full-day and public preschool

programs began to grow. Due to the rapid expansion of public preschool programs, there

was an escalating need to understand what was happening in these classrooms. In the

early 2000s, two large scale studies of public preschool programs were conducted by the

National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL): the Multi-State Study of

Pre-Kindergarten and the State-Wide Early Education Programs Study (SWEEP).

Between these two studies, over seven hundred classrooms, half of which were housed in

public school buildings, were assessed for program quality and how classroom

characteristics were related to student outcomes. Findings showed that while these

classrooms were generally warm, classroom quality was lower than was typically

associated with positive outcomes (Early et al., 2005). In addition, process quality was

lower than expected, leading the authors to report, "Children have relatively few

meaningful interactions with adults during the Pre-K day" (Early et al., 2005, p. 31).

Despite these shortcomings, findings still showed some growth for students, both socially

and academically, once again bolstering the need for the best possible conditions to

insure the best possible outcomes.

This attention to child outcomes, along with the No Child Left Behind Act in the K-12 schools, brought a standards-driven, outcome-focused curriculum that once again began to trickle its way down into the early childhood curriculum (Tobin et al., 2009). Goffin and Wilson (2001) note that "the desire for federal support and funding often drives programs to provide evidence of effectiveness that will please policy makers" (p. 191). Research-based, scientifically proven models of instruction began to be required in early childhood programs, particularly those that were publicly funded (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

Curriculum models in early childhood education. Due to the same pressures that were faced in earlier years by the kindergarten, standardized curriculum models with teacher-directed, skill-driven instruction were implemented in many public preschools and this continues to be the case today. A number of states, including New Jersey, now require the use of state-approved curriculum models in their public preschool programs. The use of curriculum models has been mandated to address issues of mediocrity and the need to meet educational standards; in other words, curriculum models continue to be utilized in an effort to "systematize instructional quality" (Ryan, 2004). Yet despite the attention that early childhood programs have received, questions still remain about the most effective methods of teaching young children, particularly those at-risk of school failure (Barnett et al., 2008). Campbell et al. (2001) note that "understanding how early childhood experiences might change the long-term odds for success in these vulnerable individuals is vital if scientists are to advise policymakers on how best to intervene in potentially negative situations" (p. 231).

Schweinhart (2002) defines a curriculum model as an "educational model" which

is "a coherent body of program practices, curriculum content, program and child

assessment, and teacher training" and is intended "to contribute to all aspects of

children's development" (p. 1). The use of the term "educational" as opposed to

"curriculum" implies contributions to children's broad development, not just limited to

intelligence. This comprehensive view means that "the cognitive, affective, and physical

dimensions of the learning experience must always be taken into account" (Schweinhart,

2002, p. 11). Yet, not all currently used early childhood models meet those criteria, with

some appearing to focus more on children's cognitive and motor development than their

social and emotional development.

Very few curriculum studies exist that look at how teachers function within

standardized curriculum models (Ryan, 2004) leaving the effect that standardization,

which is primarily aimed at academic achievement, has on the critical care component in

the classroom unknown. Instead, the goal of most curriculum studies has been to

evaluate the effectiveness of early childhood curricula and a number of studies have

shown quantifiable results in terms of outcomes (Barnett et al., 2008; Chambers et al.,

2010; Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, & Burchinal, 2001; Genishi, Ryan,

Ochsner & Yarnall, 2001; Marcon, 1999; Marcon, 2002; PCERC, 2008; Schweinhart &

Weikart, 1997; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels & Millburn, 1995; Stipek et al., 1998).

Several studies have had the opportunity to follow their participants over time

(Campbell et al., 2001; Marcon, 2002; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). One of the most

widely reported on of these studies is that of the Perry Preschool Program which provided

half-day preschool to sixty-eight low-income children who were randomly assigned to

three different curriculum models—High/Scope, Direct Instruction, and a traditional

nursery program (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). High/Scope, based on the work of Jean

Piaget, provides a primarily child-initiated learning experience, similar to the traditional

nursery model, as opposed to the Direct Instruction model, which assumes that the

teacher directs all learning in the classroom. Effects were examined through age twenty-

three and findings showed that while there was no difference on measures of intellect, at

age fifteen, group differences in "community behavior" began to emerge and these

differences were even more pronounced at age twenty-three. Those who participated in

the Direct Instruction preschool were more likely at age twenty-three to have had felony

arrests and to have been treated for emotional disturbance through special education

during their schooling. Those who participated in the High/Scope or traditional nursery

program were more likely to volunteer in their communities and to have voted in the last

presidential election. The researchers attributed these differences to the emphasis in the

High/Scope and traditional nursery program on planning, social reasoning, and social

objectives as opposed to the Direct Instruction program that focused primarily on

academic objectives (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). These findings make it clear that

we must continue to explore the social and emotional component of early childhood

programs since this is a key piece in contributing to positive long-term outcomes; the

focus must extend beyond simply the academic.

　　　Similar to Schweinhart and Weikart (2007), Campbell et al. (2001) conducted

follow-up research from the Abecedarian project which provided a full-day, year-round

early childhood program for at-risk children over a period of five years. The curriculum

included learning through play and while there was an emphasis on language, there was

an attempt to meet not just the cognitive needs of the students but their social and

emotional needs as well. Findings showed that at age twenty-one, those who had

participated in the intervention as young children were more likely to attend a four-year

college and were more likely to stay in school, again demonstrating the potential, long-

lasting effects of a quality early childhood program that focuses on all aspects of a child's

development.

Unlike the two previous studies that explored specific curriculum models and

their effects over time, Marcon (1999) conducted a large scale study in a free, public

preschool program to examine the effects of three different types of early childhood

programs, not specific models; these types of programs included child initiated,

academically directed, and middle-of-the-road which utilized a combination of the

previous two approaches. Findings showed that participation in academically directed

classrooms did not result in greater basic skills mastery and in addition, resulted in lower

scores on receptive and expressive language skills, relationship skills, and gross motor

skills. The combination approach was deemed ineffective and displayed mediocre

outcomes while the child-initiated approach yielded the best results, particularly for

African-American students.

A follow-up study was conducted with these students to examine their transition

from third to fourth grade and findings showed that a preschool model did correlate with

later school success (Marcon, 2002). In third grade, there was no difference in academic

performance between the three groups; however, school behavior was poorer for those

children who attended the academically directed preschool program. In fourth grade,

those same children's school performance declined by the end of the school year; they

performed lower than both other models academically and continued to show poorer

school behavior although that number was not statistically significant. Those who

attended the academically directed preschool program had a harder time transitioning

from lower to upper elementary school with the decline possibly being attributed to the

level of motivation and independence required in the upper grades. As Marcon (2002)

cautions, "Pushing children too soon may actually backfire when children move into the

later elementary school grades and are required to think more independently and take on

greater responsibility for their own learning process" (p 16).

     While some studies have had the ability to provide longitudinal data to support

the use of curriculum models, others have simply evaluated programs based upon current

data. Barnett et al. (2008) evaluated the effectiveness of the Tools of the Mind

curriculum model with 274 three- and four-year old children. "Instructional strategies

used in *Tools* are a combination of child-initiated activities, cooperative paired learning,

teacher scaffolding and explicit instruction, individualization through multiple levels of

scaffolding, and on-going use of assessment data to tailor interactions to meet individual

needs" (Tools of the Mind, 2011). In a randomized trial, Tools classrooms scored

substantially higher than the control classrooms on measures of classroom quality,

language and reasoning, interactions, and activities; in addition, these classrooms were

less likely to have behavior problems. Both of these findings speak to the need for early

childhood programs to focus on child-initiated learning and quality interactions between

teacher and child.

     Imholz and Petrosino (2012) examined teachers' perspectives regarding the

implementation of the Tools of the Mind curriculum by following five Pre-K and

Kindergarten teachers over the course of a school year. Findings showed that teachers'

perceptions were that their students did seem to exhibit improved self-regulation,

behavior, social skills, communication skills, and verbal skills. However, what sets this

study apart from others focusing on specific curriculum models is that the researchers did

not just focus on student outcomes but explored how teachers felt about the curriculum

model and its implementation process as well.

　　　Findings also showed that teachers appreciated the training sessions, particularly

the active participation and modeling that was available, in addition to being able to

receive feedback on their own teaching. However, the teachers did perceive the

implementation of this model to be challenging; yet despite this difficulty, they felt there

was a lack of opportunities to communicate and share ideas with other teachers in the

school. Further, there were concerns along the way regarding the amount of time required

for note-taking and documentation of student learning, and that this seemed to

"interfer[e] with the ability to interact with students" (Imholz & Petrosino, 2012, p. 189),

although this appeared to resolve by year's end as the teachers became more comfortable

with the curriculum model.

　　　While Barnett et al. (2008) and Imholz and Petrosino (2012) looked at the

outcomes within a specific curriculum model, Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, and Millburn

(1995) studied 227 children from classrooms that were categorized as either child-

centered or didactic, similar to the studies conducted by Marcon (1999; 2002). Findings

showed that while those children who participated in child-centered classrooms scored

lower on the reading/letters test, they were greatly favored on the motivation measures.

They rated their own abilities higher; had higher expectations for success; preferred

challenging activities, such as letters or numbers over shapes; and were more likely to

take pride in their successes. They were also more likely to take the initiative to begin

working without waiting for permission and they exhibited less anxiety about school.

Stipek et al. (1998) attempted to connect social context to academic achievement

in preschool by studying 228 children in 42 classrooms. As they state, "There seems to

be broad agreement that both academic and social-motivational goals are important for

young children. There is less agreement about *how* to enhance children's development

on both of these dimensions and about whether programs that emphasize one goal

undermine the other" (Stipek, et al., 1998, p. 42). Data collection included child

assessments of achievement and motivation and observations of both affect and behavior.

Findings showed a negative correlation between basic skills and social context; teachers

in those classrooms were less nurturing and responsive to children and used more

negative strategies to control student behavior. Children in the basic skills preschool

classrooms showed higher levels of stress, more negative affect, more noncompliant

behavior, and required more discipline interactions. Further, they scored lower on

achievement tests in preschool; in the basic skills kindergarten, they scored higher on

math and reading but lower on puzzles and oral vocabulary. While the basic skills

curriculum correlates with the negative student behaviors exhibited, the negative social

environment provided by the teachers in these classrooms could also be a contributing

factor; it is noteworthy that both the curriculum and the role of the teacher play a part in

the child outcomes. Few studies attempt to explore the intersection between the two, an

aim that the proposed study hopes to achieve.

Two studies have attempted to analyze a large group of early childhood curriculum models, in the hopes of influencing policymakers' decision regarding implementation (Chambers et al., 2010; PCERC, 2008). The Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium (2008) conducted an analysis of fourteen different curriculum models. This project began in 2002 to evaluate preschool curriculum models, as implemented in low-income preschools by twelve teams of researchers. The control classrooms utilized the curriculum that was already in place prior to the study. Eighty-eight percent of the classrooms were Head Start or public Pre-K programs and the data included close to 3000 children. Data collection methods included child assessments of academic outcomes; teacher reports of student behavior; classroom observations; teacher interviews or questionnaires; and parent interviews. Outcomes were followed through kindergarten and in addition to reporting on cognitive and academic outcomes, classroom-level outcomes were also reported, including classroom quality and teacher-child interactions. Of the fourteen curriculum models that were evaluated, only two impacted student-level outcomes in pre-kindergarten; however, four impacted student-level outcomes in kindergarten, including Curiosity Corner, one of New Jersey's state-approved curriculum models, which showed positive impacts in reading. Eight curriculum models produced classroom-level outcomes in pre-kindergarten, including The Creative Curriculum, another of New Jersey's state-approved models, which showed positive impacts on classroom quality and teacher-child interactions, in addition to positive impacts on early literacy and language instruction. The other three New Jersey state-approved curriculum models—Tools of the Mind, Bank Street, and High/Scope--were not included in this study. While this study focuses on more than just academic

outcomes by including observations of classroom quality and teacher-child interactions, it is still limited by the fact that these curriculum models were implemented by researchers and the study was unable to look at long-term results, instead focusing only on a two-year period. There was also no comparison between models and the curriculum used by each control group varied, depending on the setting, an area on which the proposed study hopes to shed some light.

Chambers, Cheung, Slavin, Smith, and Laurenzano (2010) analyzed forty large-scale, longitudinal studies of twenty-eight different curriculum models in order to provide policymakers with assistance in choosing an early childhood curriculum model and to influence future research in this area; studies included in this analysis were large-scale studies conducted over significant periods of time that used "standard measures". Academic outcomes were measured at the end of pre-kindergarten or kindergarten and only six programs showed strong evidence of effectiveness, while five programs showed moderate evidence of effectiveness. As in the previous study, Curiosity Corner showed strong evidence of effectiveness, specifically in the area of literacy and language development. Creative Curriculum and Tools of the Mind showed insufficient evidence of effectiveness. High Scope was excluded from this analysis, as there were no studies that the authors found to qualify for analysis and the Bank Street model was not even mentioned in the report.

This analysis has numerous limitations, including a focus limited to experimental studies that only offer quantitative data. The authors note that qualitative studies can "add depth and insight to understanding the effects" (Chambers, et al., 2010) found in these studies, yet they were not included in the analysis. Further, this analysis focused

solely on academic and cognitive outcomes; the authors believed that because social and

emotional outcomes were often based on teacher or parental report, they were not

objective and therefore, they were excluded from this analysis. While academic and

cognitive outcomes are certainly worth measuring, it is impossible to measure the full

effectiveness of a program without considering all components.

It cannot be denied that research has shown the long-term benefits associated with

child-initiated, high quality early childhood programs (Frede, 2009; Ryan, 2004).

Children who attend these types of programs are more likely to give back to their

communities and to engage in higher learning; they are less likely to be convicted of

felonies and to have gone through the special educational system due to emotional

disturbance. They show increased motivation, self-regulation, independence, and

initiative towards learning tasks and lower levels of anxiety towards school. However,

the most recent large-scale curriculum studies, including Chambers et al. (2010) that

negate the importance of social and emotional outcomes may influence policymakers

who are unaware of how to make decisions regarding early childhood curriculum. Frede

and Ackerman (2007) explain, "Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels

recognize the key role preschool education plays in children's learning and development,

but they may have less understanding of what constitutes a quality preschool program

curriculum" (p. 1). In addition, the lack of information regarding what teachers actually

do within these curriculum models does little to provide a picture of what is happening in

these programs and how positive outcomes can be achieved.

Goffin and Wilson (2001) view the implementation of curriculum models as a

"one size fits all" type of solution, in that they value "uniformity over diversity"; in the

National Research Council report, *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*,

Bowman et al. (2001) caution that "attempts to set common standards, or even to

formulate what children need, may reflect the preferences of a particular group rather

than the American population as a whole" (p. 277). Noddings' (2005) ethic of care

rejects this uniformity and she warns, "We cannot ignore our children—their purposes,

anxieties, and relationships—in the service of making them more competent in academic

skills" (p. 10). Despite these recommendations from experts in the field, the challenge to

making the act of caring a priority in early childhood programs today proves to be even

more difficult today than in the past.

      Other current trends in early childhood education. Almost twenty years ago,

Kessler noted, "The prevalence of early childhood programs in the public schools

radically alters the context of early childhood education" (in Kessler & Swadener, 1992,

p. 21). As standardization of early childhood programs continues to grow, there is an

increased urgency to explore the critical role that the teacher plays in the early childhood

classroom to examine whether there is more to success than simply implementing an

academic curriculum. In the current educational climate, it often seems that more

importance is placed upon the curriculum than upon the teacher (Ryan, 2004); value

needs to be placed on the role of the teacher to insure that these spaces remain caring

places.

      There is a growing concern from those in the field that due to "public and private

pressures" (McNamee & Mercurio, 2007), early childhood curriculum and goals will

move away from the whole child and begin to focus solely on the academic (Miller &

Almon; 2009; Noddings, 1995). In the foreword to *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why*

Children Need to Play in School (Miller & Almon, 2009), David Elkind explains, "Early

childhood education, the care and instruction of young children outside of the home, over

the last half century has become a downward extension of schooling. It is now the first

rung on the educational ladder" (p. 9). Play, which currently serves as an important

vehicle in allowing teachers to build caring relationships with children, may be put on a

shelf in favor of a more standardized preparation for later schooling (Miller & Almon,

2009). Future early childhood teachers may not even be well-educated about the value of

relationship-building as there continues to be shift away from care to education (Ryan &

Grieshaber, 2005).

      The question is: if elements of care in early childhood programs are

compromised, what will happen to the children in these programs? Baker and

Manfredi/Petitt (2004) state,

> Society in general and the early childhood profession in particular agree on the
>
> importance of surrounding young children with love. But what happens when this
>
> climate of care is missing? What are the consequences of a child care model,
>
> serving millions of our nation's children, that does not include caring
>
> relationships as part of the deal? (p. ix)

      The aim of this next section is to explore and describe how the current body of

literature addresses issues that impact upon caring for young children; specifically, I will

explore the research base and note any gaps in the literature on teacher-child

relationships, in addition to examining a critical component of the teacher-child

relationship, the interactions between teachers and children.

Teacher-Child Relationships

Noblit and Rogers (1995) believe that to truly see caring in the classroom, the

focus must be on "the relationships between teachers and children" (p. 1). Baker (2006)

states, "The teacher-child relationship holds promise as a developmental context that can

provide nurturance and coherence for children as they navigate the social world of

school" (p. 227). Relationships provide for children's cognitive growth as well.

Andrzejewski and Davis (2007) state that "…warm and trusting relationships between

students and teachers are key elements in building classroom environments wherein

students feel comfortable taking creative and intellectual risks" (p. 780). Howes,

Phillipsen, and Peisner-Feinberg (2000) explain,

> Children with more positive teacher-child relationships appear more able to
>
> exploit the learning opportunities available in classrooms, construct positive peer
>
> relationships, and adjust to the demands of formal schooling (p.113).

The acclaimed early childhood programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy are guided by

relationships, which value conversation and communication and have respect for the

individual child. Malaguzzi and Gandini (1993) describe the Reggio Emilia programs by

stating,

> We view relationships not simply as a warm, protective backdrop or blanket, but
>
> as a coming together of elements interacting dynamically toward a common
>
> purpose…we seek to support social exchanges that better ensure the flow of
>
> expectations, activities, cooperation, conflicts and choices, and we favor
>
> discussion of problems that integrate the cognitive, affective, and expressive
>
> domains (p. 10).

Baker and Manfredi/Petitt (2004) would describe this type of "relationship-based

program" as operating under the assumption that "every interaction counts".

Elicker and Fortner-Wood (1995) state that "…honest, respectful, and nurturing

teacher-child relationships are essential to children's security, self-confidence, and

learning in early childhood environments" (p. 69) and that sharing emotions and having

one-on-one moments is critical. Yet, they note that there are numerous influences on

teacher-child relationship quality including child and adult characteristics, teacher-child

interactions, and classroom context. For example, teachers are influenced by children's

behavior and teachers' philosophies influence their interactions with their students.

Further, the role of context cannot be ignored. As Ryan and Goffin (2008) state,

"Context shapes what teachers do and say in their interactions with children" (p. 390).

Low adult-child ratios, small class sizes, and staffing stability all contribute to the

relationships built between teachers and students. Kesner (2000) even found that those

teachers who experienced more harsh discipline from their own parents were more likely

to report less closeness with their students.

In addition, teacher child relationship quality has the power to affect outcomes

beyond the school as well. Zhang and Nurmi (2012), in their study of Chinese

preschoolers, found associations between teacher child relationships and social

competence, not just at school but also in the home. While high closeness and low

conflict in teacher child relationships at the beginning of the preschool year predicted

social competence in school by year's end, it predicted social competence at home after

the second year of preschool, as well.

In their study of conflict and closeness between teachers and children in kindergarten, Buyse, Verschueren, Douman, Van Damme, and Maes (2008) found that children's classroom behavior was the most important predictor of relationship quality. Not surprisingly, externalizing behaviors by students led to relational conflicts with the teacher while internalizing behaviors by students led to a lack of closeness with the teacher. As a result, the authors noted the importance of teachers' showing emotional support to their students, explaining that this is "related to the notion of 'personal or emotional involvement', which can be described as the teachers' ability to access the more personal part of the children, for example, by asking the children about their lives" (Buyse, et al., 2008, p. 369), showing respect, warmth, and sensitivity.

In 2004, Baker and Manfredi/Petitt spoke of the need for community and care amongst the adults in early childhood settings, in order to demonstrate and model caring relations for the children in those settings. They observed and interviewed staff and parents in over fifty NAEYC accredited early childhood programs about their adult-adult relationships to explore influences on relationship-building with children. They found that the teacher-child relationship was stronger when the children's parents valued the caregiver-parent relationship; when teachers had respectful relationships with each other; and when there was an open relationship between teachers and directors at their schools. Clearly, the other adults in the school environment impacted upon a teacher's ability to build relationships with her students. As described in Elicker and Fortner-Wood (1995), findings also showed the influence of low staff-child ratios and small group sizes.

Kesner (2000) states, "Perhaps, there is no other nonfamilial adult that is more significant in a child's life than his or her teacher" (p. 134). The next section of this

paper will further explore the relationships between these significant adults and their

students. I will begin with a look at the outcomes that are associated with teacher-child

relationships, including student motivation and the use of relationships as a compensatory

measure. Next, I will examine the literature that exists regarding teachers' and children's

perceptions of the teacher-child relationship. Finally, I will explore the literature base on

teacher-child interactions, which play a crucial part in determining the relationship

quality between teacher and child.

Relationships and Outcomes

Wentzel (1999) states:

Each day at school, children work to maintain and establish interpersonal

relationships, strive to develop social identities and a sense of belongingness,

observe and model standards for performance displayed by others, and are

rewarded for behaving in ways that are valued by teachers and peers. Quite often,

children who succeed in these social endeavors are also the most successful

students (p. 76).

Hamre and Pianta (2001) agree stating, "Just as teachers are likely to put more effort into

children with whom they have a positive relationship, children who trust and like teachers

may be more motivated to succeed" (p. 626). Much of the research on teacher-student

relationships focuses on student outcomes. The next section of this paper will explore the

literature that strives to make the connection between teacher-student relationship quality

and student outcomes.

Teacher-student relationships and motivation. Teacher-student relationships have been shown to have an impact on children's school success. Children who have strong relationships with their teachers are more likely to do well in school and be motivated to learn. Furrer and Skinner (2003) explain that "feeling special and important to key social partners is hypothesized to trigger energized behavior, such as effort, persistence, and participation; to promote positive emotions, such as interest and enthusiasm; and to dampen negative emotions such as anxiety and boredom" (p. 149).

Wentzel (2002) explored over 400 sixth graders' relationships with their teachers while operating under the assumption that "the qualities of children's social relationships are likely to have motivational significance" (p. 288). Her study was based on parent socialization literature and looked at student motivation as it related to teacher characteristics that showed effective caregiving. Findings showed that high expectations for students most consistently predicted students' goals and interests. Negative feedback, including a lack of nurturing, most consistently negatively predicted academic achievement and social behavior.

Furrer and Skinner (2003) studied motivation in relation to feelings of relatedness of third through sixth grade students. They note, "A sense of relatedness may function as a motivational resource when children are faced with challenge or difficulties" (Furrer & Skinner, 2003, p. 148). They describe a child's engagement in school as a "social signal" that is sent out to others, thereby enabling "supportive reciprocal reactions". Findings showed that "children who felt appreciated by teachers were more likely to report that involvement in academic activities was interesting and fun and that they felt happy and comfortable in the classroom" (Furrer & Skinner, 2003, p. 159) as opposed to children

who felt unimportant or ignored by teachers; these children reported feelings of boredom, unhappiness, or anger during learning activities.

It is important for teachers to understand the part that they play in motivating their students to learn, not simply by the activities that they plan for them, but by the relationships that they build with them. High expectations for students are a strong predictor of students' goals and interests and negative feedback negatively predicts academic achievement and social behavior. Further, students' feelings of relatedness are positively correlated with their engagement in school. Despite the fact that this research was not conducted in an early childhood setting, the message still rings true--teachers can use relationship-building as a tool to foster motivation and success in their students.

Relationships as a compensatory measure. Since research has shown the connection between teacher-student relationships and school success, these relationships can also be viewed as an intervention or compensatory measure for children who are at risk of school failure (Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, Bullock & Coplan, 2014; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992; Mantzicopoulos, 2005; Meehan, Hughes & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Stipek & Miles, 2008). Teachers can be seen as secondary attachment figures and maltreated children may be especially helped by these relationships (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992). For these children, insecure relationships outside of school may result in trust issues inside of school due to what Lynch and Cicchetti (1992) call "relational incompetence". However, supportive experiences with teachers can break this cycle. Lynch and Cicchetti interviewed 215 children from ages 7-13, including 115 who were maltreated.   Through the use of relatedness scales, findings showed that maltreated children were less likely to have optimal patterns of relatedness

but the authors stress the importance of teachers' being able to recognize the part that

they can play in breaking this cycle by embracing the role of alternative attachment figure

to "foster the building of trust that will help maltreated children negotiate relationships

with other partners" (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992, p. 98).

While a positive relationship between teacher and child may help build feelings in

the child of relational competence, Stipek and Miles (2008) add, "Positive social skills

and relationships might serve as important protective mechanisms against academic

failure, which might be particularly important for low-income children, who are often

found to be at risk for poor academic performance" (p. 1732). In Baker's (2006) study of

relationship quality and school adjustment for at-risk children in elementary school,

findings showed that high-quality teacher-child relationships predicted positive school

outcomes and that children with behavior issues who were supported by a positive

teacher-student relationship fared better than those who did not experience this closeness.

This is critically important as these children are the most common recipients of public

preschool education; yet little research exists that has explored this area, something this

study aims to achieve.

O'Connor and McCartney (2007) note that "educating teachers as to how to

develop high-quality relationships with children may provide strategies for teachers

working with children who are at risk for lower levels of achievement" (p. 364). The

authors studied the link between the quality of teacher-child relationships from preschool

through third grade and third grade achievement. Eight hundred and eighty children were

evaluated through the use of teacher questionnaires in preschool, kindergarten, first and

third grades, with classroom observations added in third grade. Findings showed that the

average quality of teacher-child relationships decreased slightly from preschool through

third grade, perhaps due to larger class size or a "greater emphasis on instructional, rather

than relational, interactions between teachers and students during elementary rather than

preschool years" (O'Connor & McCartney, 2007, p. 360); however, teachers did still

place an importance on building relationships beyond preschool which is contradictory to

other studies. When controlling for the child and the family, findings also showed that a

change in quality, in addition to the level of quality of the relationships in third grade,

predicted achievement, leading to the conclusion that teacher-child relationships have

strong effects on student achievement. In fact, findings showed that "teacher-child

relationships in third grade are stronger predictors of achievement than insecure maternal

attachments and peer relationships" (O'Connor & McCartney, 2007, p. 361), causing the

authors to recommend focusing on teacher-child relationships as an intervention over any

other types of relationships. Yet, while the authors make this recommendation and note

the importance of providing teachers with professional development and training as to

how to develop high quality relationships, they offer no insight into how to accomplish

this or what strategies teachers might use to build these relationships.

   If research has shown that positive teacher-child relationships impact upon a

child's school success, it is important to explore influences and tensions surrounding the

relationship-building process. Children's aggression and conflict between teachers and

students both have the ability to impact upon the relationships built in the classroom.

However, these relationships can also serve as an intervention for children who

experience these behavior patterns.

Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell (2003) noted that the affective quality of teacher-student relationships can serve as a compensatory measure for children who experience aggression. The issue of childhood aggression is critically important because aggression that occurs early in childhood can lead to later issues, both inside and outside of school; in addition, parental relationships are also often conflicted. Further, aggression has been disproportionately identified in African-American children. The authors created an intervention to serve as a model of support for children at risk due to their minority status, parental relationships, and aggressive behavior. One hundred and forty 2nd and 3rd graders and thirty-nine teachers participated in two different treatments. One group of students received mentoring, social skills training, and consultation while the other group received biweekly lunch visits. The authors found no main effects based on the intervention; however, teacher support in the second year predicted lower aggression, specifically for African-American students. It is possible that "…aggressive African-American and Hispanic children may be more responsive to teacher' efforts to establish warm and supportive relationships than are aggressive Caucasian students for whom positive interactions with teachers are more commonplace" (Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell, 2003, p. 1154). However, a limitation of this study is that all data was conducted via self-report, including reports of children's aggression; no observations were conducted. The authors recommend that future research in this area should attempt "to delineate the individual characteristics and classroom practices of teachers who are able to enjoy warm and supportive relationships with highly aggressive children" (p. 1155), as this study did not explore these components.

Stipek and Miles (2008) also explored student aggression by testing the

hypothesis of whether the effect of student aggression on learning is mediated by teacher-

child relationships; this longitudinal study followed children from kindergarten or first

grade through fifth grade. Teachers rated over 400 students from low-income families

regarding their aggressive behavior, teacher-child conflict, and academic engagement;

children's academic achievement was also measured. As in Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell

(2003), this study is limited by the fact that outside of the academic achievement

measures, the data was collected via teacher ratings only. Findings showed that

children's aggression ratings tended to be positively associated with teacher-child conflict

and negatively associated with achievement. Further, teacher-child conflict was

negatively associated with achievement and predicted by aggression leading to a

reciprocal relationship similar to the chicken and the egg. For example, a child's

aggressive behavior would generate conflict with the teacher and this conflict would

exacerbate the child's aggression.

Both of these findings speak to the need for teachers to be made aware of the

importance of their relationships with their students; teachers must make the effort to

build less conflictual relationships. The authors make the suggestion that "efforts to

ensure at least some positive interactions, for example, by engaging the more aggressive

children in conversation about their interests, taking care to notice good behavior, and

conveying high expectations, may compensate for the negative disciplinary interactions"

(Stipek & Miles, 2008, p. 1732).

Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes, and Reiser (2007) used a mediational model to

examine whether prosocial or aggressive behavior and peer exclusion contributed to the

link between teacher-child relationship quality and school readiness. They utilized a

"child by environment model", believing that school readiness is not simply determined

by what's within the individual child but "also by the factors within the social-relational

environment" (p. 56). Teachers' perceptions were explored regarding the prosocial

behavior, aggressive behavior, peer group exclusion, and academic readiness of each

student; they also rated their relationship with each student. Findings showed that

teacher-child closeness was correlated with greater academic readiness; relationship

quality was related to readiness and prosocial skills. Children, who had positive

relationships with teachers, were more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior and be ready

for kindergarten. While teacher-child closeness was positively correlated with readiness

and prosocial skills, teacher-child dependency was positively correlated with aggression

and peer exclusion. Teachers must make the extra effort to build relationships with these

children and to teach and model prosocial skills to avoid any peer exclusion. It is unclear

whether these critical moments can exist within the confines of a standardized curriculum

model where teachers are required to shift a good deal of their focus to academic

outcomes.

Hughes, Bullock, and Coplan (2014) explored the social and emotional

functioning of over 200 kindergarten students with regard to the specific type of

relationship that they had cultivated with their teachers. While previous research had

focused on the types of relationships and how these were linked to other variables, this

study took a "person-centered" approach. Four groups of students were identified—those

with conflicted relationships, those with dependent relationships, those with combined

conflicted and dependent relationships, and a comparison group.

Findings showed that the students who had conflicted relationships with their teachers were rated as more aggressive by their teachers; they were also noted to be less prosocial than the dependent group an displayed more anxious play and less social play than the comparison group. Their teachers rated students with dependent relationships as more anxious than the comparison group, in addition to these students displaying more anxious play than the comparison group; the teacher did not perceive these students as aggressive. Finally, the combined group, those students who rated highly on both the conflicted and dependent scales, displayed the most serious deficits of any group in the area of social and emotional functioning. Teachers rated these students highest in aggression; the students rated themselves as lonelier and less competent; and these students engaged in less social play than the comparison group. It is important for teachers to be able to identify these types of students so that they can possibly assist with interventions to improve their students' social and emotional functioning.

Cadima, Doumen, Verschueren & Buyse (2015) explored the transition between kindergarten and first grade to examine students' behavioral engagement and inhibitory control, during this challenging time, in relation to teacher-child relationships, quality of classroom organization, and peer-teacher relationships. Findings showed that in kindergarten, higher levels of inhibitory control, closer teacher-child relationships, and lower levels of peer-teacher conflict led to higher levels of behavioral engagement, which was then associated with higher levels of both observed and teacher reported behavioral engagement in first grade. As the authors note, "it is possible that children with closer relationships may be more willing to learn effective ways to behave in the classroom" (p. 9). Further, this is one of the only studies found that examined the impact of the peer-

teacher relationship on other students; not surprisingly, findings showed that "regardless

of the levels of conflict with a particular child, this particular child can be adversely

affected by a high proportion of problematic relationships in the classroom" (p.10). It is

not the teacher's relationship with one child alone that determines that child's feelings

about school; the teacher must work to build positive relationships with all children, as all

children appear to be affected by what they witness between the teacher and their peers.

Rudasill, Niehaus, Buhs, and White (2013) examined temperament in preschool

as a predictor of peer interactions in third grade, while using teacher-child relationship

quality during the intervening years as a mediator. As one might expect, findings showed

that difficult temperament in students was associated with teacher-child conflict. What

this means is that if teacher-child relationship quality is poor in the early years, students

may miss opportunities to learn relationship-building strategies. Further, "poor teacher–

child relationship history may cultivate a child's existing difficulties engaging positively

with peers by creating a very visible display of conflict within an important classroom

relationship" (p. 712). If peers observe this conflict, this may affect their perception of

and interactions with this child as well. However, the authors suggest that if teachers are

made aware of the connection between student temperament and teacher-student

relationship quality, they may be able to avoid this negative outcome by focusing on

improving their relationships with all students, regardless of temperament.

Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that relational negativity in kindergarten predicted

grades, test scores, and work habits through lower elementary school and predicted

behavioral outcomes into upper elementary and middle school, specifically for those with

early behavior problems; however, the quality of the teacher-child relationship was a

stronger predictor of behavioral outcomes than academic outcomes. As has been shown

before, teachers have the ability to serve as an intervention for those children who are at-

risk. The authors explain that "…those children who, despite significant behavior

problems, were able to develop relationships with kindergarten teachers marked by low

levels of negativity, were in turn more likely to avoid future behavioral difficulties than

were their peers who had high negativity ratings" (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, p. 635). They

recommend that the targets for this type of intervention should include children with poor

relationships and teacher-rated behavior problems in early childhood, calling the

association between the teacher-child relationship and school performance "strong and

persistent".

        Teacher-student relationship quality predicts positive school outcomes; in

addition to academic achievement, it is also related to school readiness and prosocial

behavior. As a result, these relationships can serve as a compensatory measure for

children who are at risk of school failure. Teachers have the ability to break the cycle

with maltreated children and help them to establish positive and trusting relationships.

Teachers' support may help to lower students' aggression, particularly in African-

American students. In addition, students with behavior issues fare better in school when

they are supported by their teachers.

        Mantzicopoulos (2005) speaks of the protective role that support and low conflict

can play for at-risk students and notes that future research should explore the "constructs

that represent warmth, closeness, caring, and nurturance" to see which of these "might

serve as buffers against adversity" (p. 132). However, the lack of qualitative research in

this area creates a frustrating gap in the literature. Teachers can be told of these critical

research findings showing the importance in taking the time to build high quality

relationships, particularly with at-risk students, but they need to be given support or

guidance as to how to accomplish this sometimes daunting task; further, they need

research that leads them to a greater understanding of the significant role that they play in

making these positive relationships happen, particularly in the current educational

climate.

Teacher Perceptions of the Teacher-Child Relationship

Perceptions play a strong role in determining the relationships that exist between

teachers and students. Howes, Phillipsen, and Peisner-Feinberg (2000) examined

consistency in teacher perceptions of the teacher-child relationship over a 3-year period,

operating under the assumption that the transition to kindergarten may signify a change in

the teacher's role, explaining, "…preschool teachers' perceptions of what constitutes a

positive teacher-child relationship may differ from those of kindergarten teachers" (p.

114). Their research was based on attachment theory and it was expected that teacher-

child relationship quality would be predicted by the previous year's quality; further, it

was expected that children's social adjustment would predict the quality of their

relationships in kindergarten. Close to 800 predominantly Caucasian children from the

Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study were included in this study; each year of the study,

teachers used the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) and the Classroom

Behavior Inventory (CBI) to report data on the participants. During the first year of

preschool, observations were also conducted using the Early Childhood Environmental

Ratings Scale (ECERS), the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS), and the Adult

Involvement Scale (AIS).

Findings confirmed that the teacher's perception of teacher-child relationship

quality in kindergarten could be predicted from the previous year's teacher's perception

of relationship quality. The most important predictor of conflictual relations in

kindergarten was problem behavior in preschool; the most important predictor of

dependent kindergarten relationships was preschool behavior problems and dependency

in the second year of preschool. Teachers' perceptions of their relationships with their

students were consistent over time. The authors recommend that "school psychology and

early education teacher pre- and inservice training efforts" (Howes et al, 2000, p. 130)

address the importance of building relationships with challenging students.

Stuhlman and Pianta (2002) used the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI) to

assess kindergarten and first grade teacher narratives about teacher-student relationships,

in addition to conducting observations of teachers' classroom behavior. The seven

aspects of the teacher narratives that were examined included compliance, achievement,

secure base, neutralizing, agency, positive affect, and negative affect. Teachers were

more likely to discuss compliance when talking about boys and were less likely to exhibit

positive affect towards those children who did not exhibit compliance. Further, there was

less direction of negative affect towards students who were self-reliant and more positive

affect was distributed to those students who showed more positive affect towards the

teacher. Not surprisingly, negative talk mirrored negative interactions in the classroom.

Findings showed that relationship narratives and behavior are related, again showing the

need for teacher awareness of the importance of the role that their perceptions play in

determining the relationships that they build with their students.

Teachers' perceptions play a large part in determining the relationships that they

build with their students. The current relationship quality can be predicted by the

previous year's relationship quality, showing that teachers' perceptions are consistent

over time. Relational negativity between teachers and students predicts not only lower

academic achievement for the student, but behavioral issues as well so it is critically

important for teachers to realize how strongly their perceptions of their students influence

their relationships. Teachers more often discuss compliance when talking about their

males students and they are less likely to show positive affection towards kids who do not

show compliance. Teachers must be made aware that these perceptions exist so that all

students can benefit from high quality relationships. The proposed study will allow

teachers to explore their own beliefs regarding teacher-child relationships, in addition to

eliciting their reflections and insights in response to their relationship-building behaviors

in the classroom.

Children's Perceptions of the Teacher-Child Relationship

It is important not only to explore the teacher-child relationship from the teacher's

perspective but to include the perspective of the students as well. Harrison, Clarke, and

Ungerer (2007) noted the limitations of previous studies of teacher-child relationships,

including the use of teacher report only as a means of data collection. The authors were

interested in exploring teacher-child relationships from the child's perspective; data was

collected through the drawings and self-reports of 125 Australian five year olds.

Findings showed that children's negative perceptions of their relationships were

associated with poorer academic outcomes, increased discipline problems, and poorer

social skills.

When exploring children's perceptions of their relationships with their teachers,

Murray, Murray, and Waas (2008) found that kindergarten children's perceptions of

teachers' social support were related to liking school. Further, the authors found

associations between the teacher and student sharing the same racial background;

teachers' perceptions of their same race students were more positive while there was no

difference found from the children's perspective. What is noteworthy about this finding

is that while children do not perceive a link between race and relationship quality or

school adjustment, teachers do perceive students from different racial backgrounds

differently and therefore, build different relationships with them. It is important for

teachers to be aware that this bias may exist within them and may impact upon the

relationships that they develop with their students. This study has the limitation of being

conducted with only one group in one school district but still speaks to the need to further

examine the role that perceptions play in developing teacher-student relationships.

Valeski and Stipek (2001) used a self-systems theory of engagement to explain

that children who like school are more engaged and that these levels of engagement, both

behaviorally and emotionally, should lead to children's school successes. It is the

relationships between teachers and students that lead to feeling connected and engaged

which is especially critical during the early years. The purpose of their study was to

assess the validity of a measure—the Feelings About School (FAS)—that would assess

children's perceptions and feelings towards teachers, school, and their own competence

in math and literacy. Data also included test scores, teacher-completed questionnaires,

and classroom observations. Findings showed that children's feelings about their

relationships with their teachers were more positive in first grade than in kindergarten.

First grade teachers and children were in agreement about their relationships but the

authors note that while it's often assumed that children feel connected as a result of

caring and supportive teachers, "the causal connection is probably bidirectional" (Valeski

& Stipek, 2001, p. 1210). While children's attitudes towards school were not associated

with teachers' reports of relationship quality, students who liked their teachers, not

surprisingly, had positive attitudes about school. On the flip side, findings showed that

children who perceived themselves as academically incompetent also had negative

perceptions of their relationships with their teachers.

Mantzicopoulos and Neuharth-Pritchett (2003) state that "the early teacher-child

relationship has to a large extent been explored through teacher reports and limited

evidence exists on young children's perspectives" (p. 433). As in Valeski and Stipek

(2001), the authors were interested in the development of a measure—the Y-CATS—

from a social-contextual and relational perspective that would assess children's

perceptions of support, encouragement, acceptance, opportunities for choice, conflict, and

negativity. The Young Children's Appraisals of Teacher Support (Y-CATS) was used

along with measures of academic achievement and teacher ratings of children's behavior

and social skills and their relationships with their students. Three hundred and sixty four

children from three Head Start cohorts were participants; participants were in Head Start,

kindergarten, and first grade. Children who perceived their relationships with their

teachers as negative also performed lower academically and were perceived more

negatively by the teachers, as young as preschool age.

The value in gaining children's perspectives about their relationships with their

teachers cannot be ignored. Children's negative perceptions of their relationships are

associated with lower academic achievement, increased discipline problems, and lower

social skills; in addition, if they perceive themselves as being academically incompetent,

they also hold negative perceptions of their teachers. Further, children's perceptions of

teachers' social support are related to their liking of school; not surprisingly, those who

like their teachers also feel positive about school in general.

Clearly, teachers must understand the value in building relationships with their

young students and research must explore how teachers can effectively build these

relationships. One of the most natural ways for teachers to build relationships with their

students is through their daily interactions. This next section will focus on the literature

surrounding teacher-child interactions in the early childhood classroom.

Teacher-Child Interactions in Early Childhood Classrooms

Caring is developed through interaction (McNamee & Mercurio, 2007).

Malaguzzi and Gandini (1993) explain, "Interaction is a need, a desire, a vital necessity

that each child carries within. Children seek opportunities for positive interaction with

adults and other children" (p. 11). Alder (2002) describes this reciprocal dialogue as

requiring "active listening to one another as equal moral agents" with an implication of

"respect and empowerment", further explaining that "students value talking with teachers

and being heard by them" (p. 263). Noblit and Rogers (1995) describe talk between

teachers and students as the "currency" of caring and speak to its importance by stating

that "teachers need time and 'permission' to talk and listen to their students…and to

attend to their needs" (p. 9). Howes & Smith (1995) note that young children's cognitive

development is enhanced by positive teacher-child interactions while Colwell & Lindsey

(2003) add that the quality of teacher-child interactions is connected to children's

perceptions of self and peers. Edmunson (2013, in Noddings, 2015), explains

> the student and teacher need to create a bond of good feeling, where they are free
>
> to speak openly with each other. They need to connect not just through cold print
>
> but through gestures, intonations, jokes. The student needs to discover what the
>
> teacher knows and what she exemplifies about how to live. (p. 235)

As more children enter public early childhood programs, it is critically important that

teachers are well-prepared in knowing how to interact with young children (Lobman,

2006; Quay & Jarrett, 1986; Hamre et al., 2012; Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, and

Justice, 2008).

Yet a number of studies have noted the gap in the research base regarding

influences on teachers' ability to interact positively and effectively with their students

(Gerber, Whitebrook, & Weinstein, 2007; Pianta et al., 2005). Gerber, Whitebrook, and

Weinstein (2007) explain "having positive interactions depends in large part on the

capacity of teachers to respond to the needs of young children with sensitivity" (Gerber,

Whitebrook, & Weinstein, 2007, p. 328). Findings from both of these studies showed

that the most important predictor of higher levels of attunement to students was having

more years of teaching experience; experience led to more responsive and stimulating

interactions. In addition, training in early childhood education contributed to lower levels

of harsh behaviors towards students and a more positive classroom climate. Gerber,

Whitebrook, and Weinstein (2007) also found that characteristics of the early childhood

center, including NAEYC accreditation and small size, contributed to a teacher's ability

to respond with sensitivity to her students, as well. Non-accredited centers had greater

challenges and fewer resources; they were also more likely to include lower-income

children and teachers who had less training in early childhood education.

The role of the teacher and the choices she makes regarding her interactions with

her students can be associated with both positive and negative outcomes; however, most

assessment instruments don't devote much attention to what the teacher actually does

during these interactions. In an attempt to have a tool that would provide a standardized

measure to assess the correlation between the preschool environment and children's

competence, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was developed

(LaParo, Pianta, and Stuhlman, 2004). This tool would differ from others before, in that

it would "focu[s] on what teachers do with the materials they have and on the interactions

they have with children" (LaParo et al., 2004, p. 412). This presented a shift in focus

from looking primarily at materials to spotlighting processes, a move to focus more on

process quality, including teacher-child interactions, than on structural quality, or the

contents of the classroom. Three major areas of classroom characteristics would be

assessed by using the CLASS: classroom management, instructional support, and

emotional climate. The tool was developed, field tested, and utilized in 224 Pre-K

classrooms in 6 states, and was found to be valid and reliable. Findings showed that in

states where public preschool was well-established, there was moderately high emotional

support in classrooms but fairly low instructional support. In addition, while most

teachers did allow for choice and autonomy in the classroom, the mean for most scales

was in the middle range. One of the goals in developing this tool was to lead to

improvements in both quality and equity in preschool classrooms by delving deeper into

the teacher-child experience. As the authors state, "If policy makers were interesting in

ensuring program quality, the experiences of children in classrooms would be highly

relevant" (LaParo et al., 2004, p. 423).

LoCasale-Crouch et al. (2007) used data from the NCEDL study to create profiles

of observed quality in preschool by using the CLASS, in addition to the Early Childhood

Environment Ratings Scale (ECERS). Five profiles were identified amongst these public

preschool classrooms. Profile 1 was the highest quality and was the least prevalent, found

in only 15% of classrooms. The profiles found most often were Profiles 2, 3, and 4.

Profile 2 showed positive emotional climate and high instructional quality, as established

by the classroom teacher; Profile 3 showed positive emotional quality in the classroom

and mediocre instructional quality; and Profile 4 exhibited mediocre emotional quality

and low instructional quality. Profile 4 was also associated with less experienced teachers

and lower pay. Profile 5 was of the poorest quality, where children were exposed to very

few practices that have been associated with gains; this profile was found in 19% of

classrooms and was often associated with children of color and a higher poverty rate. As

a result of these disappointing findings, the recommendation was made to create

professional development experiences for teachers that focus specifically on quality of

instruction and social emotional interactions between teachers and children.

Hamre et al. (2012) created a professional development course for preschool

teachers to improve their interactions with their students. Out of a group of 440 teachers,

half participated in a 14-week course that used the CLASS as a framework for

knowledge, with a focus on "support of language and literacy development in preschool

classrooms through effective teacher-child interactions and relationships". The course

helped teachers to identify the eleven dimensions of interactions that are a part of the

CLASS: positive climate; negative climate; teacher sensitivity; regard for student

perspectives; behavior management; productivity; instructional learning formats; concept

development; quality of feedback; language modeling; and focus on literacy. Findings

showed that those who were exposed to the course had more intentional teacher beliefs

and were able to more readily identify effective instruction and interactions; in addition,

these teachers were more likely to demonstrate more effective emotional and

instructional interactions themselves.

While the CLASS was developed as a measure for outcomes, to make interactions

measurable and objective, this study showed that it could also be used as a framework for

intervention and targeted professional development, and that teachers could improve their

interactions with their students (Teachstone Training LLC, 2015). In addition, findings

from the Hamre et al. (2012) study showed that coursework can be built explicitly around

teacher-child interactions, and that this type of intervention is effective for teachers of

varying levels of experience. As the authors note, "This is important, because as the field

looks for ways to improve teacher-child interactions at scale, there is need for

professional development opportunities that can be disseminated broadly" (p. 116).

While it is encouraging that opportunities exist for teachers to improve upon their

interactions with their students, it is important to remember that these moments of

connection encompass not only the verbal interactions, but the nonverbal interactions as

well—the gestures, the smiles, and the touches—and few studies exist that explore a

teacher's ability to express affection for and a connection with her young students on a

nonverbal level. King (1998) states, "hugging and touch are integrated parts of a

constellation of caring for primary grade teachers" (p. 67). However, in the current

educational climate, teachers may be under tremendous pressures to achieve or under

orders to hold back on displaying affection and emotion; the ability of an early childhood

public school teacher to express love and affection for her young students may even be

questioned, as the "rules" are often different in elementary schools (Tobin et al., 2009).

Noblit and Rogers (1995) note that touching and physical contact demonstrate a

relationship between people, specifically between teacher and student. However, too

often, teachers feel, or have been explicitly told, that they are not permitted to engage in

these types of interactions, leading to a lack of expressions of care through affection in

the classroom, even in early childhood programs where this would seem to be a natural

and commonplace occurrence. Baker and Manfredi/Petitt (2004) ask, "Just how much

closeness is appropriate or desirable between caregivers and the children who fill their

days? Is it possible to feel too much for other people's children? Should *love* be a dirty

word in child care (p. 37)?" Andrzejewski and Davis (2007) state, "Inasmuch as the

importance of teacher-student relationship quality is minimized in the current educational

climate, the role of human contact in building those relationships appears to be

overlooked altogether" (p. 780). Very few studies exist that look at teachers' nonverbal

interactions with their students solely; even those few studies that do explore teachers'

expressions of emotion and affection include verbal interactions as well.

This next section will discuss the body of literature that currently exists, which examines teacher-child interactions, both verbal and nonverbal, and how best to foster positive interactions between teachers and children.

When & where do teachers and children interact? A small group of studies exist that provide insights into when and where teachers interact, or do not interact, with children in the early childhood classroom. Quay and Jarrett (1986) used time-sampling during free play to compare teacher interactions in lower socioeconomic settings with middle-class settings. Participants included 17 teachers in Head Start centers and 9 teachers in private preschools. Findings showed that Head Start teachers were often busy doing prep work during this time which led to less time for interaction.

> Teachers of lower SES children need to be encouraged to spend less time in…projects that do not directly involve the children. These teachers particularly need to be trained to convey the notion that they are approachable, to be ready to relate to the children when they do approach, to encourage children to initiate more contact with them, to initiate more contact with the children, to carry out longer and more sustained interactions, and to engage in verbal communications or conversations when they do interact with the children (Quay & Jarrett, 1986, p. 497).

As the majority of public preschool programs currently provide early educational experiences for those children with a background of low socioeconomic status, this finding is critically important and as the proposed research study will focus on these types of programs, it is with the goal of shedding light on this very issue.

Kontos & Keyes (1999) used an ecobehavioral framework to explore what child and classroom characteristics accompany complex interactions with objects and peers and when or how children are more likely to experience complex interactions from teachers. Through observations of the free play period, the researchers found that teacher interactions were negatively related to complex play during art and manipulative activities; further, complex teacher interactions were more likely when children were alone and in the dramatic play area. However, it was found that teacher presence in the art area was positively related to complex play with objects in that area. The researchers felt that this showed that "where teachers locate themselves in a classroom during free play may be as important as what they do or say in that location" (Kontos & Keyes, 1999, p. 48). While both of these studies looked specifically at the free play period in exploring teacher-child interactions, the proposed study will expand beyond that time period, in the hopes of finding different times, places, and spaces that teachers carve out for interacting and building relationships with their students.

Who interacts with teachers? When exploring teacher-child interactions, in addition to looking at the when and where, it is important to examine with whom teachers are interacting in the early childhood classroom. Colwell & Lindsey (2003) and Coplan & Prakash (2003) both focused on the types of children who interact with teachers and the impact of their interactions. Colwell & Lindsey (2003) examined the connections between teacher-child interactions and children's self-perceptions and their perceptions of peers by looking specifically at the children's behavior. Data was collected through the "Feelings about Myself and Peers" puppet interview and naturalistic observations of teacher-child interactions. The researchers found that both younger children and girls

were more likely to interact with their teachers. Both boys and girls who were aggressive

with the teachers showed more negative emotion during teacher-child interactions.

Coplan & Prakash (2003) explored the socio-emotional characteristics of children

who elicit interactions with teachers compared with those children who initiate

interactions with teachers through observations of the free play period and teacher ratings

of children's behavior. Findings showed that children who initiated more interactions

with teachers were more aggressive. Children who received more interactions from

teachers engaged in more solitary-passive play and less social play and were found to be

more anxious than their peers. Those children who did not often elicit or initiate

interactions with teachers were found to be more sociable and more likely to play with

peers. If children receive attention from teachers based upon their social behaviors in the

classroom, what does this mean in a classroom that has more of an academic focus?

Would the classroom teacher be able to identify these students as easily if there are fewer

opportunities for free play or if the teacher's job during free play is to focus on specific

learning objectives?

Botkin and Twardosz (1988) observed 47 daycare teachers to describe

expressions of affection in the daycare setting, focusing on both the nonverbal and verbal

interactions between teachers and children. Findings showed that teachers used smiling,

affectionate words, active physical contact, and passive physical contact to express

affection to children and affection was expressed most through the use of smiling.

Individual children were more likely to receive affection than groups of children which

speaks to the need for one-on-one time in classrooms. While affectionate words were

used equally towards boys and girls, physical affection was expressed more often towards

girls than boys. This finding may lead girls to see their teachers as "sources of support,

encouragement, and physical contact" while the same may not be true for their male

counterparts. Clearly, this is troublesome as research has already shown that boys tend to

have more negative relationships and interactions with their teachers (Colwell & Lindsay,

2003).

How do teachers interact with children? The largest group of studies regarding

teacher-child interactions focuses on how teachers interact with their students. This next

section will first begin with an exploration of the quantitative research that examines the

"how" and will be followed an examination of those qualitative studies with the same

aim.

Quantitative studies. Kontos (1999) investigated to what extent and how teachers

are involved with children during free play based on the belief that "the amount and type

of teachers' talk to children in the classroom have been shown to be an indicator of how

stimulating the environment is and to be related to children's learning and development"

(p. 365). Findings showed that teachers most often assumed the role of "stage manager"

or "play enhancer/playmate" during the free play period. Teachers' interactions with

children most often fell under the headings of supports play with objects via statements,

supports play with objects via questions, practical/personal assistance, and positive social

contacts. Teachers most often spent time in constructive play and manipulatives.

These three areas—teachers' talk, roles, and settings--were then analyzed to look

for relationships between them. Teachers mostly assumed the role of stage manager

when involved in constructive play activities. This role "serves to get and/or keep

children involved" and mostly involved practical/personal assistance talk. In

manipulative activities, the "play enhancer" role was often assumed and served to extend

children's learning through the use of questions. These findings show that teachers adjust

their role and talk depending on the activity setting. Again, this is yet another study that

explores the free play period but given the shift in early childhood education since this

study was done, what does this mean for those programs that are more structured or

where the focus during play is on academic outcomes? Further, how do teachers interact

with children throughout the remainder of the school day?

      Lambert, Abbott-Shim, and McCarty (2002) examined the dimensions of a Head

Start classroom's quality that are associated with children's social functioning. Findings

showed that those teachers who valued compliance and obedience were observed to

initiate fewer positive interactions with their students and were also less responsive and

less consistent in their management of children's behavior. The authors state that "the

teaching style that incorporates interactions with children of the most stimulating and

responsive nature may involve less emphasis on children's compliance and obedience

and more tolerance for a highly interactive atmosphere that characterizes high quality

classroom environments" (p. 242). Many public preschool programs today are housed in

elementary schools; in these settings, there may be a higher value placed on obedience

and compliance from students due to pressures from within the building. If this is the

case, what does this mean for the interactions between those teachers and their students

and the quality of these classrooms and the relationships built within them?

      deKruif, et al. (2000) observed teacher behaviors to look for patterns in

interaction styles that were shared by early childhood teachers. The researchers used the

ECERS, TSRS, CIS (Caregiver Interaction Scale), and the Engagement Check II to

collect data. Cluster analysis was used to identify four clusters of teacher interactions

from data collected from the TSRS—average, elaborative, controlling, and non-

elaborative. The four clusters were compared and findings showed that similar to the

findings by Lambert, Abbott-Shim, and McCarty (2002), controlling teachers had lower

quality classrooms and that the children in their classrooms were less likely to be actively

engaged than in the other teachers' classrooms, once again raising the question about

those public preschool programs housed within elementary schools. The controlling

teachers also had less education than the other teachers in the study; this is noteworthy

since so few public preschool programs meet the NIEER benchmark for teacher

qualifications (Barnett et al., 2015).

Zanolli, Saudargas, and Twardosz (1997) studied toddlers' responses to teachers'

affection over time by observing 10 toddlers during the free play period. They found that

the frequency of teachers' affectionate behavior towards individual children was low. If

this is true in a toddler program where one would expect natural, nonverbal interactions

between teachers and students, what does this mean for the public preschool programs of

today? Findings also showed that when interacting with children, passive contact, which

included holding a child or putting an arm around a child, and active contact, which

included hugs, kisses, and tickles, were most frequently observed. However, neither of

these types of behaviors was accompanied by words or smiles; yet, smiling and smiling

with contact received the most affectionate responses in return from the children. Passive

contact without smiling or words and affectionate words alone received the least

affectionate child responses. An implication from this study is the need for teachers to

clearly express their feelings; if a child does not understand how a teacher feels, it's

difficult for him to reciprocate. What are the implications of this work for an early

childhood program that has rules, either written or implied, governing how teachers are

allowed to express affection to their students?

Mill and Romano-White (1999) looked at factors that impact educator warmth

and anger in the classroom by observing 78 childcare workers in Canada. Factors

included teachers' background, personal resources, characteristics of the workplace, and

teachers' job perceptions. The researchers used a scale to judge teachers' affection and

anger towards their students. The majority of the teachers did not show anger, although

12% of teachers did. This was mostly conveyed through roughness or inappropriate

speech. Those teachers who were more affectionate had their own needs better met;

worked in a setting with a lower teacher turnover rate; worked with fewer low-income

children; and had more materials at their disposal. Further, teachers who exhibited anger

noted a low quality relationship with their supervisors, leading the authors to the

conclusion that the best explanation for "caregiver anger with the children is whether or

not the educator perceives she is in a supportive environment" (Mill & Romano-White,

1999, p. 171). In the current educational climate, particularly as early childhood

programs move into the public sector, teachers may often find themselves working for

supervisors who do not have training in early childhood education. If these teachers do

not feel supported by their administrators, it may not only be stressful for the teacher, but

may be potentially harmful for her young students who may be the recipients of her anger

as well.

Quantitative research has shown how and when teachers interact with children.

Teachers' talk with students may be dependent upon the classroom setting; their roles

often change based on where they are situated within the classroom. Teachers may play

with their young students or help to set the stage for their play; their most complex

interactions often happen during the free play period in the dramatic play and

manipulative areas. However, there are many missed opportunities for interaction and

findings have shown that teachers' training and educational background play a role in

determining their interactions with their students and the level of quality of their

classroom. The type of student also plays a part in determining how the teacher interacts;

teachers interact with girls more frequently and have higher level interactions with those

students who are not as competent, most likely as a means of providing them with

support.

Yet, while these studies provide a glimpse into how, when, and with whom

teachers interact in early childhood classrooms, they are also limiting in that they do not

provide a descriptive picture of what these actions look and sound like. The majority of

the research that has been conducted has been quantitative, leaving a large gap in the

literature as to what teachers are actually doing during these moments, a critical piece of

the puzzle. This next section will explore the qualitative studies that attempt to fill that

gap.

Qualitative studies. Lobman (2006) states, "There is very little information that

describes the interactions themselves and in doing so provides rich, detailed descriptions

of the moment-to-moment encounters between teachers and children" (p. 456). Lobman

examined interactions between teachers and students by focusing on responsive teaching;

she describes responsive teachers as "those who pick up on children's cues and who find

ways to extend and enhance what children are doing, rather than limiting or redirecting

their activity" (p. 456) and who "build directly with what children are doing and saying"

(p. 457). Ryan and Goffin (2008) have described responsive teachers as those who "build

relationships with children and use their expertise to extend and build on children's

understandings of the world" (p 389).

Lobman (2006) further clarifies by explaining that rather than fixating on a

predetermined goal, responsive teachers focus on "the moment" to build on children's

current interests and extend and enhance their learning. Since very little teacher-child

interaction research focuses on qualitative measures, Lobman believes in the need for

alternate tools for viewing teacher-child interactions to create a richer, fuller, and more

descriptive picture. In her study, Lobman (2006) used observations of a teacher in a

toddler classroom to analyze teacher-child interactions through a lens of improvisation.

Improvisation allowed Lobman to view interactions as an "ensemble activity" and

findings showed that "responsiveness was a two-way street and involved the teachers and

children using each other's words and gestures to create something together" (p. 461).

Using improvisation as a lens for viewing teacher-child interactions allowed the focus to

shift from simply describing what the teacher was doing to what the teacher and children

were doing together. This type of research begins to fill the gap and explain what is

actually happening in early childhood classrooms between teachers and children.

Kugelmass and Ross-Bernstein (2000) also attempted to fill this gap by exploring

a preschool teacher's perceptions of teacher-child interactions in a high-quality early

childhood classroom case study in an attempt to describe the nature of these interactions

and their origin. The researchers used a symbolic-interactionist approach which assumes

that examining participants' perspectives is necessary for the understanding of human

behavior. Data was collected through the use of videotaping, participant observation, teacher interviews, and reflections on videotaped observations. This data was then analyzed for themes and "consistent interactional patterns" and was subsequently validated by the teacher.

The researchers labeled the teacher's interactions with children as "child referencing", meaning that the teacher used information about each specific child to inform her interactions—both verbal and nonverbal—with that child. In the current educational context, with public preschool teachers often having to work within a standardized curriculum model, it is unclear if there is even time for teachers to glean this level of information about each individual child. Influences on the teacher's interaction style were found to include previous professional experiences, education, and training; developmental theories; knowledge of individual children; and working in the context of a team.

I conducted two pilot studies (Ostrove, 2006; Ostrove, 2007) which also attempted to give a clear picture of how teachers interact with children in a high quality early childhood program. In the first study (Ostrove, 2006), the participants were two teachers in a high quality, university-based childcare center who were observed during the free play period over the course of 4 weeks. Findings showed that teachers' experiences shaped their beliefs regarding teacher-child interactions in the early childhood classroom and that these interactions were both thoughtful and respectful. The interactions were observed to have the following characteristics: using appropriate body language, meeting children's individual needs, extending children's learning, knowing when to intervene, and establishing personal relationships with students.

The second study (Ostrove, 2007) was also a descriptive case study of two teachers in a high quality early childhood program; however, the setting for this study was an urban, state-funded preschool program, which mandated the use of a standardized curriculum model—Curiosity Corner—and there was an increased focus on teachers' use of conversation. Both teachers who participated in this study used conversation routinely throughout the free choice period to foster development of the whole child. Social/interpersonal and emotional development was fostered by using conversation to support peer relations; share personal information; address challenging behaviors; engage in pretend play; and use humor to build relationships with their students. Further, teachers also used conversation to encourage independence; offer reassurance; show affection; and discuss feelings and emotions. The children's cognitive development was fostered by using conversation to directly teach concepts, extend children's learning, offer opportunities for problem-solving, and help children to become engaged in activities. Teachers' use of conversation was influenced by their own background experiences, personalities, current work setting, and educational climate.

These qualitative studies begin to provide a more descriptive picture of teacher-child interactions in the early childhood classroom; findings show the need for teachers to be responsive and collaborative when interacting with their students. Responsive teaching requires teachers to get to know their students on a personal level; teachers then use this information to inform their interactions to successfully extend and enhance learning based on the children's needs and interests. However, clearly further research is needed to add to this small body of literature. If teachers are expected to have positive interactions with their students so that they may reap the well-documented benefits, they

will need more guidance as to how to make it happen. In addition, given the current

academic focus and the use of standardized curriculum models in public early childhood

programs, more research is needed in these settings to explore how this responsiveness

and collaboration can occur so that positive relationships can be built between teachers

and their young students.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The body of literature on teacher-student relationships is growing; however, there

is still a gap in the literature that does not describe what is going on in classrooms to

create these relationships. In 1992, Pianta and Steinberg explained that most often,

teacher-child relationship studies consist of self-reports and expressed concerns that

> …this is clearly not the optimal type of measure for assessing relationships.
>
> Observational studies of classroom interactions over numerous occasions,
>
> informed by attachment theory, can provide the descriptive base necessary for
>
> further development of ideas about teacher-child relationships and their functions
>
> (p. 78).

This statement was made over twenty years ago; however, this is unfortunately still often

the case. The majority of teacher-child relationship studies to date have been mostly

comprised of self-report data. Further, using the lens of attachment theory to study

teacher-child relationships is limiting and somewhat outdated (Harrison, Clarke, and

Ungerer, 2007) and alternate views are needed to provide new and different perspectives

(Lobman, 2006; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). In addition, given the growth of public

preschool programs, further exploration is needed to shed light on how teachers are

building relationships with students while working within the parameters that come along

with being a publicly funded program.

Wentzel (1999) notes that while connections have been made, for example,

between student-teacher relationships and motivation to learn, "little is known about how

or why social *influence* occurs" (p. 84). Hamre and Pianta (2001) state that

> …it is clear that the processes related to the development and influences of
>
> teacher-child relationships are important components of children's success in
>
> school. These relational processes can be considered an essential component of
>
> the school environment, and may provide a useful focus for research, intervention,
>
> and prevention in pathways of risk and school outcomes (p. 636).

But what are those processes? If the process of relationship-building is so critically

important, why has it not been addressed in the research literature? Future research

should address the how and why and offer a more clear picture of teacher-child

relationships in the early childhood classrooms of today so that positive outcomes can be

achieved.

Conclusion

Caring can be shown through a teacher's affection for and interactions with her

young students; strong relationships can be built through her actions, leading to numerous

positive outcomes for her students. However, as history and the research shows, it is

clear that a teacher's ability to care for her students is a complex matter. What may seem

like a simple task is often fraught with many dueling forces and it is impossible to ignore

the tensions that exist surrounding care in schools. Context, race, gender, politics,

educational climate, and teacher training are just some of the factors that play into a

teacher's ability to care for her students. However, we cannot ignore that this basic

human need must be met in our early childhood programs. As Baker and Manfredi/Petitt

(2004) remind us, "life for young children is shaped by relationships" (p. 7).

We must continue to explore what is actually happening in early childhood

classrooms, specifically those that are publicly funded, to insure that care continues to

play an important role. Research has shown the value in a child-initiated, high-quality

curriculum; research has also shown the importance and value of care in the classroom.

The next step is to provide teachers with real guidance and support so that they can

properly build these responsive relationships with their students. Future research must

provide a descriptive picture to fill the current gap in the literature regarding care and

relationship-building in early childhood classrooms. More qualitative research is needed,

in addition to conducting research using differing perspectives and lenses; it is not

enough to simply rely on attachment theory as has been done in the past. New means of

data collection is also needed; depending upon a teacher's report alone is not sufficient.

Further measures must be developed to gain children's perspectives and classroom

observations must be a part of the picture. There should also be a research focus on

public preschool programs in the United States; as these programs rapidly grow and

expand, it is critically important to document and analyze what is happening in these

settings. In addition, future research must examine the use of curriculum models in

preschool and should expand the focus beyond outcomes to provide a richer story of how

these models impact upon daily classroom life.

In 1993, Malaguzzi and Gandini cautioned that "the loneliness, the separation, the

indifference, and the violence that more and more characterize modern life undermine

our proposal for a system of education based on relationships" (p. 10). We must continue

to fight against the pull towards an early childhood educational system devoid of care and

relationships and understand that the false dichotomy that is often purported to exist

between care and education cannot guide our future pathways. Future research must

continue this fight and provide a clearer picture of what is happening to care in the early

childhood classrooms of today. The aim of this study is to begin to fill this gap by

exploring how teachers build relationships with children while working within the current

educational climate and the mandate of a standardized curriculum model.

Chapter 3: Research Design

The aim of this case study is to examine how public preschool teachers build

relationships with their students while working within the parameters that come along

with being a publicly-funded early childhood program, namely the need to work within a

standardized curriculum model. This study is best described as an instrumental case

study, whereby the case is "examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of

theory" and therefore, "plays a supporting role, facilitating our understanding of

something else" (Stake, 1995, p. 237), with this choice being made to advance the

understanding of a particular issue or topic, in this case, the unknown impact of public

preschool on the teacher-child relationship.

Methodology

Yin (2008) states that "case studies are the preferred method when (a) 'how' or

'why' questions are being posed, (b) the investigation has little control over the events,

and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context"(p. 2). For

this study, a major 'how' question guides the inquiry: how teachers build relationships

with students in public preschool, a "contemporary phenomenon"; further, this is a

naturalistic study where data was gathered in the field without any manipulation of the

environment. In addition, Stake (1994) notes, "Case study can also be a disciplined force

in public policy setting and reflection on human experience. Vicarious experience is an

important basis for refining action options and expectations" (p. 245). As the aim of this

study was to examine current policy initiatives in early childhood education and their

impact, a case study was the most appropriate choice. Finally, in an effort to make the

findings more compelling, robust, and powerful (Yin, 2008), a multiple, or collective,

case study design (Stake, 1994), was chosen. A complete timeline for this study is

included in Appendix A.

Setting

      This study was conducted in New Jersey, a state that has, for the past fifteen

years, served as a model for public preschool programs and in addition, provides a unique

lab for studying standardized curriculum models in publicly funded preschool programs.

      Public preschool in New Jersey. During the 2011-2012 school year in which

this study was conducted, just over $600 million was spent by the state of New Jersey to

serve over 51,000 children in state-funded preschool programs (Barnett, Carolan,

Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). At that time, New Jersey was ranked first in the country

by the 2012 National Institute for Early Education (NIEER) State of Preschool Yearbook

based on state spending in the resources ranking, and was rated sixteenth for 4-year olds

and second, for three-year olds in terms of access to available programs (Barnett et al.,

2012). Since that time, while enrollment has remained fairly consistent, for the 2013-14

school year, spending increased to $630 million, bringing the per-pupil spending amount

to just over $12,000, slightly more than was allotted at the time of this study (Barnett,

Carolan, Squires, Brown, & Horowitz, 2015). New Jersey is now ranked second in the

country by the 2014 State of Preschool Yearbook based on state spending in the resources

ranking, and has fallen slightly in terms of access to programs as well. However, one of

New Jersey's public preschool programs, the program formerly known as the Abbott

program, continues to meet nine out of the ten NIEER benchmarks for quality, only

missing the benchmark for teacher assistant qualifications (Barnett et al., 2015). As a result of New Jersey's commitment to growing and expanding high quality preschool, in 2013, the state was awarded a $44.3 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, in addition to receiving $17.5 million in a Preschool Development Grant in 2014 (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013; 2014a; 2014b).

New Jersey's history with public preschool is unique. In 1981, a lawsuit was filed by the Education Law Center that stated that the state's funding system did not provide an appropriate education for students in New Jersey's poorest districts (Education Law Center, 2009). The Abbott vs. Burke court case went to the state Supreme Court and in 1999, the decision which became known as Abbott V, required, amongst other things, free high quality public preschool for 3 and 4 year olds in the state's 31 poorest districts (Abbott v Burke, 1998). The Abbott preschool program began as a court-ordered mandate to establish parity amongst the wide range of public school districts in New Jersey to provide the state's poorest children with access to high quality educational experiences to improve their educational outcomes. This landmark court case was revisited in 2000, when Abbott VI established the requirements that these public preschool programs must hire qualified teachers; limit class size to no larger than 15 students; and implement a developmentally appropriate and state-approved curriculum model (Abbott v Burke, 2000). In 2004, the state's Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations were implemented which speak to all domains of children's development and insure appropriate early educational experiences in the Abbott districts; these

standards were then revised in 2013 to align with the Common Core Standards and to add

a section regarding approaches to learning.

The number of children served by Abbott preschool programs has grown from

19,000 in its first year to close to 44,000 children in six percent of the state's districts in

the most recent school year (Barnett et al., 2015), and classroom quality has increased

over the years as well from just better than minimum quality to good to excellent quality

(Frede, Jung, Barnett & Figueras, 2009). Preliminary findings from an ongoing

longitudinal study examining the effects of the Abbott preschool program have shown

that quality preschool makes a difference (Barnett, Jung, Youn &and Frede, 2013; Frede,

et al, 2009). Children who attended Abbott preschool programs outperformed their peers

on standardized tests in fourth and fifth grade in the areas of Language Arts and Literacy,

Math, and Science, and the effects were even greater for those students who attended two

years of Abbott preschool; in addition, participation in an Abbott preschool program

decreased the likelihood of grade retention and special education placement. Further, as

Frede et al. (2009) state, "Given the trajectory of achievement and progression in grade

found so far, we can expect that the future will reveal not only lasting benefits for the

children who attended Abbott pre-K but eventual pay-off to society in the reduction of

school costs, decreases in delinquency and crime, and increased productivity in the

workforce," (p. 5) showing the difference that a quality early childhood program can

make.

Research sites. In this multiple case study, the sites chosen were two publicly

funded early childhood programs that follow a standardized curriculum model. Stake

(1994) explains that "the phenomenon of interest observable in the case [should]

represent[s] the phenomenon generally" (p. 243). As such, the public preschool

programs that were chosen for this study are located in two of New Jersey's former

Abbott districts, Southfield and Willow Glen; one classroom from each district was

included in this study. Consent forms were obtained from each district (Appendix B) and

pseudonyms have been used for each district. Both districts are located in urban settings

with the majority of students qualifying for free or reduced-lunch. The Southfield Public

School District is comprised of 22 schools and in the 2011-12 school year, served over

9700 students, close to 600 of whom were enrolled in the preschool program. Ninety-five

percent of students were African-American and this was reflected in the preschool as

well. Willow Glen is a smaller district, with just under 2000 students enrolled for the

2011-12 school year; 82 students received public preschool services. Sixty-five percent of

Willow Glen students were African-American and thirty-three percent were Hispanic,

with a similar representation in the preschool. Both districts have been required to

provide free, high-quality preschool since 1999; they have also been required to choose

and implement a standardized curriculum model that all preschools within the district

must follow. Therefore, this study focused on one of the state-approved early childhood

curriculum models.

   The curriculum model that was chosen to be studied was the Curiosity Corner

standardized curriculum model, which was created by the Success for All Foundation in

response to a request from the New Jersey Department of Education in the late 1990s. As

a result of the Abbott v. Burke decision, free high quality preschool was to be provided

for high-risk children in the state's poorest districts; in an effort to insure quality, it was

mandated that each district adopt a preschool curriculum model. The Curiosity Corner

model was designed expressly for this purpose, and is a research based curriculum model, with an emphasis on development of the whole child. The model "provides educators with detailed instructions and many of the materials needed to implement a stimulating program" and one of the main areas of focus of the Curiosity Corner model is literacy and language development (Chambers, Chamberlain, Hurley & Slavin, 2001). It is a somewhat scripted and rigid model, which comes "with a teacher's manual, thirty-eight weekly theme guides, over 150 children's trade books, manipulatives, games, and other materials to supplement the basic supplies of a regular early childhood classroom" (Chambers et al., 2001, p. 8) so there is little room for deviation from the program, if implemented as suggested. There is an expectation that classroom teachers will follow the teacher's manual and guides closely, in addition to adhering to the daily schedule and routines put forth by the model as well. As a fairly prescribed model, Curiosity Corner requires a good deal of training and support, both before implementation and after, and it is expected that districts utilizing this model will engage Curiosity Corner Coaches to facilitate professional development.

Yet despite all of these measures, while Curiosity Corner was one of only six curriculum models out of twenty-eight that showed strong evidence of effectiveness (Chambers et al., 2010), in addition to having a positive impact on reading and language (Chambers, et al., 2010; PCERC, 2008), there were no classroom-level effects found in either teacher-child interactions or classroom quality (PCERC, 2008), despite a stated curricular emphasis on language. Curiosity Corner did show a positive impact on student achievement in this area but it seems notable that in a program that emphasizes language, teacher-child interactions did not improve. Stake (1994) notes that in a collective case

study, "Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance"

(p. 244); while it is important to choose a typical case, it is equally as important to choose

the case from which the most can be learned. This curriculum model provides an

interesting picture of what is happening in public early childhood classrooms and for all

of the reasons given, was believed to be beneficial for exploration in this study

Sample

Dockett & Perry (2007) state, "The procedure of examining a research context in

different ways, from different perspectives is important in our attempts to describe and

understand the social worlds being investigated" (p. 53). In order to gain different

perspectives, the intended sample of this study was to be comprised of four adults and six

children. Pseudonyms have been used for all teachers, children, and administrators.

The two Lead Teachers ("teacher") in this study were Keisha Hatcher, a

Southfield preschool teacher at the Parks Elementary School, a PreK-5 school, serving

350 students, and Patrick Thomas, a Willow Glen preschool teacher at the Woodlawn

Elementary School, a PreK-4 school, serving 522 students. Two Assistant Teachers

("assistant"), one from each classroom, were intended to be participants as well; in

actuality, only one of the Assistant Teachers was able to be observed, and that was Ísabel

Cruz from Patrick's classroom. Keisha did not have a regular and permanent assistant in

her classroom during the period of my observations and as a result, she was the only

participant from her classroom. Teachers were chosen based upon willingness to

participate in the study and recommendation of their supervisors; instructions for the

supervisors included the recommendation to take into consideration how well the

curriculum model was currently being implemented in the classroom.

While criteria for inclusion did not focus on the teachers' abilities to build

relationships with their students, it is possible that given the focus of this study, the

district supervisors selected teachers who they felt were exemplary in this area. This was

not given as a directive but should that have occurred, it is acceptable to me for two

reasons. First, given the lack of studies that explore how teachers build relationships with

children in public preschool programs while working within a standardized curriculum

model, if the teachers chosen for this study were especially adept at relationship-building,

then this study could possibly serve as a model from which educators and policymakers

could learn. On the other hand, while the district supervisor may believe a teacher to be

exemplary at her job or particularly skilled at relationship-building with students, the

supervisor's definition may not coincide with my own or with the current research on

teacher-child relationships, which may raise the question of what supervisors in public

preschool programs are looking for in terms of their expectations of their teachers.

Finally, three children were selected from each classroom to offer their

perspectives on the teacher-child relationship as well. These children were selected by

the classroom teacher within the first two weeks of the study based on the following

criteria: she was to choose one child with whom she felt she had an especially positive

relationship, one child with whom she felt she had a challenging relationship, and one

child with whom she felt she had not yet had the opportunity to build a relationship.

However, as I will explain in the next section, the data collected from these children did

not end up being particularly valuable to answering the research questions.

The identities of all the participants remain confidential, in addition to the names

of the sites remaining anonymous. Consent forms were obtained for all adults and

children involved (Appendices C-F).

Data collection

Creswell (1998) explains that a case study requires "in-depth data collection

involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61); Yin (2008) explains

that the most valuable contribution of these multiple sources of data is the "development

of converging lines of inquiry" (p. 115), making the findings more convincing and

accurate. As the aim of this case study was to provide a rich description of how teachers

build relationships with their students in public preschool programs, the multiple methods

of data collection included direct classroom observations; field notes; formal and

informal teacher interviews; formal child interviews; informal assistant and administrator

interviews; and review of documents. These data sources are connected to the research

questions in Table 1.

Table 1

Data sources and research questions

Research Questions	Observations/ Field Notes	Interviews	Document Review
1) How do preschool teachers build relationships with children while working within a standardized curriculum model?	X	X	X
1a) What opportunities exist for relationship-building?	X	X	X
1b) What strategies do teachers employ to build relationships with their students?	X	X	X
2) What are teachers' beliefs about relationship-building in the early childhood classroom?		X	
3) What do teachers believe impacts upon their abilities to successfully build relationships with their students?		X	

Observations. The primary source of data collection for this study was the direct

classroom observations in each of the two classrooms. I observed each classroom for

approximately a four-hour period, once a week, over a span of six weeks, beginning with

the second week of school; the time of year was specifically chosen to be able to observe

how teachers build relationships with their students from the very start of the school year

in September. Each classroom was observed from the time of student arrival through rest

time. I chose to focus on this time period because this portion of the school day affords

the teacher countless opportunities to interact and build relationships with her students.

In most preschool classrooms, a variety of activities take place during this time period,

including the children's arrival; two mealtimes; indoor and outdoor play; numerous

transitions; small and large group activities; teacher-directed and child-directed activities;

and rest time. To focus on simply one of these moments would make the assumption that

relationships are only built during a particular time of day. Further, the majority of the

previous studies that have explored teacher-child interactions or relationships focus only

on the free play period. This study strives to provide a descriptive picture of how and

when teachers find the moments to build relationships with their students and as such, a

large block of time was necessary for the observations. As the chosen curriculum model

requires each of these activities to be scheduled into the school day (Success for All

Foundation, 2011) it was correctly anticipated that they would be a regular part of each

program.

In addition, Patrick's teaching assistant was also included in the observational

data. As another adult in the classroom who may impact upon the teacher's interactions

with his students, her role in shaping what happened in the classroom could not be

ignored. While brief jottings about her daily responsibilities were regularly documented

through the use of field notes, she was also formally observed once at the midway point

of the study in order to more fully explore her role in the classroom and what impact, if

any, her behavior or activities in the classroom had on the teacher's interactions with his

students. As was previously mentioned, I was unable to observe an assistant in Keisha's

classroom; however, this lack of consistency and the impact it had on Keisha's

interactions with her students was observed and noted as well.

Observational data was collected via videotape and field notes. All observations

focused on the participant's verbal and nonverbal interactions with her students, or lack

thereof; she was followed throughout the observation period while I remained as

unobtrusive as possible, collecting data from a comfortable distance. All field notes were

written into a research notebook, which was more fully expanded upon following each

observation (Merriam, 2009). A contact summary form was completed after each

observation to record anything noteworthy and to help focus future observations. In my

professional life as an educational consultant, I have much experience with observation

and documentation in classrooms, including taking anecdotal notes, and as a result, I was

confident that I would able to obtain the necessary data through the use of field notes.

However, to make certain that the data collection was rich and complete, certain

observations were videotaped with a handheld video camera by focusing on the teacher

interacting with her students during various periods throughout the morning. These

select videotaped observations focused only on a specific period of the day, which varied

from week to week. Over the course of data collection, each class was videotaped during

each of the following activities: arrival, large group activity, small group activity,

outdoor/gross motor activity, meal times, and free play (Success for All Foundation,

2011). A schedule was created to determine when these videotaped observations would

take place and to ensure adequate representation; this schedule can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Videotaping Schedule

Weeks	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Week 1	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival
Week 2	Large Group	Large Group	Large Group	Large Group
Week 3	Small Group	Small Group	Small Group	Small Group
Week 4	Gross Motor	Gross Motor	Gross Motor	Gross Motor
Week 5	Meal Times	Meal Times	Meal Times	Meal Times
Week 6	Free Play	Free Play	Free Play	Free Play

These videotaped observations supplemented and enhanced the field notes in order to ensure that an accurate representation of relationship-building had been collected. In addition, select episodes of these videotaped observations were shared with the teachers during interviews, as will be described below. All videotaped observations were reviewed for teacher-child interactions and these moments were transcribed verbatim.

Field notes. As was previously noted, field notes were used during the observation period to document teacher behavior and note any comments about the context and behaviors observed. Both nonverbal and verbal interactions between teachers and students were recorded, in addition to notations about the general tone and feel of the classroom; these field notes included direct quotations from participants, in addition to anecdotal information about activities observed (Merriam, 2009). As Marshall & Rossman (1999) point out, "observer's comments are often a quite fruitful source of analytic insights and clues to focus data collection more tightly" (p. 108). Field notes were recorded in a research notebook and were more fully expanded upon following each observation session (Merriam, 2009). Field notes were also used to guide future observations; if something of interest was noted or a lack of attention was paid to a particular area, future observations addressed these issues.

Interviews. Patton (1990) states, "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278). Formal and informal teacher interviews were conducted throughout the study. The goal of the interviews was to elicit the teacher's perspectives on teacher-student relationships. Three formal interviews were conducted with the teachers using

the "interview guide approach" which allowed our discussions "to remain fairly

conversational and situational" (Patton, 1990, p. 288); Yin (2008) recommends that these

interviews should "be guided conversations rather than structured queries" (p. 106).

Interview protocols are included in Appendices G-I.

     An initial interview was held with each teacher to determine teacher beliefs and

expectations regarding the role of the teacher; the nature of teacher-child relationships;

and the role that the standardized curriculum model plays in determining the teacher's

course of action. During this interview, data was also collected on teachers' education,

background, and teaching experience. This interview took place prior to the classroom

observations.

     Each teacher was interviewed twice more over the course of data collection, once

at the midway point and once at the end of data collection when all observations had been

completed. During these second and third interviews, each teacher had the opportunity to

recall and reflect upon specific events or moments with her students and to offer insights

into her behavior. Merriam (2009) notes that observations can "provide some knowledge

of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as

reference points for subsequent interviews" (p. 119). In addition, these stimulus-recall

interviews included the opportunity to view videotaped observations that were selected

by me. All formal interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

     Throughout the data collection period, informal interviews were conducted with

teachers, assistants, and occasionally, administrators to gain further perspective on

happenings within the classroom and school setting. These informal interviews were not

transcribed; however, a contact summary form was completed following each site visit

and any notes or reflections from these informal interviews were included at that time.

In addition, the three selected children in each classroom participated in one

formal interview to offer their insights and feedback into their relationship with their

teachers. Dockett & Perry (2007) urge that "…as educators, researchers, and adults, we

have much to learn about children and children's experiences, from children" (p. 48).

Yet, interviewing children involves a different process and set of challenges apart from

interviewing adults (Christensen, 2004; Irwin & Johnson, 2005). Accordingly, it was

necessary for the methods chosen for the child interviews to reflect the needs, abilities,

and interests of the participants, especially due to their young age. Each child was asked

to draw a picture of herself and her teacher; she was also asked to describe and comment

on her drawing and her words were transcribed verbatim so that the data and its

interpretation could be properly discussed with the participant (Dockett & Perry, 2007).

However, in their work with children, Irwin & Johnson (2005) found that "…if the form

of play did not match the needs of the child, barriers to rapport building were created" (p.

824). Therefore, if the child was unable or unwilling to draw a picture, an alternate

method was intended to be used; props, such as dolls and figures, were available for role

playing the relationship between teacher and child and if needed, this dialogue would

have been transcribed verbatim as well. While an open-ended approach is recommended

for interviewing adults, this may not be the most appropriate method for interviewing

children (Irwin & Johnson, 2005). As such, while a natural question posed to the child

may be, "Tell me about your picture," a few direct questions were used during the

interview as well, including "What do you and your teacher do together?", "How do you

feel about your teacher?" and "How does your teacher feel about you?" in order to obtain focused data.

Each child interview took place in a part of the preschool classroom that afforded the child a level of privacy and focus while at the same time, allowing her to remain within the comfort of her classroom (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Hatch, 1990; Irwin & Johnson, 2005). Both teachers felt it was appropriate to conduct these interviews during the Learning Labs period, as the children were naturally rotating throughout the classroom and working individually or in small groups, often at tables. While all of the children chosen participated willingly in this activity and seemed to enjoy engaging with me to draw a picture, due to their young ages and language skills, unfortunately, these interviews did not yield usable data and I did not feel comfortable drawing conclusions beyond what they shared with me. For reference, the children's drawings are included in Appendix J.

Documents. Document review provided the opportunity to gain insight into the principles that guided each program and afforded me the ability to see if there had been any formal attempt to direct staff in how to best build relationships with children; documents were also examined for "any important message *between* the lines" (Yin, 2008, p. 70). Yin (2008) notes, "For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 103). Merriam (1998) notes that documents "can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (p. 126). Documents that informed this study include the curriculum guide and materials; parent handbooks; and teacher documents, including lesson plans and correspondence with parents. These documents were photocopied and kept in a locked

file labeled with the school and/or teacher's name and date; document consent forms

were obtained from each school (Appendix K). The documents were used to gather

information regarding teachers' beliefs and practices around relationship building, both

from the teachers and the curriculum model.

In addition, artifacts produced by the children, such as the drawings noted above,

were used as part of the data collection as well. However, it was important to recognize

that issues of power are present between researcher and child and it was up to the child to

grant permission to the researcher to keep any drawings produced during the data

collection period (Dockett & Perry, 2007). All of the children included were comfortable

sharing their drawings with me. However, as noted above, these drawings did not provide

helpful insights.

Role of researcher. In order to establish rapport and a level of comfort, I

engaged in participant observation during my data collection. Yin (2008) views this as

an opportunity "to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone 'inside' the case

study" (p. 112). However, my stance was that of "observer as participant" (Gold, 1958,

in Merriam, 2009), in that my "participation in the group [was] definitely secondary to

the role of information gatherer" (Merriam, 2009, p. 124). Having spent many years

working in early childhood settings, I am comfortable in any early childhood classroom

and felt that if I was able to form relationships with the staff and children, then my ability

to collect meaningful data would be enhanced, particularly during the child interviews

(Christensen, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Hatch, 1990; Irwin & Johnson, 2005). From

acting in this capacity in two previous pilot studies (Ostrove, 2006; Ostrove, 2007), I was

aware that this role would be more challenging at certain times than others, particularly

when I was behind the video camera. It was for this reason that I chose to limit my time

behind the camera to one period during each observation.

I was also aware that my roles as participant and observer would vary during my

time spent in the classrooms (Merriam, 2009); I was careful to allow myself enough time

to collect the necessary data and was also aware that as an "observer as participant", I

would increase the potential for bias in my analysis (Yin, 2008). In addition, I took care

not to interfere with or influence the ways that the participants express care in the

classroom by any intervention, mediation, or modeling on my part; I tried not to fill in

any gaps or lapses in behavior, nor step in to problem-solve for the teachers in order to

meet the children's needs, although on one occasion that will be described in the

following chapter, I did help a teacher to understand what was happening in a particular

situation, as I felt that my input would clear up confusion between the teacher and a

student with social-emotional and language challenges. Despite this one moment of

slight intervention, I believe that the value in my assuming the role of "observer as

participant" outweighed the possible risks and I did take care to examine any potential

challenges incurred as a result.

During my first week on site, I took the opportunity to introduce myself and the

video camera to those involved; this also provided time for me to get acclimated to the

classroom setting and daily schedule. I also conducted the first teacher interviews to gain

an understanding of the teachers' backgrounds and beliefs. In my previous pilot studies, I

found that it was during this interview process that rapport began to be established so I

built upon this experience. I shared my background with the teachers so they were aware

of who I was and where I was coming from; I commiserated with them about challenging

teaching situations that we had all experienced; and I answered any questions or concerns

that they had regarding the study. It seemed that we all felt more comfortable as we

moved into the observational part of the study and I felt that my role as participant would

be more welcomed.

Pilot Studies

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, prior to the current study, I had the

opportunity to conduct two pilot studies (Ostrove, 2006; 2007), both of which explored

teacher-child interactions in high quality preschool settings. In both studies, as in the

current study, data was collected through the use of videotaped observations, teacher

interviews, and document review.

These pilot studies informed the current study. The free play period was chosen

as the focus of the two previous studies; however, for the current study, I believed that

the focus must be expanded. A great deal of the available research focuses solely on the

free play period and while I found rich material in examining it previously, I believe that

it is critically important to examine those other parts of the day where teachers might find

the time to build relationships with their students as well. In addition, in the previous

pilot studies, I found the use of videotape extremely worthwhile in providing specific

details and dialogue that might have been otherwise missed; however, it somewhat

hindered my role as a participant observer since the camera was handheld during the

entire observation period. Now that my focus would be extended beyond the free play

period, I believed that choosing to videotape the entire observation period would not be

conducive to my role as participant observer. I did, however, videotape a part of each

observation since I found this piece so valuable in my previous work. Also, while one of

my previous studies did focus on a program that was utilizing a standardized curriculum

model, I did not examine the effects, if any, that the teacher felt the curriculum model had

on the daily interactions in the early childhood classroom which the proposed study aims

to achieve.

However, one of the strongest influences these previous pilot studies have had on

the current study is the way that the participants expressed care in the early childhood

classroom; in both of these high-quality settings, teachers used their interactions with

students to foster their cognitive development, in addition to their social/emotional

growth. There was no real divide between "care" and "education"; these teachers

managed to achieve both simultaneously. While I was observing these teachers'

interactions with their students, I started to think about the topic of care and what that

really means in early childhood education. Teachers were having thoughtful and

respectful interactions with their students (Ostrove, 2006) that required a deep

understanding of who their students were. Teachers were using these conversations to

address all areas of their students' development (Ostrove, 2007), and they realized that

addressing their students' social-emotional needs, including showing affection, offering

reassurance, and sharing personal information, paved the way for them to successfully

advance their students' cognitive development, as well. While I went into these studies

looking more broadly at teacher-child interactions, after the completion of these studies, I

began to think about and define care as had been observed through these interactions, in

terms of individualization, relationships, connections, and responsiveness.

Yet looking across these two studies, while there certainly were similarities observed in how the teachers chose to interact with their students, I did notice a difference in the amount of pressure that the teachers in the public preschool program seemed to feel with regards to their role in the classroom, as opposed to the teachers in the university-based childcare center, who while not under these pressures themselves, also acknowledged the pressures faced by their public school counterparts. While none of the participants succumbed to these pressures to deliver academic outcomes by compromising the quality of their programs and interactions, I began to wonder what these classrooms might look like five or six years later, given the current shift in focus in early childhood education and this greatly informed the focus of the current study.

Data analysis

Creswell (1998) states, "for a case study…analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting" (p. 153) which was the goal of this study. Yin (2008) urges, "Case studies require an inquiring mind *during* data collection, not just before or after the activity" (p. 69). As such, the data analysis process was ongoing and reflective and the first phase of my analysis coincided with the start of data collection.

Organizing the data set. The first step in my analysis was to create files and organize the data (Creswell, 1998). All observations, interviews, and field notes were transcribed during the data collection process and were imported into computer files; the videotaped observations were viewed and searched for evidence of relationship-building and these moments were transcribed verbatim. In addition, contact summary forms were completed following each site visit to mark anything noteworthy and to summarize what

happened during the visit. All collected documents were also reviewed for examples or

mentions of teacher-child interactions and relationships, or lack thereof, and document

summary forms were completed as well. During this first phase of analysis, memos were

also compiled that allowed for preliminary analysis and interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

All data was organized into files based on teacher and program. A file was established

for each participant and all data pertaining to that participant—observations, field notes,

documents, and interviews—was placed into this file.

Reducing the data set. The next step in my analysis was to reduce the data set

by using codes to sort through the data; all of the files were imported into the Dedoose

data analysis software and I began to code. Stake (1995) suggests that "…it will be useful

to use pre-established codes but [also] to go through the data separately looking for new

ones" (p. 79). I first used a priori codes to reduce the data record based upon the New

Jersey Department of Education's "Preschool Classroom Checkup" (NJDOE, n.d.),

which includes a section entitled, "Interactions and Relationship-Building". While the

full list of these a priori codes are included in Appendix L, an example of one of these

codes is "Shows appreciation and recognition", and an example of the data assigned to

this code was the following.

A child sits on the sun in the middle of the circular carpet.

P: If you want to sit on the sun, that's a special seat and you need to sit all the way

down (helps him to physically sit down). I'm so proud of you. Give me five.

And again. And again. And again. (Patrick, Observation #1, 9/19/11)

I then read through the data another time to develop an inductive coding scheme

to identify themes and patterns, or specific areas not addressed with the a priori codes.

These inductive codes are included in Appendix M. "Influence of co-workers" is an

example of an inductive code that was derived from the teacher interviews; the following

is an excerpt of data assigned to this code.

> She's given me a lot of guidance, not necessarily structured guidance, but a lot of
>
> watching her, modeling. She's showing me exactly…I see the relationship that
>
> she has built with kids in the past…so she knows what she's doing so I've
>
> watched her a lot. (Patrick, Interview #1, 9/14/11)

As Stake (1995) notes, "The search for meaning often is a search for patterns" (p.

78). My next step was to utilize both sets of codes to sort the dataset for each teacher

with regards to how she builds relationships with her students.

Developing themes. Next, I grouped the codes with the goal of categorical

aggregation which Stake (1995) describes as the "aggregation of instances until

something can be said about them as a class" (p. 74). Data assigned to each code was

grouped together to look for patterns and themes pertaining to each teacher's

relationship-building techniques. This was made easier by using the Dedoose software to

pull out excerpts of data for each code; I was able to examine which codes occurred

together frequently, during a specific time of day, or primarily for a specific teacher, and

note if this said something important about the data. For example, I was able to discover

that the code for "Mealtimes" frequently occurred with the codes "Participates in

individual conversations", "Situates oneself", "Shares personal information", "Asks

open-ended questions", and "Displays warmth." After reading through all of the

excerpted data, I wrote a short memo for each set, noting patterns and themes.

Within-case analysis. Following this thematic analysis, I created a teaching

profile for each participant, which was then shared with each teacher for review and

feedback. I then constructed a case summary of each teacher to connect the data to the

research questions. I wrote up each teacher's case with a "detailed perspective of a few

incidents" (Creswell, 1998, p. 63) and the presentation of narrative. Stake (1995)

explains, "To assist the reader in making naturalistic generalizations, case researchers

need to provide opportunities for vicarious experience" (p. 86). As such, the cases are

presented with teachers' voices and rich descriptions of the setting and activities

observed. Documents collected also informed a case summary of the Curiosity Corner

model to make the connection between the data and the research questions as well.

Cross-case analysis. The last step in my analysis was to conduct a cross-case

comparison to look for similarities and differences and discern themes between programs.

After examining each teacher's case separately, I looked across both cases for patterns of

relationship building, in addition to noting what could be said about each case in

comparison to the other, with regards to the research questions and the literature on

teacher-child relationships in the early childhood classroom.

Revisiting. While the initial thought was to examine and write up both cases

together so that the findings were intertwined, at this point in the analysis, having

discovered significant differences between each case during the cross-case analysis, I

then returned back to the individual teachers. Going through the steps of first analyzing

each case separately and then analyzing the data together brought me to the conclusion

that there were two very different stories here that needed to be told. Initially, I had

written up my findings using the following format: individual beliefs, shared beliefs,

shared practices, and individual practices. However, this format felt mostly descriptive

and did not seem to allow each teacher's unique story to be told. The choice was made at

that point to pull out the individual cases and present them separately so that their voices

could best be heard and their experiences could best be shared. Presenting each teacher's

case distinctly and in its entirety yielded a stronger story of what was actually happening

in these programs and allowed me to move beyond simple description and make the

connections between relationship building and context.

Validity

Validity was ensured by using triangulation of data to confirm findings; a variety

of data sources were used to ensure an accurate interpretation (Creswell, 1998; Yin,

2008). In addition, thick description and teachers' voices were used. Further, during the

midpoint and final teacher interviews, each teacher had the opportunity to discuss and

respond to several episodes of teacher-child interactions to offer reflections and insights

into her responses. The teachers also had the opportunity to check the accuracy of my

interpretations after both of the interviews and when the teaching profiles were

completed; this allowed me to check my analysis against any biases that I may hold and

to adjust any of my assumptions accordingly, in addition to adding to the construct

validity of this study (Yin, 2008). I also utilized peer review to check any cultural biases

that I might have inadvertently displayed.

This aim of this case study was to explore and describe how early childhood

teachers build relationships with their students while working within a standardized

curriculum model in an attempt to improve and inform research, policy, and practice in

the field of early childhood education. Very little exists in the literature base that

explores how teachers build relationships in the early childhood classroom; even less is

known about how teachers accomplish this challenging task while working within a

standardized curriculum model. This study hopes to begin to fill that gap.

Chapter Four: Findings

Two teachers from two different public preschool programs were chosen as the

participants in this case study. Despite the fact that these teachers differed in age, gender,

race, educational background, and training, there were marked similarities between them

with regard to their beliefs and practices regarding early childhood education, in general,

and relationship building, specifically. However, as the findings will show, each teacher's

personality, and perhaps more importantly their context and experience, contributed to

their distinctive ideas and practices. This chapter will begin by first, briefly exploring the

teachers' shared beliefs regarding learning and teaching in early childhood education;

relationship building in the early childhood classroom; and integrating a standardized

curriculum model into their practices. This will be followed by two separate cases, one

for each teacher, to examine their individual beliefs and classroom practices; each case

will allow for an exploration of the tensions and pulls inherent in the teacher's school

environment and the influences on their efforts to build positive relationships with his or

her students. Lastly, while the use of a standardized curriculum model is mandated by the

state of New Jersey, in these classrooms, the Curiosity Corner model seemed to serve

more as a backdrop for daily classroom life, as opposed to the driving force; however, an

examination of the Curiosity Corner standardized curriculum model will be shared, with

a focus on how this model addresses the subject of teacher-child relationships in the early

childhood classroom.

Shared Beliefs

While the two participants, Patrick Thomas and Keisha Hatcher, are unique individuals who come from different backgrounds, despite all of their differences, they shared similar beliefs regarding learning and teaching in early childhood education. Overall, these beliefs mirror what we know to be best practice and are also shared by most other early childhood educators.

Role of the teacher: "I'm here to be their…everything."

It is important to both of these teachers that their role and responsibilities go beyond that of simply teaching subjects or content. Both teachers recognize that due to their students' ages and backgrounds, they must be more to their students than just an authority figure who imparts knowledge; they are willing, and consider it critical, to go beyond what is often expected of teachers. Keisha speaks to the need for her, and other preschool teachers, to "wear many hats", seeing herself in roles as varied as mother, doctor, social worker, comedian, and cheerleader, with her "invisible pom poms." Patrick feels the same way and in addition, connects this need to his students growing up in an area where poverty and neglect affect many of his students.

> When you come in and you see what these kids deal with on a daily basis, it kinda makes you think, "Wow, I'm not just here to teach them how to write their name. I'm here to be their mom, and their dad, and their aunt and their uncle, and their grandmother, and their friend and their psychiatrist and their doctor, and their…everything." (Patrick, Interview #1, 9/14/11)

Both teachers understand their job to include caring; motivating; listening; entertaining; problem-solving; and assisting, amongst other behaviors. They do not see themselves as one-dimensional in their students' lives. They make the time and effort to provide their students with what they feel that they need, academically or otherwise.

While the Curiosity Corner curriculum may not dictate these additional responsibilities, both teachers clearly feel that these behaviors are a necessary part of their job description, likely due to their past and current teaching experiences. For example, in Patrick's case, sitting in a pre-service orientation where his supervisor instructs her staff that they should be in "no rush to lesson plan but instead, the priority should be to get the rooms ready and be happy and welcoming," it is clear that he should be much more to his young students than the standard definition of what it means to be a teacher.

In addition, the Office of Early Childhood at the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) offers a "Preschool Classroom Checkup" for teachers, which does not simply include recommendations regarding instruction or assessment, but also devotes a section to teacher-child interactions and relationship-building, which includes suggestions regarding engaging in conversation with students, sharing personal information, and showing respect and warmth, amongst others. As public preschool teachers, Keisha and Patrick are both likely aware of these recommendations.

However, while the NJDOE may encourage this type of relational behavior from preschool teachers, they are also the driving force behind establishing state standards for early learning and creating tools for teachers to regularly assess learning outcomes; further, it is the NJDOE that mandates the use of a standardized curriculum model in its

publicly funded preschool programs. Given that there is a bit of mixed messaging coming

from the NJDOE regarding teacher roles and responsibilities, it is noteworthy that both

Keisha and Patrick, as public preschool teachers, believe that these relational behaviors

are priorities and as such, they believe strongly that their roles as preschool teachers must

be expanded.

Learning, Teaching, and Relationship Building in Early Childhood

Since preschool is often her students' first learning experience, Keisha believes

that it is her responsibility to,

> ...set the tone for how they feel about education so...it's important for us to be
>
> patient and understanding and all those things so that we can get them that stable
>
> foundation, that firm foundation that, "Wow, school is fun! I love going to
>
> school!", so that they can carry that on. (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)

Keisha does not mention teaching how to read or count when she discusses laying a

foundation for her students; the words she chooses regarding her actions as a teacher is

"patient" and "understanding." While both teachers feel that it is their responsibility to

lay the foundation for future school experiences, for them, it is not just about their

students learning content; it is about school being an enjoyable experience for their

students.

In addition, both teachers believe that in order to build positive relationships in

their classrooms, they must create a comfortable environment; model appropriate

behavior; and take the lead from their students.

"Safe, secure, and comfortable." Both teachers repeatedly used the words "comfort" or "comfortable" when describing what they wanted to impart in their classrooms. In fact, during our first formal interviews, Keisha and Patrick referred to comfort seven and eight times, respectively. It was clear, however, that the idea of comfort did not just refer to the students' social and emotional needs, but that if they felt comfortable and safe, they would take academic risks as well, and trust their teachers to help them achieve.

When asked what he strives for in terms of his relationships with his students, Patrick said,

> Comfort, I think, is number one. Wanting the child to just be comfortable to walk through the door, comfortable to come up to me if they want to tell me something or ask me something. And then once they get on that level with you, they're more willing to accept help from you when it comes to teaching them about concepts or when it comes to teaching them about their relationship with the kids in the class. "Oh, he and I are friends so he's not going to tell me the wrong thing." (Patrick, Interview #1, 9/14/11)

Everything is relational for Patrick. If students are comfortable with their teacher, they will be willing to learn, not just academically, but socially as well. Patrick's use of the word "friends" demonstrates how important it is for him to have positive connections with his students; for him, "friends" implies trust and care.

Keisha shared a similar sentiment regarding comfort and the benefits to her students that come along with that feeling. She shared that her priority, her primary role as a preschool teacher, is "to really make the children feel comfortable", and that if she

was able to help them to feel "safe, secure, [and] comfortable but also [to] see [her] as

somebody that they do respect, that they do love," that would be her goal.

This need to help her students feel a sense of comfort in her classroom came up

numerous times during our discussions and through my observations, on topics ranging

from comfort on an emotional level, such as helping a child through the first day of

school, to comfort on a physical level, like helping a child who was complaining of

something in his shoe. Keisha also shared that she wanted her students to feel comforted

by their relationship, particularly if any conflicts had occurred between them.

> I really want them to feel comfortable. I really want them to feel like they can
>
> come to me about anything. I don't want them to feel like, I can't talk to Ms.
>
> Keisha, or she's going to say something, or she's going to be mad at me. So
>
> sometimes, if something's happened and I've kind of got on a child or
>
> reprimanded them a little bit, even before we leave, I'll be like, "It's okay, high
>
> five," make sure that you understood whatever I was trying to tell you…but I
>
> think it does make the relationship a little easier. A little more comfortable for
>
> them. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

For Keisha, feeling comfortable and having a positive relationship are connected and

both allow for an openness and an understanding between her and her students.

Modeling appropriate behavior. Another belief that both teachers shared was

the importance of modeling appropriate behavior as it applied to relationship building

with their students. Both Keisha and Patrick believe in modeling appropriate behavior by

situating themselves as part of the group and participating in activities with their students.

They believe that by engaging in activities with their students, they are given an

additional opportunity to build connections with them; their belief is that their students

will see their participation as valuing both the activity and the time they get to spend with

them. In addition, if appropriate behavior is modeled, the aim is that the students will

follow the teachers' lead which will reduce potential conflicts and lead to stronger and

more positive relationships; modeling was the stated preference over singling children

out for misbehavior. Further, being able to model conversational skills and social skills

allowed for positive relationships in all aspects of their students' daily lives, both in and

out of school.

While both teachers spoke of relationships being critically important between

themselves and their students, they also shared that it was important for them to help

foster these relationships between their students as well. Keisha shared that she feels that

building a sense of community in her classroom is key.

> Especially when they first start, I want them to know that it's not just *my* class,
>
> that it's *our* class, that these are *our* things. They're not *my* toys; they're not *my*
>
> materials; and it's not just *yours* [emphasis added] but it belongs to us…we're
>
> kind of like a community. (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)

By using the word "our", Keisha's hope is that her children begin to see themselves as

part of something larger than just themselves. In addition, her intentional decision not to

use the word "my" is meant to help her students understand that they, as a group, are all

in this together.

"Taking their lead." Finally, in addition to creating a comfortable environment

and modeling appropriate behavior, both teachers spoke to the need to take the lead from

their students regarding how best to interact with them. Both Keisha and Patrick base

their interactions upon cues from their students or knowledge of a student's personality

and needs. Patrick shared that he believes that "every child can be taught" but that good

teaching is about finding the way that works best for each child; he finds it curious that

suddenly a term like "differentiated instruction" has gained traction and become a

buzzword in the field of education because he feels "that's the only way you can teach"

and that individualization is what he attempts to implement in his classroom.

This attempt to follow the students' lead not only occurs during moments of

academic instruction or guidance, but applies to meeting a child's social and emotional

needs as well. Patrick shared that at meals, he sits with his students so that they can eat

together like a family and have conversations. He chooses where to sit based upon what

his students need at that given moment.

> I choose which kid I feel might need a little…it depends…If it's a kid that might
>
> need a little help, I would sit next to him. If it's a kid that I need to be a referee
>
> for, then I would sit close to them. Or…this morning I sat down next to the new
>
> kid…Or…like there were a couple of days where Dre had this sad face on so you
>
> know, just go sit next to him and try to talk to them. So it really depends. It's
>
> never just a random sit, though. I'll bring a chair to where I feel I need to be.
>
> (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

Patrick makes conscious and intentional decisions when he interacts with his students,

based upon their cues, and these careful choices allow him to strengthen his connections

with them.

Keisha shared that she uses the cues given by her students to tap into both their

social-emotional and academic needs as well. When speaking of one of her students,

Camíla, Keisha said, "I know her personally and every child I need to deal with a little differently." She shared these same sentiments while talking about how she might discipline a child.

> Because with Zamir, I think sometimes, I have to tell him a couple of times. For the most part, sometimes he doesn't do it the first time. So with knowing Zamir, I know that I have to connect with Zamir. But with Brandon, he's very easygoing. Like all I have to do is just like that [gestures tapping his shoulder], tap and tap and both of them sat down. So yes, sometimes my relationship and how I deal with children is different depending on who they are. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

Knowing her students well means that she is able to guide their behavior in the most appropriate way for each individual child.

Both Keisha and Patrick shared that they strive to get to know their students and their needs by various means and both share similar beliefs regarding how to go about obtaining that information. These strategies include conducting observations of their students and taking anecdotal notes; engaging parents in sharing information about their children; situating themselves to connect with and/or observe their students; and taking the time to have individual conversations with their students. It is from these experiences that they are able to build a knowledge base from which to draw upon, when deciding how to best meet their students' needs, whether they are academic or social-emotional.

Both teachers noted that tensions and pressures existed in their school settings around the goals and objectives of the preschool experience. Given their beliefs regarding relationship building and young children's needs, the question remains regarding

individualization—how can one individualize instruction and interactions to best meet

student needs if external sources exert pressure and prioritize student needs differently?

And if these interactions are not truly individualized, meaning the teacher is not able to

pick up on cues given by the student, how does this affect the relationship between

teacher and student? This study aims to explore these questions in the following sections.

To conclude, Keisha and Patrick both share similar beliefs about learning and

teaching and relationship building in preschool. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of these

beliefs are considered to be best practice in early childhood education. However, despite

their emphasis on relationship building, Keisha and Patrick teach in different school

districts and as a result, their experiences, as public preschool teachers, are different. This

next section will share two very different stories of how Patrick and Keisha attempt to

build relationships with their students while navigating the tensions and pressures

inherent in the public preschool setting.

Patrick Thomas: "I know that what I'm doing is for them.

I won't let anyone change the way I am."

Patrick Thomas is a Caucasian man, who has been working with children since he

was a teenager, including working as a camp counselor and shouldering the

responsibilities of being the oldest child in a large extended family. He earned his

Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and had taught at the elementary school level

for over eight years before entering the public preschool program in the Willow Glen

Public School District. His previous teaching experiences included teaching 2nd and 4th

grade and he admits to having had no training in early childhood before becoming a

preschool teacher, as it was not his first choice of teaching assignments.

Patrick's reluctance to teach in the early childhood program is not surprising,

given that he didn't feel he had the background to do so successfully. He was able to

share these concerns with his potential supervisor, Donna, who intentionally placed him

in a classroom where he would be able to learn from an experienced teacher, Allison.

With Donna's support, Patrick was able to learn and grow professionally. Had he been

placed in a classroom as the sole classroom teacher, or in a classroom where his co-

teacher was not able to share her experiences and knowledge with him, it is unclear if he

would have felt as positively about the experience. Yet, as a result of this placement, after

co-teaching in his first year in preschool with Allison, a preschool disabled teacher, in

their inclusive preschool classroom, Patrick had a change of heart and realized that

preschool was where he wanted to be and he chose to stay; he and Allison still continue

to co-teach as a team.

Patrick made the decision to stay in preschool because he felt that being in an

early childhood setting gave him the opportunity to build a strong foundation for his

students, while also providing him with the ability to get back to what he enjoyed about

teaching and what he had begun to feel was missing in the upper grades.

> …[Y]ou lose the connection with the kids because of what's imposed upon you
>
> by administration, by the Board office, I feel like they have no clue what's going
>
> on in here so they don't mind throwing new things at you and saying, "Do this,
>
> you have to get it done." And I didn't want to be…I remember the way I was
>
> feeling towards the end, when I was [teaching] in 2nd grade and just feeling, "This

isn't fun anymore." You're not doing what you're supposed to. (Patrick,

Interview #1, 9/14/11)

In the upper grades, Patrick had begun to feel that his role as a teacher was becoming

minimized, limited, and one-dimensional; it was less about giving his students what he

knew that they needed and more about him following directives and engaging in

paperwork and standardized test preparation.

Patrick has a very strong opinion on what he feels he now must give to his

preschool students, based upon his past experiences and his students' needs.

Six years ago, I was so stressed out over being pulled in different directions, over

Terra Nova testing because I was teaching fourth grade and second grade, and all

the testing that we had to do and I don't know what happened but one day, I got to

the point where I said, "I don't care what *you* want from me, Willow Glen! I have

fifteen kids in front of me right now and I need to focus on what *they* need. So

I'm going to differentiate my instruction based upon *these* kids [emphasis added],

not based upon the tests that you're giving me. (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

It was troubling to Patrick to feel that his efforts were being negated in favor of "teaching

to the test" and so he began to push back. Moving to preschool alleviated some of these

concerns, in that his students were no longer affected by standardized testing, but

pressures surrounding outcomes did still exist and he continued to be aware of that

tension, despite remaining adamant about pushing back where necessary.

I think that there is a pull to work on both the social skills and the curriculum-

based skills but these kids, some of them, her [pointing], she's going to be going

to kindergarten next year and I don't care if you can write your numbers…if you

are going to barge into a group and steal someone's pencil, it's not working. So

personally? I pay no attention to the external pulls of the district. And maybe I

should and maybe that's a fault of mine and maybe I'll get written up for it one

day but I don't care. This is what she needed at the moment and this is what I feel

that she's going to need, so this is what I'm going to give her. (Patrick, Interview

#3, 11/7/11)

The above quote was in reference to a question that was posed regarding how Patrick

makes choices about his interactions with his preschool students; we had just viewed a

recorded episode of Patrick making the choice to stop a small group activity to help a

child understand how to enter a social situation. As he strongly stated, his priority was

clearly, to meet his student's individual needs by addressing her social and relational

skills so that she could be successful in her future relationships and school experiences.

Patrick repeatedly put his relationships with his students, and his focus on

relationship building, at the forefront of his planning, despite any external pressures that

may have existed. Modeling a positive relationship with his co-teacher was an intentional

decision. Sharing himself with his students, with minimal boundaries, allowed them to

get to know him well and opened pathways for connection, communication, and

understanding. Particular times of the day were carefully chosen to insure that he had

many opportunities for relationship building. And having a supportive team in place in

his classroom, in addition to having a supervisor who backed him and respected him as a

person and as a teacher, helped to encourage him to continue on the path he had chosen,

which was that despite whatever external pulls might exist, Patrick was willing to ignore

them in favor of closing the door and doing what he felt was right in his own classroom.

Modeling Relationship Building

Patrick believes in modeling appropriate behavior in order to build relationships

with his students, including the need to model conversational skills and social

interactions. However, his application of this belief extended beyond simply modeling

how to do an activity or perform a task. Patrick believes that it is critically important for

him to model relationship building, in order to prepare his students for their future

successes, both in the classroom and out.

Choosing relational activities. The goal of modeling appropriate behavior was

typically to guide children's behavior in a positive way but in addition, the focus was

often relational. An episode occurred in Patrick's classroom, during Story Tree, where his

modeling was intended to teach a lesson about appropriate behavior towards others.

Patrick: Hands out! (sings and uses hand motions) It's time to read, read, read a

book, we are getting smart, (Andre puts his hand up and quietly calls Patrick's

name), here are our pictures, take a look, here are words, let's start.

Patrick finishes his song and looks directly at Andre.

Patrick: I'm sad. I was trying to sing my song and you were trying to call my

name the whole time. It made me a little sad.

Andre does not respond and Patrick moves on. (Patrick, Observation #1, 9/19/11)

The goal of the planned activity was to read a book, answer questions, and make

predictions. However, Patrick made the choice to stop the activity and focus on relational

behaviors.

Patrick had the opportunity to view this episode and offer insight into his choice

to address Andre in this way.

I want them to know that I don't want you to not interrupt me just because it's

wrong in the classroom and a rule, but also because it really does affect somebody

when they're talking and if he did it to one of his friends, they would feel the

same way, and sometimes, the kids can't verbalize that to the other kids so I'm

trying to model that. (Patrick, Interview #2, 10/24/11)

While modeling, in this instance, resulted in a child being singled out for inappropriate

behavior, Patrick felt that it was worth it if the child learned the lesson of how to behave

towards his peers. Patrick had previously indicated the need for everyone to get along and

build relationships in his classroom, not just between him and his students, but for the

students to build positive relationships amongst themselves as well. If the students got

along well, conflict would be reduced, and the classroom would be a more positive place

to be. This applied to both their current situation and their future social experiences,

something that Patrick does not take lightly.

     Fostering inclusion. Patrick's classroom was an inclusive one on a macro level,

meaning that typically developing children were grouped together with those that were

developmentally delayed or facing other challenges. However, it is not enough to simply

group children together and assume that inclusion on a more micro level will occur;

Patrick took the time to make sure that his class functioned as a cohesive group and that

they understood that they were all in this together.

     One of the goals of inclusion in Patrick's classroom seemed to be to create a sense

of family. Specific songs were chosen to help the students and teachers get to know one

another, in addition to helping everyone to feel a part of the group. One morning in

Patrick's classroom, the group sang "The More We Get Together", by including each

class member's name, as they did every morning; when they sang Ms. Allison's name, a

child noted that Ms. Allison wasn't there. Patrick responded by saying, "Even though

some of our friends aren't here doesn't mean that we shouldn't include them. They're

still a part of our class" (Patrick, Observation #4, 10/19/11). This moment illustrated to

the group that everyone was important and valued, even in their absence.

When thoughtful decisions regarding inclusion are made, the outcomes can be

quite positive and powerful. Patrick was observed having one such moment during a

morning meeting. He had an interaction with Maya, a child who was classified and

received special educational services, and he was then able to reflect upon the encounter

later. Patrick was conducting Clues & Questions and Maya brought up the days of the

week wheel to be the helper.

> Patrick: (to the group) Are you listening? (to Maya.) Come here. (he puts his arm
> around Maya and guides her to him, where he has her stand between his arms
> while he holds the wheel in front of her, with his arms around her)
> Patrick: Look! We need to figure out what day it is today. Yesterday was, look
> (points), Sunday.   Say "Sunday" (group repeats the word). And yesterday was
> red because we don't come to school on Sunday, do we?
> Class: No!
> Patrick: Sunday's a break for us. So today starts with this sound. Listen. Show
> me listening ears. Listening ears means no noise. Today starts with this sound.
> Mmmm.
> Heaven: Monday.

> Patrick: If you think you know what it is, I want you to put your hand in front of
>
> your face. (he puts his hand in front of his face and whispers something to Maya)
>
> Maya: Monday.
>
> Patrick: Tell your friends what day it is.
>
> Maya: Monday. (other children call out as well)
>
> Patrick: Oh, I'm talking to Maya. We need to use listening ears. Go ahead (taps
>
> Maya). Tell 'em.
>
> Maya: Monday.
>
> Patrick: Good job. Can you move the clip to Monday? Starts with an M. Very
>
> nice job. (Maya goes back to her seat) (Patrick, Observation #2, 9/26/11)

When we discussed this interaction during our interview, after viewing it together via

video, Patrick shared why he made this choice, specifically, so that Maya could be

included in a regular part of their classroom's daily life.

> I told them [the others students]…when you have the answer, put your hand in
>
> front of your face and I put my hand in front of my face so I could tell her [Maya]
>
> the day to make sure that she got the feeling of accomplishment, you know that
>
> she was able to tell her friends what day it was…My thing with her is just trying
>
> to provide her with any opportunities to succeed because she struggles and you
>
> know, it's very obvious that she'll struggle for a while. (Patrick, Interview #2,
>
> 10/24/11)

Patrick made the conscious decision to tell all of the students to put their hands in front of

their faces so that he could do the same, and at the same time, assist Maya by quietly

providing her with the correct answer, helping her to feel successful and able to fully

participate along with the rest of the group. This unusual and intentional decision sent the

powerful message that every student matters and has the right to contribute and

participate.

       Role modeling gender relations. Something unique about Patrick's situation is

that he co-teaches with a female teacher. He takes this responsibility very seriously and

feels that if he and Allison are able to model appropriate and positive relations between a

male and a female, then that affects not only his relationships with his students but his

students' other relationships as well.

> I think it makes it easier to build a more solid relationship with the kids because
>
> whether you're trying to or not, you're modeling correct and appropriate
>
> interactions between people. This is the friendship or relationship that we have
>
> and you can do the same with your friends. There've been times that I've pointed
>
> that out, or where Allison has said…"How do you think I'd feel if Mr. Patrick did
>
> that to me?" So not only do we have the relationship, we point it out to them,
>
> making sure that they know it. (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

It is not enough to Patrick to simply act appropriately in his students' presence. He makes

a point of using his own behavior as a teachable moment for his students. Patrick goes on

to share that for him, it is a bigger issue than just one of modeling how to treat others.

Pointing out these interactions allows him to share appropriate behavior and interactions

around issues of gender to impact his students' relationships going forward.

> And I think that it's important for them, especially in this district where—it's
>
> stereotyping, I'm sorry, but it's true—they don't see a lot of positive male to
>
> female interactions. And Allison and I have talked about that and you know, we

> try to make sure that anytime that we have an issue, it's never discussed in front
>
> of them but that they can see, look, a guy and a girl can get along and have a good
>
> relationship and work together so I can do that. So I think in modeling it, they
>
> pick it up. (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

During the pre-service orientation, Patrick's supervisor, Donna, shared her professional

and personal code of ethics for her entire early childhood staff, which included the

statement, "I am committed to both modeling and maintaining respectful, collaborative

relationships." It is perhaps not surprising that Patrick and Allison believe this to be

critically important as well.

Sharing Himself

In Patrick's classroom, one could often hear him sharing personal information

about himself with his students. In fact, when casually chatting with them about their

weekends, he would often say, "Do you want to know what I did? So ask me!" He would

share his favorite foods, his outside experiences, and his likes and dislikes, as he asked

about the children's. Patrick made himself regularly available to his students, both

physically and emotionally; his presence was noted by the children on a regular basis and

he could often be found engaging with children in a Learning Lab, whether it was sitting

down on the children's level at a child-sized table to work on a puzzle or huddled

together on the floor with a couple of children in the library area to read a book. It felt

natural for Patrick to fully share himself with his students whether by using humor,

displaying warmth, or sharing his appreciation for them.

Humor. For Patrick, a key behavior that was observed in his classroom was his use of humor. He was often observed joking with and gently teasing his students, with a smile on his face to make his intentions clear. Frequently, he would joke with students on an individualized basis, as opposed to in front of the whole group, as demonstrated in the following short encounter with Xavier.

Patrick was sitting with his class on the carpet during a whole group activity. When it was time for the students to transition from the classroom to the gym, Patrick dismissed the children from the carpet by calling them, one at a time, to go stand on the line by the door. Without being called, Xavier got up and stood in front of Patrick. Patrick sat him down on his lap to wait for his turn. While he was waiting to be dismissed, Xavier looked through the keys and other items that were hanging from Patrick's lanyard and he held up Patrick's school ID.

X: Who's that?

P: I don't know. Some handsome guy. (joking)

X: You? (looks up at him and smiles) (Patrick, Observation #3, 10/12/11)

This small moment included physical affection as well, as Xavier sat on Patrick's lap, and allowed Patrick to display warmth towards Xavier, in addition to being able to joke with him. It was clear that both Patrick and Xavier felt comfortable with one another and despite a transition taking place in the classroom, Patrick made the effort to prioritize this moment of human connection with a student.

Patrick was often observed individualizing his interactions with his students, and this was clear from the way he chose to use humor when interacting with them. In a pretend play episode, Patrick jokingly compared his student, Kiana, to his grandmother,

even calling her "Grandma" because of how slowly she appeared to be "washing" the

dishes. Kiana's positive reception showed that she found Patrick's name-calling funny.

When asked about his choice to use humor when engaging with Kiana, Patrick said,

> And Kiana, it's funny…I know when you can joke with Kiana and she'll get it.
>
> So like saying it to her, and she was like, "I know, I know I'm slow", you know, I
>
> think I have that relationship with her where we can joke around at her level too.
>
> (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

Patrick made the deliberate choice to joke with Kiana because he felt that he knew her

well enough to know how she would respond, in addition to feeling confident with his

assessment of their relationship.

> In another episode, Patrick was sitting with a small group of children—Nia,

Christian, and Maya—in the Water Lab, and the children were using tweezers to pick up

leaves, plastic pumpkins, and acorns from out of the water and deposit them into a

bucket. This activity was designed around the fall theme from the curriculum, with the

additional objective of giving the children practice with their fine motor skills. Patrick

gave the students directions for how to engage in the activity, in addition to providing

suggestions regarding how to be successful. He encouraged them only to use the

tweezers, not their hands, and showed them recognition and appreciation when they were

able to achieve the goal; there was much conversation happening throughout the activity.

However, Patrick also took the time to joke with the students while they were engaged in

the activity.

> P: Why do you think it's so hard to pick these things up? You got it! Quick, go,
>
> put it in!

> N: (picks up a tiny acorn) I got it!
>
> P: You got it! Drop it in. (exclaims) You're like Mr. Miyagi with the fly!
>
> Nia stops what she's doing, looks at Patrick, and laughs loudly.
>
> P: (smiles at her) That's crazy! (Patrick, Observation #3, 10/12/11)

Patrick was able to lighten the mood, after a child had worked hard to achieve her goal, by using humor during his interaction with her. As was the case with Kiana, it was clear from Nia's response that she enjoyed this type of humor.

Patrick shared that he made decisions regarding the use of humor based upon the student and the situation; he was able to individualize his interactions based upon his relationships with his students and how well he knew them. Patrick shared that when he had taught in the upper grades, he had engaged in this same type of behavior, including allowing students to reciprocate with their own playfulness and jokes, as long as the time and place were appropriate. His rationale for sharing his sense of humor with his students is that he wants to treat his students "like an equal, like you're a person and I can joke around with you too." Patrick used this powerful phrase, "like a person", more than once during our conversations; it is clear that he chooses to see his students as individuals that should be treated as he would treat anyone else outside of the school building.

For Patrick, using humor translates into being and sharing himself with his students and treating them with respect. The goal is clearly to strengthen his relationship with his students.

> I think it kind of makes them feel like your teacher's a person so he's going to be
>
> funny with you too, like your friends, and if you don't know that he's being
>
> funny, then he'll laugh and show you that it is. But I think it kind of makes them

feel more comfortable, like, oh, I can have fun with him too, not just learn from

him. (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

Patrick's belief in his students seeing him in a holistic way, as a whole person, not just a

teacher or authority figure, influences his choice to use humor to build relationships and

comfort with his students. However, it is clear that external forces shape this choice as

well.

      ***Engaging with co-workers*.** Patrick was regularly observed joking with his

colleagues, both in front of their students and when alone. There was a comfortable and

easy relationship between Patrick and his co-teacher, Allison, in addition to one of their

aides, Ísabel, as well. This use of humor was reciprocal; at times, his colleagues were the

ones initiating this playful behavior, such as in the episode below between Patrick and his

student, Jésus.

      Jésus runs up to Patrick with an acorn top perched on the tip of his finger.

      J: It's you, Mr. Patrick! (he is joking and got the idea from Ms. Allison; Patrick

      laughs and looks at Allison) (Patrick, Observation #2, 9/26/11)

For Allison to have shared this joke with Jésus and then to have encouraged him to share

it with Patrick sent a message to the students that it was acceptable to engage in playful

situations in their classroom; Patrick's positive reception demonstrated his strong

relationship with Allison.

      Ísabel engaged in similar behavior in front of the students. On one occasion, she

was taking items out of the gym closet for the children to use while Patrick sat in front of

the group and chatted with the students while they waited. When Ísabel finished, she

snuck up behind Patrick and gave him "bunny ears" by putting her two fingers up behind

his head. All of the children laughed. Patrick laughed and said to the group, "She's so

funny, isn't she, Ms. Ísabel?" This lighthearted and playful relationship amongst the staff

set a model for the students to follow; it showed them that using humor was a way to

display one's caring for another and that they should feel comfortable using humor with

one another.

     Influence of administrators. In addition to his co-workers setting the tone and

encouraging the freedom to use humor to build relationships, the influence of the

administration in Patrick's district played a role here as well. Even though he was clear

about always making decisions based upon his own personal beliefs, Patrick did share

that he felt that Donna, the Early Childhood Director, had a direct influence on him.

During the pre-service meeting with the district's entire early childhood faculty, I

observed Donna sharing a directive to the group, with the statement that "Humor is

necessary!" For Patrick, being told explicitly that the use of humor was not only

appropriate, but was encouraged, likely influenced his choices surrounding humor in his

classroom.

     Being able to use humor to build relationships with his students allowed Patrick

the opportunity to prioritize relationship building in his classroom by fitting these

moments in wherever appropriate. Humor could even be used during a passing moment

to encourage appropriate behavior, such as when a child hugged Patrick and after

hugging her back, he asked her if she had washed her hands yet. When she shook her

head to indicate that she had not, Patrick replied, joking, with an exaggerated facial

expression and voice, "Ewww! Go wash them!" Using humor took place in the

classroom and outdoors; during large and small group activities; and during mealtimes

and Learning Labs. Humor allowed Patrick to share himself with his students, in addition

to providing an informality, a comfort level, and a warmth that lent itself to building

positive relationships.

      Displaying warmth. Displaying warmth included noting a child's presence and

welcoming her; giving a child physical affection or using touch as a means of interaction;

paying a child a compliment; gently encouraging a child; and validating a child's

feelings. By displaying warmth towards his students, Patrick was able to strengthen his

relationships with them. Additionally, as a result, his students were likely to reciprocate

these feelings and behaviors. This genuine warmth that flowed in both directions led to a

low incidence of conflict being observed during my time spent in the classroom, in

addition to contributing to an overall feeling of cohesiveness amongst the group.

      As was demonstrated previously with Patrick's interaction with Andre during

Story Tree, this is not to say that warmth was on display during every observed

interaction; there were exceptions. I did observe shortness with the students at times, and

on one occasion, Patrick threatened to call a student's parents if he did not behave

appropriately; while not ideal, Patrick acknowledged that the use of that threat was only a

last resort, since it could possibly lead to a strained relationship between teacher and

student. Patrick believed strongly that discipline was about teaching and guiding

children's behavior and that warmth could and should accompany these moments;

however, he did not believe that warmth, with regard to discipline, had to be translated as

"mushy" or "laíssez-faire".

      Further, displaying warmth may seem an obvious and expected behavior of early

childhood teachers but with the constraints and pressures placed upon public preschool

teachers in the current educational climate, it is not necessarily a given. In addition, not

all public preschool teachers have undergone training that is specific to early childhood.

For example, given Patrick's previous experience teaching in the upper grades, one might

expect that his interactions with his current students might closely mirror his interactions

with older students, which for many upper grade teachers means having more defined

boundaries and distance. The fact that he made displaying warmth a priority speaks

directly to who he is as a teacher, in addition to demonstrating that public preschool can

still include the human need for connection and care, which is so vital in early childhood.

   Physical affection. Touch and physical affection can be taboo subjects in early

childhood classrooms, particularly in those situated in elementary schools. However,

Patrick spoke to the need for a certain level of physical affection, given his students' ages

and needs; he shared that it was normal and natural to return a hug or a high five and

likely, added to the degree of warmth and trust present in the teacher-child relationship.

   Patrick did not really articulate the need for any boundaries, and clearly, believes

in integrating physical affection with relationship building. His beliefs regarding

affection seem to come mainly from his experiences teaching in the upper grades and his

correlation between aggressive behaviors and lack of affection; once he entered the

preschool, he felt it was his responsibility to give his students what they need.

> I just think that in the Pre-K, they need so much more affection, they need so
>
> much more down on their level, where I think [in the upper grades,] teachers get
>
> so comfortable standing behind their desks and forget that there's kids here.
>
> They're not little machines that you're teaching to. The one thing, when I taught
>
> in my 2nd grade, and 3rd and 4th grade careers, the principals were like, "Don't

touch the kids. Don't go NEAR the kids. Don't touch them on the head, don't

touch them on the shoulder." Like, it almost made you scared to go near the kids.

And then when I came here, it was weird because she [Donna] said, you're on the

floor, you're hugging them, you're giving them what they need, basically, not

thinking about anything else. Just focus on the kids' needs and give it to them.

Don't listen to what anyone else has ever told you. (Patrick, Interview #1,

9/14/11).

Patrick also shared that he has seen what is missing from some of his students' lives

when witnessing their interactions with their parents and that lack of affection plays a

part in his decision-making process. Further, being told by his supervisor to "focus on the

kids' needs" gave Patrick the freedom to be able to "give it to them."

When asked if he ever felt that he had to hold back his affection, particularly

given that he is a male in an early childhood setting, a situation that can, unfairly, put one

under scrutiny, Patrick stated that at Willow Glen, he had never been made to feel

different from anyone else. It's important to note that while Patrick shared many times

that he would do whatever he needed to do to give his students what they needed, feeling

supported by his supervisor does likely validate his beliefs and provides him with the

opportunity to build relationships with his students without worrying about boundaries.

He referred back to Donna a number of times throughout our conversation about

displaying warmth and physical affection and it was clear that he felt extremely

comfortable with his students, given her directives. I was fortunate enough to attend the

pre-service orientation for the Willow Glen public preschool teachers and one of Donna's

main instructions to her teachers was, "Smile, nurture, be kind and embrace 'warm

fuzzies', allow yourself to have fun!" Having the support of his supervisor likely leads to

Patrick's comfort level regarding being affectionate with his students.

   Reciprocal feelings. Through my time spent in his classroom, I was able to

observe these feelings of warmth and moments of physical affection being reciprocated

by the students towards Patrick as well, which demonstrated that his efforts to create

positive relationships were successful.

   A moment that stood out above many other such moments in Patrick's classroom

involved a student named Xavier. Patrick was sitting at the table next to Xavier, who was

engaged in an activity. Patrick was speaking to one of the teacher's assistants, Ísabel,

who was nearby. He told Ísabel that he needed to get himself a pink pin for breast cancer

awareness, and as he continued talking with Ísabel, Xavier got up from the table without

Patrick really noticing. Xavier walked away and came back with a pink pen, which he

handed to Patrick. Patrick looked confused and because I was observing the episode from

start to finish, I explained that Xavier had overheard Patrick's conversation with Ísabel

and thought that he wanted a pink pen. Patrick showered him with praise and announced

to the class that Xavier had earned a "kindness heart" for his actions, which made Xavier

smile. Patrick reflected on this event during our final interview.

>   …[H]e was obviously focused on something that I was saying that had nothing to
>
>   do with him and I wasn't speaking to him at all and the fact that he got up and
>
>   brought it to me kind of made me realize that he listens to me a lot more than I
>
>   thought. And also, that he cared enough to bring it to me and that's why I wanted
>
>   to make a big deal out of him bringing it over to me, because I didn't ask him for

>it, by any means, and I remember being like floored by that! Like, where did this
>
>come from? (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

Xavier had clearly demonstrated his feelings for Patrick by this act of kindness and while the two of them didn't have a strained or negative relationship, this was not typical behavior from Xavier.

>I think it made me realize that our relationship is a lot different than I thought that
>
>it was. He cared enough to go get something that I wanted so maybe he wanted to
>
>please me because he heard something that I wanted and he wanted to get it for
>
>me. And he went to find it! Not that he just had it in front of him. He actually
>
>got up to go find it. So that was very interesting to me. (Patrick, Interview #3,
>
>11/7/11)

After receiving the pink pen from Xavier, Patrick then took it and even though it was not a pin, he wore it anyway. He hooked it on his lanyard that held his school ID and wore it for the rest of the morning.

>I hooked it on me. To show him that what he did…I'm not just telling you that
>
>what you did was important to me, I want to show you that…well, I didn't need
>
>this…but you gave it to me so I'm going to wear it. You got it for me. It
>
>validated what he did and made him feel special. (Interview #3, 11/7/11)
>
>Patrick had several different choices that he could've made in that moment. He

could have laughed; he could have corrected the child's mistake and emphasized the difference between the words "pen" and "pin"; he could have thanked the child and put the pen away; but, instead, he chose to wear the pen. It was such a striking moment that really showed how Patrick felt towards his students and how his students felt towards

him. This moment of warmth in both directions gave insight into Patrick's relationship-

building skills with his students and the fact that he took the time to interact in this

meaningful way showed how he prioritizes care in his classroom.

Showing appreciation. Being able to stop, appreciate, and show recognition for a

child's triumphs or efforts was important to Patrick and was observed repeatedly in his

classroom. In addition to the class having a "Kindness Heart" system in place, where the

students could earn "hearts" for positive interactions, Patrick often took the time to show

appreciation for his students. Sometimes, he showed appreciation for engaging in positive

social interactions. On one occasion, Patrick bent down to tie Nia's shoe and when he

bent over, he shared that his back hurt. Nia rubbed his back.

P: That feels good. You know how to make me feel better. (Patrick puts out his

arm to Nia) Here, give me a hug. Thank you. (Patrick, Observation #3, 10/12/11)

Being able to thank Nia, not only verbally, but also physically with a hug, gave her

recognition and appreciation for reaching out to him. Perhaps since he was helping her,

she was then motivated to reciprocate.

Other times, Patrick was able to show recognition for a job well done with an

academic task. On one such occasion, Patrick sat in Manipulatives/Puzzles with Maya.

He encouraged her along the way as she worked and recognized her for her efforts, in

addition to providing her with support and ideas as needed.

P: You did it! Get a hard one, Maya. I'm excited. Turn it. That's almost it, I

think. Keep going! (Patrick, Observation #1, 9/19/11)

Being able to show his appreciation for her perseverance allowed Maya to continue

working, even though the task at hand was difficult for her. She stayed and continued to

work on several more puzzles along with Patrick's cheering.

Sometimes, showing recognition wasn't about rewarding a job well done but was

about simply recognizing a child for who she was or something difficult with which she

was struggling. One morning, Kayla arrived to school with a bandage on her arm. Patrick

took her hand and exclaimed, "This is pretty cool. You're a tough girl!" Children were

often being noticed and recognized for their individuality. By taking the time to

appreciate his students, Patrick was able to find many moments to build relationships

with them, by creating opportunities for them to feel successful.

Prime Times: "Every day, every minute of every day, every second."

Patrick shared that he strives to always find the time to build relationships with

his students throughout the school day and when asked when these moments of

relationship building most occur, he stopped to take pause. Then he continued,

> Really it's every day, every minute of every day, every second. It's when they
>
> walk in the door and you're shaking their hand or you're giving them a high five
>
> and saying, "I'm glad that you're here today,", to the end of the day, when you're
>
> giving them a hug, saying, "I'll miss you, I'll see you tomorrow, I can't wait to do
>
> this again." So I think it's every second. There's no time when you're not
>
> building a relationship with them. When you're helping them off the slide, when
>
> you're helping them do a project, when you're walking around the school,

showing care and concern for them just lets them realize it. You're looking out for

them. Making them feel safe. (Patrick, Interview #1, 9/14/11)

Patrick makes the effort to insure that all of his interactions with his students have

meaning and are purposeful by infusing every moment with thoughtfulness and care.

However, there were certain times of the day that seemed to be optimal for Patrick to

engage in strengthening his relationships with his students. Mealtimes and Learning Labs

were two times of the day when Patrick was set up for success with relationship building.

Mealtimes. In Patrick's school, the schedule was such that he was present during

both main meals of the day, breakfast and lunch, which is not always the case in public

preschool programs. The students ate their meals in the classroom, family-style, and sat

around two tables, allowing two groups of approximately seven to sit separately; the

teachers and aides also sat at these tables. Patrick was regularly observed sitting and

eating and chatting with his students during breakfast and lunch, and these moments were

rich with positive teacher-child interactions.

Patrick sits with the children at lunch and eats with them. He encourages passing

the food and pitchers to one another and talks with the children.

P: Jésus, do you like that?

J: Yes.

N: My grandmother got Oodles of Noodles.

P: I like those.

Patrick asks Jésus to help Sofía. He encourages good table manners.

P: Use your hands to eat bread. Don't spit food out please.

Patrick talks to the children about where they live. They ask where he lives and if

he has a car. He jokes that he lives far away so they'll never find him. A few

children laugh. (Patrick, Observation #2, 9/26/11)

By engaging with his students over lunch, Patrick is able to interact with his students and

elicit and share personal information. They are able to get to know one another a little

better and in addition, he is able to encourage appropriate behavior in a relaxed

atmosphere. Being able to spend time with his students during mealtimes led to many

positive opportunities for relationship building, in addition to providing many benefits.

There were opportunities for engaging in conversation, fostering inclusion, displaying

warmth, offering assistance, showing appreciation, and modeling appropriate behavior.

Patrick often modeled appropriate behavior by eating and having conversations

with his students, an additional benefit of which was fostering his students' language

development. By sitting with his students at meals, Patrick was also able to model

appropriate interactions, in addition to being able to show appreciation and recognition

towards students' positive behavior.

Patrick is sitting with the kids while they eat breakfast.

Patrick: I'm hungry. I think maybe I should eat breakfast too. (Kiana passes him

a cereal bowl) Oh, that's so nice of you. Thank you.

Kiana: I'll open it.

Patrick: Oh, that would be lovely. I'm going to go get a spoon. (While he's up,

Kayla arrives at school and Patrick greets her) Good morning, how are you this

morning? (sits back down) Oh, thank you so much! (Kiana pours milk into his

bowl) Are you pouring the milk for me too? You are being so nice! Good job.

A little bit more. I like a little bit more. Can you pour a little more? (Kiana

smiles and does) Perfect. Good. Thank you. What kind of cereal is this? Does

anyone eat this kind of cereal at home?

Andre: I do.

Patrick: I do too. Do you know what it's called? Frosted Flakes.

Kiana: I eat Frosted Flakes at home.

Patrick: I do too. I love 'em. (Patrick, Observation #4, 10/19/11)

Sitting and conversing with his students over breakfast was a natural way for Patrick to

interact with his students and strengthen his relationship with them. However, it also

afforded him the opportunity to show them warmth, trust, and appreciation, such as when

he allowed Kiana to pour his milk and then thanked her. In addition to these relational

activities, Patrick also took the time to expand his students' vocabulary by naming the

cereal that they were eating. Sharing meals with his students provided opportunities for

relationship building but not at the expense of building cognitive or language skills; in

fact, being able to build relationships at this time likely enhanced Patrick's ability to do

so.

In addition, mealtimes seemed to provide a great opportunity to help children feel

included. One day during breakfast in Patrick's class, Andre came over to Patrick's table

because he had a conflict at the other table. Patrick welcomed him to the table and told

him they were talking about their weekends; he asked Andre what he had done, as Andre

sat down to eat breakfast with him. Patrick then asked the rest of the children at the table

to share with Andre what Patrick had previously told them that he did over the weekend

(Patrick, Observation #5, 10/24/11).

On another occasion, Nia sneezed at the lunch table and several of the kids laughed and said it was "nasty". Patrick told them not to laugh, that it was not funny, that she didn't do it on purpose and that "we don't want to make anyone feel bad" (Patrick, Observation #6, 10/31/11). Even the use of the word "we" implied that they were all part of the same connected group. Fostering inclusion was easy to do at mealtimes since the group was divided into small groups and Patrick's presence provided him with the opportunity.

Learning Labs. Another prime time for relationship building for Patrick was during the Learning Labs period. As part of the Curiosity Corner curriculum model, Learning Labs is expected to be an extended period of time where children are free to make choices about learning; there is also an expectation that the teacher will rotate throughout the classroom to engage with students during this time, in order to scaffold and extend their learning. Because Patrick's classroom was an inclusive preschool classroom, it was staffed with four adults. Patrick was the General Education teacher; Allison was the Special Education teacher; and Ísabel and Dave were teachers' aides. Largely as a result of this staffing pattern, Patrick was able to spend long periods of uninterrupted time engaging with small groups of students during the Learning Labs period.

Actively participating in Learning Labs for extended periods of time with his students allowed Patrick to be present in the moment with them; to build off of the children's interests; to keep his students engaged; to encourage their creativity; and to work together towards a common goal. Within this one period of the day, many opportunities to strengthen relationships presented themselves.

On one occasion, previously mentioned, Patrick was observed with a small group

of children in the Dramatic Play Lab. They were reading a recipe and pretending to bake

pumpkin muffins. Patrick was reading the ingredient list and the steps aloud to the

children and asking for their help in finding the items needed, making and mixing the

batter, and putting the muffins in the play oven; he also asked them to "wash" the dishes

in the play sink while they waited for the muffins to cook. This episode, which lasted for

the majority of the Learning Labs period, involved all participants buying into the notion

that they were there to make pumpkin muffins. Patrick didn't say that they were

pretending; he just continued to elaborate on and extend their play. At one point, he

intentionally directed their play in a different direction.

> Patrick: (to Christian) Come here. (takes his arm) I asked you not to put your
>
> [stuffed] dog on the table because I don't want to get his germs on our muffins.
>
> So can you put him on the side so he can watch? That's what I do with my dog at
>
> home.

Patrick took the opportunity to stop the play momentarily and share personal information

about himself with Christian, giving Christian a glimpse into his life and the opportunity

to get to know him better, all while allowing the play scenario to continue.

> Patrick: (to Kiana) Are you almost done with these dishes?
>
> Kiana: Yup.
>
> Patrick: You're taking longer than my grandmother to wash them! (joking)
>
> You're slow!
>
> Kiana: I know.

Patrick: (laughing) She says, I know! (looks in the fridge) Where's my orange

juice container? Where's my orange juice container?

Kiana: Right here (gives it to him).

Patrick: Okay. (walks on his knees over to Kiana at the sink) Let's see what's

going on over here. You put this on top of the stove. What happens if it catches

on fire?

Kiana: Ohhhhh.

Patrick: Ohhhh. (Kiana moves it) Thanks.

While Patrick and the group were engaging in pretend play, he continued to take

advantage of teachable moments and directed appropriate behavior. Even though he was

mostly playing out the role of facilitator, he still felt it important to model skills that he

thought were important for his students to learn.

Christian: Look, Mr. Patrick! (points to the stuffed dog)

Patrick: Oh, what a wonderful spot. Then he can see everything. I love it! (to

Christian) Here, look, I found something over here that doesn't go here. Here

you go. (gives it to Christian who goes and puts it away)

Patrick: Christian, can you bring the spoon and fork that are on the floor over

here to Kiana so she can wash it since she's doing such a fabulous job?

Patrick: (a few minutes later) Hey, Grandma, are you done with those dishes yet?

(Kiana just gives him a look)

Christian: Mr. Patrick, my doggie's sleeping.

Patrick: Oh, then we'd better wash the dishes quietly. Don't worry. Grandma's

going so slow, she'll never finish. Hurry up, Grandma! (Kiana laughs) Look,

> she washed all those dishes and we already put everything away. I wonder what
>
> we can do when we're all done. (Patrick, Observation #6, 10/31/11)

Patrick took a pretend play opportunity and utilized the experience to teach skills and

concepts, including academic topics, such as math and science and real-world topics, like

sharing and safety; in addition, through play, Patrick was able to share a bit of himself

with his students. Further, his deep engagement with his students showed them how he

valued their relationships and his time with them. When later asked why he chose to

engage in the way that he did, Patrick shared,

> …[B]ecause of the way things were going…even though it was the same activity
>
> we were doing the whole time, it was different. We went from doing one thing to
>
> the next thing to the next thing. And they were all involved, through them
>
> wanting to be, and through me asking them to and pushing them to. It's [about]
>
> keeping them engaged. (Patrick, Interview #3, 11/7/11)

Patrick chose to build on the children's interests by changing up the scenario and

including various activities—following the recipe, making the muffins, cleaning up,

sharing the muffins, and eating the muffins. The students' faces and attitudes reflected

their pleasure in having him there with them and the intentional teaching in which Patrick

engaged was almost just an added bonus to an already positive experience; his students

seemed open to learning because of Patrick's presence and the learning and teaching

unfolding as a natural part of their play.

The Learning Labs period, by design, allowed Patrick to build relationships and

focus on relational activities with his students. When addressing the Labs period, the

Curiosity Corner curriculum guides include a "facilitating learning" section for each Lab

and expectations that the teacher will "tour" throughout the classroom during the entire

period. However, his own philosophy of giving his students what they need likely played

into his decision to spend extra time with his students, if needed, thereby not feeling the

pressure to "tour" the classroom as frequently as the model perhaps would recommend.

In addition, it is probable that the number of staff members present in Patrick's

classroom made it possible for him to remain in any given Lab for an extended period of

time, as he was sharing the responsibility with three other adults; his co-workers clearly

impacted his choices regarding his interactions with his students.

Staff Support. The students did not seem to notice a difference between the

teachers and the assistants in the classroom. In particular, they did not view Ísabel, one of

the assistants, as having any less authority than either Patrick or Allison. Ísabel had

certain responsibilities that were clearly hers, such as tooth brushing and setting up for

and cleaning up from meals; she was the one who washed hands with the students when

they came back from gross motor play. It appeared that this structure allowed Patrick to

spend more "teaching" time with the students. If Ísabel was monitoring teeth brushing,

Patrick was leading Music and Movement with the children on the carpet. If Ísabel was

assisting with hand washing, Patrick was starting Rhyme Time and Clues and Questions

on the carpet. If Ísabel was preparing for lunch, Patrick was engaging in Story Tree.

However, Ísabel was not limited to only caregiving duties. During one of my

observations, Ísabel sat at the Writing Lab to engage the children in literacy but she also

helped work out social conflicts and provide personal care by brushing teeth, putting in a

hairband, and helping to wash hands. She worked with children at the computer to find

answers to their pie-baking questions but she also sat with a student at naptime to rub his

back. Having such supportive staff members present clearly provided Patrick with many

opportunities to engage with his students throughout the day.

Summation

Patrick's story is one of pushing back against mandates and following his own

beliefs about what his young students need. By choosing prime times for relationship

building and prioritizing relational activities, including the modeling of positive

relationships, Patrick is able to build time into his school day to insure that there is a

place for caring in his classroom; the structure of the school day and the staffing pattern

that is set by his district also lend themselves to relationship building. By sharing himself

openly with his students, through the use of warmth, humor, appreciation, and inclusion,

he opens himself up to building natural connections with his students and sets the tone for

them to do the same for him. Patrick's strong beliefs provide him with the ability to push

back against what he feels is developmentally inappropriate and to stand up for his

students' needs. However, it is clear that having the support of an administrator who

respects and appreciates him, and is well versed in best practices in early childhood

education, empowers him to speak out, as well. While Patrick has the support of his

supervisor and a team approach in his classroom, not all public preschool teachers are as

fortunate; making the time for relationship building isn't is always so easy in public

preschool classrooms.

Keisha Hatcher: Fighting to Make Time for Relationship Building

Keisha Hatcher is an African-American woman who has been working in the field

of early childhood education for about ten years. She recently completed her Master's

Degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education while continuing to work full-time

as a classroom teacher and raise her two children. Like so many others in the early

childhood field, she didn't start off her career as an educator but instead, found her way

into the classroom through a position as an aftercare worker in a small, independent

childcare center in Southfield, New Jersey, the city in which she was raised.

    After taking the Praxis exam, Keisha assumed the role of teacher's assistant in the

same childcare center, where she was fortunate to work with a "fun", "energetic" and

experienced teacher; for Keisha, this year was "phenomenal" because she was able to

learn from her colleague. The center in which she worked was a contracted childcare

center with the Southfield Public School District; as a result, they were required to follow

the same curriculum model that the public schools were using, which was Curiosity

Corner. Following her first year, Keisha moved into the position of classroom teacher

and she has now had her own classroom for more than ten years.

    While Keisha worked in the childcare center, she was supervised by a Master

Teacher from the Southfield Public School District and after four years as a classroom

teacher in the childcare center, the Master Teacher felt that Keisha was ready for a new

opportunity.

> So she kind of worked her magic on me for four years and got me geared and
>
> ready to come into the district. That was really great to have her and then she
>
> actually was my Master Teacher here [in the public school system] for three
>
> years. This is the first year that she's not my Master Teacher. She followed me
>
> here…so it's good to have that mentor because that's what she is to me; she's a
>
> mentor. (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)

The support and encouragement that Keisha received from her Master Teacher gave her

the confidence to move to a different teaching position, in addition to providing her with

the validation that she was a successful teacher.

Keisha believes that the teacher-child relationship is important in determining a

child's school success and attitude towards school. As she says,

I think the children feel the difference. The difference is that the children know

when someone *really* [emphasis added] cares and is really taking the time with

them…I think that teacher who really tries to have that relationship with a child,

that child will definitely take risks more…they'll probably want to do more

challenging work because they know that they have the teacher backing them up

(Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)

What makes the difference, in Keisha's opinion, is that teachers who exhibit care

for their students affect the academic success of those students. For Keisha, relationship

building is not only about creating a safe and comfortable environment to meet children's

social and emotional needs; relationships allow students to feel comfortable taking

academic risks.

Despite her best intentions, however, Keisha notes that a variety of factors come

in to play when it comes to determining a child's school success, including learning

issues, speech delays, and challenges at home. She explains that, sometimes, "you try

hard, you put in all the love and the time into it, but some things just don't come together

with that child" (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11). Keisha's observation that sometimes,

she is unable to achieve what she wants due to external factors is an honest and real

statement about the struggles facing teachers. She goes on to state,

> Sometimes things do happen, you try your best, you build these relationships but
>
> not all the children may get to where you want them to be…There's definitely
>
> other things other than the relationship…but I still believe that the relationship is
>
> still important because just making the children feel welcome and wanted and like
>
> they matter and you care about the fact that they are learning or not learning, that
>
> still plays a big part of it but there are other factors. (Keisha, Interview #1,
>
> 9/13/11)

While she admits that there's more to a child's school experience than the teacher-child

relationship, she still notes its importance for both a child's emotional development and

their motivation to learn. What is especially telling in Keisha's statement is that she feels

that she must try her best to build relationships, despite these other factors that play into

the results of her relationship building efforts.

External Influences and Pressures

Keisha feels acutely the tensions associated with teaching in a public preschool

program that is housed in an elementary school building. There are school policies and

structures in place that do not lend themselves to opportunities for relationship building;

in addition, she is supervised and evaluated by a principal, who has not been trained in

early childhood education and from whom she feels pressure and occasional disregard for

her professionalism. Further, given her previous childcare experience, she notes the

differences inherent in teaching in a facility that is solely devoted to early childhood

education, as opposed to being in a school where her successes may be scrutinized by the

teacher down the hall or her needs for support and assistance may be dismissed.

Public School Setting. Teaching in a public school is a very different experience for Keisha than her previous experiences in a childcare facility. While it is clear that her previous experiences impact her current practices, she also acknowledges the difficulties inherent in the elementary school setting.

> Every day, you're thrown…different curveballs and you do have to be able to manage to deal and feel like, what's best for my children, how is this going to work, and still be there for them. It's always different. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

What is critical for Keisha is that despite these "curveballs" and having to deal with the unexpected, she still attempts to prioritize what she feels is best for her students. She believes that it is her job to figure out how to make things work so that she can continue to build relationships with her students and best support their development.

> Keisha goes on to share that her previous experience in a childcare facility was different with regard to the level of support and professional development she received.

> But you do need competent and confident teachers coming in to this type of setting. Like I can say that the early childhood, the childcare facility that I was in, they were more like a family and they were helping to kind of mold you and help you. But once you get into this arena here? No, you need to already have it together. So it is a big difference. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

From Keisha's perspective, the childcare facility was willing to invest in and train their teachers; in addition, Keisha's choice of words in calling her previous colleagues a "family" sheds light on how she feels about her current placement and the level of support she currently receives. She goes on to share that in her opinion, this is known

within the Southfield Early Childhood Department and thus influences their decision-

making process with regard to teacher recruitment and placement.

> And I understood why a lot of people in the Early Childhood Department wanted
>
> us to have that [experience] in a childcare facility…Monique [a co-worker] was
>
> trying to get into the school district a little bit earlier. I think she only did one
>
> year over at the childcare facility and they told her, take a couple of more years
>
> and work there and then go over here because they told her, once you go over
>
> here, it's totally different. So getting that level of experience under your belt,
>
> being able to be thrown curveballs because you've had that experience, you've
>
> been in the classroom for a couple of years so you know how to kind of change
>
> and go with the flow, as opposed to just coming in here with not a lot of
>
> experience under your belt because there's so many different things to worry
>
> about. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

From Keisha's description, it seems that there is awareness amongst those in the

Southfield Early Childhood Department that even though the population and the

curriculum are the same, whether in the childcare facility or the elementary school, the

challenges facing the teachers are different. Further, Keisha's take seems to be that one

hones her teaching skills in the childcare center, where she can collaborate with others

and learn from her co-workers about best practices in early childhood education, before

moving on to the public school setting, which does not provide the same level of support

or recognition of best practices.

     School Policies and Practices. Certain policies were in place in Keisha's school

that did not seem to support her relationship building efforts. I witnessed her being pulled

away from students on more than one occasion to attend to business or housekeeping

tasks. For example, several times during my observations, I witnessed the phone ringing,

taking Keisha away from her students to take a call informing her that she had to stop

what she was doing to input her daily attendance at the computer immediately.

> Even now with FOCUS [attendance] being done on the computer, at first we had
>
> cards, and now everything is just changing and you have to be able to manage it
>
> without getting too stressed out about it. And just keeping an eye on the kids and
>
> knowing that the kids are first. It's a lot. (Keisha, Interview #3)

With the old system of attendance, Keisha was able to build taking attendance in with her

morning meeting with the children; while she now inputs the attendance to the computer

system, she has maintained her "old" way of taking attendance as well, because she found

that experience to be valuable for her students. Keisha's powerful statement that "the kids

are first" shows the tensions inherent in her classroom, between wanting to be there to

build relationships with her students but having to struggle at times to find the time, due

to external pulls.

On one occasion, during Learning Labs, the school nurse brought two boys from

another preschool class to Keisha's classroom. The boys' class was outside so the nurse

asked if she could just leave them there, instead of bringing them to meet their class.

Keisha agreed and then a few moments later, another student was dropped off in her

classroom as well. At this point, with three additional students present, Keisha decided it

was time to clean up from Labs.

Learning Labs was an extremely busy and bustling time in Keisha's classroom

and on this day, in particular, children who needed Keisha's attention had pulled her,

every few minutes, from Lab to Lab. She had rotated from Blocks to Science to Art to

Listening to Manipulatives and back again, in addition to stopping to help a child clean

up from painting, and she noted, aloud, that "there were too many people just wandering

and too many children in each Lab." Adding two additional children, and then a third to

the mix, seemed overwhelming for Keisha, as she quickly made the decision to cut

Learning Labs, and her daily plans, short once the third child arrived. Keisha had shared

that it was a challenge for her to find the time to build relationships with her own fifteen

students but adding other children to the mix only appeared to exacerbate the situation.

      Structure of school day. Additionally, in Keisha's school, the scheduling and

structure of the school day impacted upon her contact time spent with her students.

Breakfast was served before the school day officially began so I only observed breakfast

once, when I arrived early. During my observation, Keisha was able to sit with a few

children during breakfast, however, not all children arrived in time for breakfast; further,

once it was time for the school day to begin, the children were encouraged to finish

quickly to join the opening activity, as Keisha had already moved on.

      While breakfast took place for a small number of children in the classroom, lunch

took place in the cafeteria with the rest of the school and Keisha did not stay with her

students during lunch; her aide remained with the class. In addition, Keisha's class had

Physical Education during the period immediately before lunch and she did not remain

with her class during this time either; again, that was her aide's responibility. As a result,

following Physical Education, Keisha would meet her students in the cafeteria, where

they would line up to receive their lunches; she would get the tables ready with their milk

and cutlery. Once all of the children were seated, Keisha would leave the cafeteria to

return to the classroom where she would eat her lunch alone or with a colleague.

During my first observation, when the children returned to the classroom after

lunch, Shakirah, one of Keisha's students, walked over to the table where Keisha was

eating her lunch with a fellow teacher. Shakirah sat down, while the other children were

using the bathroom and preparing for naptime, and began talking with Keisha while she

ate her lunch.

S: Is this for your juice? (points to the straw on the table)

K: It'll fall all the way down.

S: You gotta hold it like this. (she demonstrates)

They have a lengthy conversation about food, while the other teacher returns to

her classroom. Keisha finishes her lunch.

S: I'll put this in the garbage for you. (Keisha, Observation #1, 9/20/11)

Even though the opportunity to build relationships during mealtimes did not really exist

in Keisha's classroom, Shakirah carved out her own moment that day. She talked with

Keisha about foods that they both enjoyed and offered her assistance by showing her how

to use the straw and cleaning up after her. It was clear from these interactions how

warmly Shakirah felt about Keisha and this moment demonstrated the value in teachers

and students sharing meals together, and being able to interact in a relaxed and natural

setting. However, while there was clearly a benefit to Shakirah's outreach, this did not

extend to the other children; those who were not as outgoing or outspoken as Shakirah

were not afforded the same opportunity to connect with Keisha.

Given that her students had two periods in a row where she was not present, followed by naptime as well, this limited opportunities for relationship building between Keisha and her students. While mealtimes provide many rich opportunities for preschool teachers to interact with and build relationships with their students, this opportunity did not exist for Keisha. It did not matter if Keisha felt that it was important to share meals with her students; the structure of the school day was out of her control and was created without her participation.

Influence of administrators. While Keisha noted that during her time at the childcare center, her Master Teacher served as a mentor and support, in her elementary school setting, it was now her principal who was responsible for daily support and ongoing professional evaluations. Keisha shared that she regularly felt pressure from her principal to produce measurable outcomes; for example, her principal explicitly asked about her students' progress in the area of reading instruction, which was a different experience than Keisha's time spent in the childcare center.

> My [former childcare center] director never said, "Produce readers." Never. And
> I produced readers without them having to say that…So [now, there is] that
> pressure from him [current principal] and…over there [former childcare center],
> everything was preschool. Everything. (Keisha, Interview #2, 10/11/11)

By saying, "everything was preschool," Keisha implies that there was an understanding of child development and preschool children's needs in her previous setting, while in her current setting, there is a lack of focus on preschool and instead, there exists a pressure to achieve. In fact, Keisha feels this pressure so acutely that she shared that despite her beliefs and tendencies to want to let her students' development unfold more naturally, she

was now introducing letters and phonics at a much earlier stage in the school year than
she had previously. This is not part of the Curiosity Corner curriculum but is something
that she felt pressured to include as part of her daily programming.

During my second week of observations, the principal approached me in the
cafeteria as I was helping Keisha and the children get started with lunch. He came up to
me and asked how I was. I answered, "Great, how are you?" He replied, "I guess the
better question is, '*Who* [emphasis added] are you?'" He had never met me before, never
asked to meet with me, and had not stopped in during my time in the classroom. I
introduced myself and thanked him for allowing me to come into his school and he
replied, dryly and sarcastically, "Oh, so you're the reason Ms. Hatcher is so stressed out."
Keisha laughed this comment off and we both commented that it hadn't felt stressful; he
simply turned and walked away. Keisha commented that this was how her principal
usually interacted with her—in a sarcastic and less than serious manner. She noted that
he never really stopped in to her classroom, never observed her on a regular basis, but
was responsible for conducting her yearly evaluation.

Influence of co-workers. In addition to feeling pressure from her principal,
someone who was not trained in early childhood education, being in an elementary
school building also led to feelings of pressure from her elementary education-trained
colleagues as well. The change in context from a childcare center to an elementary school
building brought along the added stress of having to work alongside those who would
teach her students the following school year and might not share the same
developmentally appropriate expectations or objectives as Keisha held. She shared that in
the childcare center, she didn't have to stop and think, as she does now, "I know the

kindergarten teacher is over there and I know she's looking for certain things and if she

gets the students in my classroom, what is she going to say about my students?" She went

on to share,

> So that's another pressure. Before, I really didn't know. They just went off to
>
> another building. So now it's also thinking, when my children move along, are
>
> they where they need to be?... "What child did you have?" Because you know
>
> they do that. "Which child was yours?" "Which one did I get from you?" Or
>
> even if *I* [emphasis added] go in and check on them because I want, personally, to
>
> know how they're doing. So it's both ways. When I do go in and check on them,
>
> it's like, "Which one is yours?" So those are real pressures. (Keisha, Interview
>
> #2, 10/11/11)

Even if Keisha values spending time on relational activities or developing her students

social and emotional skills, she still feels pressure to produce academic outcomes, as she

does not want to be perceived by her colleagues as ineffective or for her students to be

perceived as ill-prepared. However, being able to rely on co-workers for assistance can

be a support for relationship building with students, as well.

    Value of an assistant. Keisha was the teacher in a classroom of fifteen students

and while it was mandated by the state that she have an assistant, it did not always work

out that way. For example, Keisha was regularly alone with her students on the

playground while her assistant was inside preparing the classroom for naptime.

    In addition, early in the school year, during the first few weeks of this study,

things were even more challenging for Keisha. Keisha's original assistant, Miss Dalia,

moved next door to take over as the classroom teacher for a fellow preschool teacher who

went out on a maternity leave. As a result, Keisha was given a substitute assistant, Miss

Samara, but this was not someone who had been trained or had experience working with

Keisha. Within a few weeks, a new, more permanent, assistant, Miss Shirley, was

assigned to Keisha's classroom but as Keisha shared,

> It's like starting all over again. And I'm like, "Oh, God!" When Samara came, I
>
> was like, "Okay." I was okay with that, that was the second change. But now
>
> with the third change, I'm feeling, like, exhausted. I'm feeling tired. (Keisha,
>
> Interview #3, 11/4/11)

The challenge of not having a regular assistant in her classroom impacted Keisha's stress

level, but also affected her ability to reach every child, as she ended up being the only

consistent figure to interact with her students.

An episode occurred between Keisha and Hakeem during a Music and Movement

activity where Hakeem was sitting out, by choice. At the time, Keisha was the only adult

who was participating in the activity with the children; she still had the first substitute

aide in her classroom. Keisha attempted to get Hakeem involved by asking him to

participate; he shook his head to indicate his lack of interest. She took his hand anyway

and attempted to bring him into the activity, even though he clearly did not want to

participate, given his facial expression and body language. While viewing this recorded

episode later, Keisha acknowledged that perhaps, she should have taken the cue from

Hakeem, but it was likely that given her lack of regular support, she felt the need to keep

all of the students engaged, in order to reach every student. She shared that she usually

tries to get her assistants involved during the Music and Movement activities but that

since Miss Dalia's absence, this hadn't been so easy to accomplish.

Keisha felt strongly that having an assistant greatly impacted her ability to build

relationships with her students. When asked about the value of having a regular assistant

in the classroom, Keisha stated,

> Oh, yes, having an aide is a support definitely. Takes half of the burden or the
>
> workload…If she's pulled out of the room, I'm having to worry about everything.
>
> I'm having to keep my eyes on all 15 children so it does lessen the opportunity to
>
> have those [meaningful] moments… I may not have some of those moments
>
> where we can go off to ourselves and I may just kind of walk around a little bit
>
> more. It'll definitely lessen my time to have with children if I don't have an aide
>
> in the room. (Keisha, Interview #2, 10/11/11)

There were times when Keisha's aide was pulled from the classroom to attend to other

duties elsewhere in the school, leaving her alone in the classroom. As she shared above,

this did impact her behavior; she rotated more quickly throughout the classroom,

stopping only briefly to engage with students, as opposed to being able to share lengthy

interactions with them, which she'd prefer and which are strongly encouraged by both the

state's guidelines and the Curiosity Corner curriculum guides. Keisha shared that when

she worked in a childcare setting, this loss of an assistant never seemed to happen;

assistants were considered dedicated to the classrooms where they had been assigned.

> There [were] not other agendas. It's really just early childhood…Right now,
>
> [aides] get pulled for stuff that doesn't really have anything to do with Pre-K so I
>
> think that that's the difference. There's so many other things going on in the
>
> elementary school as opposed to the childcare facilities because [there,] my aide
>
> was hardly ever pulled. Hardly ever. We were always there together. So it had to

be something that was really more extreme and it would be something that even

took maybe 5 or 10 minutes as opposed to a whole 40 minutes. (Keisha, Interview

#2, 10/11/11)

In the elementary school setting, Keisha felt that there was less respect for or adherence

to this type of a model so there were times when her assistant was taken from her to

attend to non-preschool duties, leaving Keisha with less time to devote to effective

relationship building.

Influence of Curriculum. Keisha does admit that despite the very real challenges

that she faces, she feels that structuring her day based upon the Curiosity Corner

recommendations provides her with some built-in opportunities to interact with her

students on an individual basis.

Learning Labs is definitely an easier time because the children get to have free

play, free choice play…that's my time to hone in and ask questions or sit next to

them…so learning lab, free choice play is one time that I do try to build a

relationship. (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)

In addition to Lab Time, Keisha shared that playground time is also an opportune time for

relationship building and she feels that using the Curiosity Corner curriculum model may

provide opportunities for her to get to know her students better due to the recommended

structure of the school day and the extended periods of time devoted to both Gross Motor

Play and Learning Labs. However, even these curriculum-driven moments, such as

Learning Labs, were compromised at times, if Keisha did not have the proper supports in

place.

Despite her appreciation of the curriculum's focus on extended periods of free choice time and the fact that the curriculum helps guide her as to *when* she could be working on relationship building, Keisha doesn't necessarily feel that Curiosity Corner plays a huge role in determining *how* she interacts with her students. She shares that as a general rule, she takes the lead from the children when interacting with them and then "build[s] off where they are," a fairly standard belief in early childhood education, but she does mention some specific activities in the Curiosity Corner curriculum that incorporate moments of conversation and allow her to ask open-ended questions and get to know her students better. Keisha notes that the Curiosity Corner teacher handbook or theme guides,

> …may give you a specific prompt as to what you can say. It even might say, if a child is crying or if a child doesn't raise their hand or if a child doesn't do something, then they might offer a solution or something that you can do. But it depends because it's not consistent in every theme because every week the theme changes so some themes may play a little more into the relationship-building more so than others. (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)

Keisha shares that in addition, the guides do have a "sidebar" where hints or tips may be offered and that sometimes, she finds these suggestions to be helpful but that unfortunately, again, she doesn't find this to be consistent throughout the teacher materials.

Keisha's take on Curiosity Corner is that there is a very strong emphasis on language development and building children's vocabulary, but when asked about an emphasis on relationship-building, she notes that most of the suggestions regarding

relationship-building pertain to the home-school connection, as opposed to the

connection between teachers and students. Keisha feels that the themes that help to

welcome the students to school in the very beginning of the year may offer opportunities

for getting to know one another better, but that "there's not much strength in that teacher-

child relationship past that first month (Keisha, Interview #1, 9/13/11)."

Being pulled in many directions. Given all of these influences on Keisha's

behavior, it is not surprising that Keisha spoke often of how difficult it was to find the

time to have consistent and positive interactions with all of her students and that

regularly, she felt pulled in more than one direction. The observation below, recorded

during Learning Labs, is a typical example of Keisha being continually pulled away from

the task at hand to take care of additional responsibilities.

> [Keisha] gets up to push up Omar's sleeves and then goes back to Brandon and
>
> models how to play the game. She leaves to help a few kids at Water Lab and Al-
>
> Tamar comes to ask for help with the Smartboard. She goes to help him but it's
>
> not working correctly so she redirects him to the computer lab instead. She then
>
> returns to Brandon but the telephone rings, telling her that her attendance needs to
>
> be done now. She needs to use the computer to log the daily attendance and so she
>
> leaves Brandon again. (Keisha, Observation #2, 9/27/11)

Keisha was attempting to engage with her students to meet their needs during Lab Time

but it was very difficult for her to maintain any type of lengthy interaction as she kept

getting pulled away; in addition, receiving the phone call telling her that she had to stop

what she was doing immediately to input the attendance was disruptive and cut her

interactions even further short. Not only were opportunities for relationship building

being lost as a result of being pulled in many directions, but the children were likely not

able to get the most out of the experiences that were set up for them in Labs due to the

lack of scaffolding or interaction from the adults in the room.

Again, Keisha shared that her feeling of being pulled in many directions was

exacerbated by her lack of support in the form of a regular assistant.

Well, in this situation with Ms. Samara, being it was her first week, I think that

was only her second day, I think that I probably didn't look to her as much. She

wasn't really familiar with my children. She really didn't know their names that

day. If Ms. Dalia was there, see, she would've felt it a little more and said, "Hey,

Ms. Keisha is reading a story, is there anything I can help you with?" She was a

little bit more where she was able to foresee me kinda needing that time with the

children and it was kinda like vice versa. (Keisha, Interview #2, 10/11/11)

Keisha acknowledged that it was ultimately her responsibility to teach her students how

to function more independently so that she wasn't being constantly interrupted and pulled

from activity to activity and at this point, she didn't feel that she had done her best in this

area.

I did take the time after this day to kinda get the children to know what they're

supposed to do without having to come to me every five minutes. I did work with

them that week about trying to talk with their friends a little bit more. (Keisha,

Interview #2, 10/11/11)

Even though Keisha realized the impact of her students' dependence upon her and took

the time to instruct them otherwise, it was clear that being without a regular assistant

certainly did not help and she shared that she felt a bit "knocked off her game." Being

pulled in different directions did not help her level of stress, nor her ability to build

relationships with her students.

Setting limits and boundaries

In addition to external pressures shaping her behavior in the classroom, Keisha

made decisions internally that had the potential to affect her relationship building with

her students as well. Even though she regularly situated herself down on her students'

level in order to engage with them, Keisha spoke of needing clear-cut boundaries when it

comes to affection and issues of touch. She feels that a line must be drawn somewhere

and for her, that line is kissing. While Keisha was comfortable giving hugs, both

individual and "group hugs", Keisha feels that kissing is "too intimate" and should be

reserved for families; she shared that if a child seems to want to kiss her, she'll gently ask

them to "blow her a kiss" instead. In addition to intimacy, Keisha feels that kissing

crosses a line that she connects with her students' safety; she shares that it's her

responsibility to teach her students about inappropriate touches and that she teaches them

that kisses are only for their parents. Keisha ties the feeling of comfort in with that of

feeling safe and secure as well, which she considers to be a priority.

> For safety, I don't think they should be going around kissing everybody and stuff
>
> like that, but I guess I would draw the line because you have draw the line
>
> somewhere, because you don't want them to feel too comfortable, like anything
>
> goes. I am the adult and I am the teacher and I am supposed to protect them in
>
> that way. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

For Keisha, it was important to have boundaries with her students and while comfort was

key for her, it wasn't without its limits.

Keisha shared that she was never really given a directive as to how best express

her affection for her students. Her decision is driven by her own beliefs and comfort

level. She explained that even in the childcare center where she worked previously, she

drew the line at kisses. This boundary still allowed her to show physical affection

towards her students, helping them to feel more comfortable, while allowing her to

remain comfortable as well. Further, displaying her affection could be as simple as when

Keisha said, in passing, to a student, "Your hair is beautiful. Did your mother do that last

night? I love it," or when she gave her students high fives as they signed in one morning.

However, it could also be complex and intertwined with additional behaviors, as in the

episode below.

One morning during Gross Motor Time, Keisha had her students listen to a song

on a CD and follow the directions given in the song by using their bean bags. One of

Keisha's students, Shakirah, did not follow the directions to keep her beanbag in her lap

before the song began so Keisha took her beanbag away after more than one request to

stop playing with it. Keisha gave Shakirah the benefit of the doubt by offering her the

opportunity to correct her behavior and continue to be a part of the group, but Shakirah

did not take advantage of Keisha's generosity.

Keisha played the song and when it was finished, she held up Shakirah's beanbag

and asked her if she was ready to have it back, giving her yet another opportunity to join

the activity. Shakirah refused to answer so Keisha put the beanbag down and did not give

it to her for the second round of the game. It was then time for Physical Education, so as

each child was called to line up, he or she put the beanbags away. Keisha called Shakirah

last for the line because she didn't have a beanbag. Shakirah was teary-eyed and Keisha

reminded her, "Shakirah, I asked you to stop throwing."

The class then walked to the gym and Keisha gave the group a reminder of how to

walk in line in the hallway. Shakirah cried, quietly, all the way to the gym, so midway

through their walk, Keisha stopped to talk to her, put her arm around her and explained

what had happened back in the classroom. Keisha walked with her the rest of the way to

gym with her arm around Shakirah's shoulders. By the time they reached the gym,

Shakirah was crying loudly. Keisha kept her behind and brought her to the bathroom to

speak with her and allow her to calm down and wipe her face. Once Shakirah calmed

down a bit, Keisha kneeled down to talk to her and asked, "Can I have a hug? Would

that make you feel better? I still love you," and they embraced.

Keisha showed warmth, within limits, by offering Shakirah several chances to

correct her behavior and participate in the beanbag activity and also, by sharing her

feelings of love for her. She was physically affectionate with Shakirah when she put her

arm around her shoulder to comfort her and when she hugged her to bring some closure

to the incident. However, she also encouraged appropriate behavior and managed to

achieve conflict resolution with Shakirah. Keisha's warmth allowed her to be able to

smooth over a tense situation and keep her relationship with Shakirah positive and intact.

However, because Keisha would not remain with her class during Physical Education,

which was followed by lunch, another period of her absence, one wonders if Keisha

being able to continue spending more time with Shakirah in a positive way would have

strengthened the relationship even further.

Carving out time and space

Given the challenges that Keisha faces, it is important to note that she still works

hard to find the time to build relationships with her students; relationship building is still

a priority for her. As previously mentioned, Keisha feels that the Curiosity Corner

curriculum helps support some of her choices. For example, she used the Clues and

Questions period to model problem-solving and the relational concept of friends helping

one another by using two of the puppets from Curiosity Corner; the curriculum guide

suggested a scenario of Curiosity the Cat having difficulty with a puzzle and JoJo, a

friend, offering to help (Keisha, Observation #3, 10/4/11). While the curriculum often

focused on the language development piece of interactions, Keisha chose this activity to

focus primarily on how to have effective relationships.

Gross motor. In addition, Keisha found that during gross motor activities, she

was able to spend extra time with her students in order to build relationships with them.

When Keisha's class engaged in gross motor play, they often went to the playground

right outside of her classroom and during my observations, they were the only class

present. Further, Keisha's assistant, if one was present, would usually stay in the

classroom during this time, preparing for naptime. Being alone with her class during

gross motor play required Keisha to stay involved and engaged with her students.

Sometimes this meant initiating and supervising a game with a group of students. On one

occasion, Keisha was on the playground with her class; a group of children were playing

"Duck, Duck, Goose" under her supervision. Keisha whispered to Camíla to pick Samuel.

She quietly told Zoe to pick Brandon. She wanted all of the children to be involved and

included, and helped two more children join in the game as well (Keisha, Observation #2,

9/27/11). She did not make her goal obvious to the group but the clear message that she

was sending to the individual students to whom she spoke was that everyone mattered

and everyone should feel included. This push for connection was a conscious choice on

Keisha's part to put relationships first.

Sometimes being alone with her students during gross motor time meant having to

stand back and keep watch over the group. However, Keisha was also observed on

several occasions playing with her students, whether that meant having a catch, jumping

rope, or even going down the slide. Keisha shared that she engages in this type of

behavior for her students.

> Every once in a while, they'll all say, "Ms. Keisha, go on the slide!" Every once
>
> in a blue moon I'll get up there, just for laughs, because a lot of them get a kick
>
> out of it, seeing me do it…so just to play with them a little bit, just to be involved
>
> in what they're doing, that's all. (Keisha, Interview #3, 11/4/11)

The goal for Keisha when engaging in this type of behavior is to have fun with her

students and to strengthen that human connection between them.

If Keisha's class could not go outside due to inclement weather, they did not have

any other space that they could utilize for gross motor activity, as is sometimes the case

in other schools. Instead, Keisha would come up with something active for her students

inside the classroom, which proved to be challenging at times. On one occasion, her class

was prepared and ready to go outside and was unable to do so, as a maintenance worker

was mowing the lawn; while this was frustrating for Keisha—who said, "It's always

something!"—and disappointing to her students, given that that time is preschool

playground time and the lawn maintenance should have been scheduled for another time,

Keisha quickly came up with another plan.

Keisha managed to turn the mood around and put on a CD for her students so she

could dance with them. The children were excited but then, there was a problem with the

CD. When that didn't work out, it almost became funny to the children because Keisha

reacted by laughing and throwing her hands up. They didn't get as disappointed this time

because they saw her reaction. Still, Keisha didn't give up and instead, improvised by

teaching them some of the muscle stretches that she does at the gym, sharing a different

part of herself with her students. The kids became excited and engaged and participated

enthusiastically in the stretching exercises. Keisha could have easily given up at this

point and simply read the children a book, as many other teachers do when there is a lack

of time or activities to choose from, but she felt that meeting the children's needs was

important and she knew that she had to come up with a gross motor activity because that

was what they needed. This choice demonstrated how in tune she was to her students and

how important it was to her to be responsive to their needs. Her relationships with her

students came before her own comfort level. As she shared, she felt that if she gave up,

she would "probably be cheating them out of the part of the day that they really enjoy."

Keisha made the conscious choice to prioritize her relationships with her students.

Gross motor time provided opportunities for Keisha to connect with her students

and she was not willing to let that go. For her, the benefit was too great. As she shared,

> When we're outside, you know, it's easy to take a ball and [say], "Hey, do you
>
> want to play catch?" And I'm asking questions…but that's that time that I can
>
> also have some intimate time because some children, they already know what

they want to do and they're playing chase or whatever but I might see another

child off by themselves that I can speak to or talk with. (Keisha, Interview #1,

9/13/11)

Even though it was challenging for Keisha to be alone with her class during gross motor

time, the benefits were just too great in her opinion and she was willing to do what she

had to do to use that time to foster her relationships with her students.

Small moments. Keisha seemed to have many factors working against her,

particularly given that she had less contact time with her students due to her absence

during meals and specials, but because she was aware of the importance of carving out

time to build relationships with her students, she made the effort to connect during other

times of the day. She prioritized relationship building with her students by using what

contact time she did have with her students wisely.

Even where the curriculum did not explicitly guide Keisha's choices, she found

ways to carve out time and space in the small moments to aid her in making positive

connections with her students. Keisha believed in being proactive with her students when

guiding their behavior and setting up clear and appropriate expectations, in an attempt to

keep their relationship positive. For example, she intentionally used songs to demonstrate

appropriate behavior, such as the song sung before exiting the classroom.

I'm looking straight ahead of me,

I'm standing straight and tall,

I'll give myself a great big hug,

I'm ready for the hall.

Zip our lips,

> Hands on hips,
>
> Stand up tall,
>
> Let's get ready for the hall.

Being able to sing directions, along with hand movements, was engaging and interactive for the students and was received much more positively than if Keisha had given each of those directives as commands.

Keisha also took the time to acknowledge and recognize her students and their unique contributions to the class. She was regularly observed addressing a child's return to school after an absence in order to share her concern and to welcome them back to the group. As Keisha said,

> I just want them to feel like they're missed and kind of acknowledge them, like you weren't here yesterday so we didn't get a chance to talk with you and play with you but we're glad that you're back. You know, just kinda give them a sense that I am thinking about them and that they do matter in the classroom. (Keisha, Interview #2, 10/11/11)

Keisha's emphasis was on the child's social and emotional wellbeing; she did not bring up what learning experiences they had missed. The goal was for them to feel included as part of the group. In addition, during one of my observations, when a child had to leave early due to illness, Keisha took the time out of her circle time activity to explain to the children why their friend was leaving and to send well wishes her way as she departed. This moment of inclusion was important for both parties; the child leaving would feel valued and cared for and the children observing the interaction would learn how to care for others.

This type of outreach was extended to all of Keisha's students, in general, but was also mindful of differently-abled students. It could be demonstrated through a simple act of a teacher reaching out to a lonely student. Keisha saw Brandon, a very quiet student, sitting alone with the memory game. She said to him, "You're sitting all by yourself. Would you like me to sit with you?" He nodded so she sat down and modeled how to play the game (Keisha, Observation #2, 9/27/11). Taking the time to interact with Brandon on an individual basis, after noting his solitude, demonstrated to the onlooker, and to Brandon, that Keisha wanted all of her students to feel connected to the group.

Keisha's presence was regularly felt, as she moved throughout the classroom, and she did try to be available and accessible to her students, even during moments of transition. Being physically close to her students not only gave her the opportunity to reach out to them, but also gave them the opportunity to reach out to her, as well.

Keisha: (to the class) Let's clean up quietly and go to the carpet.

She sits in the Block Lab to show Samuel, Zamir, and Al-Tamar how to clean up the lab.

Trinity comes over and shows Keisha a "T" block.

Trinity: This is in my name.

Keisha: Yes it is. Clean it up.

Keisha holds Zamir's hand.

Keisha: Put the Legos inside the box.

Keisha then put a hand on Zamir's back and told him to calm down. Zamir began throwing the blocks onto the shelf as his way of cleaning up. Keisha asked him to stop and pointed to Trinity, as an example of how clean up appropriately. Zamir continued

throwing the blocks and Keisha had to lie across the floor to reach him; she touched him

and reminded him again of the appropriate way to clean up. Samuel hugged her while she

was lying across the floor and he asked if he could throw away the garbage for her.

Keisha said yes and thanked him. (Keisha, Observation #5, 10/17/11)

By being a part of the action during this moment of transition, in addition to being

down on the children's level, Keisha was able to model and direct appropriate behavior in

an individualized and private way, as opposed to calling to Zamir from across the room

with public directives. Further, being down on their physical level provided Keisha's

students with a feeling of comfort and a willingness to engage with her, both physically

and verbally. Sam asking if he could help Keisha to clean up, in addition to his display of

affection towards her, most certainly occurred because of her presence in that Lab.

Acting on his feelings towards her led to him wanting to assist and please her.

Caregiving and offering assistance

In Keisha's classroom, she was frequently observed participating in caregiving

behaviors and offering assistance to her students. Caregiving included meeting children's

basic needs, such as helping them with clothing or shoe-tying; cleaning faces or wiping

noses; or getting them food or drink. Often times, these moments brought Keisha in close

proximity to her students, in addition to bringing her down on their level, and as

mentioned previously, this situating of herself led to close interactions with her students,

such as the time when she bent down to a tie a child's shoe and two children hugged her

while she was down on the ground.

During another moment of caregiving, Keisha was attempting to help her student, Tracey, to feed the class goldfish when she accidentally elbowed her. Keisha quickly picked Tracey up, hugged her, and apologized. She sat down with Tracey on her lap and asked her what hurt; she comforted her, held her, rubbed her back, and talked to her quietly. The children asked if Tracey was okay and if they could give her a hug. Keisha told them yes, and shared that they could give her a group hug, which they did. (Keisha, Observation #5, 10/17/11)

Keisha was easily able to engage in caregiving since she was so physically close to Tracey; she was able to quickly address and resolve the situation, all while making sure that her student felt cared for and safe, and that the other students were able to witness this positive example, as well.

On another occasion, while the class was out on the playground, Keisha helped Isaiah with an issue with his shoe. She shook out his shoe to make sure there was no rock providing the discomfort. He continued to complain and Keisha took the time to rub his foot, before putting his shoe back on.

K: How's it feel?

I: It's not hurting me.

K: It's not? Maybe it was something in your sock. (Keisha, Observation #6, 10/25/11)

Taking the time to help Isaiah feel comfortable was a priority for Keisha. Even though she was the only one outside on the playground with her class of fifteen students, she knew that a moment of caregiving and offering assistance could lead to a stronger and more positive relationship with Isaiah, so she made the choice to help him.

With all of the staffing disruption in Keisha's classroom, it is perhaps not surprising that she was seen engaging often in caregiving behaviors. She knew her students best and could not rely on anyone else, whereas in other classrooms, those responsibilities are often shared more equally. It is possible that Keisha engaged in more caregiving simply out of necessity; she was often the only one available to do so. However, regardless of the cause, caregiving for her students did lead Keisha to have nurturing interactions with them to insure that their most basic of needs were being met.

Summation

Keisha's story is one of struggling to find the time to build relationships with her young students, despite the pressures and pulls associated with being situated in an elementary school building. Being without a principal or supervisor who supports her and understands best practices in early childhood education adds to her level of stress, in addition to forcing her to make compromises regarding what she feels her students need and deserve from her. Further, the role of her assistant is not as well defined as it should be, nor does the school appear to take the importance or worth of a steady and consistent assistant seriously. In addition, Keisha often feels a disregard or lack of respect and value towards the work that she does as a preschool teacher, all of which contribute to making relationship building with students a challenging prospect. While she may often feel pulled in many directions at once, Keisha, as an experienced and thoughtful teacher, still manages to find the time to carve out moments where she can prioritize relationship building in her classroom, particularly through engaging with her students during gross motor play and moments of transition, and when providing caregiving or assistance to

meet her young students' needs. Despite all of the obstacles she faces, Keisha

understands the need and is willing to fight for time to build relationships with her

students.

Curiosity Corner and Supporting Teacher-Child Relationships

While neither teacher felt that the Curiosity Corner curriculum model strongly

impacted upon their relationship building with their students, it was noted during

interviews, observations, and review of documents that there were moments of attention

to or support for relationship building throughout the curriculum guides. For example, in

the teacher's manual, the "snapshot of a classroom" includes descriptions of a teacher

sitting on the floor, playing with children, or "cuddled up in the library corner with a

couple of children on her lap, reading" (Success for All, 2007). Explicitly telling teachers

that they should be down on the children's level or that physical affection and touch are

not only acceptable, but also expected, demonstrates to teachers how making time for

relationships can be built into the school day. In addition, although it is noted in the guide

that the primary focus of this curriculum model is children's oral language development,

program goals and objectives address the emotional/personal domain as well. In fact, the

teacher's guide reminds the reader, "Only when children's basic needs for food, shelter,

safety, love, and belonging are met can they focus their attention on working toward

meeting the higher level needs of achievement and creativity" (SFA, 2007, p. 7).

However, when addressing how to support children's development in the interpersonal

domain, the focus is mostly on building and facilitating peer relationships, with little to

no attention given to the teacher-child relationship. Yet, while the main focus of the

curriculum model may not be on the teacher-student relationship, it is clear that there are

certain elements of the daily structure that are helpful in this regard.

Extended Time for Interactions

Despite the fact that the Curiosity Corner model may not explicitly dictate the

importance of teacher-student relationships or how to facilitate relationship building, the

model does provide a structure to the day that enables relationship building between

teachers and students. As was previously mentioned, Curiosity Corner calls for an

extended period of time to be devoted to students' engagement in Learning Labs, with the

expectation that the classroom teacher will rotate throughout the Labs to interact with

their students and scaffold their learning. In addition, as Keisha pointed out, over the

course of the school day, two hours—an hour in the morning and an hour in the

afternoon—are recommended for Gross Motor Play, a time that was observed to be

especially conducive to relationship building for her.

Interpretation and Inconsistency

Some attention must be given to the intersection between the explicit

recommendations of the curriculum, as it is a heavily scripted program, and a teacher's

interpretation of these recommendations. As the daily structure is further broken down in

the Curiosity Corner teacher's manual, there is specific attention given briefly to the

teacher-child relationship during discussion of the teacher's role during Greetings and

Readings and Snack Time; however, this discussion focuses primarily around the topic of

conversation, which is not surprising given the oral language focus of the curriculum

model. In addition, when reviewing the individual theme guides, the suggestions given

with regard to teacher-child interactions are mostly theme-driven, as opposed to letting

conversation unfold between students and teachers more naturally. For example, in the

"Fall into Fall" theme guide (SFA, 2006), there are recommendations for teachers to talk

with students during Snack Time about shared food allergies, if applicable, and/or shared

likes and dislikes of certain cold-weather snacks. The guide advises, "Be sure to tell the

children about your favorite cold-weather snack or those of your family members" (p.

56). While it is positive to see the curriculum model encouraging teachers to share

personal information with their students, it is clear from the guide that their focus should

be on the theme.

Similarly, when reading the recommendations for Greetings and Readings, there

are instructions to use the early moments of the day to read with small groups of children

to introduce the theme and relate it to the classroom materials; there is no mention of

reading for enjoyment or to establish security or to help ease the transition to school, all

of which would support relationship building. However, there is a note to have materials

prepared ahead of time which will "allow one of you to focus on greeting the children

and adults as they arrive, and will allow the other(s) to interact with the children, using

the materials in the classroom" (p. 15). This inconsistency with regard to relationships,

which may have been an attempt to provide a balance between social and cognitive

developmental directives, seems to have led to these teachers' interpretation that

relationships are not a priority in this curriculum model.

In addition, it was clear through observations that the Curiosity Corner model was

not being used in the same way in each of these classrooms. As previously mentioned,

during our first interview, Patrick shared that he did not know much about the curriculum

model at all and that most of what he learned was from his co-teacher when he began

teaching in the preschool program, although he was observed engaging in certain

activities related to the Curiosity Corner schedule, and his lesson plans did seem to

follow the format of the Curiosity Corner day, although not always consistently. Patrick

was not observed utilizing the more scripted language of the model, during either direct

instruction or through his informal interactions with his students, and the same was true

of Keisha, who admitted that while she felt the script could be helpful to new teachers,

she did not feel that it was something that she needed. Keisha, however, did adhere more

to the Curiosity Corner schedule and activities on a more regular and daily basis. Given

that each teacher was observed during the same weeks and themes, one would expect a

similar experience in each classroom but that was not really the case.

Summation

While there were not many explicit recommendations in the Curiosity Corner

materials regarding teacher-child relationships, the model did provide some opportunities

for relationship building in the form of extended periods of free choice time, when

teachers were expected to rotate throughout the classroom or play space to interact with

their students. Further, with its focus on oral language development, teachers are

encouraged to engage in regular conversation with their students; however, the focus of

these conversations appears to be somewhat narrow, with attention being given to the

specified theme.

Conclusion

Through my observations in these two different public preschool programs, I was

able to examine what effects influenced relationship-building between teachers and

students. Influences explored included the use of a standardized curriculum model; the

pressures associated with being housed in an elementary school, including the influence

of co-workers and supervisors; and the tensions between being able to find the time to

"be there" for students while still delivering measurable results. Both Keisha and Patrick

were seen carving out opportunities for relationship-building where they were not already

built into the program and utilizing the curriculum model to their advantage to achieve

positive relationships as well.

The teachers observed prioritized certain behaviors over others, in order to build

relationships with their students. Both Keisha and Patrick were observed modeling

appropriate behavior, taking their lead from the students, and creating a comfortable

learning environment. Additionally, each individual teacher engaged in several additional

behaviors in order to foster relationship-building, including using humor, caregiving, and

displaying warmth, and both found specific times of the day—gross motor play and

mealtimes—to carve out moments for connecting with their students as well.

Keisha felt the pressures associated with being a part of an elementary school

more acutely than Patrick and it was more of a struggle for her to find the time, maintain

boundaries, and keep business and housekeeping to a minimum, in order to build those

relationships. Patrick was fortunate to have an additional three adults in his classroom on

a daily basis, in addition to having a supervisor who was well versed in early childhood

best practices and openly showed her support for him. However, despite these

differences, both teachers openly prioritized building relationships with their students.

In addition, the Curiosity Corner standardized curriculum model provided some

opportunities for relationship building by providing extended periods of time for teachers

to interact with their students, even if the main focus of those times is not explicitly

meant for relationship building. Despite the mixed messaging that seems to exist in the

curricular materials regarding the value of relationships, if allowed some room for

interpretation, teachers can use this program to their advantage, since the scheduling of

large blocks of free choice time and the focus on oral language development both lend

themselves to regular and positive interactions with their students.

In the next section of this paper, I will look at these findings in the context of the

existing literature base and will share implications for early childhood teacher preparation

and practices; early childhood education policy; and future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how two public preschool teachers built

relationships with their young students, while working within the constraints of a

standardized curriculum model. I will begin this chapter with a brief summary of the

research project, in order to review the background, research questions, and methodology

used. Following this summary, relevant issues will be highlighted from each teacher's

individual story, in addition to those presented that affected both teachers, in order to

connect the findings to the current literature base, and to further the understanding of how

public preschool teachers build relationships with their students. Finally, I will conclude

this chapter with a discussion of the implications for future practice, policy, and research,

while noting the limitations of the current study.

Project Summary

Early childhood education, and the promises that it holds, have become thrust into

the national spotlight as state-funded preschool programs are continuing to grow. In an

attempt to standardize these programs, many states have mandated the use of curriculum

models in their state-funded early childhood programs, implying a shift in the goals and

aims of early childhood education from one that addresses a child's social and emotional

needs to one that focuses on the academic. While we know that there are positive

outcomes associated with certain types of curriculum models, what we don't know is

what influence a curriculum model has on the daily lives of teachers and students in early

childhood classrooms. Research has shown that teacher-child relationships have been

used successfully as an intervention and compensatory measure for students at risk of

school failure; in addition, teachers have used relationships to build motivation and

success in their students. Yet, while we know that teacher-child relationships make a

difference, it is unclear what influence, if any, the public preschool setting and the use of

a curriculum model have on a teacher's ability to build relationships with her young

students. The purpose of this multiple case study was to add to the small body of

literature in this area by exploring and describing how teachers build relationships with

children in public preschool programs while working within the parameters of a

standardized curriculum model. The research questions guiding this study were:

1) How do preschool teachers build relationships with children while working within

   a standardized curriculum model?

   a) What opportunities exist for relationship building?

   b) What strategies do teachers employ to build relationships with their students?

2) What are teachers' beliefs about relationship building in the early childhood

   classroom?

3) What do teachers believe impacts upon their abilities to successfully build

   relationships with their students?

The participants in this study were two public preschool teachers in two former

Abbott districts who were working within the Curiosity Corner preschool curriculum

model. Multiple data sources included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and

document review. Participants were videotaped for a portion of the observations and were

able to reflect upon several researcher-selected episodes during their final two interviews

to offer reflections and insights into their behavior. Data was collected in each classroom

for approximately four hours a week over a six-week period. All data was transcribed,

coded, and grouped, using the Dedoose data analysis software to look for patterns and

themes. Analysis took place within each case and across cases as well.

Findings showed that the participants recognized their job to include responsibilities

that encompassed both care and education. Establishing comfort was most important to

them, and they both believed that comfort would establish feelings of emotional safety

and security that in turn would set the stage for learning. These teachers prioritized

relationship building and relational activities in their classrooms, despite the pressures

and constraints that they faced; however, each teacher confronted these challenges

differently, as their teaching environments varied, particularly in terms of supervision and

support. Patrick's was a story of openly pushing back against constraints and working to

give his students whatever he felt they needed to succeed; he modeled appropriate

relationships and fostered inclusion, while openly sharing himself with his students, all of

which was made easier due to his daily schedule, which provided for extended periods of

interaction during meals and Learning Labs, and the support of his consistent and

experienced classroom staff and his well-educated supervisor.

The external pressures in the elementary school setting faced by Keisha were felt

more acutely and impacted upon her stress level and her ability to build relationships with

her students; pressure from co-workers and administrators forced Keisha's hand at times,

and certain policies and practices of the school, such as the structure of the school day or

lack of consistency with her assistant, led her to have less time for relationship-building,

in addition, to being out of her control. Yet despite these challenges, Keisha found ways

to carve out time for relationship building, particularly during Gross Motor activities and

moments of caregiving and transition. The Curiosity Corner curriculum model did not

appear to have a great impact, either positively or negatively, on either teacher's

relationship building abilities, although the extended periods of time allotted for Learning

Labs and Gross Motor Play did seem to provide opportunities for longer and more

sustained interactions.

Impact of Teaching Preschool in an Elementary School Setting

Little has been done to document the public preschool experience for either

teachers or students. While this study focuses on local policy, there is reason to believe

that these issues exist more broadly across the implementation of mandates. As states

continue to expand public preschool programs, it is necessary to examine what is actually

happening in these classrooms and in what ways, being part of a publicly funded program

may impact upon learning and teaching. Further, with many of these programs being

housed in elementary school buildings, a careful exploration is needed to understand both

the subtle and overt ways that this situation impacts the preschool experience. As both

participants in this study are public preschool teachers who teach in elementary school

buildings, they both had much to contribute to this gap in the literature.

External Forces and Unintended Consequences

With preschool programs moving into the public sector, there are concerns

regarding the aims of these programs and if a shift in setting will dictate a shift in focus

(Miller and Almon, 2009). Additionally, with many of these programs being housed in

elementary school buildings, the experiences of learning and teaching may change, for

both teachers and students (Goldstein & Bauml, 2012). Policies and practices in these

settings may not be set up to support relationship building and best practices in early

childhood education (Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 1995); in addition, support in the

form of administrators may be lacking due to an absence of preschool experience or

formal early childhood education training (Friedman et al., 2009; Whitebrook & Ryan,

2011).

In the rush to institute public preschool programs, school districts may not be

adequately prepared to set up these programs appropriately, leading to unintended

consequences and barriers to success. For the two teachers in this study, a disparity

existed between their two programs, or at the very least, the teachers' perceptions of the

aims of their programs and the level of support they received differed widely. Both

teachers experienced challenges due to the elementary school setting.

Academic pressures. High quality preschool provides for development in all

domains, including both cognitive and social (Miller & Almon, 2009); in high quality

preschool, care and education are two sides of the same coin (Bowman, Donovan, and

Burns, 2001; Ryan and Goffin, 2008). Shifting to a heavy focus on academics, and what

may be interpreted as cause for worksheets and didactic programming, as opposed to an

active learning approach that builds on children's natural abilities and interests, can have

its consequences. For Patrick, while he noted that there were academic pressures or

developmentally inappropriate demands associated with his position, he did not feel them

as acutely as Keisha did. Perhaps this was due to his prior experience and comfort level

in the school, given that he had taught in the upper grades previously; perhaps it was part

of his personality or character traits. Particularly around the issue of pressure from

colleagues to produce academic outcomes, he shared,

No. I don't feel it. I think that some teachers may feel…not that they feel it from

them [other teachers] but that they don't want the kids going to that room, coming

from them, not knowing. I don't care. Because I know that what I'm doing is for

them. I won't let anyone change the way that I am. (Patrick, Interview #3,

11/7/11)

Patrick acknowledged that while his fellow preschool teachers may feel some pressure,

he felt that these teachers might put this pressure on themselves by caring about what

others think of their success with their students. Whether or not Patrick is right in his

assumption that teachers have control over allowing themselves to feel, and respond to

these external demands, there is no doubt that they exist in the elementary school setting.

The question is, if and how these pressures impact upon what happens in the public

preschool classroom. Patrick was fortunate to have had the support of three additional

classroom staff members, in addition to a supervisor who was well versed in early

childhood best practices and who openly supported his efforts.

Keisha openly admitted that she felt new pressures being in the elementary school

setting, based upon comments that were shared with her by her fellow teachers and by her

principal, particularly around academic achievement, with reading being the stated

benchmark of success. Goldstein and Bauml (2012) note that both upper grade teachers,

in addition to principals, may not have the knowledge base or experience to understand

the complexities involved in early childhood learning and teaching. Due to the pressures

that she felt, Keisha noted that in her classroom, she had begun introducing phonics

instruction at an earlier point than she ever had before and that there was an explicit

expectation from her principal and colleagues that her students should be reading by

year's end. In an effort to allay their concerns, and possibly also for her own self-preservation, she made a decision regarding learning and teaching that went against her prior experiences and her own beliefs, a decision that impacted upon the time she would have available for more developmentally appropriate activities, and one that could potentially affect her interactions with her students in a negative way.

Research has shown that high quality child-centered preschool programs—including those whose teachers build positive relationships with their students—have lasting outcomes (Campbell et al., 2001; Frede et al., 2009; Marcon, 1999, 2002; Ryan, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Expanding high quality preschool programs certainly has its benefits; these programs may serve as an intervention and provide opportunities to close the achievement gap and level the playing field for all children (Baker, 2006; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992; Mantzicopoulos, 2005; Meehan, Hughes & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes, and Reiser, 2007; Stipek & Miles, 2008), but if the quality begins to diminish, along with the pressure to up the academic ante, these programs may be for naught. For a preschool program to maintain a high level of quality, its teachers must be able to set, or follow, developmentally appropriate goals and standards for their students. When expectations become developmentally inappropriate or are perceived by students to be unfair or unrealistic, relationship quality is affected (Valeski & Stipek, 2001). Both teachers had appropriate expectations for their students which likely added to the positive relationships that were observed; however, some of the decisions regarding learning and teaching were not solely in the hands of the teachers themselves.

Lack of control. Even if a teacher does not want to bow to academic pressures, she may find herself in a position where these decisions are out of her control. Noddings (2014) notes that teacher morale can be affected by this lack of control over decision-making regarding curriculum or pedagogy, in addition to other policies, all of which can lead to low morale. While it is true that teachers of all grade levels may experience a lack of control over their classroom experience with regard to scheduling and support staff, this issue becomes exacerbated in the public preschool setting. Teachers need many opportunities to build relationships with their students through individual interactions (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Noddings, 1995). Most high quality early childhood programs support this finding by structuring the school day so that there is continuity of care; teachers and/or regular assistants are present during primary care moments, such as mealtimes, naptime, and arrival and dismissal (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). However, in the public preschool setting, this is not always the case.

In Patrick's classroom, he was present and able to sit and interact with his students during mealtimes. Many moments of positive relationship building were observed; there were opportunities for sharing personal information and appreciation, in addition to Patrick being able to support and encourage his students' independence and growth. For Keisha, however, this opportunity did not exist. Her class ate their lunch in the cafeteria, along with the rest of the school, and Keisha was not present, leading to missed opportunities for relationship building. Further, Keisha's schedule also dictated that her students had Physical Education during the period before lunch, another period when she was not present, leaving her students without her care and attention for a good portion of the morning, which was then followed by naptime. Whether Keisha's beliefs

aligned with this type of schedule did not matter; her amount of contact time with her

students was out of her control and was mandated by those outside of her classroom. If

Keisha's opportunities for relationship building were limited, it was not her choice;

however, if relationship building was to be a priority for her, she would need to make the

conscious choice to focus on relationships during the time she did have with her students.

Forces outside of their control further impacted both Patrick and Keisha's

teaching experiences and thus, their relationship building opportunities. Both teachers

experienced moments of what may have seemed like insignificant inconveniences but

impacted upon their levels of stress, in addition to their plans for their students. In both

schools, it was observed that preschool teachers were not always given necessary

consideration with regard to shared spaces, and keeping them abreast of changing events

in the school seemed to be an afterthought; Patrick would often refer to the fact that in his

school, the preschool felt separate from and didn't have much to do with the rest of the

school, or "like [they] were [their] own little clique." While there may be inconveniences

in child care centers as well, being in the elementary school setting often made the

teachers feel as if they were part of an "us vs. them" situation; they were sometimes

included because they were housed in the building, but they were often excluded because

they were early childhood.

Patrick's class was observed being turned away at the last minute from using the

all-purpose room for gross motor play due to an assembly for the upper grades and a lack

of communication, something that Patrick implied happened often in his building. After

some shared frustration with his co-teacher, they came up with an impromptu obstacle

course in their classroom so that their students would still have their gross motor

experience. Keisha's class also faced this experience when they were scheduled to use the

preschool playground; as they prepared to go outside, Keisha noticed a groundskeeper

mowing the lawn and similarly to Patrick, had to come up with an improvised alternative

in her classroom. It is notable that both teachers put their students' needs ahead of their

own frustrations; their relationships with their students were important. However, this

may not always be the case. Some teachers would have allowed their feelings of anger or

disrespect to take over, thereby depriving their students of what they needed, in addition

to allowing their lowered sense of morale to impact upon their relationships. While the

teachers in this study made the best out of a sometimes difficult situation, programs

housed in elementary school buildings would benefit from being set up for inclusion so

that all teachers feel respected and valued.

Scheduling was routinely interrupted in Keisha's classroom, but the most

egregious infraction seemed to occur on a day that was already busy. The class was

already a bit noisy during Learning Labs and three students from another classroom were

dropped off in Keisha's classroom to await the return of their class from the playground.

The feeling of three additional children being present seemed to rush Keisha into

cleaning up from labs a bit early. Keisha did agree to this arrangement, but she did not

appear to have a choice, and it was not clear why this was an acceptable practice. Keisha

had previously shared with me her thoughts about a lack of regard or respect for the work

done in the preschool classrooms and this incident made me wonder if the school simply

looked at the preschool as babysitting. This inconvenience seemed to show a lack of

respect for Keisha, as if what she was trying to accomplish in her classroom was not

important or valued and could be easily interrupted with the addition of three more

children. Keisha shared that this was not the first time this had occurred. Granted, this

disruption was not for a long period of time but it did end up negatively affecting Keisha

and her plans for the day and was clearly out of her control.

     Value of assistants. Having a supportive and experienced teacher's aide present

adds to the level of quality in a preschool classroom. However, guidelines and

requirements vary widely as to what are acceptable credentials and job responsibilities for

teacher's aides (Barnett, et al., 2015). Even just between the two programs in this study,

there was a vast difference between what was expected of teacher's aides and again, this

was somewhat out of the teachers' control. In Keisha's classroom, I observed three

different teacher's aides within the six-week period that I spent in the classroom.

Keisha's regular aide left to work as a maternity leave substitute teacher and so she was

given a temporary aide who then left shortly thereafter for a more permanent aide. This

disruption occurred within a 4-week period at the beginning of the school year, when the

support of a regular and experienced aide is, perhaps, needed the most.

     Further, Keisha's aide was occasionally pulled from her classroom to attend to

other duties elsewhere in the building, which seemed to convey a general lack of respect

or understanding for what happens in preschool classrooms. When making decisions

regarding teacher-child interactions, it is important to be able to consider the individual

needs of each child (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Epstein, 2007; Goldstein, 1999; Hirsh-

Pasek & Golinkoff, in Zigler, Gilliam & Barnett, 2011; Noddings, 2012). If these needs

are not carefully considered, there is the chance of negating a child's feelings and

harming the relationship. Having a regular aide present assists with meeting all of the

children's needs.

During one observation, Keisha was observed trying to engage with a student, in order to include him in the activity that was taking place; he was clearly not interested in the activity, as demonstrated by his facial expressions and body language, however, as the only adult in the classroom at the time, Keisha took him by the hand and pulled him in to join the activity anyway. With a regular assistant present, perhaps instead of forcing a child into an activity in which he was not interested, Keisha could have directed her assistant to sit with him instead, so that he still felt a sense of inclusion but his choice was respected.

Keisha reflected that she felt that she wasn't really paying such close attention to this child's needs, something that she had previously shared was critically important in her efforts to build relationships with her students. When making decisions around inclusion and building community, if children's needs are not taken into account, there is potential for damage to be done to the relationship between teacher and student. Having an extra pair of hands available in the classroom provides additional opportunities for all students' needs to be met.

In Patrick's classroom, the staffing situation was quite different. Due to the inclusive setting of Patrick's classroom of fifteen mixed ability students, there were four adults regularly present in the classroom: a General Education teacher, a Special Education teacher, and two assistants. One of the assistants in particular, Ísabel, was extremely supportive and engaged and was heavily relied upon, due to her talent and experience. It would be easy to dismiss the personal care and social and emotional duties as solely Ísabel's responsibility, and to say that the cognitive development of the students was more of Patrick's focus. Yet while it was clear that some of Ísabel's responsibilities

did allow for the "academic" to take place between Patrick and his students, it would not

be fair to say that was her only role in the classroom, just as it would not be accurate to

say that as the General Education teacher, Patrick's only responsibility was to attend to

his students' cognitive development. All of the adults served all of the children's needs.

In addition, Ísabel was observed speaking in Spanish to those children who

needed it and she also served as a resource to Patrick in this respect; her fluency in

Spanish not only helped her to build positive relationships with those students who were

limited English proficient, but also assisted Patrick in doing so, as well. The role of the

aide is crucial in early childhood classrooms but it is common knowledge that this

depends upon how effective and supportive the aide is. Ísabel was clearly an educated

and experienced aide and was given due respect by her colleagues. Patrick unequivocally

treated her as an equal in the classroom and she acted as such.

However, having so many strong and capable educators in one classroom can

have unintended consequences. While having so many staff members in Patrick's

classroom afforded him the luxury of being able to spend extended time with small

groups of students, his reliance on his experienced co-workers may have limited him

from engaging with his other students, at times; for example, instead of rotating through

all of the Learning Labs to be able to engage with more students during that period, there

were other staff members present in the various Labs to interact with the students. Patrick

would need to be aware of who he had spent time with so that he could make up that

contact time with his other students later in the day or the week.

Further, there were times when Patrick was observed attending to other tasks

during prime teaching moments. It is likely that because there were so many staff

members present in his classroom, Patrick felt comfortable removing himself, on

occasion, to take care of other responsibilities, such as preparation for lessons and

communication with parents, because he knew that his skilled co-workers would attend to

his students during his absence. While the goal of having a low teacher-student ratio was

to be able to better meet the needs of individual children in this inclusive preschool

setting, there may have been unintended consequences with this type of staffing pattern.

Even though it was not observed often, Patrick's time spent attending to other matters

while his students were present meant less contact time and less time for relationship

building between him and his students.

Prioritizing Relationship Building

For both teachers, despite the pressures and challenges that they faced in the

public preschool setting and despite the policy constraints within which they worked,

they still made relationship building a priority in their classrooms. This was evident in

their actions and those reciprocated by their students; strong relationships existed

between these teachers and their students.

Patrick chose to put relational activities at the forefront of his teaching. He was

aware of his unique teaching situation, where male and female co-teachers had the ability

to model positive relations for their students. Patrick believed that this example would not

only affect his relationship with his students, but would go on to impact his students'

relationships with their peers and others outside of the school setting, a finding confirmed

by Zhang & Nurmi (2012). Patrick also took the time to set a positive example by

regularly demonstrating inclusive behavior as well, so that all of his students felt valued,

respected, and cared for; he would point out these moments to his students, when needed, so that relationship building and caring for others was taught explicitly. Regardless of taboos that may exist around issues of touch in elementary schools (Baker and Manfredi/Petitt, 2004), Patrick openly engaged in physical affection with his students, which clearly communicated his interest in and care for them; not surprisingly, his students regularly reciprocated these warm and caring interactions.

Despite feeling pressures more acutely than Patrick, Keisha consistently found ways to show her students that she cared for them and put their relationships first. She took the time to welcome them back to school when they were absent. She stopped what she was doing to engage in caregiving behaviors. When there were schedule changes and disruptions, Keisha still continued on with her plans, or adapted them accordingly, because she knew what her students needed and she wanted to be able to provide it for them; her own comfort or stress level was not taken into account. Even though she spoke of setting limits and boundaries around physical affection, she was regularly observed hugging students and offering them assistance to help them feel comfortable.

Given the many variables and challenges present in public preschool classrooms, it would not be outside of the realm of possibility to find teachers putting their relationships with their students on the back burner. In addition, given the use of a standardized curriculum model which has come under fire from those in the field who are concerned about the teacher's role in the classroom being diminished (Miller and Almon, 2009; Ryan, 2004), it was reassuring to see that at least in these two classrooms, relationship building was still very much a priority.

Impact of the Curiosity Corner Standardized Curriculum Model

Given the concerns over the mandate for certain public preschool programs to

implement and utilize a standardized curriculum model, I was very interested to see what

impact, if any, this type of model would have on a teacher's ability to build positive

relationships with her students. As Noddings (2015) notes, "There is a place for a stated

objective and direct instruction, but education restricted to that form is impoverished" (p.

235). In an attempt at transparency, I will share that going into this study, I was a bit

skeptical and was not quite sure what I would observe in this regard. A few years prior, I

had previously conducted a pilot study where I had observed two teachers in the same

public preschool program that was utilizing the Curiosity Corner model, but only during

the free choice period of Learning Labs. While what I observed was mostly positive

when it came to teacher-child interactions, given the heavy focus of this curriculum

model on oral language development, in addition to its scripted nature, and the fact that

this study was now being conducted in a more challenging educational climate, I was not

sure what I would observe this time around. However, there were both positives and

negatives associated with my observation and analysis of the Curiosity Corner

Favorable Daily Structure

It was encouraging to observe that the Curiosity Corner model specifically

recommended extended periods of time for teachers to interact with their students,

particularly during Learning Labs and Gross Motor Play. In states where specific

curriculum models must be chosen in order to receive public funding for preschool

programs, what may be perceived as a constraint and a move towards a one-size-fits-all

brand of teaching may actually provide increased opportunities for individualization, by

providing these extended periods of open-ended activity time for teachers to get to know

their students. Further, in schools where the daily schedule may be out of the teachers'

control, it may actually be helpful to have the schedule dictated by a curriculum model

that explicitly recommends extended periods of time for active learning and for teachers

to interact with their students on an individualized or small group basis. This is not

something that would be left up to interpretation; this recommendation is at the core of

the curriculum model.

Inconsistency, Interpretation, and Implementation

In an attempt to achieve a balance by including both curricular- or theme-driven

recommendations, and more general recommendations based in early childhood research

and best practices, at times, this mixed messaging may not be properly received,

especially given that preschool teacher qualification requirements vary from program to

program (Barnett et al., 2015). Neither of the teachers in this study interpreted this

curriculum model to be focused on teacher-child relationships; their read of the teachers'

guides was that it was primarily focused on academics. However, given both of their

backgrounds and training, they were able to make decisions regarding the curriculum

model that they believed to be in the best interest of their students (Goldstein & Bauml,

2012). In the hands of a teacher who is not as well trained, and it is clear from the

scripted nature of the program guides that that is the target audience, the interpretation

could be very different, with a belief that a focus on academics, with little regard for

relationships, is the intention of the model. While there may be initial training in the use

of and implementation of this model, it is not ongoing, leaving much of its successes, and

failures, in the hands of the teachers who are enacting it.

Related to issues of interpretation comes the concern over whether or not the

model is being implemented consistently, either within programs or across programs in

the same district, state, or nationwide. The implication of mandating the use of a

standardized curriculum model is that all children will be receiving the same level of

quality, although we know that is not always the case (Ryan, 2004). It was clear from this

study that the model was not being used in the same way in each classroom that was

observed.

For proponents of using a standardized curriculum model to insure consistency of

quality across programs, this finding is problematic. However, for those who have

concerns regarding standardized curriculum models and the homogenization of teaching

(Goffin and Wilson, 2001), at least for these two teachers that did not appear to be the

case. While it was clear that Keisha felt a bit more pressure than Patrick to adhere to the

curriculum model, both teachers appeared to put their own individual marks on their

programs, when and where they could.

Implications

The teachers in this study understand that despite the constraints of a standardized

curriculum model, required state assessments, and state early learning standards, taking

the time to build relationships with their students is crucial. As Goldstein and Bauml

(2012) note, "Even in schools where curricular and instructional freedoms are limited,

there are always opportunities for resourceful teachers to use their professional judgment

to devise learning experiences that meet children's needs" (p. 103); it was evident that

both of these teachers manage to find ways to connect with their students despite the

parameters imposed upon them. They take the time to cultivate real and meaningful

relationships with their students and are able to achieve their learning objectives, in

addition to fostering their students' social and emotional growth. These teachers clearly

understand that teaching in a public preschool program cannot be an "either/or". They

know that their job is not to provide opportunities for either cognitive development or

social development; caring teachers know that they must plan for both (Noddings, 1995).

In addition, research shows that students are motivated to learn if they feel that their

teachers care for them (Alder, 2002; Wentzel, 1997); it was evident through their

interviews that both Keisha and Patrick are in agreement with these findings and believe

that in order for learning to occur, they must take the time to connect with their students.

Likely as a result of their beliefs, these teachers have very few behavior management

issues in their classrooms and instead, through their high quality teacher-child

interactions, they have created classroom environments where the children appear to feel

safe, secure, and loved, and are eager to learn, which is consistent with the findings of

Cadima et al. (2015). Early childhood teachers can apply the strategies that are described

in this study to improve the level of quality of their own interactions with their students.

Noddings (2012) shares that when she talks with teachers about improving caring in their

classrooms, they often ask

      how they can 'do this'—establish a climate of care—'on top of all the other

      demands'. My answer is that establishing such a climate is not 'on top' of other

things, it is underneath all we do as teachers. When that climate is established and

maintained, everything else goes better. (p. 777)

Finding the Time

Teachers must make the effort to prioritize relationship building and relational

activities. Even though there were differences between the two settings observed, and one

seemed to be more conducive to relationship building, both teachers still found ways to

build in the time for relationships during the school day. Teachers should make the time

to sit with their students during meals, when possible, so that they can eat, model

appropriate behavior, show appreciation, and share personal information with their

students. The Gross Motor period can also be utilized by teachers for playing and

interacting with their students, in addition to being able to model appropriate behavior

and offer assistance as needed. Further, while some teachers may have more scheduled

opportunities for relationship building built into their day, due to their school's master

scheduling and their classroom support staff, teachers can also find time to foster their

relationships with their students by keeping things positive during moments of transition,

for example, by singing as opposed to simply issuing commands. While daily schedules

and choice of curriculum models may be out of the hands of public preschool teachers,

they can learn from Patrick and Keisha that it is possible to find the time to prioritize

relationships, despite working within constraints.

Building Places and Spaces

It is possible for preschool teachers to interact positively with their students

throughout the school day, even though certain times may seem to lend themselves more

easily to the task. However, it is also important to note that the physical design of the

classroom, and shared spaces, may contribute to relationship building as well. A library

area, for example, that is small and cozy allows teachers to interact with their students in

a warm and often, physical, manner which lends itself to positive relationship building;

teachers can sit on the floor with their arms around their students while reading, which

allows both sides of the "care and education" coin to be addressed. The fact that these

kinds of spaces are designed for just these types of moments make it more likely that

there will be positive interactions in these areas.

In addition, limiting the number of students in each area creates smaller, more

intimate groups, which are more conducive to relationship building and positive

interactions. Having several small tables available for meals allows an adult to be present

at each table and for the large group to be broken up into smaller groups. This more

intimate setting provides opportunities for the students and teachers to feel comfortable

getting to know one another and likely, feels more manageable and positive to the

teachers.

Making Your Mark

Getting to know others is at the heart of relationship building, yet for many

teachers, boundaries are drawn, limiting the learning process and becoming one-sided.

Preschool teachers should take the time to share personal information about themselves

with their students. Teachers can be called by their first names, or something along the

lines of Mr. Patrick or Ms. Keisha if a more formal approach is desired, and should

openly share their likes and dislikes with students, in addition to bringing their own

interests, life events, and families into their teaching. Given the young age and limited

language skills and experience of their students, preschool teachers can also encourage

their students to ask them questions. Patrick would often say to his students, "Do you

want to know what I did this weekend? Then ask me!" Relationship building is a two-

way street and teachers must understand that putting themselves into their teaching and

allowing their students to truly get to know them has its benefits.

Inserting creativity. Further, despite the use of a standardized curriculum model,

both teachers found ways to insert their own personal touches into their teaching as well,

putting their own stamp on an otherwise standardized curriculum. This creativity is

critical for relationship building; as Noddings (2014) puts it, "creative, caring teachers

convey themselves, a view of the world, and a way of relating" (p. 18). Keisha and

Patrick's objectives may have been the same, especially given that they were utilizing the

same curriculum model and following the same state standards, but they inserted their

own creativity into their lessons. As Noddings (2015) reminds us, "unity of purpose does

not imply uniformity of programs and courses. One great purpose can guide what we do

across all programs and disciplines" (p. 234). Teachers should strive to be creative when

lesson planning, in order to share themselves with their students and to better personalize

instruction to meet their students' individual needs.

Supporting Teachers

As is common in the field, it is perhaps not surprising that both of these teachers

came to the profession through a non-traditional route. Neither teacher had an

undergraduate degree in early childhood education, yet both teachers were extremely

committed to their students and clearly understood the need to take the time to build

relationships with their students. Although Patrick had studied elementary education, he

noted that he had taken virtually no coursework in early childhood education, but was

appreciative to his co-teacher for helping him to learn on the job and through her

example. One cannot say if the same level of understanding was present prior to this

placement but had Patrick not been placed with an experienced teacher, one cannot say

that the outcomes would have been the same. Once they are in the field, teachers must

have professional development opportunities to support their efforts in the areas of

relationship building and creating a climate of care (Hamre et al., 2012; Noddings, 2014;

Pianta, 2011). Teachers must have opportunities to communicate with colleagues, as

"collegiality will only further the cause of improved student learning" (Noddings, 2014,

p. 16).

In order to build positive relationships with their students, teachers must feel

professionally supported (Mill and Romano-White, 1999; Yoshikawa et al., 2013) and the

best way to make that happen is to have well-trained administrators. Policy should

require supervisors of public preschool programs to have received degrees in Early

Childhood Education, and principals or directors in buildings that house public preschool

programs should be required to have training as well; targeted professional development

for administrators can help fill the gaps in their knowledge base (Ryan, et al., 2011). It is

clear that the administrators in these programs played a large part in their teachers' stories

and their abilities to build positive relationships with their students. Patrick spoke about

his supervisor, Donna, so frequently and in such a positive way, that it was evident the

role that she played in encouraging, respecting, and supporting him, in addition to setting

the tone and high expectations for her program. As a result of Donna's support, Patrick

clearly enjoyed his job and felt free to take risks, share himself with his students, and take

the time to build relationships with them. With all of the mandates, restrictions, and

policies facing public preschool teachers, it would not be a surprise if teacher morale

were negatively affected. As raising teacher morale helps student learning, teachers must

be supported appropriately and given room to creatively plan to meet their students'

needs. As Noddings (2014) notes, "freedom to plan and teach creatively is conducive to

both higher morale and a deeper sense of responsibility" (p. 18).

Keisha, however, spoke about how the principal in her school did not seem to

understand best practices in early childhood education, likely through no fault of his own,

given that most elementary education programs do not devote time to early childhood. In

addition, she did not always feel respected or valued or that what she was trying to

accomplish was as important as the upper grade teachers in the school. Further, when

discussing the move from the childcare center to the elementary school, Keisha noted that

those in the Early Childhood department wanted their teachers to be "ready" for the

challenges that awaited them. It was clear that they felt that the childcare center was

where one should hone one's skills as a preschool teacher.

One wonders how much impact and influence those in public school Early

Childhood departments have over the individual building supervisors and principals.

From Keisha's description, it sounded as if teachers must go into the elementary school

setting with the ability to stand up for their beliefs and defend their positions if

challenged, as they will not be supported in the same way that they were in the childcare

facility. However, it may not be enough for teachers to be trained and engaged in

implementation of best practices, if the school is not set up to help these teachers

effectively cultivate relationships with their students.

Scheduling to Facilitate Relationship Building

State early learning standards and public preschool programs must be aware that

the goal of high quality early education is not simply to prepare children to enter the

academic world "ready" to learn, but that early childhood teachers play a large part in

determining how their students' future school experiences will play out, and having the

time available for relationship-building is necessary to achieve this goal. Certain

considerations must be taken into account when planning these programs; time must be

built into the school day to allow for relationship building (Noblit & Rogers, 1995). In

addition, priority must be given to continuity of care and consistency with caregivers

(Noddings, 1995; 2005). Scheduling must allow for teachers to eat meals with their

students, as this has been shown to be an optimal time for building relationships. In

addition, if public preschool programs include "specials" or co-curricular activities, the

teacher and/or the assistant should be present during those times, to minimize disruption

and the stress of transition. If a teacher is unable to be present during one or more of

these time periods, scheduling should be thoughtful and reflect this challenge, and not

group these periods together, as was done in Keisha's situation, where her students went

from Physical Education straight to lunch which was followed by naptime, leaving her

with a large chunk of the day unavailable for relationship building.

In addition, when mandating the use of a standardized curriculum model,

recommendations should be made to use models that schedule large blocks of free choice

time so that teachers have numerous opportunities for relationship building. Further,

curriculum models should be evaluated for the impact that they can have on teacher-child

relationships (Goffin and Wilson, 2001).

Limitations and Future Research

This study has its limitations, given that the focus was limited to two teachers'

experiences in two different school districts. In addition, the teachers in this study were

selected by their supervisors, so one can surmise that they were chosen due to their

reputations for building strong relationships with their students; while this is valuable

because it provides a model for teachers to follow, it may not be indicative of what is

happening in most public preschool classrooms. In the future, adding the supervisors to

the participant list may glean valuable information as well. Further, the current study

intended to collect data from the students themselves, to gain their perspectives on their

relationships with their teachers. However, given the young ages of the children and the

levels of language development present, the data collected from the students via their

drawings did not provide the desired insights. Future research could attempt to build upon

the work done by Valeski and Stipek (2001) to gain students' perspectives on their

relationships with their teachers through the use of a standardized tool.

Another limitation of this study is that only one curriculum model was observed.

Future research should strive to include more than one curriculum model; causation based

on curriculum model still would not be able to be determined due to the qualitative nature

of the study, but it would be beneficial to observe and describe what is happening in these

classrooms and to gain teachers' perspectives on working within various curriculum

models and the impact these models have on their abilities to build relationships with

their students. Further, given that the focus of this study was on care and relationship

building, less attention was paid to the educational side of preschool and how the

curriculum model was being implemented in these classrooms; as a result, I did not really

have the opportunity to specifically observe how academics were being implemented and

how or if that changed how the teachers built relationships with their students. In fact, it

is possible that due to my emphasis on care, I may have even reinforced the notion with

which I disagree, the idea that "care" and "education" are compartmentalized in the

preschool classroom. In addition, this focus on care limited the ability, to an extent, to

make statements about how the curriculum model and the teachers' efforts to build

relationships with their students did or did not work together.

The setting of this study provides several limitations. It would be beneficial to see

this type of study carried across multiple early childhood programs in a variety of

settings, particularly if one was able to choose several public preschool programs in the

same district that are housed at different sites, i.e. elementary school, contracted childcare

center, etc. Taking this idea one step further, it would be valuable to see a multiple site

case study of teacher-child relationships conducted across several programs of varying

levels of quality to note similarities and differences. This exploration of teacher-child

interactions in programs of varying quality could also be looked at in relation to issues of

equity and socioeconomic status, particularly given that most public preschool programs

are meant to serve children of lower socioeconomic status.

In addition to location, the timing of this study is a limitation as well. The time of

year was chosen specifically to address relationship building from the very beginning of

the school year but it would be helpful to be able to evaluate if teachers' strategies,

priorities, challenges, perceptions, and relationships change over the course of the school

year. Related to the limitation of time, it is with full disclosure that I share that while this

data was collected in the Fall of 2011, due to ongoing health reasons, my timeline for

completion differed from what was initially proposed and there was a large gap of time

over several years when no formal analysis or writing was taking place. However, during

that time, I continued to regularly think about the data and its context in the changing

educational climate and I believe that some of this time away actually afforded me the

opportunity to think about the data and conduct some preliminary analysis in a way I

could not have done immediately following the data collection. The distance provided me

with some clarity and new ways of looking at the data.

This gap in time is also a limitation of this study in that the world has continued to

change over the past 4 years; time does not stand still. As an example, the Southfield

Public School District has since dropped the Curiosity Corner curriculum model and has

chosen to use the Tools of the Mind model for their preschool programs instead. I cannot

speak to what these programs look like in the present day or if these teachers have

changed their focus on relationships since the time of data collection. However, a

moment in time was captured and I believe there are still lessons to be learned from these

findings.

As a qualitative research study, causations and correlations cannot be drawn;

however, through the use of rich description and narrative, strategies for effective

teaching and relationship -building in the early childhood setting can hopefully be

learned. Stake (1995) explains, "Naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at

through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experiences so well

constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85); this was my

goal in presenting the findings. In addition, while causality cannot be established, a case

study "can offer important evidence to complement experiments" (Yin, 2008, p. 16) and

help with the "how" or "why", in addition to expanding and generalizing theories.

More qualitative research is clearly needed on this topic and future research

should continue to employ a qualitative case study approach across multiple sites and

curriculum models to determine the nature of teacher-child relationships in public

preschool programs, as the quantitative studies that exist around this topic do not provide

a complete picture of what is happening in these programs (Barnett, 2010). However,

future research could build upon previous quantitative studies; for example, a study could

be built upon deKruif et al. (2000) to describe each of their defined teacher interactional

styles in a more qualitative, descriptive manner. Naturalistic observations could be done

using this previous research as a theoretical framework to provide more description than

the original study put forth.

Future research does not need to take an "all or nothing approach", and could

include both quantitative and a qualitative components. As practically all studies of

teacher-student relationships have been quantitative in nature, this study focused solely

on obtaining qualitative data to add to the literature base and provide real description of

what is actually happening in these classrooms. However, being able to provide

quantifiable data as well, through a mixed methods study, regarding times and places for

relationship building or evaluating the strength of the relationships, would be valuable as

well.

Future studies should strive to inform policy so that a higher level of quality of

care can be attained across all early childhood settings. More needs to be done to add to

the literature base, as described above, to further the understanding of how public

preschool teachers build relationships with their students. In addition, various lenses

should be used to frame future studies, as alternative views are necessary for providing

fresh and diverse perspectives (Lobman, 2006; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). With the

continued growth of these preschool programs, the more insight and understanding that

research can provide, the better these programs, and their outcomes, will become.

Conclusion

The majority of teacher-child relationship research focuses on elementary or

middle school; utilizes quantitative research methods; and when conducted in early

childhood programs, centers primarily on the free play period. This qualitative case

study expanded the focus beyond free play in early childhood programs to examine when

and where teachers carve out spaces and places throughout the school day to build

relationships with their students, and what influences their abilities to build these

relationships. In addition, nearly all current early childhood curriculum research focuses

primarily on academic outcomes with little focus on children's social and emotional

development or what teachers actually do while working within these models. While

there is still much work to be done in this regard, this study aimed to shed light on how

teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs while working

within the mandate of a standardized curriculum model, in order to fill the gap in the

literature and inform policy and practice, to insure that care remains a critical component

of preschool education.

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Appendix A

Timeline

Table 3

Timeline

Role of researcher	July 2011	August 2011	September 2011	October 2011	November 2011-September 2015
Participant selection	Selection of participants by district supervisors	Meet with participants to make introductions	Teachers select children for interviews		
Consent forms		Obtain consent forms from participants; send out consent forms to parents	Obtain consent forms from parents of children to be interviewed		
Classroom Observations			Begin classroom observations	Complete observations	
Interviews			Conduct first teacher interviews; subsequently, submit to teachers for review	Conduct teacher interviews #2 & #3; subsequently, submit to teachers for review; conduct child interviews	
Document review			Begin document review	Complete document review	
Data Analysis			Begin preliminary data analysis	Ongoing data analysis	Ongoing data analysis; Member-checking: submit profiles to teachers for feedback
Writing and Reporting					Fully complete writing of Dissertation, distribute, and defend before Dissertation Committee

Appendix B

District Approval to Conduct Research Form

Examining the (False) Dichotomy Between "Care" and "Education"
in Early Childhood Programs:
A Descriptive Case Study of Teacher-Child Relationships within
A Standardized Curriculum Model
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education

DESCRIPTION
The _____ Public Schools are invited to participate in a research study on teacher-child relationships in public preschool programs. Studies have shown that teacher-child relationships can be used as a compensatory measure or intervention for students at risk of school failure; in addition, teachers can use relationship-building as a tool to foster motivation and success in their students. Research has also shown that the use of standardized curriculum models in early childhood programs can play in a role in determining a child's later successes as well. This study aims to shed light on the interplay between the two, namely how teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs while working within a standardized curriculum model.

This study will involve the researcher conducting classroom observations of and interviews with a total of two public preschool teachers working within the Curiosity Corner curriculum model; two different school districts will provide the sites for this study. In each district, the researcher will be conducting observations in one preschool classroom from arrival through rest time one morning per week over a 6-week period. In addition, each teacher will be interviewed three times, once at the beginning, once at the middle, and once at the end of the study. Portions of the classroom observations will be videotaped and the interviews will be audiotaped for the purpose of maintaining accurate records. These tapes will only be used by me and my faculty advisor, if necessary. Classroom observations will also include the teaching assistant in each classroom; she will be the focus of one observation period. In addition, three children from each classroom will be selected for a short interview.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
There are no foreseeable risks associated with the district's participation in this research study. There is a slight risk that teachers, or children, will occasionally be uncomfortable with the researcher's presence in the classroom and if a teacher, or child, requests it, the researcher will always leave the room. Benefits include the opportunity for teachers to reflect upon their classroom practices, in addition to contributing to the early childhood educational research base.

TIME INVOLVEMENT
The district's participation in this study will take no more than thirty-one hours: twenty-eight hours of classroom observations and 3 hours of interviews within which each teacher will be involved.

Initials _____

PAYMENTS AND COSTS
Teachers will receive a gift for their classrooms and a small honorarium for their participation in this study, and there are no foreseeable costs for the district associated with participation.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
If you have read this form and have decided that the _____ Public Schools will participate in this project, please understand participation is voluntary. **You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.**

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your name and organization will not be identified in any reports of the findings from this study. All data will be destroyed following the completion of the study.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
You will be given a copy of the report describing the study's findings.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the researcher, Randi Ostrove, at:
        Graduate School of Education
        Rutgers, The State University
        10 Seminary Place
        New Brunswick, NJ 08901
        Tel: 732-993-0512
        E-mail: randiost@verizon.net

If you prefer, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Carrie Lobman, at:
        Tel: 732-932-7496, x8116
        E-mail: carrie.lobman@gse.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at:
        Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
        Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
        3 Rutgers Plaza
        New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
        Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
        E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Please sign below if you agree to the _____ Public Schools' participation in this research study:

Signature_____ Date_____

Name _____ Position_____

Signature of Principal Investigator_____

Appendix C

Teacher Consent Form

Examining the (False) Dichotomy Between "Care" and "Education"
in Early Childhood Programs:
A Descriptive Case Study of Teacher-Child Relationships within
A Standardized Curriculum Model
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education

DESCRIPTION
You are invited to participate in a research study on teacher-child relationships in public preschool programs. Studies have shown that teacher-child relationships can be used as a compensatory measure or intervention for students at risk of school failure; in addition, teachers can use relationship-building as a tool to foster motivation and success in their students. Research has also shown that the use of standardized curriculum models in early childhood programs can play in a role in determining a child's later successes as well. This study aims to shed light on the interplay between the two, namely how teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs while working within a standardized curriculum model.

This study will involve the researcher conducting classroom observations of and interviews with two public preschool teachers working with the Curiosity Corner curriculum model; two different school districts will provide the sites for this study. In each district, the researcher will be conducting observations in one preschool classroom from arrival through rest time one morning per week over a 6-week period. In addition, each teacher will be interviewed three times, once at the beginning, once at the middle, and once at the end of the study. Portions of the classroom observations will be videotaped and the interviews will be audiotaped for the purpose of maintaining accurate records. These tapes will only be used by me and my faculty advisor, if necessary. Classroom observations will also include the teaching assistant in each classroom; she will be the focus of one observation period. In addition, three children from each classroom will be selected by the teacher for a short interview.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this research study. There is a slight risk that teachers, or children, will occasionally be uncomfortable with the researcher's presence in the classroom and if a teacher, or child, requests it, the researcher will always leave the room. Benefits include the opportunity to reflect upon your classroom practices, in addition to contributing to the early childhood educational research base.

TIME INVOLVEMENT
Your participation in this study will take no more than 27 hours, 24 of which will be classroom observations and 3 of which will be interviews.

PAYMENTS AND COSTS
You will receive a gift for your classroom and a small honorarium for your participation in this study, and there are no foreseeable costs for you associated with your participation.

Teacher's Initials _____

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary. **You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions.**

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your name and organization will not be identified in any reports of the findings from this study. Further, all data will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
You will have the opportunity to review the final paper before it is made available to parents and the school district so that you may offer any feedback to me or note any changes that you feel should be made with respect to how you are portrayed. You will be given a copy of the final report describing the study's findings; a copy of this report will also be made available to the district and the parents of the students in your classroom.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the researcher, Randi Ostrove, at:
       Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University
       10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
       Tel: 732-993-0512
       E-mail: randiost@verizon.net

If you prefer, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Carrie Lobman, at:
       Tel: 732-932-7496, x8116
       E-mail: carrie.lobman@gse.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at:
       Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
       Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
       3 Rutgers Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
       Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
       E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Please sign below if you agree to participate in this research study. By signing, you are also consenting to be videotaped.

Signature_____ Date_____

Name _____

Signature of Principal Investigator_____

Appendix D

Teacher Assistant Consent Form

Examining the (False) Dichotomy Between "Care" and "Education"
in Early Childhood Programs:
A Descriptive Case Study of Teacher-Child Relationships within
A Standardized Curriculum Model
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education

DESCRIPTION
You are invited to participate in a research study on teacher-child relationships in public preschool programs. Studies have shown that teacher-child relationships can be used as a compensatory measure or intervention for students at risk of school failure; in addition, teachers can use relationship-building as a tool to foster motivation and success in their students. Research has also shown that the use of standardized curriculum models in early childhood programs can play in a role in determining a child's later successes as well. This study aims to shed light on the interplay between the two, namely how teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs while working within a standardized curriculum model.

This study will involve the researcher conducting classroom observations of and interviews with two public preschool teachers working with the Curiosity Corner curriculum model; two different school districts will provide the sites for this study. In each district, the researcher will be conducting observations in one preschool classroom from arrival through rest time one morning per week over a 6-week period. In addition, each teacher will be interviewed three times, once at the beginning, once at the middle, and once at the end of the study. Portions of the classroom observations will be videotaped and the interviews will be audiotaped for the purpose of maintaining accurate records. These tapes will only be used by me and my faculty advisor, if necessary. Classroom observations will also include the teaching assistant in each classroom; she will be the focus of one observation period. In addition, three children from each classroom will be selected by the teacher for a short interview.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this research study. There is a slight risk that teachers, or children, will occasionally be uncomfortable with the researcher's presence in the classroom and if a teacher, or child, requests it, the researcher will always leave the room. Benefits include the opportunity to reflect upon your classroom practices, in addition to contributing to the early childhood educational research base.

TIME INVOLVEMENT
Your participation in this study will take no more than 4 hours which will consist of observation.

PAYMENTS AND COSTS
You will receive a gift for your classroom and a small honorarium for your participation in this study, and there are no foreseeable costs for you associated with your participation.

Teacher's Initials _____

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary. **You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions.**

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your name and organization will not be identified in any reports of the findings from this study. Further, all data will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
You will have the opportunity to review the final paper before it is made available to parents and the school district so that you may offer any feedback to me or note any changes that you feel should be made with respect to how you are portrayed. You will be given a copy of the final report describing the study's findings; a copy of this report will also be made available to the district and the parents of the students in your classroom.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the researcher, Randi Ostrove, at:
     Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University
     10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
     Tel: 732-993-0512
     E-mail: randiost@verizon.net

If you prefer, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Carrie Lobman, at:
     Tel: 732-932-7496, x8116
     E-mail: carrie.lobman@gse.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at:
     Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
     Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
     3 Rutgers Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
     Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
     E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Please sign below if you agree to participate in this research study. By signing, you are also consenting to be videotaped.

Signature_____ Date_____

Name _____

Signature of Principal Investigator_____

Appendix E

Parental Consent Form

Examining the (False) Dichotomy Between "Care" and "Education"
in Early Childhood Programs:
A Descriptive Case Study of Teacher-Child Relationships within
A Standardized Curriculum Model
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education

Dear Parents,

I am a doctoral student in the Early Childhood/Elementary Education program at the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. In order to complete my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a Dissertation research study. The _____ Public Schools have allowed me to contact you to request permission for your child to participate in my study.

DESCRIPTION
The purpose of this study is to look at how teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs. The focus of this study is on the teacher. This study will involve me observing and taking notes in your child's class once a week for six weeks. A small part of these observations will be videotaped as well. These tapes will only be viewed by me and my faculty advisor, if necessary.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
There are no known risks to your child for participating in this study, and your child will not benefit directly from participation. However, benefits for the classroom teacher include the opportunity for her to learn more about her teaching and to be able to teach others how to be more effective teachers. Each teacher will also receive a small gift for her classroom in appreciation for her participation. There is a slight risk that teachers, or children, may sometimes feel uncomfortable with my presence in the classroom and if a teacher, or child, requests it, I will always leave the room.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
If you have read this form and have decided to allow your child's participation in this project, please understand that participation is voluntary. **You have the right to discontinue your child's participation at any time.**

CONFIDENTIALITY
This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about your child such as gender and age, however, no real names will be used.   I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. My faculty advisor and I and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. All data will be destroyed following the completion of the study.

Parent's Initials _____

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
If you would like to have a report of the study when it is completed, please indicate this at the bottom of this form.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me, Randi Ostrove, at:
>Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University
>10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
>Tel: 732-993-0512
>E-mail: randiost@verizon.net

If you prefer, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Carrie Lobman, at
>Tel: 732-932-7496, x8116
>E-mail: carrie.lobman@gse.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at:
>Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
>Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
>3 Rutgers Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
>Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
>E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Again, your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please sign below if you agree to allow your child's participation in this research study. By signing, you are also consenting for your child to be videotaped. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Randi Ostrove
>**

_____   has my permission to participate in this research study,
(Child's name)

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____ Date _____

Signature of Principal Investigator _____ Date _____

_____ Yes, I would like to have a report of the study when it is completed.

Appendix F

Parental Consent Form for Child Interview

Examining the (False) Dichotomy Between "Care" and "Education"
in Early Childhood Programs:
A Descriptive Case Study of Teacher-Child Relationships within
A Standardized Curriculum Model
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education

Dear Parents,

I am a doctoral student in the Early Childhood/Elementary Education program at the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. In order to complete my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a Dissertation research study. The _____ Public Schools have allowed me to contact you to request permission for your child to participate in my study.

DESCRIPTION
The purpose of this study is to look at how teachers build relationships with children in public preschool programs. Your child has been selected to participate in a short interview. The interview will involve him or her drawing a picture and will take place in your child's classroom.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
There are no known risks to your child for participating in this study, and your child will not benefit directly from participation. However, benefits for the classroom teacher include the opportunity for her to learn more about her teaching and to be able to teach others how to be more effective teachers. Each teacher will also receive a small gift for her classroom in appreciation for her participation. There is a slight risk that teachers, or children, may sometimes feel uncomfortable with my presence in the classroom and if a teacher, or child, requests it, I will always leave the room.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
If you have read this form and have decided to allow your child's participation in this project, please understand that participation is voluntary. **You have the right to discontinue your child's participation at any time.**

CONFIDENTIALITY
This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about your child such as gender and age, however, no real names will be used. I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. My faculty advisor and I and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. All data will be destroyed following the completion of the study.

Parent's Initials _____

RESULTS OF THE STUDY
If you would like to have a report of the study when it is completed, please indicate this at the bottom of this form.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me, Randi Ostrove, at:
      Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University
      10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
      Tel: 732-993-0512
      E-mail: randiost@verizon.net

If you prefer, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Carrie Lobman, at
      Tel: 732-932-7496, x8116
      E-mail: carrie.lobman@gse.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at:
      Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
      Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
      3 Rutgers Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
      Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
      E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Again, your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please sign below if you agree to allow your child's participation in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Randi Ostrove
      ****

_____   has my permission to participate in this research study,
(Child's name)

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____ Date _____

Signature of Principal Investigator _____ Date _____

_____ Yes, I would like to have a report of the study when it is completed.

Appendix G

Teacher Interview Protocol #1

Background Questions

1. What prior experiences have you had in the field of early childhood education?

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

3. What types of coursework did you have that related to early childhood education?

4. How long have you been teaching at this school?

5. How did you come to this teaching position?

6. What experiences have shaped your educational philosophy and/or classroom
   practices?

Teacher Beliefs

1. How do you view the teacher's role in the early childhood classroom?

   a. Why do you feel this way?

   b. What experiences have led you to this belief?

2. How would you describe the nature of teacher-child relationships in the early
   childhood classroom?

3. What is the value, if any, of teacher-child relationships in the early childhood
   classroom?

4. What do you strive for in terms of teacher-child relationships in your own
   classroom?

   a. How do you build relationships with your students?

   b. When and where do you find time to build these relationships?

5. What guides the way that you build relationships with children in your classroom?

6. What part, if any, does the curriculum model play in the relationship-building

    process?

7. What, if anything, is the connection between the teacher-child relationship and

    children's learning?

Appendix H

Teacher Interview Protocol #2 & #3

1. Can you describe the interaction that we just viewed/discussed?

    a. Is this a typical interaction?

    b. Why did you choose to respond/initiate the way that you did?

    c. Can you describe your relationship with _____?

    d. How does that moment contribute, or not contribute, to your relationship

        with _____?

    e. Is there anything that you would do differently?

Appendix I

Child Interview Protocol

Researcher will have crayons, markers, and paper available at a small table in the classroom during center time. She will ask the selected children one at a time if they would like to participate in a drawing activity with her. When they arrive at the table, the researcher will explain that she is here to learn about what teachers and children do at preschool. She will ask the child to draw a picture of herself and her teacher. While the child is drawing or when completed, the researcher will ask questions, such as:
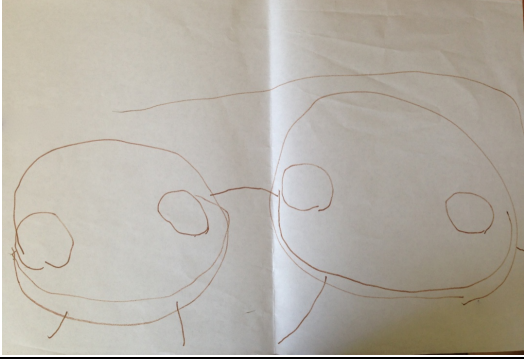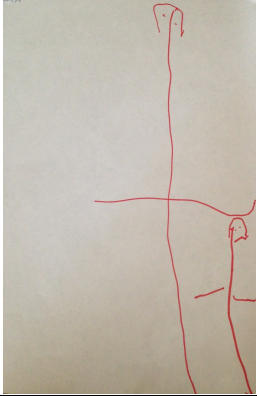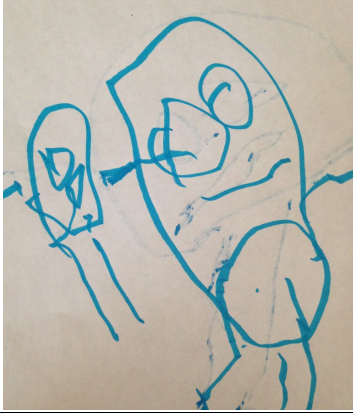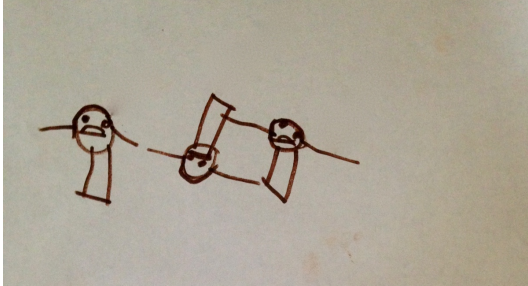
Can you tell me about your drawing?
What do you and your teacher do together?
How do you feel about your teacher?
How do you think your teacher feels about you?

Alternatively, if the child does not want or is not able to draw a picture, props such as dolls and figures will be available for role-playing. If this is the case, the researcher will ask the child to pick two props, one who will be the teacher and one who will be the child, and to show her something that they do together. Questions may include:

What do you and your teacher do together?
How do you feel about your teacher?
How do you think your teacher feels about you?

Appendix J

Children's Drawings

Patrick and Andre **"We're happy. Mr. Patrick's gonna be so happy!"**	**Keisha and Brandon** **"Like to play with Ms. Keisha." (motions spinning with his fingers)**
Patrick and Cameron **"Playing."**	**Keisha and Isaiah** **"Playing with playdough together."**
Patrick and Christian **(no dictation given)**	**Keisha and Taylor and Dalia (the assistant)** **"I like to play with them, hold hands, and play Ring Around the Rosie."**

Appendix K

Authorization to Use Data

Examining the (False) Dichotomy Between "Care" and "Education"
in Early Childhood Programs:
A Descriptive Case Study of Teacher-Child Relationships within
A Standardized Curriculum Model
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education

This study will involve the use of existing documents, such as the program's parent and/or employee handbook; the program's educational philosophy and/or mission statement; the program's curriculum materials; and teacher documents, including lesson plans and correspondence with parents. These documents will be photocopied and kept in a labeled file. The documents will be used to gather information regarding teachers' beliefs and practices and will only be used by personnel involved in this study. By signing below, you are authorizing the review of these existing documents. All documents will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Please sign below if you agree to allow the above-mentioned documents to be reviewed for this research study:

Signature_____   Date_____

Name _____   Position_____

Signature of Principal Investigator_____

Appendix L

A Priori Codes

- ❖ Asks open-ended questions

- ❖ Encourages problem-solving

- ❖ Participates in individual conversations

- ❖ Shares personal information

- ❖ Shows appreciation and recognition

- ❖ Engages in positive conflict resolution

- ❖ Displays warmth

- ❖ Situates self amongst students

Appendix M

Inductive Codes

- ❖ Influence of parents

- ❖ Influence of school setting

- ❖ Influence of curriculum

- ❖ Influence of co-workers

- ❖ Influence of administrators

- ❖ Finding the time

- ❖ Professional development/past experiences

- ❖ Individualizes interactions

- ❖ Takes cues from student

- ❖ Shows physical affection/uses touch

- ❖ Models appropriate behavior

- ❖ Uses humor

- ❖ Participates in caregiving (tying shoes, helping with blankets, washing hands, etc.)

- ❖ Fosters inclusion

- ❖ Encourages appropriate behavior

- ❖ Displays trust

- ❖ Shares expectations

- ❖ Offers assistance

- ❖ Business and housekeeping (cleaning, paperwork, etc.)

- ❖ Preparation for/investment in the future

- ❖ Learning labs

- ❖ Direct Instruction

❖ Gross motor play (outside or indoors)

❖ Pretend play

❖ Mealtimes

❖ Arrival/dismissal

❖ Naptime

❖ Story Tree

❖ Rhyme Time

❖ Clues & Questions