ADDRESSING RESPECT
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

Principals, teachers, and school support staff perceive an increase in disrespect for the educational system and its representatives (Lickona, 1991). Using a qualitative research design through focus groups this study sought to answer the following question: *What are the similarities and differences between students’ and teachers’ perspective understanding of respect and disrespect in the social and educational environment of school?* Participants included elementary students in grades 4-6, teachers, and support personnel from a large urban ring elementary school in the northeast. Inductive data analysis resulted in four main themes: Justice and Fairness, Positive Impact on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Environmental Influences, and Relationships. Results suggest that adults and students shared similar perceptions of respect and disrespect in school.

Keywords: respect, disrespect, self-efficacy, motivation, engagement, social and emotional learning, academic achievement.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to include the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 (Public Law 107-110) caused a cultural and practical shift in educational thinking, compelling educational conversation to focus on data, testing, and academic achievement (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg, & Zins, 2007). While attention on student assessment and academic rigor has increased, student engagement in school has decreased (Marks, 2000). A key issue for educational leaders is how to improve academic achievement in the context of high-stakes testing while simultaneously addressing social and emotional issues that impact students’ engagement in educational tasks (Goleman, 2006).

Schools have traditionally responded to behavioral, social and emotional needs in a reactive fashion after incidents and problems occurred. Research has shown that authoritarian, punishment-based responses have not been successful in maximizing learning opportunities or promoting a safe school environment (Horner & Sugai, 2002). Many schools tried to create more rules and escalated enforcement, yet disrespect in schools continued and often increased (Gordon & Preble, 2011). Therefore schools began to focus on whole school information and data to determine how arrange learning and social environments to address the social emotional needs of students (Horner & Sugai, 2002). For example, nationally 7,500 schools have implemented a universal school-wide prevention program, called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to address the social-emotional needs of students (Bevans, Bradshaw, Koth, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008).

Presently, school administrators are charged with interpreting data on social and emotional outcomes for students and creating plans of action based on these results. School leaders can impact the culture of the school and support continued academic achievement by
building relationships based on trust and respect with the students, parents, and teachers
(Blankstein, Cole, & Houston, 2007; Elias et al., 2003; Walberg, Wang, Weissberg, & Zins,
2004). The social aspects of learning are equally important as academic aspects and educational
leaders need to focus on both to ensure successful, well-adjusted students (Cohen, 2001). “The
importance of learning about student respect (and disrespect) cannot be underestimated”

**Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this qualitative research was to examine the concepts of respect and
disrespect through surveys and focus groups and its relationship to elementary school students’
achievement in school. As an administrator, it was important for me to see how respect and
disrespect could affect the students’ relationships with their peers and the adults at school and
how this affected learning. According to PBIS data for my school and Rhode Island state-wide,
“defiance, disrespect and disruption” has historically been the most frequently reported behavior
despite the implementation of PBIS in schools (SWIS data, R. Horner, personal communication,
May, 2011). A greater understanding of these two concepts so closely tied to discipline issues
may provide guidance for a school community in how better to provide social and emotional
supports.

Many discipline issues with elementary students arise during non-instructional times such
as passing in hallways, lunches, recess, and before and after school. These issues can then carry
over to the classroom, affecting students’ attention and engagement and overall school climate
(Anderson, Haugen, Spriggs, & Todd, 2002). Often, the PBIS strategies used in the classroom
have more difficulty being implemented in all school settings (Anderson, Haugen, Spriggs, &
Todd, 2011). The most frequent behavior referrals which result in attention from teachers or
administrators are instances of disrespect. Support staff is seldom trained in strategies to prevent conflict in the lunch room and on the playground and feel that they are victims of disrespect by the students they supervise (Colvin, Lewis, & Sugai, 2000). Students are not able to transfer their controlled classroom behaviors to the more unstructured lunch and recess times. Although their behavior is more respectful while in the classroom environment, the openness of a cafeteria or playground is more problematic for them to negotiate (Colvin, Lewis, & Sugai, 2000).

Because of the students’ behavioral challenges during the non-instructional times of the day, the work of the principal is often focused on teaching students to get along, be respectful of each other, and refine their social skills (Anderson, Haugen, Spriggs, & Todd, 2002; Colvin, Lewis, & Sugai, 2000; Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Kely, Lewis, Newcomer, & Powers, 2002). Therefore, a greater understanding of respect and disrespect within the school environment may provide educators and administrators with a way to decrease class time that is taken to resolve these problems. This research aims to add to the discussion how to best meet social and emotional needs of today’s students.

**Statement of the Problem and Its Significance**

Social problems, including disrespect, take students’ and educators’ time away from academic learning. Some students have difficulty focusing on learning because they are preoccupied by social problems (Christenson & Havsy, 2004). For others, school does not feel like a safe place to learn because they worry about peer relationships (Cohen, 1999). Students are not learning if they are asked to leave the classroom because they are perceived as disrespectful of the teacher (Marchand-Martella, Martella, & Nelson, 2002; Lickona, 1991; Martinez-Egger & Powers, 2007). The student who feels disrespected can misbehave, disrupting the learning process for other students (Lickona, 1991; Batelaan, 2001). Gordon & Preble
(2011) investigated school climate and reported that the views adults and students differed as to whether schools were safe and respectful.

Additionally, for a number of students, the non-instructional times of the day, including lunch, recess, and hallway passing cause problem behaviors that impact their focus and engagement when they return to class time (Lewis & Sugai, 2000). If children continue to obsess about relationships, or feel that they were disrespected by their peers or the adults in charge, they are unable to focus on their teacher and classmates (LaGreca & Santogrossi, 1980). Then the teacher must take class time to solve and process social problems, academic time is lost (Anderson, Haugen, Spriggs, & Todd, 2002). When principals do not have to spend time addressing behavioral problems in the lunch room and at recess, he or she can spend more time in the classrooms to assist teachers with instructional improvement (Anderson, Haugen, Spriggs, & Todd, 2002; Colvin, Lewis, & Sugai, 2000; Davies et al., 1998; Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Kely, Lewis, Newcomer, & Powers, 2002).

**Research Questions**

Respect can be defined how people are recognized on belongingness and morality (deCremer & Mulder, 2007). In *Seven Habits of Effective People*, Stephen Covey spoke of the need for respectful communication and compromise. Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot in *Respect: An Exploration* saw respect defined through “empowerment, healing, dialogue, curiosity, self-respect and attention” (DeLellis 2000). I proposed to study the definition of respect and disrespect as perceived in schools today. When understanding social learning of elementary students, it is necessary to understand how they perceive respectful behavior. It is also just as necessary to understand how the adults in the school perceive respectful behavior. Were
students having difficulty learning because they do not feel respected? Did teachers have difficulty teaching because they do not feel respected?

The main research question was: What are the similarities and differences between students’ and adults’ perspective understanding of respect and disrespect in the educational environment of school? Secondary questions are: 1) How do intermediate aged elementary students, and the teachers and support staff with whom they work, understand the concept of respect and disrespect? 2) How do respect and disrespect influence the academic learning and the learning environment?

**Theoretical Framework**

This research is based on the theory of social emotional learning and its importance in schools. Although success in schools is currently being defined academically, success also depends on social and emotional learning skills (Payton et al., 2007). Standardized test and report card grades encompass what is defined as school performance, but school success also includes school behavior as defined by constructs of engagement, attendance, and study skills (Elias et al., 2003).

Intrinsically, schools are social places and learning is a social process. Students do not learn alone but rather in collaboration with their teachers, in the company of their peers and with the support of their families. Emotions can facilitate or hamper their learning and their ultimate success in school.”

(Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg, & Zins 2007, p. 191)

If children experience disrespect in school, their engagement, rate of attendance and study skills may suffer.
Daniel Goleman—who popularized the phrase emotional intelligence—has indicated that social and emotional learning (SEL) needs to be systematically taught in schools (DeAngelis, 2010). Goleman founded an organization, in 1994, with others, called Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to provide research and resources to schools. CASEL defines social and emotional learning as a process for helping children to develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness (http://www.casel.org). Social and emotional learning is to teach children to be self and socially aware, to make responsible decisions, to self-manage and to manage relationships. Preventative programs to teach social and emotional learning based on the Goleman/CASEL model are now taught in schools (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg & Zins, 2007). With the increase in instructional time to improve standardized test scores, there is the idea that the social and emotional learning is no longer of importance. However, research evidence shows that the opposite is actually true (Cortes, Domitrovich, & Greenberg, 2007).

The Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports program (PBIS) is used in schools today to address social and behavioral skills.

PBIS is an implementation framework that is designed to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students by (a) emphasizing the use of data for informing decisions about the selection, implementation, and progressing monitoring of evidence-based practices; and (b) organizing resources and systems to improve durable implementation fidelity. (Simonsen & Sugai, 2012, p.1)

PBIS programs instruct teachers to reward, teach, and re-teach positive behaviors that are expected of students (Marchand-Martella, Martella, & Nelson, 2002). In my school, spite of the
adherence to PBIS principles, disrespect continues to be the most frequently reported behavior that causes teachers to take class time and/ or to send student to the office (SWIS data).

Respect is full recognition as a person including status, prestige, and a feeling of being accepted by others (deCremer & Mulder, 2007). The need to belong is important to social relationships and affects people cognitively, behaviorally, and physically (deCremer & Mulder, 2007). Disrespect can be defined as the “experience of injustice” (Miller, 2001, p.527). If the students are still showing disrespect for each other or the adults in my school in spite of PBIS implementation, it is important to see which of tenants of SEL instruction are not being understood or practiced.

Research Design

Qualitative analysis was used for this study that explored students’ and adults’ perceptions of respect and disrespect in school. Participants’ perceptions were collected through a brief survey, followed by four adult focus groups and five student focus groups. The groups met from thirty to sixty minutes each over a two week period. Analysis of the recorded and transcribed conversations was performed by using in vivo open coding to determine themes that emerged from the conversation. The focus group questions were designed to help the researcher explore the similarities and differences in how adults and students perceive respect and disrespect. The information from the focus groups was analyzed to determine how peoples’ perception of the concepts of respect and disrespect and how that affected academic achievement. The decision to use the concept of respect and disrespect is based on data from the School Wide Information System (SWIS) database, which showed that at this school disrespect, disruption, and defiance were the most common behaviors cited by the adults in the building, when making a discipline referral.
Qualitative data lends itself for the researcher to hear the participants’ voices (Casey & Krueger, 2000) and to study real world problems and situations (Yin, 2011). By speaking to both the adults and the students in the building, I was able to understand their perceptions of respect and disrespect. This information was then used to see how respect and disrespect affects their learning. This study was important because students, teachers, teacher assistants and lunch personnel all had the chance to answer question about respect.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is researcher bias because the site of the project is the elementary school where I am principal. Additionally, this study only utilizes the data from one elementary school, and is limited to the demographics of the same. The generalizability may be compromised when considering a more diverse population. All participants in the surveys and focus groups, both adults and students were volunteers. Further, there is a self-selection bias because those students who chose to be part of the focus groups may show good group behavior and be at ease socially in a group. These students also were students whose parents agreed that they could take part in the study. Qualitative research by its very nature of deep study in a particular setting precludes generalizability in traditional sense. Instead, it has been suggested that a qualitative study can generalize to readers or audience who is interested in the topic (Merriam, 1998).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Within this chapter, several constructs which are related to my theoretical framework of social emotional learning are presented. Specifically previous research in: a) social cognitive theory, b) motivational theory c) engagement theory d) positive behavioral theory, and e) respect were explored in order to answer the following research questions for the literature.

Research Questions for the literature

1. How does the literature define and discuss respect and disrespect in the relationships of adults and students in school?
2. What does the literature show about the interplay of respect and disrespect, social and emotional learning, and academic achievement?
3. What social, psychological, behavioral, and cognitive theories relate to the concept of respect?

Social and Emotional Learning

Durlak, Dymnicki, Schellinger, Taylor, and Weissberg (2011) conducted a recent meta-analysis of SEL universal interventions used in schools. They found that, if they lacked social and emotional skills, students became less connected to school as they got older. Conversely, in schools that implemented SEL programs, students showed significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior and academic performance. Students with stronger SEL skills feel as though they are more able to control their environment by taking responsibility for their actions and making good choices (Durlak et al., 2011). The authors state that SEL programs can help to decrease behaviors such as bullying, violence, substance abuse and school failure. Specifically, Durlak et al. (2011) suggested that students who are more self-aware and confident about their learning will try harder in class and study with more persistence. Students
with academic goals as well as self-discipline, motivation, study skills, and organization are able to handle stress and achieve higher grades. Academically successful students also have better problem-solving skills and are more responsible (Durlak et al., 2011).

These authors indicate that it is important to have “instruction in processing, integrating, and selectively applying social and emotional skills in developmentally, contextually, and culturally appropriate ways” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406). In order for students to develop SEL skills and change their problem behaviors they will need certain supports which include a positive, respectful, caring, and safe school environment, engaging teacher practices to promote learning, high academic and behavioral expectations, and respectful, caring teacher and student relationships (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg, & Zins, 2007). “There is a growing body of scientifically based research supporting the strong impact that enhances social and emotional behaviors can have on success in school and ultimately in life” (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg, & Zins, 2007, p.208).

Social-Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura, in his social-cognitive theory, discusses how people are able to regulate themselves in their environment and use modeling and meta-cognition to learn behaviors. Social-cognitive theory suggests that people are not solely dependent on their needs nor does their environment automatically control them. People influence their environment, which in turn influences them (Bertrand, 2003). Bandura believes that the capacity to exercise some control over one’s life is humanness. This theory includes a student’s efforts to use emotions, cognition, and his or her environment to learn and self-monitor his or her progress (Bertrand, 2003).

Bandura’s theories also speak to how self-efficacy contributes to cognitive functioning. Self-efficacy beliefs influence cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes
Strong self-efficacy influences students’ motivation because they feel that they can set goals for themselves, self-regulate their behavior, and be successful. Students who have strong self-efficacy also believe that they have control over their affective processes. They feel that they can cope with the academic and social demands of the school day and are able to deal with stressors. Low self-efficacy in students can cause them to be disruptive, non-motivated, and non-achieving (Bandura, 1993). This situation affects the other students and their teachers as well.

Self-regulatory skills will not contribute much if students cannot get themselves to apply them persistently in the face of difficulties, stressors and competing attractions…Children’s intellectual development cannot be isolated from the social relations within which it is imbedded or from its social consequences.

(Bandura, 1993, p.136-137)

When students have stronger social and academic self-efficacy, they exhibit behaviors that promote acceptance by their peers (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). These children are more considerate, are more able to seek assistance for academic tasks, and then are more engaged in academic activities (Bandura et al., 1996).

**Motivational Theory**

Deci and Ryan’s, (1996) self-determination theory explained how motivation occurs. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a school-wide behavior system, uses controlled or external motivation. The premise of the PBIS programs is that by beginning with external motivators, the students will then become invested in the expected behaviors. The motivators will be gradually removed, and the behaviors will become part of the students’ daily
routine. PBIS is an effective program for school-wide behavior management for the majority of elementary students.

Some students receive behavior referrals because they are amotivational (Deci & Ryan, 1996). It is difficult to find a positive reinforcer for these types of children because they do not respond to the external motivational influences of the PBIS program. They do not show respect for themselves or authority figures, and extrinsic reinforcers are unsuccessful in changing their behavior. Once an amotivational student is identified through the SWIS data, individual behavior plans can be utilized to promote autonomous motivation, to promote social, emotional, and academic learning (Horner & Sugai, 2002).

Some students in every classroom are intrinsically socially and academically motivated in school. These students may be motivated because they enjoy the school environment or may have the inherent personality to be interested in school. However, they also may be motivated extrinsically because they want to please their teachers, parents, or peers. The external system becomes part of their way of functioning in school. Deci and Ryan (2000) described this as the movement towards internalization and integration of values and behavioral regulations. “Internalization is the process of taking in a value or regulation and integration is the process by which individuals more fully transform the regulation into their own so that it will emanate from their sense of self” (p. 60).

Deci and Ryan (1996) also discuss the idea of relatedness. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are more likely to occur if students feel a sense of relatedness or connectedness to their teachers, their peers, and their school. This connectedness then leads to respect for the group and engagement with the group (deCremer & Tyler, 2005; Simon & Strurmer, 2003). The students gain more competence in school both socially and academically, as they internalize more of the
school behaviors that were initially extrinsically motivating to them. If children are helped with their class work by adults, they may be extrinsically rewarded by attention during class time. This process can become internalized and integrated into the child’s daily routine, even if initially external regulation was necessary. This process can help students to then feel competent and autonomous in the social world of school (Deci, Patrick, Rigby, & Ryan, 1992; Deci & Gagne, 2005).

Covington (2000) discusses pro-social goals, including peer acceptance, moral character, and social respectability. He states that it has been recognized that there are:

a broad range of social concerns and behaviors as important aspects of school related motivation, including the willingness to cooperate, to comply with rules and to help others… Like academic goals, the pursuit of social goals can help organize, direct, and empower individuals to achieve more fully. (p. 178)

Motivation is important for students to learn academic and social and emotional behaviors. These behaviors move from being extrinsically motivated to internalization as students are reinforced.

**Engagement Theory**

Student engagement is a crucial concept because if students are not engaged in their school environment, they are not learning academically or socially and emotionally (Elias et al., 2003). When students’ social and emotional needs are fulfilled, they feel increased control over their environment and become more competent in their academic and social learning (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This process leads to engagement. When the students’ social and emotional needs are not met, they can become disaffected and unmotivated and therefore no longer
engaged in the social and learning processes. Students who are not engaged in the social and learning process are no longer respected members of the group (deCremer & Tyler, 2005). As students master tasks, they can attain a level of engagement that promotes a sense of belongingness to their environment.

When children’s self-perceptions, interests, values and goals change, it is important to consider the social organizations of the school (Eccles, Rodriguez, & Wigfield, 1998). This concept is called the stage-environment fit (Eccles & Roesner, 1999). Each individual student has a certain path that he or she travels through school. The school also has certain groupings, procedures and policies that are continually changing as the individual child progresses through the grades. It is best when the two change in synchrony with each other and it can be damaging to the child when the two are out of sync (Eccles & Roesner, 1999). When students feel competent, socially connected, and that they are in control of their environment, the stage-environment fit is developmentally appropriate (Eccles & Roesner, 1999). If students with increased academic pressures are being asked to learn content that was previously learned at a later age, their stage-environment fit is no longer developmentally appropriate. If social and emotional skills are ignored to focus on academic ones, the stage-environment fit will be lacking.

**Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports**

There are four critical elements of PBIS. First, schools must have clear expected academic and behavioral outcomes for students. This includes using an effective curriculum with valid assessments for social and emotional skills in conjunction with academic core subjects. Second is use of research based practices should be employed to maximize academic achievement and social skills of students. Third, PBIS is a data-based decision making process
based on data. Lastly, PBIS uses the systems that are needed to ensure that the data, practices and outcomes are effective (Horner & Sugai 2002).

The PBIS process includes teaching expectations of behavior for the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms and assemblies (Simonsen & Sugai, 2012). There are three school-wide behavior expectations: a) respect, b) responsibility and c) readiness in my school. The staff is taught to use a continuum of behavior supports and practices (Simonsen & Sugai, 2012). In addition, the staff is also taught to use a ratio of four positive responses to student behavior for every one negative response to student behavior. Pre-corrections are used as reminders for students to recall the behaviors previously taught. This can help change the environment to help the student be successful in following behavioral expectations. The PBIS system is based on efficient use of data to guide decision making (Simonsen & Sugai 2012).

Respect

What is respect? Philosophers through the ages have attempted to define respect. Confucius felt that respect was gained when you were educated and behaved properly towards others (DeLellis, 2000). Immanuel Kant is probably the most cited philosopher in discussion of respect. He saw humanness as a moral right for respect including self-respect, and believed that all people deserved this dignity (DeLellis, 2000). Dillon (2007) explained, “Kant also maintains that the duty of self-respect is the most important moral duty, because fulfilling our duty to respect ourselves is a necessary condition to fulfilling our duties to respect other persons” (p. 208).

Respect is full recognition as a person, which includes status, prestige, and being accepted by others. Respect can be considered a hard-wired, ethical principle and that it is the “social glue” of our lives. The need to belong is important to social relationships, which affect
people cognitively, behaviorally, and physically (deCremer & Mulder, 2007). Respect from the group influences the behaviors of individuals and groups (Binning & Huo, 2008).

The aforementioned historical perspectives of respect have viewed the concept as a fundamental right for all. Therefore, the concept of respect is discussed within the framework of procedural justice (Miller, 2001). Procedural justice encompasses the idea that the way outcomes are decided is as important as the outcomes themselves (Miller, 2001). Respectful treatment by authorities increases the commitment to the organizational rules and the organization represented by these authorities (Simon & Sturmer, 2003). The decision-making process influences this concept of procedural justice. It is clear that often people will just want to have a “voice” about the decision even if they cannot change the outcome. Respect is gained by being able to voice their opinion (DeGoey, Smith, & Tyler, 1996; Miller, 2001).

Respect for others in school helps to promote empathy and tolerance. Respect may even be more important than love (Blincoe & Harris, 2011). Disrespect can breed intolerance for peers who are not members of the in-group instead of respectful acceptance of them (Eckloff, Henrich, & van Quaquebeke, 2007). Social exclusion from a group promotes disrespect of an individual, who may then respond with sadness, anger and perhaps aggression. An insult can be the expression of disrespect among students to cause anger and aggression (Miller, 2001). Social and emotional learning is necessary to address individual self-esteem and strategies to promote inclusion. Sincere apologies, a necessary social convention, are often the reaction by another when someone is angry. Insincere apologies will not help to renew the lost respect (Miller, 2001).

Students described disrespectful treatment as having occurred a) when they were unjustly accused or blamed for a wrong doing, b) when promises or agreements were broken, and c) when
they did not receive recognition deserved for their effort on a particular task (Miller, 2001). The context in which disrespect is perceived is important to students, as is their perception of the situation. If other peers witness the disrespectful act, the situation can be magnified. Student withdrawal after disrespectful treatment can also occur. Thus, respect needs to be restored for students in the school setting along with self-esteem (Miller, 2001). Students strive for a) mutual understanding; b) acceptance of who they are; c) honesty and truth; d) being acknowledged, recognized, and encouraged; and e) being respectful to and respected by others (Miller, 2001).

Gordon & Preble’s (2011) school climate research discussed redesigning school using principles of respect, engagement and personalization and to balance the desired ends with appropriate means to meet the academic social and emotional needs of their students. Their work on respect and disrespect focused on the idea that the ultimate goal of a school climate improvement team is to build positive respectful relationships within the school and to improve conditions for learning and the social-emotional development of students. Therefore, the question of respect and disrespect as a primary fact of SEL became a central question for me to explore through my research.

Summary

Teacher and student relationships, student engagement and motivation, peer respect and belonging cannot be separated from the rest of what happens in each school day (Gordon & Preble 2011). Bandura (1993) showed how students need self-efficacy in order to be academically and socially successful in school. Deci and Ryan (1992) explained how motivation is needed for academic learning and achievement. Eccles and Wigfield (1992) discussed engagement, stage-environment fit and its necessity for students to learn. Procedural justice
showed how people need to know the rationale for rules, procedures and consequences, in order to feel respected and to feel that their voices counted in the decisions made (Miller, 2001).

This literature review synthesized multiple theories that provide background in order to study the concepts of respect and disrespect in elementary schools. The literature demonstrated that school is not only an academic place, but a social one as well. Evidenced-based SEL programming in a safe learning environment provides opportunities for rewards for positive behavior based on expectations that have been previously taught (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weisberg, & Zins 2007). PBIS programs work to change the school environment to promote positive changes for adults and students by preventing disruptive behavior through systems of support (Bevans, Bradshaw, Koth, Ialongo & Leaf, 2008). Once SEL practices become part of the school environment student engagement and more positive behavior should result in better academic performance in school.

Students need to be academically successful to fulfill the academic requirements of the school curriculum. Schools receive report cards based on this assumption. However, as the literature shows us, there are multiple aspects of students’ school day that affect academic learning. If respect is not present in the school environment for the adults and students involved in the academic process, success can be difficult. Students need to possess self-efficacy, be motivated and engaged, give and receive respect and feel a sense of belonging to the school community. The study that follows researched how students and adults at an elementary school understood respect and disrespect. In spite of the PBIS program, disrespect has continued to be the most prevalent behavior infraction in our school. It was important to pursue how to change this. Through the use of surveys and focus groups, the participants at the school discussed the way that they understood respect and disrespect.
Chapter 3: Methods

Research has shown that applying Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs for increasing respect throughout the day supports positive changes in school climate (Marchand-Martella, Martella, & Nelson, 2002; Durlak et al., 2011). However, the problem of disrespect in school continues to increase. “Parents, educators, researchers, children, and adolescents in many societies all note with alarm a growing problem of disrespect and a decline in respect for self and others” (Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006, p. 1). The administration, teachers and support staff confront daily disrespect from the students, who feel their needs are not met and then become disrespectful (Martinez-Egger & Powers, 2007). In spite of more school wide behavior programs such as PBIS, many schools continue to have difficulty meeting students’ social and emotional needs (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg, & Zins, 2007). In their school climate research, Gordon and Preble (2011) note that the views of adults and students whether schools were safe and respectful, often differed.

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of teachers, students and support staff regarding the concepts of respect and disrespect. Qualitative research is intended to study the meaning of real-world environments from the perspective of the participants (Yin, 2011). In order to better understand the perceptions of respect and disrespect in an elementary school, a qualitative study using focus groups for data collection and in vivo open coding for data analysis was conducted (Saladana, 2009). A short survey given to teachers, students and support staff was used as a preliminary tool from which questions concerning respect and disrespect were developed for the focus groups. Focus groups let individuals express their thoughts in their own words without preconceived categories or associations (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). Due to the nature of the exploratory questions of respect and disrespect and the importance of gaining an
understanding of the unique perspectives of different members of the school community a qualitative research design was considered appropriate. A further section describes this appropriateness in greater detail. In addition, my unique role as an administrator at this elementary school, made the analysis of this concept specifically important to my daily professional practice and my role as a leader in the PBIS school-wide program.

**Research Questions**

Students are more academically successful when their social and emotional needs are supported (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg & Zins, 2007). A primary social and emotional need is the need for respect (Gordon & Preble, 2011; Cohen, 2006). If students do not feel self-confident or have self-efficacy, they do not achieve well in school socially and academically (Bandura, 1993). Students need to be motivated and engaged in school (Deci & Ryan, 1996; Eccles & Wigfield, 1993). SEL programs, such as PBIS, aim to change the school environment by directly instructing and reinforcing behavioral expectations to help students increase respectful behaviors and decrease disrespectful behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011). If students and adults in a PBIS elementary school were still not feeling respected, the question arose:

What are the similarities and differences between students’ and adults’ perceptions and understandings of respect and disrespect in the educational environment of school?

Secondary questions focused on detailed aspects of this question.

1. How do intermediate aged elementary students (grades 4-6), and the teachers and support staff with whom they work, understand the concept of respect and disrespect?

2. How do respect and disrespect influence the academic learning and the learning environment?
Research Tradition

Understanding of different perceptions of respect and disrespect within the school community is necessary in order to provide a social emotional climate that promotes academic achievement (Gordon & Preble 2011). Because respect and disrespect are concepts that connect with a person’s feeling of acceptance and belonging (deCremer & Mulder, 2007), and participation in the group (Simon & Strumner, 2003), they lend themselves to be studied qualitatively. This qualitative data can then be used to analyze students’ and adults’ perceptions and understanding of respect and disrespect. Yin (2011) described five criteria for selecting qualitative research methods which I aligned my current study under. A description of this alignment follows.

First, qualitative research involves the study of real people’s lives in the real world (Yin, 2011). Through focus groups, I interviewed the students and adults at an elementary school utilizing PBIS in Rhode Island about their perceptions and understanding of respect and disrespect. The category of defiance, disruption and disrespect is the most frequent one cited by adults when students are written up on Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) as indicated in the past five years of data collected through the PBIS structure in the School Wide Information System (SWIS, 2013). Therefore it was necessary to understand the perception of the concept of respect and disrespect for both the adults and the students in the school. Since this was a real problem of real people in the real world, it met Yin’s first criteria for a qualitative study (Yin, 2011).

Second, Yin (2011) proposed that qualitative research has the ability to represent the views and perspectives of the participants in a study. Creswell (2009) agreed: “the focus of qualitative research is on participants’ perceptions and experiences” (p. 195). The current study used focus groups to record the views and perspectives of the teachers, support staff and the
students at this school to explore the different groups’ definitions and understanding of respect and disrespect. Therefore, this process met Yin’s second criteria of qualitative research because the staff and students in the school were able to share their opinions on respect and disrespect (Yin, 2011).

Third, Yin (2011) argued that “qualitative research covers contextual conditions—the social, institutional, and environmental, conditions within which people’s lives take place” (p.8). Similarly, Creswell (2009) stated that qualitative research is used in natural settings “where participants experience the issue or problem under study” (p. 175). Gordon and Preble (2011) discussed that reducing disrespect is different from developing respect, and believed it is necessary to focus on developing respect to have sustained change. They also support qualitative data collection to understand respect in the contextual conditions of the school environment (Gordon & Preble, 2011). The purpose of this study was to collect qualitative data, to learn more about the students’ and staff’s perceptions of respect and disrespect in their own context and environment, meeting Yin’s third criteria for qualitative research (Yin, 2011).

Fourth, according to Yin, (2011) qualitative research is not just a record of people’s lives and events, but also allows researchers to explain these events through the ideas and concepts that emerge through qualitative research. Creswell (2009) stated that the researcher focuses on learning the meaning of what the participants say about an issue or problem. Since disrespect continues to be the most frequently cited type of behavior on office referrals at my school, it is important to learn what the participants in the school’s PBIS program have to say about this problem. Research has shown that social emotional learning (SEL) instruction is an effective way to address the social and emotional needs of students i.e., (Bloodworth, Walberg, Weissberg & Zins, 2007). Students’ academic achievement improves when explicit social emotional
learning (SEL) programs are instituted to teach these skills (Durlak et al, 2011). However, even with the advent of SEL programs like my school’s PBIS program, there is still difficulty in schools where there are relationships that do not promote respect (Gordon & Preble 2011). The qualitative analysis of the focus groups’ responses explained the participants’ ideas and concepts, in order to develop the meaning of respect and disrespect in the school. This research study met the fourth criteria of qualitative research.

Fifth, Yin (2011) stated that qualitative researchers strive to collect, integrate, and present data from a variety of sources of evidence as part of any given study. Creswell (2009) considered this process collection from multiple sources of data. Gordon and Preble (2011) said that words are powerful for qualitative research and that data collection should include all voices. The study was collected data from teachers, students, and support staff through focus groups. In this way, representative members of the school community were able to contribute their unique understanding about of respect and disrespect. By having included multiple sources of evidence in producing themes this study met Yin’s fifth criteria of qualitative research (Yin, 2011).

The qualitative research study met Yin’s five criteria for using qualitative research methods. It investigated how real people look at a real problem of practice within a real school environment. The subjects’ voices were heard within their natural setting in which they experienced respect and disrespect. Explanations were formed through multiple sources of data around a common concept. Therefore qualitative data collection and analysis methods were appropriate design for answering the research questions.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research is an inductive method of data collection and analysis. The inductive approach allows data to lead to the emergence of concepts (Yin, 2011). Categories, propositions
and meaning can be developed from the data collected in the field and then interwoven with existing information (Yin, 2011). The qualitative researcher works from the bottom up to build patterns, categories and themes (Creswell, 2009). Focus groups are common data collection method in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2011).

**Survey.**

In order to begin the focus groups, a broad strokes survey on respect was administered to students, teachers and support staff. Dey (1993) discussed survey methods of investigation as “closed questions using researcher-defined categories” and can be used as a “data collection instrument within the context of a case study” (p. 14). Responses to a researcher selected subsection of the *Respect and Responsibility School Culture Survey* (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, 2012) were used as background information on which focus group questions were developed. The original survey was written to be used with students, administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff, other staff and parents. It was also able to be duplicated without permission. The researcher selected 13 items which focused on respect, but not responsibility, from the original survey. Participants responded to statements using a five-point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Appendix F). For example, the survey included items such as: *Students treat other students with respect regardless of differences and teachers don’t allow students to treat them disrespectfully.*

**Focus groups.**

Focus groups, considered an example of a group interview technique, place increased emphasis on the relationship of group members, rather than with the interviewer and group participants (Morgan, 1988). Morgan (1988) states that focus groups use group interaction to produce data and insights that would not be obtained without the group structure. Focus groups
today usually consist of six to twelve people who discuss the topic with a moderator who helps to keep the participants on topic and promote interaction between them (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). Morgan (1988) suggests that a group should be no smaller than four and no larger than twelve participants. This study utilized five student focus groups (4-6 grades) ranging 5 to 7 participants and four adult groups (teachers and support staff) ranging from 3 to 6 participants.

Focus groups encourage the participants to build on what other members of the group say, and can be more flexible for the participants because they can respond to other group members, as opposed to only the interviewer (Morgan, 1988). This leads to more emphasis on the group participants’ voices. The group interaction replaces the interviewer-interviewee protocol and can provide more insight because of said interaction. It has been suggested that opportunities for group discussion may encourage students to more willing disclose information and ideas with their peer group (Casey & Krueger, 2000; Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). A variety of voices from the school community were heard through this qualitative study.

Focus groups for students, teachers, and support staff also allowed for multiple interpretations of the same event (Yin, 2011). Questions were tailored for each group of participants, data was collected, and results were compared across groups (Casey & Krueger, 2000). The importance of having data from different sources is called triangulation (Maxwell, 2005; Creswell, 2009). This process provides for triangulation of data by using three different groups of people from one place. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) write, “… triangulation can be understood as a way of using unrelated pieces of information to get a better fix on something that is only partially known or understood” (p. 131). By using focus groups representing students, teachers and support staff respectively for this qualitative research, data was gathered from
different sources and perspectives and provided triangulation on the concepts of respect and disrespect.

Questions used for the focus groups were designed based on several relevant sources to this research (Appendix K). Five items from the Respect and Responsibility Survey of School Culture were transformed into questions and presented with the intention of creating deeper understanding through group dialogue and discussion of these items. For example, one question was: How do you think the students in this building treat other students? In addition, two questions were developed which highlighted key principles of the PBIS curriculum used at the school. For example: How does a student get an office referral for defiance, disruption or disrespect? Lastly, one question specifically addressed how personal treatment in school may affect ability to complete school tasks. The groups ended with the chance to discuss anything that they wanted concerning respect and disrespect.

A qualitative study using focus groups was chosen to study different groups’ understandings and perceptions of disrespect and respect at one elementary school in Rhode Island. The focus group model, with an initial survey, was chosen so that the voices of the students, teachers and support staff in the community would be heard and data from different groups could be compared. Inductive qualitative research was facilitated by the focus groups so that patterns, categories and themes were analyzed to determine each group’s understandings of disrespect and respect.

**Site and participants.**

The school for this study is in the state of Rhode Island and is part of a large urban ring district. The city has approximately 83,000 people, is predominately Caucasian (ninety-three percent) with a median household income of $59,000. Ninety percent of the population in the
city graduated from high school and thirty percent of the residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Seven percent of the families speak a language other than English in their home and eight percent of population is below the poverty level. The median home value is $230,000, and seventy-five percent of the population owns their own homes, with an average of three people per household (U.S. Census Bureau retrieved from quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/44/4474300.html).

The school system contains three high schools and three junior high schools. There are sixteen elementary schools that funnel into certain secondary schools, an early childhood center and a career and technical center. Rhode Island now has two new school report cards—the AMO Summary and the Accountability summary. The school was rated as typical in 2012 by the new system meeting seven of the eight required areas as shown on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) school report card. All Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) targets had been met prior to 2012 (Rhode Island Department of Education retrieved from www.ride.ri.gov).

The elementary school for the study has approximately four hundred students, fifty teachers and support staff and is the second largest elementary school. Due to declining enrollment in the school district, this school accepted half of one of the other city elementary schools’ students starting in the 2009-2010 school year. Thirty percent of students receive free or reduced lunch and fifteen percent receive special education services in an all-inclusive environment. Students who qualify for ESL services go to another school, but are able to return to their home school when they have completed the program there. There are no Title One services and no minority ethnic groups are large enough to be rated on the school report cards. The stability index is approximately ninety-two percent with eight percent of the students moving each year. The attendance rate is ninety-six percent with a nine percent chronic
The first focus groups included fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. The age of the students is appropriate for participating in focus groups because older students are generally more able to express their thoughts verbally and to attend to the questions asked (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). Parents were contacted to give their permission for their students to participate and only students with parent permission were part of the focus group (See Appendix I). In order to adequately sample these three grade levels all students were invited to attend the groups. The chance of equal choice for all members of these grade levels is called randomization (Casey & Krueger, 2000). Students who do not wish to participate in the focus groups or who have parents who do not wish for them to participate are self-selected non-participants. There were two focus groups for the fourth and fifth grade levels and one for the sixth grade.

The second focus groups were adults who were teachers in the school. Their participation was voluntary and they were formally invited by letter (See Appendix G). The teachers in the school included: grade level classroom teachers, special educators, and specialist area teachers. The groups fit the appropriate size focus groups (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). All of these teachers have been trained how to complete the PBIS office referral form. Sessions were approximately forty-five minutes to one hour, as teachers’ schedules allowed. Incentives included coffee gift cards. There were three teacher groups held after school hours.

The third focus group consisted of support staff, including lunch personnel and teacher assistants who work at the school. Their participation was also voluntary with a written invitation (See Appendix G). These two groups of staff supervise during the lunch and recess periods, which are two of the times of the day when the referrals are written for defiance,
disruption and disrespect are written with the most frequency. The teacher assistants and lunch personnel are adults that need a vehicle to have their voices heard (Yin 2011) because they do not participate in staff meetings. There were six lunch personnel and five teacher assistants who could participate in the focus groups. This fit the size criteria to be a focus group (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). Incentives were coffee gift cards. This group was the most difficult to gather for a focus group. It consisted of two teacher assistants and a substitute teacher and also met after school.

All groups were conducted in the library which is free on Wednesday mornings, during lunch and recess and after school. It is a comfortable area and large enough to accommodate the focus groups. The questions were similar but appropriate for each group. The sessions were recorded using a digital audio recorder and an I-Pad device.

**Data collection.**

The focus groups selected of teachers, students, and support staff comprised groups from which to collect rich data. Yin (2011) describes collecting data in “field settings”, which can be defined in many ways, one being “institutional scenes”, which include schools (p. 111). The survey was incorporated as part of the data collection and was used as a starting point or snap shot of the teachers, students and support staff’s initial perceptions of respect through closed questions (Dey, 1993). The surveys were given to the students when I met with them by grade for “Town Meetings” on a Wednesday morning before the focus groups were scheduled. All students participated except for one. They also wrote comments about respect at the end of the survey if they wished. The adults were given the surveys at a staff meeting or they were put in their mailboxes. All staff returned the surveys to me in person or put them in my mailbox.
The focus groups were formed once students indicated their desire to participate and parents granted their permission. All sessions were recorded and the information was transcribed by researcher. Each group had a series of questions to answer (See Appendix K) to address their understanding of the concepts of respect and disrespect. Sessions concluded by asking participants if they had any additional comments they wished to share. Casey & Krueger, (2000) suggested that focus group questions be conversational, clearly written and short in length. Questioning was utilized to encourage engaged and focused interaction about respect and disrespect.

Morgan (1988) stated that focus group “interaction leads to relatively spontaneous responses from participants as well as producing a fairly high level of participant involvement” (p. 18). One fourth grade group was quiet, but the other student groups were lively with the majority of students interacting with each other. Each adult group had all participants who equally contributed to the discussion as evidenced by the transcripts from the recording. The data gleaned from the group was what the participants found important, and how the participants agreed and disagreed. All members of the group need to feel that their information is important to the discussion and for the success of the group (Shamdasani & Stewart, 1990). This appeared to be the case in these focus groups.

As acting moderator during the focus groups, it was necessary to have questions prepared ahead of time and ideas of prompts to use for extending or clarifying comments so that the flow of discussion was maintained (Casey & Krueger, 2000). Most of the time, my low moderator involvement helped more spontaneous ideas arise. However, at times there needed some high moderator involvement in order to keep the conversation on track so to collect useful data (Morgan, 1988). It was important to know when to pause to let slower responders finish what
they have to say. It was necessary to draw out quiet speakers and to be sure that data collected represented the entire focus group and not just the opinion of one or two members.

As well as recording the session and transcribing the information discussed, I took field notes during the sessions. This way the information that was discussed was noted and inductive analysis was used to create further questions or new ideas for each subsequent focus group discussion (Morgan, 1988). After the focus group sessions were completed, the recorded data was transcribed and analyzed using open coding methods (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) in order to better understand perceptions of the focus groups and their similarities and differences.

Data analysis.

Once data was collected, it was necessary to analyze the data. During each focus group session, all verbal interactions were recorded and field notes were taken as the sessions took place. Analysis actually occurred while the data was being collected, because information was automatically categorized as it was recorded (Merriam, 1998). In qualitative research, according to Saldana (2009), coding is a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language- based or visual data” (p. 3). The coding process for analysis of the focus group data collected was based on open coding. Corbin & Strauss, (1990) describe open coding as naming and categorizing the subject based on the data collected. The data are broken down, examined, compared for similarities and differences. Questions can be asked about the data and then reflection on the information can lead to new ideas (p. 62). Grbich (2007) describes open coding as word by word or line by line analysis to identify concepts and categories. These initial concepts and categories can be further analyzed later after more data is collected. Open coding called in vivo coding uses the participants’ own words to establish the codes. Once the initial codes were established,
theoretical or analytical memos were written to further decide which concepts and categories emerged (Saladana, 2009).

The initial coding was done using colored pencils for five themes that emerged for both the adults and the students. A second round of coding was completed to further analyze the properties and dimensions of the categories established during the first round of coding. The second round was done by color coding the text on the computer. This allowed for the themes to be refined and new patterns to emerge. Once it was established that focus group data represented voices from each participant to the greatest extent possible in a natural setting, then all identifying information was removed, and the data was considered under the larger group designation (i.e. teachers). Once the second round of coding was completed and the data analyzed, conclusions were drawn (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Grbich, 2007; Saladana, 2009).

In summary, qualitative data analysis using open in vivo coding began immediately following the completion of each focus group. The first round of coding was accompanied by theoretical field notes, memos and analysis recorded by the researcher as the focus groups happened. An additional round of coding was completed in order to further analyze the categories and consider the triangulation of data. A final analysis was then completed to confirm the coding, categorizing, and organizing of data before final themes were explored.

Validity and Credibility

Joseph Maxwell (2005) discussed considerations regarding the validity of qualitative studies. The study should involve intensive, long term involvement to provide more reliable direct data. Because of the unique position that I am in as a principal of the school, I already have a long term involvement with the members of the school community. I have also intensively studied the concepts of respect and disrespect for months prior to the time spent with
the focus groups. From the conception of my research questions to the completion of my analysis lasted approximately one year. Therefore, this study includes intensive, long term involvement. Next, the data should be rich, detailed, and varied enough to show a complete picture of what is happened in the study. By meeting with five student groups and four adult groups from 30-60 minutes each, the data was rich, detailed and varied enough to be able to form themes after it had been coded. What was said in the focus groups was transcribed in full so that all of the data would be considered. In addition, a search for negative cases and discrepant evidence should be completed. If something did not fit with the data, it was important to further analyze why this was the case, rather than discounting it. After the audio recordings were transcribed, any data that was personal and off topic was not included in the coded text if it was discrepant to concepts of respect and disrespect. Next, Maxwell discussed triangulation to collect information from different sources. The information was collected from the three different focus group participants and was coded separately. The data from each group was compared with each other as the themes emerged from the coding. Maxwell said to consider quasi-statistics when striving for validity in a qualitative study. Frequency counts were used to verify the amount of evidence for any particular concept or category when coding. Lastly, Maxwell (2005) said that validity should include comparison. This study compared the three different types of participants in the school’s PBIS program and their definitions of respect and disrespect. Based on Maxwell’s considerations, this study’s results can be considered valid.

Researcher Bias and Authenticity

This study was conducted at the school where I am principal. I have interacted with all of the study’s participants in this role. I have been having “Town Meetings” with each grade level approximately twice a month. These meetings have been used for me to get to know the students
in my school and for me to teach them the rules and routines of the school. I also meet with the adults in the school on a regular basis. We interact in whole group, small group and one-to-one settings. Therefore, I had a personal and professional relationship with all members of each focus group. Every effort was made for objectivity to provide authenticity of results. For example, the focus group transcription was verbatim for each participant and did not include any researcher observations so to protect authenticity and potential bias. Any observations were addressed in theoretical memos and field notes.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

All participants in this study volunteered and only participated on that basis. The children in the study had parental permission and participated voluntarily. There was no pressure to participate or repercussions, if parents did not wish for them to participate. The guidance counselor asked them if they were sure that they wanted to participate while I was not in the room to be sure that all students were comfortable with the process. One student declined to participate in the group. The students also had the chance to leave the focus groups at any time. Adults were chosen on a totally volunteer basis and there was no pressure to participate if they did not wish to do so. The participants were protected by the submission of documents to the Internal Review Board of Northeastern University. The project was approved by the superintendent of the school system.

The results of the study are available to all participants if they wish to have the information. The audio recorder and I-Pad device were kept with me throughout the study will be kept with me and the files were deleted post transcription are completed. The transcripts were securely stored within my personal belongings and within a locked office and were used only in
conjunction with this study. All effort was made to reduce any potential risks to participants involved in this research study.
Chapter 4: Research Results

The purpose of this study was to complete inductive, qualitative research on student and adult perceptions of disrespect and respect in an elementary school. First, a survey was conducted to obtain background information on respect from, teachers, support staff and students. Focus groups were chosen for data collection, so to take advantage of group dynamics to facilitate the emergence of themes concerning respect and disrespect. Focus groups allowed the students and adults to share perceptions without the pressure to reach consensus (Casey & Krueger 2000). The use of both adult and student groups allowed for: triangulation, comparison, and inclusion of multiple voices. The opportunity to participate in the study was given to all staff members and to all fourth, fifth and sixth graders. The students who participated did so voluntarily after first discussing the project with their parents in order to receive permission.

This chapter reports the results from the survey instrument, detailed description of the participants and results from open coding of focus group transcripts. The goal of this research is to explore the perceptions of respect and disrespect by adults and students.

Survey Results

Surveys were given to grades four, five and six when I met with them during Town Meeting times, which took place each Wednesday morning throughout the school year. Of the possible 190 participants, 177 completed the survey including 57 fourth graders, 61 fifth graders and 59 sixth graders. Surveys were given to 40 teachers and 22 surveys were returned. Twelve surveys were given to support personnel and twelve were returned. Each of the 13 items which contained a comment about respect was rated on a 5-point Likert scale; ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The percentage of each group: students, teachers and support staff that responded for each choice is reported in Table 1.
Table 1

Survey Results

Responses to the Question: “Do students treat other students with respect, regardless of differences?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
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Responses to the Question: “Do students treat teachers with respect?”

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
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<td>59</td>
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</tr>
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<td>58</td>
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Responses to the Question: “Do students treat other adults at school with respect?”

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<th></th>
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<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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Responses to the Question: “Do students respect others’ property?”

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Responses to the Question: “Do teachers treat students with respect?”

<table>
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<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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### Responses to the Question: “Do other adults at school treat students with respect?”

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<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other School Staff</strong></td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Responses to the Question: “Do teachers make sure that students treat each other respectfully?”

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
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### Responses to the Question: “Do teachers make sure that students treat them respectfully?”

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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### Responses to the Question: “Are people in this school are generally polite (say please, thank you, excuse me, or hold the door)?”

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<tr>
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>25</td>
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Responses to the Question: “Does the school have clear rules against hurting other people physically (hitting, pushing, kicking, tripping) or threatening to hurt?”

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<thead>
<tr>
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Responses to the Question: “Does the school have clear rules against hurting other people emotionally (name-calling, mean teasing, leaving people out, spreading rumors)?”

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Not Sure</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
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Responses to the Question: “Does the school have effective disciplinary consequences for hurting people in any way (physically or verbally)?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Not Sure</th>
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<td>8</td>
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Responses to the Question: “Do I feel respected at this school?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
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</table>

Note: Responses for students are the average of grades 4, 5, and 6 rounded to the nearest number.

The results of the surveys showed that most of the participants in this school believed that they were treated with respect and that they treated others respectfully. When looking at the final statement, “I feel respected at this school”, it seems that a majority of the support personnel
felt respected at the school. Two-thirds of both the students and the teachers agreed with the statement.

Teachers and students reported that students treated teachers with respect, but more support personnel negatively rated this statement. Students felt that they treated support personnel with respect but only half of these adults felt they did. The data suggest that there is difference in the level of respect shown to the teachers as compared to the other adults in the school. The other adults overwhelmingly felt that they treated the students with respect, but the students and the teachers did not necessarily agree. Therefore, the survey showed that the adults believed that they treated the students with more respect than the students experienced. The students also felt that they treated the adults with more respect than the adults did. This showed that the groups tended to rate themselves as more respectful to the other groups than the other groups experienced.

The majority of all three groups were in agreement that teachers made sure that students treated students with respect and that they treated the teachers with respect. This shows that the teachers are able to garner more respect and are teaching the students how to respect others as well. All of the groups felt that people should be more polite and respect property more. Overall the students, teachers and other staff felt that the rules were consistent and fair, but the adults definitely felt that stronger consequences were needed for behavioral infractions. The majority of the students felt that the consequences were fair, but that belief decreased as the students got older. Therefore the older the students got the more they wanted stronger consequences.

The survey results showed a broad view of how students, teachers and other school staff felt about the levels of respect at this school. Generally each group rated themselves as the most respectful to others and that the teachers made sure that students were respectful to each other
and the teachers. The students and adults discussed these ideas further in the focus groups and through the focus groups more individual voices were heard.

**Focus Group Participants**

**Students.** Five student focus groups (2 fourth, 2 fifth and 1 sixth grade) were held for this study. The groups met on Wednesday mornings when the library was not being used for classes. One student group met in the guidance office because the library was in use. Their teachers allowed them to miss class time to participate in the focus groups. The guidance counselor came into all groups to be sure that students did not feel pressure to stay and reinforced that students could choose to return to class at any time.

**Fourth grade groups.** One fourth grade group had five students and met for twenty-five minutes and the other had six members and met for one hour.

The fourth grade group with five members, including three girls and two boys was the third group that was held and met in the guidance office. There were students from two different classes and consisted of three boys and two girls. This group was very quiet. They returned to class after twenty-five minutes because it became clear that the students were ready to end the session. Two students contributed more to the discussion than the other three.

The other fourth grade group was the fourth student group held and included students all from one classroom except for one student who was not at the first fourth grade session. This student was very talkative and may have helped this group to be more outgoing. The group had three boys and three girls and was a mix of students who shared personal examples on respect and disrespect in their lives. Their discussion was one with much give and take with comments building on each other’s thoughts. They were somewhat reluctant to return to class, but realized
that an hour out of their studies was a long time and knew their teacher would be anxious for them to return.

**Fifth grade groups.** One fifth grade group had five members and met for one hour and the other had seven members and met for one hour. The first fifth grade group was all girls from two different classrooms and was the second focus group held. One girl did not speak at all but did stay and listen. Her friends tried to encourage her but she elected to be quiet. Two of the other girls contributed to the discussion only two times each. The remaining four girls contributed most to the discussion. I saw one of the girl’s mothers at a PTO meeting that night and she said he daughter came home and said that it was “Her favorite thing that she had ever done in school.”

The last fifth grade group was comprised of five students containing two boys and three girls in which two students receive special education services under Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Again, there was some variability among participants as to the level of contribution to discussion. Students provided wait time within the group for quieter students to respond. The behavior of the participants seemed at ease.

**Sixth grade group.** The sixth grade group had five members and met for thirty four minutes. This group ended because they had to go to lunch. This was the first group that I met with and there were three girls and two boys. One student decided to leave the focus group after it had begun. This group was somewhat quiet but all students did contribute. Two of the students, one boy and one girl, spoke slightly more than the others.

I sent all of the students a two dollar gift card by mail over vacation. Two of the fourth grade girls sent me thank you notes and were very “greatful” and hoped that I get my “doctor’s degree”. I also took all of the fourth, fifth and sixth grades out for an extra recess.
**Adults.** There were four adult focus groups; three were made up of all teachers and one included two teacher assistants and one substitute teacher, referred to in this study as support personnel. All adult participants were female. Two of the teacher groups included five teachers and the third one had six teachers with one student teacher observing the session. The teacher groups met in the library after school. One met for fifty-three minutes, one for forty-two minutes and one for thirty-three minutes. The support personnel group met in my office for one hour.

The first teacher group contained two third grade teachers, a reading specialist, a physical education teacher and a first grade teacher and met for fifty-three minutes. This group continued talking after we said we were done and I was able to include this information because the I-Pad was still recording them. The second teacher group met for thirty three minutes and was comprised of two fifth grade teachers, two sixth grade teachers and a special educator who works with fifth and sixth grade. The third teacher group included two second grade teachers, two fourth grade teachers, a Kindergarten teacher and a sixth grade teacher. Part of the session was observed by one of the second grade teacher’s student teacher. This group met for forty-three minutes.

The last adult group was held in my office, met for an hour, and contained two teacher assistants and one substitute teacher. I gave all of the adult participants a gift card for three dollars. All of adults expressed that they were happy to have participated, enjoyed the sessions and that no incentive was necessary.

**Setting**

Student and teacher groups met in the library. The library is a large room that once was a cafeteria. It has eight square tables, two of which we put together so that the groups could sit comfortably around the tables. It is a room filled with shelves of books, a bank of fourteen
computers and the librarian’s desk. There are books and stuffed animals displayed on top of the shelves such as Curious George, Junie B. Jones, Arthur, and Franklin. There are many bookracks for paperback books and magazines and a huge cart of VCR tapes. There are two rug areas; one to watch the Smart Board and one cornered by bookshelves for a quiet place to read. Health projects boards are positioned on high shelves, from a student group doing a project called “Chasing Fitness”. Newbery Winner books and posters are prominently displayed.

Focus group sessions were recorded with a digital tape recorder and transcribed into text from the audio files. In addition, all sessions were recorded using Record Box on an I-Pad for a back-up copy in case of technical difficulties. The I-Pad stayed in the center of the table and the tape recorder was moved to whoever was speaking. Voice quality was clear and loud on all recordings. My last fifth grade student group was the most inquisitive as they entered. They asked, “Have you interviewed the other groups yet?” “Are we the last one?” “I was thinking last night that today would be our turn.”

Themes

Seven hours of audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher through repeated playing of the audio files and typing into a print document.

Based on the information from the transcripts four major themes emerged during analysis. The themes were created through in vivo coding so as to stay close to the explanations and descriptions of the participants. Themes were: a) justice and fairness, b) positive impact of PBIS, c) environmental influences, and d) relationships. Subthemes emerged under each theme which serve to clarify each groups’ unique perception and are presented here in detail. These subthemes are where the similarities and differences of respect and disrespect can be found.
Though not necessarily about respect or disrespect, all participants reported enjoying the opportunity to participate in the focus groups.

These were subthemes that emerged within each of the themes. The students’ subthemes for justice and fairness were the inconsistent use of rewards and consequences. The adult subthemes were the balancing of the rewards, interrupted learning, and the families’ roles in these. For shared expectations, the subthemes of rewards and referrals emerged for both the students and the adults. The students also discussed how adults are helpful and the adults discussed consistency and modeling. For environmental influences, the subthemes that emerged were the classroom environment in comparison to the lunch and recess one, the treatment of people, how it affects learning, and problem solving. The subthemes for relationships were judgment, empathy and perspective, and acceptance.

**Justice and fairness.**

Justice and fairness emerged as a theme as to how and when students and adults felt respected or disrespected. If they were unable to voice how they felt, they did not feel respected. If they were able to have a part in the conversation and were listened to, the process felt fair and they felt respected.

**Students.** The students discussed interactions with teachers during which fairness was an issue and how they disliked favoritism. They spoke of fairness with peers during learning and play and how some students could make both situations unfair by showing them disrespect. For instance, it was unfair to them when someone was wrongly blamed when there was a disagreement. It was important to students when a situation occurred in school that all voices be heard and the whole story told. They reported a perceived difference in how students acted when teachers were watching and then when they were not being supervised by teachers. They stated
that many students behaved only when teachers were watching and that students who always showed good behavior did not always get the recognition they deserved. Table 2 displays quotations from students that demonstrated this theme.

The first subtheme under Justice and Fairness was inconsistent use of rewards for students during the school day. The students felt that some children who weren’t good all the time got rewards and some who were good all the time didn’t get them enough. They also said that some students got rewards, but they were only good when teachers were watching and that adults need to treat everyone fairly and should not have favorites.

The second subtheme was inconsistent use of consequences by teachers towards students. Students felt that the adults needed to hear both sides of a story when a behavior infraction occurred, that adults should talk to students in a calm voice privately, without grabbing them. In addition students reported that adults need to follow through with their responses in a situation as they said they would.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme and Grade</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent use of Rewards</td>
<td>Some of the teachers don’t give out the gotchas very often but they know that the kids are being respectful so you don’t get the bracelets very often.</td>
<td>It’s like half fair and half unfair. Sometimes some of the kids who are only good around teachers get them and then some of the kids who are good get</td>
<td>I like it but I just don’t like how many you have to earn. 15 gotchas. How are we going to earn that if our teachers don’t give them out?</td>
<td>I think that some of the students are two faced so when like they’re up to the teacher they’re nice and sometimes when they go outside and they act mean.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students’ conversations focused on the fact that it was not always the best students who got the rewards through the PBIS system and that there was still some inconsistency in the use of reinforcements. One fourth grader said, “Well, it really depends on the teachers.” They also felt it was unfair that the students who behaved only when someone was watching often got the rewards.

One sixth grader said;

Kids who don’t deserve it. The teachers, they pay attention of how they do in school; how they’re working and all that, but they don’t know what they do at recess like they’re swearing and being mean. The teachers don’t know that—they’re really nice to the teachers and then as soon as they’re away they start being mean.

The groups also discussed that it was important to find out all sides of a story and not to embarrass the student in front of their peers. One fifth grader passionately said:

I feel like the teachers do take time. My teacher sometimes if somebody is told on somebody else, she will pull them out into the hall and talk to them and if she says no, she’ll ask what really happened and tell then some of the kids will say they have a
witness and she will talk with them to see what their side of the story is to see which person is correct.

Especially it’s better to take them over to the side because most people don’t want everyone to know. For example my friend got written up at one point and she did not want everyone to know so if the lunch aides like just start yelling what she did then everyone’s going to hear it and going to know.

You shouldn’t automatically blame someone because of past actions and so you should always look at who does what I think probably one of the reasons is that some teachers favor other students.

In summary, the students were quite clear that they should be treated fairly and that the adult who is speaking to them should be aware of their feelings and the situation that occurred. They also wanted recognition for being good and felt that to be fair the teachers should be sure to give out the positive reinforcement incentives that were used in PBIS, all the time to those students who were doing what they should. The sixth graders were especially concerned about the fact that many of their peers only behaved when that teacher was watching and then did not treat their peers well on the playground where less supervision occurred.

**Adults.** The adults discussed fairness as part of respect in how they were treated by people and how they were required to accomplish tasks that they perceived as unfair or unjust. Tasks included a) teaching the state curriculum standards, b) the new teacher evaluation process and c) dealing with the continual changes in the educational system, families, and society. In addition, they discussed how hard it was to be fair in rewarding students because the children who were good all the time often got overlooked during the busy school day, while students who
were continual behavioral challenges captured their attention. Quotations that represent each subtheme are reported in Table 3.

The first subtheme was balancing of rewards. The teachers felt that some students who are behaviorally challenging get rewards and other students who are consistently following behavioral expectations don’t get them enough. They also knew that some students are rewarded when teachers are watching, but those students may not continue the correct behavior when they were not being observed. The second subtheme was interrupted learning. Teachers and support staff said that it was unfair to both teachers and students to be disrupted by behaviors in classroom. The third subtheme was families and school. They felt that it was unfair to teachers and support personnel when students did not behave as if they valued education and the corresponding expectations.

Table 3

*Fairness and Justice Quotations from Adults*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balancing of Rewards</td>
<td>If there is a teacher present. I see this with the sixth graders. They’re on the level but what’s happening when we step out of the room or they’re out at recess- it’s not kind.</td>
<td>Then there is also the thing where you focus on the good and not the bad so if you bring in your homework in three times this week you can go to the prize box and what about the other kids who bring their homework in five times a week.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interrupted Learning

There were many interruptions in my classroom last year, which interrupted with my teaching and interrupted with their learning.

Families and School

It’s like we talked about when we were kids. The principal called your house, you were dead. If your teacher said something it was you. Now it is -what did you do (teacher) to piss him (student) off.

But I also feel that we are the only ones who are accountable. There is no accountability for anywhere else but us-parents, kids nobody.

If they value education if they are talking at home are they thinking beyond this year; thinking about their future; going to college and having a career.

The teachers and support personnel also discussed the unfairness of failing to acknowledge students who were always good and that it was hard to remember to give out the rewards as frequently as they should in order to be truly fair and just.

One teacher also spoke of how hard it is to be patient with certain students. From her heart and soul she said:

I know at the same time and I speak for myself here when you’re dealing with students who are not showing you the 3Rs or being respectful who are always on your radar- it’s very easy to raise your voice to them you can get a little carried away because of frustration. I find myself doing that with a couple of students. Are you kidding me? You raise your voice and then I have another student that I really had to stop and think about it. Am I being kind and considerate and respectful of him you know every single
day and sometimes it’s hard for us to reflect that- that reflection piece is hard for students to do but it’s hard for us to stop and say are we being respectful of these particular students who drive us crazy. It is you have to reset every once in a while that reflection piece. I think it’s hard for us when were in the middle of it so no I don’t think the adults are always at their best at showing respect but most of the time I am. There are very few instances where I don’t show respect of the students.

Teachers discussed how this year things are much calmer at the school and that their teaching and learning was not interrupted as often as it was last year. One teacher said: “It disrupts the peace of the other students” while another commented, “And you’re just stressed out.” Another teacher stated, “We did not teach effectively because there was such bad behavior.” Lastly a fourth teacher said, “This year I am teaching again. They are paying attention to what I am saying.”

Lastly the teachers commented on how being an educator in our present society felt unfair to the teaching staff at school. One teacher said:

The parents don’t have respect for us either. They don’t have respect for you and they want things for their kid their way and make exceptions. They’ve got excuses. They don’t want to follow through. There is no model for respect. They don’t see it at home. The only place they see it is here and we don’t have them long enough.

The discussion went further when another teacher commented: “If they are hearing things at home about those blankety, blank teachers, they are going to come to school and not respect us. If their parents don’t, then they don’t.” Lastly one teacher responded, “We know what the problem is we know that all of us are working super hard and are spent at the end of the day and we are looking at different areas to fix it and we’re just not. It’s like a broken tooth.”
One teacher summed up her feelings:

I think that’s really aggravating when we try to do everything we do and then it’s not reciprocal. When you go home you are supposed to do your part and they don’t. It’s frustrating because it makes you want to say why do I bother? Why do I do this? I’m knocking my head against the wall and I’m not getting any respect from them. I’m not getting any help from them and it has to be a two way street.

In summary of the theme of Justice and Fairness from teachers and support personnel, the discussions showed they are struggling with their profession and its close relationship to families and society. They reported that it was unfair that they were unable to reward the good students consistently and that their attention was diverted by unacceptable behaviors and inconsistent cooperation from their students’ families. Their concern, frustration, and caring voices were heard through their comments.

**Positive impact of PBIS.**

The perception that PBIS has a positive impact on school culture and respect in school was shared by students and adults. All participants commented on the value of the behavioral structure and had many thoughts about what it did personally for them and generally for the school. This theme contained the student subthemes: rewards, referrals and adult help and the adult subthemes: rewards, referrals consistency and modeling. Representative quotations are displayed in Table 4 and Table 5.

PBIS uses incentives to reward behaviors that are consistent with previously taught behavioral expectations which are specific for different areas of the school. When students do not follow these behavioral expectations the adults use a behavioral referral to write up the behavioral infraction. This form includes what happened, who was involved, what was the
motivation for the behavior, and what was done by the adult as a result of this behavior.

Teachers choose the consequences for any minor behaviors which include conference and reteach, loss of a privilege, or parent contact among others. Major referrals are sent directly to the principal for further discussion and action. Behavioral referrals are recorded in the SWIS database and then tracked by the PBIS tertiary teams to institute individual interventions as needed. Whole school data is shared monthly as staff meetings.

**Students.** Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students discussed what they liked about the gotcha tickets and the respect bracelets. Most students acknowledged a need for a classroom system to work with the PBIS system. The older students had suggestions for other rewards to link to the reinforcer tickets and other ways they could help. They discussed that the older students might like different reinforcers and might be able to help the younger students by teaching them to be respectful.

One subtheme was rewards. Students said rewards helped students to be good and boosted self-esteem. They liked classroom rewards, gotcha tickets and respect bracelets. The second subtheme was referrals. The students said behavioral referral write-ups were like a warning to change behavior and that they are the rules of the school and everyone knows what they are. The third subtheme was that adults are helpful. They said that the lunch ladies help the children learn game rules and teachers and assistants help students with classwork. The students felt the PBIS system is a good one for adults to help students learn correct behaviors.

Table 4

*Positive Impact of PBIS Quotations from Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>I like getting</td>
<td>Before I didn’t</td>
<td>If you get</td>
<td>I like to get</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students’ discussions showed that they liked the PBIS system including rewards. They pointed out how it has helped them to change their behavior. They also liked the referral process particularly the built in warning prior to referral which allowed students a chance to change their behavior before resulting in a referral. They also spoke about how adults did help them during the school day.

One fourth grader said: “When you get the bracelets it kind of changes you. Like I got this so I should try to be more respectful. Like the New Year’s ‘revolutions’ [sic] that we did in Town Meeting; that could change your whole personality.” The idea of the referral as a warning was summed up by this student:
I think it’s a good thing because like she said you get a chance and you get a certain number of chances, but then if you do it a certain number of times you have to go to detention or something. So it’s good that they learn. So you get a number of chances so you don’t just get it right away, so you learn your lesson.

A sixth grader said, “I think some of the students are doing it just to get the rewards, but I think others are doing it because they are nice.”

They discussed how they liked the classroom rewards systems as well as the whole school ones, because for whole school rewards they received bracelets, but the classroom could choose their own rewards, like popcorn and a movie or pajama day. The sixth graders commented that perhaps students who get referrals should not be able to earn the bracelets as easily.

The third subtheme was that adults were helpful to students in different ways. The students discussed how much teachers helped them with their classwork and their emotional needs and did not like it that some students could be ungrateful. One fourth grade said, “If you’re having trouble, they will help you.” Another said, “They kind of get mad because kids give them attitude it’s not nice-the teachers get a lot done- do a lot for you in the classroom-they have to get up really early just to come to school every single day for us to learn.”

In summary, it was clear from the students’ discussions that the rewards and referrals of PBIS are part of their culture. They see adults at school as helpful and caring. They are generally happy with the procedures in place and are glad that they have chances to change behavior.

**Adults.** The adults spoke of the impact of consistency from PBIS so that all students knew all teachers were following the same rules and expectations. With all of the changes in the
family and society, they felt that school was now the constant in students’ lives and teachers were models for social norms that students need in life.

The first subtheme for the adults was also rewards. They commented that students were proud of the reward bracelets and it was hard to remember consistently to give out the rewards. Similarly to students, adults also had referrals as their second subtheme. They said that referrals were a way to track behavior and were like a warning to change behavior.

The adults had two other subthemes emerge under the positive impact of PBIS theme: consistency and modeling. For consistency, the adults stated that PBIS helped all school personnel to have same expectations for behavior. They felt that school often becomes a constant in students’ ever changing lives today, such as changes in the family structure or family economic status. For modeling, the adults commented that they were role models for behavior and learning, for the students and that PBIS helps to teach the social skills and conventions that the students need.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>There are the kids who are always doing what they are supposed to all of the time but they’re quiet but that’s the same thing with any kind of a system</td>
<td>I know with my little ones I say: Oh I love the way that person’s sitting they will get a gotcha and then the others say I will do the right thing. I want one too.</td>
<td>If she is doing a lesson whether she uses it in a positive and just pile them on somebody’s desk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>I haven’t had to write a lot this year.</td>
<td>I think that the referrals it’s a good way to track behavior over the</td>
<td>Well, fortunately I have only written one or two referrals this whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
year so nothing is a surprise when they move to the next grade you can look back in the system so that you have a record for the parents you have back up. year…I think the word referral upsets them- more than a conversation it’s more like a warning.

Consistency  We are the consistent ones for them.  PBIS is a culture has a structure to it and it has been very beneficial here.  It’s data and you can’t argue with data.  It’s like training a puppy you can’t teach them just once in a while, but all the time.

Modeling  We are modeling it.  Pointing out who is doing the right thing.  Modeling with your teaching - what you want them to do.  I feel that the teachers are very good role models I feel that the teachers are very respectful to each other as well- that’s what I mean about being a good role model.

The teachers discussed that they liked to reward students but did not want to inadvertently create good behavior only for rewards. Teachers wanted to distribute more tickets to those students who always followed behavioral expectations. They acknowledged that the system was beneficial to those students who are having difficulty getting their work done or attending to the teacher, but that it is still hard to be sure the other students are getting positive reinforcement as well. They discussed the idea of altering the reward system so that more immediate and varied rewards were available. Like the students, they thought that there should be a classroom system as well as the whole school system, to accomplish this. One teacher said: “So I think the focus needs to be more positive on those kids. So I am very conscious in my
classroom giving out those tickets, so some days twelve go home.” Another commented, “When they get a gotcha they are pretty proud of it. They come in and say look I got a gotcha.”

The adults acknowledged students who followed behavioral expectations. One adult commented, “They really deserve that and I tend to focus on the student that I’m trying to build up the self-esteem.” In regards to different types of rewards one teacher assistant said, “I think it can be something that the classroom teacher can decide-the little kids have the prize bin and the bigger kids maybe they can sit in the hallway and read because they like to do stuff like that.” One teacher assistant described the positive connection to academics when she said:

I was watching someone who was working. He had just got back on track and I said I am going to keep my eye on you for ten minutes and you will earn a purple gotcha if you continue working like this for ten minutes and he did and he even smiled and thanked me and that’s a big thing for him because he is not a smiler [sic].

According to the teachers, PBIS also provides consistency that the school needs. One teacher said: “Now that the kids are getting older, PBIS has been with us for a while, so it’s more ingrained in them.” Another commented, “You can say to any kid in this building show readiness and they know exactly what you mean.” Next another reported, “I think that our school is doing a great job being consistent with the gotchas.” Lastly, one related, “We don’t have to reinvent the wheel you know just consistently in every class. It’s gotchas, 3Rs. They know it. We know it.”

Finally, one teacher summed it up saying:

“The rules are consistent throughout the school so is knowing that we do communicate with each other and that the story is not going to change when you go next door. That
teacher in front of you-this still going to be this is the rule and you have to follow it-so continuity and a united unit”.

Lastly, the teachers discussed they taught the behavioral expectations through modeling the correct behaviors for their students. A teacher said:” The majority of us are very respectful. We always give them…” while another finished “the courtesy of listening.” Additionally one teacher added, “I think we are setting forth the examples what we want them to be and what we’re asking them to do.” Also a teacher commented, “And giving them examples of how a situation should be dealt with in an appropriate way- not raising your voice- not yelling and calmly discussing.”

In summary, the teachers saw PBIS as a consistent, viable, positive system for their school. They acknowledged, like the students, that it is hard to be sure that the students following behavior expectations are rewarded consistently and that both classroom and whole school systems are needed. The adults embraced the consistency of the program and did not see the inconsistency that the students do. They modeled the correct behaviors, which the students agreed that were part of the school culture.

**Environmental influences.**

The students and adults discussed the difference in behavioral expectations and interactions between classrooms and other environments of the school.

**Students.** Students discussed different problems on the playground and in the lunch room and how the adults differed as to their behavioral expectations and response to behavior in those environments compared to classroom settings. Table 6 displays quotations that illustrated this theme. They felt that classroom environment and the students in it could definitely affect their learning. They also commented on how the home environment could help or hinder a child.
The first subtheme was classroom environment versus lunch and recess. The students said that there were fewer students in the classroom which meant closer supervision and that the teachers know you better so it was more personal. They felt that children were better when an adult was near at recess and students were better in classroom when teachers were watching. The second subtheme was treatment. The students felt that if people, adults and students, were nice, kind, and caring and use manners, the environment was more positive. They said that if people, both adults and students, were arguing, mean, rude and/or hurtful, the environment was more negative. The third subtheme was how behavior affects learning. The students said that thinking about what happened at recess sometimes distracted them from learning and discussion of the incident from recess took class up time. They felt that behavior in the classroom environment was important for learning. Specifically, if students were bothering others while they were expected to complete class work, they could not concentrate. They discussed that students’ behavior in group work—an instructional grouping where students are placed in a group and expected to complete tasks or create a product—directly influenced how well could learn. If students in groups were not helpful or were disrupting the environment the group could not complete their tasks. The fourth subtheme under environmental influences was problem solving. The students said that relationships were formed when adults and students try to solve their problems together. Students expressed gratitude over receiving adult help with academics and behavior.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Environment Influences Quotations from Students*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom vs Lunch and Recess</th>
<th>Because our teacher is more used to us.</th>
<th>There’s no teachers on the bus and they think that they can do anything they want.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Treatment | I think the teachers treat us respectfully and they treat us all equally. | I think the students are mostly nice but some can be not very considerate of others and don’t realize how they’re treating other people. | Other kids treat some kids respect or disrespect if they don’t want to play with you nicely don’t be like rude - you’re not playing with me you are not cool be nice. | Some kids can be nice but then some kids who have stuff going on in their life and then they kind of take it out on other people and I feel like that’s not really a good reason. | I think the teachers treat us good and I think that we should start doing that back to them because some of the kids don’t. |

| Affects Learning | There is two people in our class who are always fooling around and always talking like when we’re doing reading groups. | It affects you because you are trying to concentrate on your work but you’re thinking about the situation – what had happened and then like you do bad. | I think that’s true because if you’re happy and you have lots of friends and their nice to you you’ll do better on your work and concentrate then if you’re being bullied. |

| Problem Solving | My mom called that kid’s parents and now the fight is all over |

The students discussed the school environment first referring to the differences between the classroom and lunch and recess. One student said, “It’s different in the classroom because there are less kids, so the teacher can watch them more carefully and then outside there are a lot more kids, so while they’re watching the other kids, they basically torment the other kids.”
Another student stated, “I think it is different between the teachers and the lunch aides because the teacher like doesn’t like get as mad as easy as the lunch aides and the substitutes.”

The students also spoke of how adults and other students treat them and how it affected them. One student commented: “I think the teachers treat us respectfully and they treat us all equally.” Another stated “I think I know why people are always mean to each other because they want all the people to feel what they feel.” An additional student said, “I think people bully each other because they think it will make them popular because other people will find it funny too.” Lastly one student expressed, “I think the adults treat the kids fairly because they are really nice to them and they’re kind of on the kids back one someone is bullying them”

They also had a lot to say about what affects their learning in the classroom. What bothered them was when some students distracted them from their work and took up too much of the teacher’s time. One student said: “I am trying to do my work and I can hear them in the background and I’m trying to get my work done and they’re just fooling around.” Another stated, “If people treat you badly then you might be thinking about that and how you’re going to deal with it and then you might write down some random answer because you are not paying attention.” One student mentioned their difficulties with behavior during partner work: “When you’re trying to work with a friend and you have to be partners with someone not good you are trying to be a good student and just goofing off and then getting you in trouble-that irks me.”

The last part of the discussion of environmental influences focused on how problem solving occurred in different environments. One fifth grader spoke about how she helped some second graders get along “because it’s kind of hard for second graders because they don’t know what happens when someone is being mean to you”. A fourth grader told how he started a
football team “for everyone who is rejected” from the team with the “people who are really good at it.”

In summary, the students were well aware of environmental influences on behavior which included the adults within the environment. When inconsistencies occurred, or time was perceived as wasted on behavior, students felt disrespected. They did not like it when students disrupted their learning, but felt that the teachers were helpful. They also found ways to work out some of the problems that they encountered outside of the classroom.

**Adults.** Adults discussed many environmental influences outside of the school building that impacted their feeling respected. Increased emphasis on more intense learning standards created a different environment in which to work in than in the past and created a more stressful environment for students. Adults also perceived changes in students’ home environments resulting in a more chaotic and challenging home life. According to adults, these environmental influences directly affected the school environment. Adults believed that students behaved best for their teachers and had more difficulties in other environments both inside and outside of school. Quotations that illustrate the following subthemes are found in Table 7.

Adult subthemes matched the previously discussed student subthemes. The first subtheme was classroom environment versus lunch and recess. Adults felt that the students behaved differently at lunch and recess than in the classroom. The second subtheme was treatment. Adults felt that teachers treated the children as if they were their own children when handling behavioral expectations. They approached students’ behavior in a nurturing way. They saw the staff at school as hard working and considerate to each other, as well as to the students. The adults acknowledged the difference at lunch and recess with support personnel, who had different relationships with the students.
The third subtheme for adults under environmental influences was how behavior affects learning. Adults discussed how the home environment affected how students functioned in school. Multiple home environmental influences on the students were considered; including a) socio-economics, b) family structure, c) time spent at daycares, d) social media and technology, and e) families’ value of education. The fourth subtheme was problem solving. Adults stated that in order to develop internal regulation, teachers helped students to be problem solvers and that team work and group work helped children with social relationships.

Table 7

*Environmental Influences from Adults*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom vs Lunch and Recess</td>
<td>I think more happens outside at recess more than in the classroom.</td>
<td>You will be able to keep walking but if you are talking she will stop you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>I think listening courteously-listening to what people have to say.</td>
<td>Appreciating differences. Showing kindness for others.</td>
<td>I think within this building the teachers respect each other greatly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affects Learning</td>
<td>There’s no social interaction (at home).</td>
<td>And it’s about running to work, coming home, having dinner, doing baths. How many kids don’t even sit at the dinner table?</td>
<td></td>
<td>We have some kids who are shushers and they get pretty frustrated by the noise in the room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>I’d like to figure out how to solve</td>
<td>We tend to just want to give the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like the students, adults acknowledged that there were differences in behavior in classrooms as compared to lunch and recess. One teacher assistant expressed it this way:

I see them arguing with the lunch ladies the ladies outside at recess. If you ask a kid to stop bouncing that ball, they say I wasn’t bouncing it. I didn’t do it. I just saw you do it. Every little thing is an argument and I keep telling the kids to just say ok -when they give you something to do, just say ok.

Also similar to students’ comments, adults believed that they treated students well and had opinions about positives and negatives of students’ treatment of other students and adults. They expressed that younger students were still self-centered which influenced students’ ability to take the perspective of another peer: “I also think in the really little kids-they’re so self-centered-their world revolves around them and they have no idea yet that everybody else is a concern. It’s me, me, me, I, I. Part of that is that they are still babies.”

One teacher discussed the school saying, “I haven’t been anywhere else for a long period of time. I just have a very warm feeling in this building ....” She described how for her, the school environment contained adult respect and positive relationships. One teacher described her positive relationship with her grade level team: “I think it’s good that the students see that too,” she said about the respectful and caring adult relationships with each other “and even just to touch base or talking.” These adults expressed how their relationships with each other
helped them to be more nurturing for their students and models for respectful student relationships.

Adults spoke about how the students’ home environments affected their learning and how increased emphasis on academic achievement made the classroom environment different than in the past. For example, teachers said: “it’s harder to be a good parent.” Another added, “I think people are so stressed out. We had a parent in today. She knows exactly what is going on with her kid and there’s nothing she can do to change it, so she’s not willing to do anything different.” One teacher described how: “That night a girl didn’t do her homework (which is not out of the ordinary) but one of the excuses she gave was her parents are always yelling at each other and it’s hard to concentrate.” Another teacher stated:

I think too a lot of my kids come in and they have had a really difficult mornings at home or something’s happened and they’re not ready to learn to listen or to sit down they have got a huge problem going on in their head and how do you expect at kid to learn academically-they’re not going to-they’re not ready to get to it and we can try to show them respect and treat them with respect but if they come in that way with a problem that is happening at home we have a big job.

Part of that big job for the teachers was that they had to teach more academics and had less time to work on social skills and behavior. One teacher shared: “I worry our scores will go down if this keeps going on because kids will tune us out.” Another stated: “All of the academics we will need to cram down their throat-frustration level is very high.”

One teacher summed it up by saying:

It’s very hard sometimes because they don’t have enough time-we have been talking about this a lot-all of the things that we had done in the classroom-that had also taught
social skills-like we talk about with Kindergarten-having time to go in housekeeping is valuable learning time and then we get these kids in second and third grade who cannot get along and cannot share and can’t work cooperatively because they have not had a chance to do it, because it is such as academic push at a young age when you are learning that stuff.

The teachers also discussed how important in this day and age it is to be a problem solver. One teacher stated:

When I do centers with my kids, they’ll come up to me and say he’s doing this and she’s doing that or I can’t do that and I say you know what this is why we do centers. This is why we work in groups because you have to learn to get along to be problem solvers. You have to learn to rely on each other not just because I want to put you at centers, but because there are a lot of things that you need to learn right now. So go back to that center and try to figure it out and I am not going to solve the problem for you and nine times out of ten they will be able to figure it out. But it’s a really important part of their day is having that control to say I need to be a problem solver.

In summary, adults remarked that how people in the school environment and outside the school environment treated each other made a difference. They felt that they treated other adults well and treated the students with care and concern which then provided a model of respectful and appropriate behavior for students. They felt that the students were better in the classrooms and had more difficulty in unstructured situations, but that they were trying to teach them to problem solve to assist with those times of the day. They were concerned about home influence on students’ behavior and ability to learn in school, while feeling stressed about the level of academic competence required of students today.
Relationships.

How adults and students communicated and cooperated with each other was very central to all conversations.

**Students.** Students described relationships with teachers as essential to their learning academics and appropriate behavior. Because their teachers knew them better, they behaved better for them. Students perceived support personnel as having less personal relationships with students. Supporting quotations from students on this theme are included in Table 8.

How the student or adult felt inside was crucial to their relationships with each other. The students discussed how some of their peers would not be nice to them because they were not able to feel good about themselves. They did not like when adults or students treated them poorly because of how they were feeling inside.

The first subtheme was judgment. Students said that you should not judge people until you get to know them and you should make your own judgments as opposed to following the crowd. The second theme was empathy and perspective. Students expressed that how other people treated you affected your feelings about yourself and conversely, how you treated others affected how they felt about themselves. This included adults and peers at school and at home. They also said that if you were bullied it affected how you felt inside and how you did in school. They felt people bully because they do not respect themselves. They also discussed that if you were mad about something, you should not take it out on someone else.

The third theme was acceptance. The students said that some adults had different expectations than others and that support staff worried more about what could happen when they watched the children because they were responsible for the students’ safety on the playground. They said that some adults demonstrated an understanding of their developmental stage (i.e.
children) and had more reasonable expectations of them than other adults in the building, particularly support personnel.

Table 8

*Relationships Quotations from Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judgment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think respect means being nice to people doing an act of kindness without being told like you should just know it because respect is just common sense and you’re trying to get good at it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes in class when you do something really good like answer a question or just complete your homework with outstanding ability, the kids will say like teacher’s pet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy and Perspective</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like if someone sees that someone doesn’t have respect for themselves, then they could bully someone.</td>
<td>I don’t think that some people in this school don’t get that what they do affects other people and that teachers need to learn that too.</td>
<td>I think an example of being kind would be allowing somebody to play with you even if they were different from you or not like you. You can’t just exclude them. You have be nice to them and you have to have them join with you.</td>
<td>I think when you don’t listen to anybody and do whatever you want to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My only pet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Students first discussed that they felt guilty when they received rewards, but felt like they did not deserve the reinforcement. One fourth grader related it to a similar situation at home:

“Whenever I got a gift that I didn’t deserve it and it gave me anxiety it feels like you are getting away with stuff and you’re lying to your parents; it gives you anxiety that feeling when you did something wrong.”

The students talked about how someone feels inside can influence how they interact with you and how you feel inside influences how you understand others: “I think kind is when a friend is feeling down you can always make them happy and cheer them up.” One student suggested a way to improve a relationship: “Being nicer to the lunch ladies even if the lunch ladies give you attitude-don’t back talk them because they will tell the principal or their teacher.” Another student described: “It’s just being a bigger bully you should just be the bigger person and let it go.” One precocious fifth grader said:

They feel like they are the rulers of the school and no one can take them down and if I mask myself in cool; then everyone will like me not for who I am but for a cool person who I can try to be-you have to be who you are and you have to just respect yourself.

Lastly, they discussed being accepted for who they were; specifically in the lunch room environment. The fourth grade students said when referring to the noise level at lunch, “We’re young it doesn’t bother me.” Another added: “It just bothers them.” A third student commented:
“They expect to act like we’re twenty-five.” Lastly one student said: “They expect us to act like
we’re a royal person- they want us to be perfect.” When they discussed playing together outside
and to the worry that some adults displayed, one student related: “They have to understand us
that we are not going to do anything to ourselves. We’re not going to do anything to our friends
because we like our friends. We wouldn’t hurt anybody.”

In summary, it was clear that relationships were important to the students in their
perception of respect and disrespect. They spoke about how they felt, how they wanted to be
treated, how they could help others and how they were learning how to behave.

**Adults.** Adults spoke about how positive relationships among adults at school were
important for the students to see and to have modeled for them. They said how they treated their
students as if they were their own children. They felt that technology and family challenges
were changing relationships between students and peers, and families and schools. Adults
discussed how they felt while trying to be patient and consistent with students with difficult
behaviors. They also discussed how hard it was dealing with students who struggle with
attention during the school day and how much pressure there is for students to achieve
academically. See Table 9 for quotations with support this theme.

The subthemes were the same for the adults as they were for the students. For judgment,
they said that teachers understand that parents have concerns and that they are important too, but
it is a challenge to meet everyone’s needs. They felt that it was important for a teacher to be able
to continue to begin each day with a positive attitude. For empathy and perspective the adults
said that it was necessary for students to be able to: a) consider how someone else felt, b) to be
able to act on it and c) to result in being nice to others. They felt that some of the students are
unable to learn perspective taking from class lessons in academics or behavioral expectations.
The third theme was acceptance. The adults said being an inclusive school has created a climate of acceptance of differences for students. They felt that it was sometimes hard to be a teacher and to be accepting of students who are challenging to teach.

Table 9

*Relationship Quotations from Adults*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes and Groups</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>I am going to be a better teacher. I am going to be a better person today. Because it’s not the kid’s fault. It’s not.</td>
<td>If they don’t feel respected they are not going to feel safe to take chances and do their best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy and Perspective</td>
<td>I think it’s blatant-sometimes it’s the tone that you use. It’s not what you say. It’s the tone that you use. It’s just not caring how they hurt someone’s feelings.</td>
<td>Valuing someone else’s opinion. And dignity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>I think the inclusion helps them to be much more accepting.</td>
<td>A lot of them are very talkative and they might have something to say to the authoritarian figures -on their own with their peers they are generally nice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adults first revealed judgments about how much they worry about meeting students’ needs and fulfilling daily expectations of their job. One adult expressed, “But I hope we can do this. It’s a clean slate. The next time you see them it’s a new day, even if you start with a smile,
sometimes they break you right down.” Another adult explained the link between students’ feeling respect and successful teaching. “I think if they think that they are not going to be respected-they aren’t going to be doing their best work-they are not going to take a chance and raise their hand and share their ideas. They’re not going to give as much as they possible can and take ownership of their education.”

Next, adults discussed the challenges of students understanding empathy and perspective at school. One teacher described the difficulty as a societal change. She stated: the social norms of today and “that lack of EQ (emotional intelligence), you know that thing from the past.” Another adult described difficulty with perspective taking: “I think they say mean things on purpose. They don’t put themselves in the other person shoe until it happens to them and then they’re the first ones to come telling on the other person.” Another teacher commented on students’ decision-making difficulties: “Understanding what is right and refusing to follow and making a conscious choice not to follow.” Finally an adult described the empathy needed by teachers for students:

Just trying to understand where they are coming from because it’s easy to say oh this parent and complain. But know that everybody has their issues and we don’t know what they are and things are happening to them and they are to their children. I think we have to be cognizant.

Lastly, adults also discussed acceptance by remarking on how the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general educational setting has positively influenced students’ ability to accept their peers. One adult commented: “I find that the children are very supportive and accepting. There always will be some [who are not], but they have grown up with each other-that’s what they’re used to—that’s a wonderful thing.”
In summary, the adults discussed how important positive relationships were to them as part of their school culture and as an instructional vehicle to students. They were concerned that students struggled with empathy and perspective taking perhaps due to societal changes. They saw inclusion of students with disabilities as part of the culture of acceptance.

Conclusion

The four themes discussed in this chapter include justice and fairness, the positive impact of PBIS, environmental influences and relationships. Subthemes which served to further explain the participants’ comments were also presented. The students and the adults both felt that the PBIS program was a good thing for the school, but the teachers saw it as more consistent than the students did. Both groups saw differences in students’ behavior when the adults were watching, in the classroom and at lunch and recess. Everyone felt it was hard to be sure those students who were always following the rules were rewarded enough. Again there was agreement between the two groups, students and adults, as to respect and disrespect. Findings from this data will be further discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Findings & Implications

In May of 2012, when I attended a state-wide PBIS conference, I found that as in my school, the referral area of disrespect, defiance and disruption was the most recorded behavior infraction for schools in the state of Rhode Island. This caused me to wonder why this particular infraction was the most frequent in PBIS schools, where the students have been taught the expectations for respectful behavior. Since it was the most frequent behavior cited by the adults, was this because there was a misunderstanding between their concept of respectful behavior and the students who they cited for it?

As an administrator, I strive to have the students behaviors improve each year as the PBIS system is used and to have the referrals decrease. By studying how the adults and the students in our school understood respect and disrespect, would I be able to learn how to facilitate more respect and less disrespect? Since this was also the same area cited for the state of Rhode Island, the study might contribute information to other schools in the state. The literature on social and emotional learning cites respect as a necessary behavior in order to improve school climate and to improve academic achievement (Lickona, 1991). Initially I began this investigation with the hypothesis that adults’ and students’ perceptions of respect would differ and that this misunderstanding would explain the persistence of disrespectful of behavior in my school. This study was guided by the following research questions: 1) What are the similarities and differences between students’ and adults’ perceptions and understandings of respect and disrespect in the educational environment of school? 2) How do intermediate aged elementary students, and the teachers and support staff with whom they work, understand the concept of respect and disrespect? 3) How do respect and disrespect influence the academic
learning and the learning environment? In this chapter I will present my findings and their implications for practice. Lastly, I will discuss the limitations of the study.

Findings

At this elementary school, adults and students held very similar ideas of respect and disrespect. Their joint definition focused on empathy, dignity and procedural justice.

One might conclude that adults cited students for disrespect most frequently because they had a different perception of respect than their students. However, both adults and students at this school had very similar ideas about respect and disrespect. Initially, they described respect as being nice, kind, and caring to each other and disrespect as being mean, unkind, and uncaring to each other. While the discussions began with these simple labels for both groups, it soon became increasingly complex throughout the duration of the focus groups. This conclusion is articulated below and implications for practice and future research are offered in the following section.

Empathy and respect. First, in order to be respectful, one must have empathy for the other person. Mark H. Davis (1983) stated “empathy in the broadest sense refers to the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another” (p.113). His research at the University of Texas at Austin saw empathy in relationship to social functioning, self-esteem, emotionality and sensitivity to others. Adults and students commented about how important it was to understand another person’s perspective. Considered social awareness in Bloodworth et al 2007, students and adults demonstrated this competency of SEL by focusing on empathy and perspective taking in their description of respect. The students showed their need for empathy when they expressed that they wanted others, both adults and students, to understand why they might have behaved as they did. They wanted adults to empathize with their role as children and
to understand how they made choices as children. Students also felt that all students at their school needed to remember to have empathy for each other. The students perceived some children were disrespectful to others because they felt “mean” inside and took that feeling out on other people. They could empathize with these students, but did not want them to express their feelings in a disrespectful way. Students especially wanted other students to be empathetic when they wanted to learn and work hard on their studies. They did not like being distracted from their work and they wanted all students to respect the fact that they wanted to learn.

In addition, students reported that the level of empathy they received was different based on who the empathizer was. The students believed that because their teachers knew them well, the teachers were more respectful; whereas because they had less personal connection with support personnel, the support personnel seemed less respectful. Simon & Strumer (2003) described that then the perceived respectful treatment by authority figures increases students’ commitment to the organization that these adults represent. Therefore this shows a positive relationship between the degree of relationships with teachers and students and then their increased respect for their teachers, because they felt their teachers were more empathetic.

Adults discussed how empathy and respect were promoted at the school because it was an inclusive environment for all students. The teachers saw how inclusion has helped the students and the teachers to be accepting of students with social and learning challenges. This acceptance builds connectedness throughout the school. According to deCremer & Tyler (2005), students who feel connected to their teachers, peers and their school are more likely to respond to extrinsic motivators, such as used in this school. The teachers liked that students had “grown up” with PBIS and inclusion and appreciated that the students’ school experience had been framed by PBIS and inclusion practices that promoted empathy and respect.
Similarly, adults commented on their desire for empathy for what it was like to be an educator in current times. They felt that parents, school committees, administrators, or the department of education were unable to understand the perspective of elementary school teachers concerning the demands placed on them and the pace of changes that came with those demands. Recent changes in teacher evaluation and the conversion to the new national learning standards, along with the need to be skilled in data collection and analysis, were described as stressful and time consuming. Demands placed on teachers to be sure that all students’ academic and behavioral needs were met through response to intervention, including PBIS, were perceived as overwhelming and lacking teacher perspective. This finding supports Buese’s and Valli’s statement that, “…the act of teaching is dominated by external plans and requirements such as pre-specified lists of competencies and objectives, pretests and post-tests for determining students’ skill level, and an increase of record keeping and evaluation” (p.524). These increased demands may create a school climate both within the building and without, that lacks empathy.

*Dignity and respect.* In addition to empathy, both adults and students felt that being respected not only required empathy but also dignity. When you were not treated with understanding and empathy, then your dignity was compromised. If support personnel yelled at a student in front of friends instead of speaking individually and privately to the student, dignity may not remain intact. When the teacher pulled a student aside to discuss something privately, then dignity was sustained. Therefore adults’ reaction to misbehavior was considered pivotal in students’ ability to gain continued social and emotional understanding, an essential goal for social-emotional learning (Bloodworth et al 2007) and protecting their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Dignity was very important to students, which may reflect its’ role maintaining sense of self-esteem. Unexpected reactions from teachers and support personnel threatened
students’ dignity by presenting an environment that was uncontrollable by the students. A feeling of control over one’s own environment may contribute to social and learning success (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Adults felt that they lost dignity because of the current demands of their profession; expectations were set so high that teachers worried of seeming less than competent and professional. Self-efficacy is at stake here as well. If teachers do not feel as if the larger community perceives them as capable and effective, their self-efficacy can be affected (Bertrand, 2003).

**Procedural justice.** Lastly, the joint definition of respect from students and adults corresponds with Miller’s (2001) concept of procedural justice. Procedural justice theory explains that the way the decision is decided upon is as important as the decision itself. Empathy, dignity, and procedural justice were interwoven within the arena of decision making in schools. For students, it was decisions about whether behaviors were appropriate or not, or what learning activities, including behavioral expectations, were taught. The students felt that teachers gave them more time to tell their side of the story and explain their decision about the behavior, than did the support personnel. When students gain skills in self-awareness, a process supported through collaboration between teachers and students, students are demonstrating the outcomes of social and emotional learning. Therefore, they were more willing to abide by the teachers’ decisions even if they did not like them. Procedural justice theory states that respect is gained in decision-making when the people involved are able to voice their opinion (Miller, 2001). However, they did not feel they received this same procedure from other adults during non-instructional times, such as lunch and recess. They said that the support personnel generally yelled at whoever was “told on” and they did not check both sides of the story. Because these
venues were larger than the classroom, the support personnel did not have the time to process
decisions the way students would like, compromising the students’ sense of procedural justice.

Procedural justice theory (Miller, 2001) also helps to explain adults’ discouragement as
to recent wide-reaching educational decisions’ that they were expected to uphold. Teachers
commented that they had lost the ability to contribute to decision-making which directly affected
their daily practices and their feeling of respect in their profession. Teachers reported accepting
change more when they had the chance to be a valued part of the decision-making process. This
exemplifies Miller’s (2001) idea that even when a person dislikes a decision they are more likely
to accept it and follow it if they feel they have contributed their voice.

This shared definition of respect and disrespect included empathy, dignity, and
procedural justice as needed to ensure respect and diminish disrespect.

**Behavioral expectations provide both teachers and students with a welcomed framework under which to go about their school day.**

The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program was an important part
of this school’s day-to-day functioning. Both students and teachers liked that there were clear
behavioral expectations. PBIS teaches the expectations for behaviors in the different settings of
the school day, with the premise that staff will acknowledge positive behavior four times to
every time that they correct behavior that does not meet those expectations. Tangible rewards,
often in the form of some type of ‘ticket’ are given to acknowledge the correct behavior for the
expectations that can be later accumulated for other rewards.

**Consistency, PBIS, and behavior.** The teachers felt that the consistency of the PBIS
school rules and expectations helped to promote respect throughout the school. This supports
Goleman’s (2006) idea that SEL must be systematically instructed in schools in order to change
students’ behaviors. The students knew what it meant to be respectful, responsible, and ready, because they had been taught the behavioral expectations. The teachers valued this consistency so that all adults in the building knew how the students should act. This finding was further supported by an outside resource known as the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), a survey conducted by a district-wide PBIS coordinator, which seeks to measure the fidelity of PBIS implementation in local schools. Since 2006, this school has scored at or above 80% on all criteria. This suggests to me as an administrator that both quantitative and qualitative data show commitment by adults and students to the PBIS framework.

Consistency of expectations, a hallmark of PBIS, should result in an increase of positive behaviors and a decrease in negative behaviors. This appears to be the case in this school. Data from this school shows that there has been a decrease in behavior referrals since the inception of the PBIS program. Behavioral referrals have decreased from 516 in 2006 to 196 in 2012. In 2006 the data showed that 51% of students had 0-1 referrals, 21% had 2-5 referrals and 28% had more than 6 referrals that year. In the 2011-2012 school year, 78% of students had 0-1 referrals, 12% had 2-5 referrals and 10% had more than 6 referrals. This data shows that the program has helped to increase the majority of students responding to the reinforcers and consistent structure from 50% to 78%. (SWIS Data https://app.swis.org/swis.php.)

This 78% represents a percent close to the 80% benchmark of the school population needing no additional behavior supports besides school wide PBIS. Of the final 20% of a school population, PBIS proposes that 10-15% would need targeted, intensified secondary interventions and 5-10% would need individualized, and even more intensive tertiary interventions.

Reinforcement and motivation. PBIS programs with positive interventions and supports use reinforcers or rewards for shaping a consistent set of student and adult behavioral
expectations. By teaching the students the behavioral expectations and rewarding them when they successfully meet them, there should be a decrease in behavior referrals and an increase in rewards (Irwin et al 2004). The students discussed how they liked getting the rewards and felt that it helped them to continue good behavior. The reinforcers were motivating and students and adults agreed that the rewards were helpful to change behavior. However, the students were concerned with the internalization of the values and the behaviors, as they acknowledged that many students were respectful only to achieve the rewards. Motivational theory can be used to explain the relationship between external and internal motivators and the PBIS framework (Deci & Ryan, 2003). The students begin by needing extrinsically motivators and as they gain more competence in their behaviors, they begin to rely on intrinsic motivation such as pleasing others and personal relationships. It was striking how students articulated their movement from behaving in order to receive rewards, such as the respect bracelets, to continuing to perform the correct behaviors because it was the right this to do at their school.

Osterman (2000) said that pro-social behavior can be learned through imitation of adult modeling in a caring environment. Adults explained that they modeled correct respectful behavior with other adults and students during the school day. PBIS had increased their awareness of the importance of such modeling. They felt that because they showed respect to each other, the students were more able to do the same with their peers. PBIS provided a framework that encouraged positive interaction between adults and students as opposed to the more traditional disciplinary approach.

Osterman (2000) stated that:

When children experience positive involvement with others they are more likely to demonstrate intrinsic motivation to accept the authority of others while at the same time
establishing a stronger sense of identity, experiencing their own sense of autonomy and accepting responsibility to regulate their own behavior in the classroom consistent with social norms. (p. 331)

**More respect.** Additional evidence as to the positive impact of PBIS on the school community can be seen this year through a decrease in disrespect/non-compliance/defiance behavioral referrals from 57 minor infractions and 15 major infractions to 25 minor infractions and 17 major infractions from quarter 1 to quarter 2 (SWIS 2012-2013).

This school valued the PBIS program and felt that it helped to define and promote respect for the students and adults. Adults and students felt the structure provided by PBIS was important and contributed to a respectful environment in which to learn. SEL literature cited research that schools were the most successful when social and emotional learning was integrated with the academic goals (Bloodworth et al, 2007). PBIS was one of the structures that school chose to use to integrate these two areas.

By focusing on the whole school as the unit of analysis, efforts to arrange learning and social environments for the adoption and sustained use of research-validated practices have become increasingly important in addressing the social behavioral needs of all students in schools. (Horner & Sugai 2002, p.28)

**Respect and disrespect are influential on learning.**

Student motivation increases when they feel teachers care about their learning (Gordon & Preble, 2011). The literature showed that social-cognitive theories emerged as teachers and scholars started to take into account the cultural and social conditions and the students’ environments in the process of learning (Bertrand 2003). At that time, the importance of peers and the competency of instructors also started to be considered as part of learning. Students who
can regulate their behavior are motivated and able to set goals for themselves which leads to more engagement and self-efficacy in their academic tasks (Bandura 1993).

**Disrespect and learning.** The focus groups discussed the disruption of the learning environment by students who were disrespectful. The teachers felt that it hampered their teaching and the students felt that it impeded their learning. These students may be disrespectful because they lack self-regulation and, therefore, cannot self-monitor (Bertrand, 2003). They can then be disruptive (Bandura, 1993), which impacts the other students and the teachers in their classroom. The adults and the students in the groups saw this as disrespectful toward them. The teachers discussed that students had difficulty with problem-solving and needed the self-regulation skills to be able to be able to work within their classroom groups. If they could work together, they were more respectful.

Self-regulated learning entails that students use emotional, cognitive and environmental resources along with self-observation and reaction to progress (Bertrand, 2003). “Perceived self-regulatory inefficacy thus affects academic attainments by increasing proneness to involvement in detrimental activities that conflict with academic pursuits” (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 1209).

Engagement theory proposes that if a student’s needs are not met then they can become dis-engaged in their environment (deCremer & Tyler, 2005). According a recent meta-analysis of SEL interventions, students lacking social and emotional skills are at greater risk of disengaging with the school environment (Durlak et al., 2011). If students are disrupting their peers’ environment by being disrespectful, the other students’ engagement can suffer. Students who are more able to seek assistance from adults and their peers do better academically. Students who are considerate of their peers feel that their environment is better for learning
(Bandura et al., 1996). The students discussed that the peers who disrupted the learning environment detracted from academic achievement. They told how it was hard to interact socially with these students if they caused them to be off task from their assignments. Bandura (1977) also states, “motivation which is primarily concerned with activation and persistence of behavior is also partly rooted in cognitive activities” (p. 193). The students then took time away from the other students in the classroom. The students said it was hard for them to learn when someone was being disrespectful, by shouting out, talking when they were supposed to be quiet and not engaging in the group work required. They worried about not doing well on a test or being successful in a group project when they had to contend with students who were not engaged and did not have the self-efficacy skills to manage their environment (Bandura, 1993). Students needed to perceive that they had academic, self-regulatory, and social efficacy skills to be successful in school. This finding corroborates social emotional learning theory in that there is a relationship between social and emotional and academic self-efficacy which then leads to academic engagement (Eccles, Rodriquez, & Wigfield, 1998).

**Respect and teaching.** The teachers’ feeling of being disrespected included the inability to have time in the classroom to address the social and emotional learning of their students. SEL instruction requires time in an already full schedule in order to be effective. The increased demands for academic achievement because of school accountability ratings, compromised the teachers ability to devote time to SEL. They discussed how they were unable to honor the stage-environment fit because the academic curriculum was moving too quickly for their students (Eccles & Roesner, 1999). When the school’s environment works well for the child then there is a stage-environment fit (Eccles & Roesner, 1999). The teachers felt that the stage-environment fit was compromised by academic demands for their students. They stated that the
students did not have the time to develop social skills because those activities were no longer part of the required curriculum and therefore no longer included in the school day. The teachers of the younger students cited play kitchen time in Kindergarten. The teachers of intermediate students discussed the lack of time for projects and plays that help the students to learn how to work with each other and be engaged in their learning. The increasing paperwork of accountability and worry about academic achievement left less time to address social and emotional learning (Buese & Valli, 2007). They said that the curriculum did not consider the students’ developmental levels and they needed more training to be sure that they knew the strategies for all of their students to succeed.

Students and adults saw respect and disrespect as important to the learning process. Learning was compromised when students felt the classroom environment was disrespectful because of their peers’ behaviors. They needed a respectful environment in which to learn. The teachers felt that the increased academic demands were disrespectful to students’ social skills and emotional development. Respect was achieved when academic and SEL learning could occur simultaneously.

**Implications for Practice and Future Research**

For the first implication for practice, it was clear that the students had more difficulty feeling respected during the non-instructional times of the day. As a PBIS school, this data tells us that we need to continue to adjust the environment, pre-teach behavioral expectations, and train staff to build a culture within which the students and the support personnel, as well as the teachers, feel less disrespect and more respect. Other PBIS schools can use this information to help them to analyze their challenges during non-instructional times. The lunch and recess data should be reviewed further by our universal PBIS team to implement more ways to adjust the
environment of the cafeteria and the playground, to ascertain which behavioral expectations need to be retaught and to determine what training should be instituted for the support staff, so that there is more respect and less disrespect during the non-instructional times of the day. The targeted team should continue to review the data of the students who are in the secondary and tertiary levels of interventions and determine what can be implemented to support them during these times of the day. Other schools that are implementing PBIS may want to consider the difference in behavioral referrals depending on environment, as well as the specialized training for support personnel.

Research studies show that pre-correction of behaviors and active supervision of transition behaviors helped to decrease problems at lunch and recess and movement in and out of the school each day (Colvin, Lewis, & Sugai, 2000). The pre-correction of behaviors helped to promote social skills and active supervision increased safety when groups of students are gathered. Recommendations for practice could be to assign support personnel to certain groups of children to teach them and then supervise more organized games. Colvin, Lewis & Sugai’s (2000) study also showed that the more that the supervising staff interacted with the students, the better the behavior was during that time period. The students stated that the children behaved better when the lunch staff was nearer to them when they played outside. The guidance counselor and the physical education teacher could be used to train the lunch staff in physical and social skills to promote more respect in the non-instructional times of the day. In the future PBIS programs should provide a framework of differentiated training based on adults’ roles and responsibilities in school.

Further training for the support staff should help the students’ quest for empathy, dignity, and procedural justice. The training could also provide empathy, dignity, and procedural justice
for the support personnel who were cited in the survey as the least respected members of the school population by both the students and the adult in the respect survey. Implications for leadership would be to work with the PBIS teams to provide more consistent training and data collections for the support personnel.

Further implications for practice as an administrator to promote respect and decrease disrespect would be to be sure students and adults are able to voice their feelings, so that they are more able to understand and comply with decisions and the rules required. During the busy day with the pressure to use all class time efficiently to be sure students meet current academic standards, it is often difficult for teachers and administrators to find the time to address social issues. The students and teachers enjoyed the time that they had to discuss respect and disrespect. Their voices were heard and their sense of procedural justice was acknowledged. They felt that by voicing their ideas they established a feeling personal dignity. As a principal, I have been conducting grade level Town Meetings to give students time to have their voices heard. Implications from this study suggest that the large venue of a whole grade level may not be the best way for student voices to be heard. Future plans to hear more individual voices could be implemented in the times of the day when certain groups of students are not involved in activities. These groups could be used to encourage students input on school policies and how to increase procedural justice. In addition students could discuss their views on problems in school and generate solutions. Also, the addition of a student council at the elementary level could be considered; however, determining the shape and function of such a body is beyond the scope of this investigation.

This study also provided an important reminder that teachers and staff also need to feel empathy, dignity, voice and procedural justice. The teachers also enjoyed the time to speak with
me. Coffee with the principal in the morning or ice cream after school, with discussion topics chosen by the teachers, might be a venue to facilitate the chance for voices to be heard. The importance of empathy, dignity and relationships might also be able to be promoted through some voluntary “Professional Learning Communities” that are not required and organized according to the topics that interest the participants (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008). Although parents were not part of this study, based on teachers’ comments, providing opportunities for teachers and parents to speak in an informal way would help to build respect.

A specific implication for practice involving any PBIS program is that reinforcement should be given out more frequently to those students who typically meet behavioral expectations. Both the adults and the students acknowledged that the students who are always doing everything right all of the time don’t get noticed, exactly because they are. The PBIS team at this school has discussed using a behavioral reinforcement that would combine community service and behavior. Students’ good behavior would be tied to a project such as donations to a food bank or a charity. When they had maintained no referrals for a period of time, money could be raised to give a goat to a child in Africa or donate to a local food bank. Based on the findings from the study, this is a valid idea to explore so that students who meet behavioral expectations can continue to be positively reinforced, to move the reinforcement from extrinsic rewards to intrinsic rewards. Other schools that are using PBIS could brainstorm community service reinforcements to use at their schools.

An implication for practice for me as an administrator is to be cognizant of how students’ academic achievement may be compromised by disruptive behaviors in the classroom. As an inclusion school, all students including students with disabilities are taught in the regular classrooms. Special education is provided within the classroom environment or in small groups
in a pull out model for intensive academic support. The students in focus groups showed that disruption of learning felt disrespectful to them. They were worried about fulfilling their academic requirements when some of the students’ behaviors were not conducive to their learning. Administrators should work with the special education and the PBIS teams to help to adjust classroom environments so that students with disabilities (both academic and behavioral) have their needs met without compromising the other students in the classroom. Intervention blocks could be helpful to group students in order to meet their academic needs and help reduce disruptive behaviors that might result from the inability to adequately understand the classwork. Differentiated instruction and engaging lessons should facilitate more classroom appropriate behavior from students who may have behavioral challenges that can cause them to be disrespectful to their teachers and their peers. These are areas that I can facilitate by providing intervention blocks in the schedule and assisting teachers with further training in differentiation for academic and behavior skills. These are areas that I would recommend other administrators should consider as well.

Disrespectful behavior from students may be the result of their feeling little control of their environment due to difficulties learning, behaving or socializing. Eccles & Roesner, (1999) described this phenomenon as a lack stage-environment fit; this misfit occurs when a child’s developmental level does not meet the demands in the environment. Adults discussed students who appeared to have poor stage-environment fit, which made it difficult for them to function in their classroom. Continued research in this area would be beneficial for teachers who are finding it difficult to meet the social and emotional needs of their students while increasing the academic rigor in their classrooms. Further examination of school environments needs to help develop an understanding of the impact of the current increases in academic
demands and the sustainability if SEL programs. Based on the findings of this study, we must find ways to continue and include SEL programs as academic emphasis takes priority.

Additional research with elementary aged students about behavioral expectations, respect, and SEL learning is an area for further focus. Most of the studies of respect were concerned with middle school students and older (e.g. Binning & Huo, 2008; Binning, Huo & Melina 2010; Cohen, 1999). However, this study showed that fourth, fifth and sixth graders had much to contribute to the definition of respect and disrespect in schools today. There is a gap in the research where younger voices are concerned. It is these younger students, beginning in Kindergarten, who will be the recipients of SEL training such as PBIS. In order for this framework to be effective, it is important to better understand the perspective from these younger students.

**Limitations**

This study is limited to the demographics of the school in which it was conducted. The city is predominantly white. Therefore, the students and adults in the study represented a primarily Caucasian population and the results may not be similar for a more diverse population.

Students and teachers voluntarily participated in the focus groups. The students wanted to participate but also had their parents’ interest in them being part of the study. Student and adults voices were therefore limited to those who elected to participate. This means that there may be opposing or contrasting opinions from other students and teachers that were not included. This may include students who have the most behavioral referrals and therefore see me as a disciplinarian, or teachers who were not pleased with PBIS, but were not comfortable sharing that with their supervisor. In addition, the pool of participants did not represent all of the roles within a school community, such as lunchroom personnel.
This school has been part of the PBIS program for seven years and has a district wide trainer as part of the staff. This expertise and commitment to the PBIS program may not be present in other schools and therefore the findings may differ. However, the purpose of this research was to investigate my own school, so that I could immediately put my findings into practice. Readers interested in PBIS are most likely going to find relevance in these findings.

Lastly, my role as moderator of focus groups may have hindered or encouraged certain students and adults to participate in the discussion. They may have been worried about my bias as the administrator at their school and how I would perceive their comments. I noticed that some students could be quiet and reluctant to speak out in front of their peers. Most groups had balanced discussion, but not all. Although the group dynamic of a focus group was my intended benefit for this methodology choice, it also had a drawback in that some students and adults are not as comfortable speaking in a group than one-on-one.

**Concluding Remarks**

This study began with the question of how SEL affected academic achievement. It ended with a conclusion that academic learning was definitely affected by the environment in which students learn and the relationships that they have within that environment. Through the research and the process, the concept of respect became the focus. I presumed that the adults and the students would have different perceptions about respect and that was why there were more behavioral referrals in this area. However, the students and adults saw respect in a similar fashion. Overwhelmingly, adults and students stated that being respected mattered and provided detailed descriptions of what respect and disrespect meant to them in the school environment. The impact of PBIS was shown to have a positive impact on the climate of a school and subsequently students’ learning opportunities. Adults and students voiced the importance of
empathy, dignity, voice and procedural justice within their focus group discussions. This study would have relevance to other administrators and educators familiar with PBIS framework or SEL learning.

Personally, this journey into SEL and respect showed me that both students and teachers appreciated and valued the chance to have their voices heard. The focus groups gave me the chance to hear information that I had not heard before. This provided a clearer understanding of and empathy for both the students and teachers in their respective roles. It helped me to see that challenges in teaching and learning through an SEL lens.

Completing this study and writing this record of my research was extremely challenging for me. As I have experienced a challenging academic task, my greatest gain from this experience has been a new found level of empathy for students and teachers as they face challenging tasks every day. I will use this newfound empathy in my future interactions with teachers and students, and it will help me to pause and view each person’s struggles as unique. This has changed my perspective when making decisions as an administrator at their school. This process helped me to realize the need of the support and guidance of other skilled in the areas that I found challenging. I will hope to provide that support and guidance to the teachers and the students when they need it each day as they strive to become more effective teachers and students.
References


*Connecting social and emotional learning with mental health.* Prepared for the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence at the University of Chicago.  
Retrieved from http://www.casel.org  


Appendices

Appendix A- Letter from Superintendent

January 8, 2013

Dear Members of the Internal Review Board of Northeastern University,

I am writing this letter to inform you that Michelle Paton has permission to complete her doctoral project at Sherman School in Warwick, Rhode Island. She will be allowed to have staff and students participate in a survey and focus groups to help define respect and disrespect. She also had permission to use the Sherman School website, parent e-mails and the systems telephone all call for communication. The parents will be asked to sign letters of permission for their children to participate. Mrs. Paton’s project is constructed to minimize the risks to the adults and children involved in the focus groups, and survey.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Robert D’Agostino, Ed. D
Remember that I told you that I have been going to school too. I am working on what you call a Doctoral degree and I have been studying social and emotional learning. What do you think that is about?

Right, it is what we discuss at Town Meetings and what you have learned in our PBIS programs and lessons. Most of the time in school is learning our school subjects. However, we need to be able to get along with everyone at school and follow school rules and procedures in order for our school days to go well.

One of the areas on the PBIS referral forms is defiance and disrespect. This is the area that the adults write up students up the most.

I would like to investigate why this is so. So I have developed a short survey for you to take about respect and disrespect. It is thirteen questions long.

I am sending home a form today for you to have your parents fill out if you do not want to take the survey. At our next Town Meeting we will take the survey.
Appendix C- Letter for exclusion- survey- students and parents

Dear Parents:

As you may know I have been working on my doctorate degree at Northeastern University. I have been studying the relationship between social and emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Since we are a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school, we keep data on the type of behaviors that are problematic. Students here have been written up most often for disrespect of adults. Therefore, I would like to study how students define respect and disrespect to help us to see why this is the case. The initial part of this study is a simple thirteen item survey for all the adults and students in grades 4, 5, 6 on respect. If you would not like your child to participate in this survey please indicate your child’s name and sign below. If you are agreeable with your child taking this survey, there is no need to return this letter. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,
Michelle Paton

___________________________________________________ ___________________________
I do not want my child __________________________ to participate in this survey.

Signed ____________________________________________
Appendix D- Script for presentation of research project - staff

- Discuss my doctoral journey
- Describe the study- the PBIS referrals in defiance and disrespect
- Describe the idea of different perceptions and understandings of respect and disrespect
- Describe the survey and focus groups
- Discuss the time to do the groups, the questions and discussion
- Reassure the confidentiality
- Discuss that this is not related to the RI Evaluation and is discussing different subject matter.
- Reassure that it will no way reflect on their standing as a staff member
- Describe the possible uses of the information
- Answer any questions
- Give them the survey to complete
Appendix E- Letter for survey- school staff not able to attend the staff meeting

Dear Staff Member:

As you may know I have been working on my doctorate degree at Northeastern University. I have been studying the relationship between social and emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Since we are a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school, we keep data on the type of behaviors that are problematic. Students here have been written up most often for disrespect of adults. Therefore, I would like to study how students define respect and disrespect to help us to see why this is the case. The initial part of this study is a simple thirteen item survey for all the adults and students in grades 4, 5, 6 on respect. I would appreciate it if you could complete this survey and return it to me by___________________________. All participation is voluntary and anonymous.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Michelle Paton
Appendix F-survey

Respect Survey

Check one

1. Student _______ (Grade __________)  2. Teacher _______  3. Other School Staff________

What I mean by respect:

*Respect* means honoring the rights, dignity and worth of every person.

*Respect* is courtesy of others and not hurting them physically and emotionally.

For each item below, check the box that is closest to your experience in school.

**Strongly disagree** means that you *do not* think this happens most of the time

**Somewhat disagree** means that you do think that this happens only some of the time.

**Somewhat agree** means that you think that this does happen most of the time.

**Strongly agree** means that you think this happens almost all of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Students treat other students with respect, regardless of differences.</th>
<th>1. strongly disagree</th>
<th>2. somewhat disagree</th>
<th>3. not sure</th>
<th>4. somewhat agree</th>
<th>5. strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Students treat teachers with respect.</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | | | | |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Students treat other adults at school with respect.</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students respect others’ property.</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers treat students with respect.</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other adults at school treat students with respect.</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers make sure that students treat each other respectfully.</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teachers make sure that students</td>
<td>1. strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. not sure</td>
<td>4. somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. People in this school are usually polite (say please, thank you, excuse me, or hold the door).</td>
<td>1. Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. Not sure</td>
<td>4. Somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The school has clear rules against hurting other people physically (hitting, pushing, kicking, tripping) or threatening to hurt.</td>
<td>1. Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2. Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3. Not sure</td>
<td>4. Somewhat agree</td>
<td>5. Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. The school has effective consequences for hurting people in any way (physically or verbally).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. strongly disagree</th>
<th>2. somewhat disagree</th>
<th>3. not sure</th>
<th>4. somewhat agree</th>
<th>5. strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. I feel respected at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. strongly disagree</th>
<th>2. somewhat disagree</th>
<th>3. not sure</th>
<th>4. somewhat agree</th>
<th>5. strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Include anything else you would like to write about respect at school.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Adapted from:

Respect and Responsibility School Culture Survey, Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility) State University of New York College at Cortland www.cortland.edu/character
Appendix G- Focus groups- adults

Dear Staff Member:

As you may know I have been working on my doctorate degree at Northeastern University. I have been studying the relationship between social and emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Since we are a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school, we keep data on the type of behaviors that are problematic. Students here have been written up most often for disrespect of adults. Therefore, I would like to study how teachers define respect and disrespect to help us to see why this is the case. Teachers’ voices are an important part of this study.

I am planning to form focus groups of six to twelve teachers to answer questions about respect and disrespect. All sessions will be recorded and then transcribed. The information will be used in my report. All names will be changed and the school will not be identified, so that all information remains confidential. I will meet with each group one time for forty-five to sixty minutes before or after school. I will also do individual interviews if we do not have enough people to form a focus group.

None of the work for this project will in any way affect your role as a teacher in our school building. There is no connection between this study and your teacher evaluation, but is rather a subject of information that I am interested in knowing about. I feel that your expertise in this area will be important data for the study and as a researcher I am responsible ethically to use the information in a confidential fashion. I value your help to me on this study and truly appreciate your time and knowledge.

This project has been approved by the Superintendent of Schools and Northeastern University. You are welcome to read the results of the study when it is completed. I appreciate
your help with this project. Feel free to contact me with any questions. Please return the form to me by ________________ and I will provide you with the details of the study.

Sincerely,

Michelle Paton

________________________________________________________________________

Staff Member’s name__________________________________________ _____________________

I would like to participate in a focus group for the research project conducted by Michelle Paton

Signature__________________________________________________________ _____________________
Appendix H- Parent permission- students – Focus Groups

Dear Parent:

As you may know I have been working on my doctorate degree at Northeastern University. I have been studying the relationship between social and emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Since we are a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school, we keep data on the type of behaviors that are problematic. Students here have been written up most often for disrespect of adults. Therefore, I would like to study how students define respect and disrespect to help us to see why this is the case. Student voices are an important part of this study.

I am planning to form focus groups of four to eight students in grades four, five and six to answer questions about respect and disrespect. All sessions will be recorded and then transcribed. The information will be used in my report. All names will be changed and the school will not be identified, so that all information remains confidential. I will meet with each group one time for thirty to forty-five minutes.

I ask you to sit down and discuss this project with your child or children. I would like you together to make the decision about whether to participate in the focus groups. The students will still be allowed to leave the study at any time if they decide that they no longer wish to participate. This is a research study on an area that I am interested in and will in no way affect your child’s standing in school if they chose to participate or not. I truly appreciate your help with this project.

This project has been approved by the Superintendent of Schools and Northeastern University. I am asking your permission for your child to participate in a focus group if he or she would like to and if you approve.
If so, please complete the permission form below. You are welcome to read the results of the study when it is completed. I appreciate your help with this project. Feel free to contact me with any questions. Please return the permission slip by ________________.

Sincerely,

Michelle Paton

__________________________ __________________________
Child’s name__________________ Grade and teacher________________________

Parent or Guardian’s name________________________

I give my child permission to participate in the focus group for the project conducted by Michelle Paton

Signature__________________________________________ _____________________
Appendix I-Document of informed consent- adults

Disclosure Statement and Consent to participate in a research study

This study is to investigate the perception and understanding of respect and disrespect of staff members and students in an elementary school.

The study will be conducted by Michelle Paton, doctoral student at Northeastern University.

The study will be supervised by Dr. Jane Lohmann of Northeastern University.

As a participant you will be asked to participate in a focus group to answer questions about your understanding of the concepts of respect and disrespect. The group setting is to allow you to have the support and knowledge of your peers as we discuss the topic. The session will last from thirty to forty five minutes for teacher assistants and lunch aides during the school day before or after their hours worked.

The sessions for teachers will last from forty-five to sixty minutes after school. We should be able to complete all questions in one session. Multiple sessions will be scheduled to accommodate schedules. If you wish to contribute any more information after the session is completed, we can meet again, as a group voluntarily or individually.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may answer any of the questions that you wish to discuss and may decline to respond as you wish. This process will be kept confidential and the names of the school and district will not be revealed.

However, in order to obtain approval for the project the school and district has been disclosed to the superintendent, Dr. Lohmann of Northeastern University and the Internal Review Board of the college. They will not disclose your name to anyone associated with the process. The taped information will be destroyed once it has been transferred to paper.
We will discuss the results as a staff without any revealing of any names to investigate whether the information can continue to help us to improve our school.

If you wish to contact me with any questions, feel free to email to paton.m@neu.edu or call me at 508-951-7765. You may contact Dr. Lohmann at 617-756-3237 or email at lohmann.j@neu.edu.

Please sign below to indicate that you have read this statement and agree to participate in this study. Thank you very much for your participation.

Name___________________________________   Date__________________________
Appendix J-Document of informed consent- students

Disclosure Statement and Consent to participate in a research study

This study is to investigate the perception and understanding of respect and disrespect of staff members and students in an elementary school.

The study will be conducted by Michelle Paton, doctoral student at Northeastern University

The study will be supervised by Dr. Jane Lohmann of Northeastern University.

As a participant you will be asked to participate in a focus group to answer questions about your understanding of the concepts of respect and disrespect. The group setting is to allow you to have the support and knowledge of your peers as we discuss the topic.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may answer any of the questions that you wish to discuss and may decline to respond as you wish. This process will be kept confidential and the names of the school and district will not be revealed.

We will discuss the results in a Town Meeting after the study is complete, without using any names, to investigate if we can use the information to improve our school.

If you agree to all of this information and to participate in the study, please sign below

Thank you very much for your participation.

Name____________________________________ Date__________________________
Appendix K- Questions for Focus Groups

Questions for focus groups- students

What do you think respect means? Disrespect?

How do you think that students in the building treat other students?

Give examples of how students treat you and/or other students.

How do you think that the adults in the building treat students?

Give examples of how adults treat you and/or other students.

How does a student get an office referral for defiance or disrespect?

Describe the behavior referral system. How does it work? What’s good about it?

If you could, how would you change it?

Do you think that how people treat each other matters to how well you can do your school work? Please explain with examples.

Is there anything else that you would like to say about the topics we have discussed?

Questions for focus groups- teachers and other adult staff (conducted separately)

How would you define respect and disrespect?

Please describe what you think appropriate behavior towards adults and/or students looks like. Please give examples.

How would you describe inappropriate behavior? Please give examples.

Describe how the adults, including staff members and other teachers in the building treat students.

Describe how the students treat the adults in the building.

Describe how the students treat each other.
Explain how the behavior referral system works. To what degree does it work?

How might you change it?

How do you teach appropriate behavior in your classroom (or during your interactions with children)?

How do behavior and the way people treat each other influence academic achievement?

Is there anything else that you would like to say about the topics we have discussed?
Appendix L- Protocol for Focus Groups- Students

Thank you for participating in this focus group. We will discuss respect and disrespect and how you understand what they mean.

Remember we are doing this because this is part of my research project. I wanted to learn about what adults and students think about respect and disrespect in school and how it influences their day at school.

I will be the moderator and you will have to follow my directions so everyone gets to talk. I have a form for you to sign that you agree to be part of this focus group and the research study. Let’s read it together and if you are in agreement and want to participate you can sign the form. If you have decided not to do this, then you may return to class. I will leave by the library back door and another teacher will check to see if anyone wants to leave and you may do so at that time.

I will begin with the questions that I have planned and then I will give you a chance to discuss other ideas at the end of our time. If anything upsets you and you want to see Mrs. Murray, Mrs. DeCollibus or Mrs. Brown, you may go talk to them. If you want me to speak with your parents I will do that.

Here is our agenda:

- Welcome
- Purpose of the focus group
- Ground rules
- Ask questions and discuss answers
- Restate and summarize what was said
- Chance for any other thoughts
- Thank you
Appendix M - Protocol for Focus Groups - Adults

Introduction for focus groups

- Review the research study
- Reassure the confidentiality and that this will not affect any of their job at school
- Ask them to sign the consent form
- Review agenda

Here is our agenda:

- Welcome
- Purpose of the focus group
- Ground rules
- Ask questions and discuss answers
- Restate and summarize what was said
- Chance for any other thoughts
- Thank you