

**STUDENT/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND SCHOOL SUCCESS:  
PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS FROM GRADES NINE TO TWELVE**

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## DEDICATION PAGE

I dedicate this page to all of the students whose lives I have influenced and to those who have influenced mine.

## Abstract

Teachers play an important role in determining students' perception of personal success. Eighty students between the ages of fourteen and eighteen in a rural setting in southern Alberta were surveyed and interviewed. Students reported their perceptions of their own personal success and the influence of a positive relationship with a teacher. Respondents also provided examples of negative relationships. The importance of building caring relationships with students is demonstrated in this research report. Included in the discussions are qualities or actions of teachers and the significance of their role in developing positive influences, which have an impact on student success both inside and outside of school.

## Preface

### Key Makers

Some people see a closed door and turn away.

Others see a closed door, try the knob;  
If the knob doesn't open, they turn away.

Still others see a closed door, try the knob;  
If it still doesn't open, they find a key.  
If the key doesn't fit they turn away.

A rare few see a closed door, try the knob;  
If it doesn't open, they find a key.  
If the key doesn't fit, they make one.

And even fewer see the closed door,  
Then choose to take time to get to know  
The person behind the closed door well enough  
To become an invited guest through the backdoor.

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## Background to the Project

My teaching career began with a room full of students who had a variety of learning needs. Some of the students exhibited behaviors that were unusual to my virgin teaching experiences; others had diverse academic struggles that challenged everything I had learned in university; and others just plain stumped me even though I was eager and young. I was in what was deemed a Special Education Classroom. Willing, enthusiastic and naive, I struggled to meet the needs of all the students. Years later, one of my colleagues said to me, “Jolene, at times, those kids were hanging from the ceiling, but you left a lasting impression on their lives. You got to know them and you let them know you.”

I did not recognize the importance of building relationships with students until much later in my career. However, I now believe that the most important role that teachers have is to develop relationships with their students – it’s not what you teach them but, rather, whether or not you let them know you care. My career has continued in the area of special education, and my teaching philosophy has steadily evolved towards the belief in the importance of developing a personal relationship with each student.

The relationships that are developed in the school setting are some of the most influential aspects in the development of personal character. How we function in society as individual citizens is related to the quality of the relationships that we have developed with our peers and teachers. The skills that are honed while pursuing, developing, and refining the art of building relationships are skills that require years of practice, yet they sustain us in our adult years. Accordingly, it is part of my belief about teaching that student-teacher relationships have an impact on individuals’ success inside and outside of

school. As adults, we reminisce about our earlier years as students, and it is a rare occasion that algebra, spelling, history, or typing is talked about. Rather, it is the teachers who are long remembered, well after the lessons that they taught.

Research validates this thought, as it is documented that students who have had positive, caring relationships with their teachers tend to be more successful academically (Niebur & Neibur, 1999). A result of these relationships, most students are better equipped to be successful in society.

Throughout my teaching career, I have held the belief that children will be more responsive to academic learning after they have had the experience of knowing that they are respected, cared for and deserving of my attention. I feel that I need to share a part of myself as person, not just as a teacher, but as an individual who may, or may not, have had the same experiences as them. In my own experience as a student, I know that I have been more successful in my pursuits if I felt that the teacher had a personal investment in me as a person.

In conclusion, I believe that human beings perform to higher levels if their teachers have a personal investment in the outcome of their efforts. In particular, I propose we perform to greater heights if we feel that a significant someone has a personal, vested interest in our accomplishments.

## Purpose and Focus of the Project

The focus of the project is student-teacher relationships and some of the different ways they impact student success. For many of us, Academy Awards, Nobel Peace Prizes, and Heisman trophy winners will be forgotten, but the effect, positive or negative, that teachers have on their students can never be discounted. It is my belief that teachers leave a lasting impression on their students, and this impression may be one that has a life-long effect.

Although the age group of students in this study is clearly identified later in this proposal, I believe that the research reflects the impressions of all students, defined as anyone pursuing knowledge under the tutelage of a teacher.

The term relationship also needs further clarification. For the purpose of this project, I am defining relationship as communication (verbal and non-verbal) between the teacher and the student that is perceived as caring.

The measure of student-teacher relationships and their impact on student success was collected primarily through the use of surveys and personal interviews. Additional data analyzed includes student academic achievement and attendance records.

For the purpose of this study, I chose to base my research on eighty students who are between the ages of fourteen and eighteen at Highwood High School, where I am presently employed. The survey and personal interviews were intended to gather student perceptions, of their own personal success and the factors that may, or may not, have contributed to their success. Because success is a value that is arbitrary, it was necessary to define an understanding of success. For the purpose of this study, I have defined success as personal satisfaction, attendance, and academic achievement.

## Review of the Literature

Although teaching and learning are two very different processes, the connection or intertwining between the two cannot be ignored. Learning is a process, conceived in the mind where meaning and understanding are generated. Connections between meaning and understanding are only possible when the concept has something of known origin to which to attach itself. Hence, learning only has meaning when the student actualizes it. Teaching on the other hand, requires that the educator impart knowledge in a manner that enables the learner to construct meaning from it. This, in turn, requires the teacher and the learner to have some kind of connection. I believe this connection is the key to successful teaching and learning. The interaction between teacher and student is essentially the fundamental basis for teaching -- making connections with active, growing minds. However, I also feel this connection needs to be perceived as caring by both the student and teacher.

Human beings are social creatures. Because they rely on emotional nourishment from others, they help to create and respond to a strong need for social interaction. Schools are the most influential institution in today's society for the teaching of social and communication skills. Learning social skills, perfecting social graces, and communication all begin at an early age, committing the teachers in children's early years as significant influences, negatively or positively. In the school system there are many demonstrations of behavior that are not considered appropriate social conduct. These demonstrations usually provide evidence of the influence of the students' earlier role models. In some cases, the extent of this "inappropriate role modeling" has disturbed the learners' ability to emotionally control themselves in the classroom. In these particular cases it is, without

a doubt, essential to build a strong student – teacher relationship to facilitate trust and caring, often those qualities that have been earlier violated by a previous adult. The research conducted by Medina and Lunn (1999) states that, “[T]he teacher appears to be of utmost importance when working with students identified as emotionally/behaviorally disabled. ....[identifying] a student-teacher relationship that is based on empathy and unconditional positive regard” (p. 462). The idea of building strong student-teacher relationships is not isolated in the world of behavioral teaching but, rather, it is equally important in all teaching situations.

Since 1996, collaboration between Alberta Learning, University of Alberta, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge has resulted in resources to promote learning environments that are safe, secure, and caring. Together they have developed the resource, “Supporting Safe, Secure and Caring Schools in Alberta”. They have defined a safe and caring school as:

A Safe and Caring School is:

- Physically, emotionally and psychologically safe as characterized by
  - Caring
  - Common values and beliefs
  - Respect for democratic values, rights and responsibilities
  - Respect for cultural diversity
  - Respect for law and order
  - Common social expectations
  - Clear and consistent behavioral expectations
  - Appropriate and positive role modeling by staff and students
  - Respect for individual differences
  - Effective anger management strategies
  - Community, student and staff involvement (SACS, p. I)

Having defined, for Alberta schools a definition of safe and caring schools, policies for school governance have been developed and implemented. One section in the

research from the Safe and Caring Schools (1996) document states how staff is to act as role models.

To establish a school environment of emotional and physical safety which serves as a deterrent to violence, it is essential that staff members model appropriate behaviours by demonstrating caring and support for each other and their students. High expectations of appropriate behaviour irrespective of gender or racial, cultural or ethnic background must be established and maintained. (SACS p. 72)

Alberta Learning, in this initiative is demonstrating support for the creation of environments where children and youth can develop “self esteem, accept diversity and different points of view, have empathy for other’s feelings, resolve conflict peacefully and build satisfying relationships”. (SACS, p. 85).

Further to this, Alberta Legislation amended the Alberta School Act in June 1999. Section 45(8) reads, “A board shall ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board is provided a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviors”.

Alberta Learning is seriously examining the concept of safe and caring schools. Many resources have been developed for teachers, students and parents. Many of the resources, designed to be used in the classroom, create security and respect among students and staff. These resources, and the emphasis Alberta Learning has placed on developing safe and caring schools demonstrates respect for the need of positive learning environments.

Creating an environment that is caring and supportive, and one which engages students in critical thinking, involves more than just knowledge of curricula and pedagogy. The characteristics that are demonstrated by exemplary teachers are those which create an alliance between the student and the teacher. An emotional commitment

to teaching becomes evident when the teacher and student are capable of demonstrating a mutual respect, trusting that together they have a shared responsibility for learning. A solid communication system, allowing humor, sensitivity, and caring to be openly shared creates an environment that radiates a sense of security for both parties, an ideal for which all teachers should strive.

Emotional security is a key factor for the learner. Acceptance of an individual's emotional status, recognition of the need for personal attention, and leveling the playing field to accommodate academic needs are some of the responsibilities that teachers have for establishing emotional security. Learning more readily occurs when the learner is emotionally capable of digesting the experience, making a connection between the material and a previous experience. The relationship between the student and the teacher is an emotional activity that involves a connection. Teaching and learning is greatly affected by the emotional connection, and as Fouts (2001) claims, "in order to move forward academically, many students seem to need a sense of emotional connection and validation that is brought about by the spontaneous matching and synchronicity of emotions between the teacher and themselves". (p.15). The idea of caring is the key ingredient in creating that emotional commitment.

Teachers must be willing to commit time and energy to achieve an emotional connection with all students and a learning environment that is imaginative and interactive. The environment must hinge on spontaneity and structure. Kohn ( 1999) suggests that schools are small communities where teachers preserve the dignity of learners by providing activities that give students a sense of belonging and connection in an environment that allows for the free exchange of ideas and, thus, learning.

Niebuhr and Niebuhr (1999) surveyed two hundred and forty one ninth grade participants to examine student-teacher relationships and their correlation to student academic achievement. Their results indicate that student-teacher relationships are of particular importance, and as stated in the results, “Part of the necessary quality condition in the classroom is that as teachers allow their students to know them and, hopefully, like them, the students will work harder, thus increasing their opportunities for success”. (p. 4). For teachers to create a climate that allows students to get to know them, they must possess characteristics that are homogenous with warmth, caring, and nurturing. Green (1998) surveyed six hundred students and six hundred teachers to study what characteristics in school environments were necessary to deem a school nurturing. The results indicate the major characteristic of a nurturing school is positive student-teacher relationships. The evidence quickly becomes cyclical in nature, as positive student-teacher relationships are a critical component of a nurturing environment, and a nurturing environment tends to promote more positive student-teacher relationships.

In addition to the development of student-teacher relationships, there is evidence that good schools are about more than academic achievement. A study by Silins and Murray-Harvey (1995) provides evidence that there are alternative indicators of quality schooling that may contribute to redefining school performance by taking into account students’ attitudes towards school, their approaches to learning, their academic self-concepts, and teachers' perceptions of school leadership and organization. In their study, ninety eleventh grade students from ten participating schools were asked to complete three questionnaires. The results of the study indicate that student self-concept and attitudes toward school are directly associated with academic achievement.

Tiberius (1986) makes the statement that relationships are as essential to teaching as the flour in a cake. He argues that effective teachers form relationships that are trustful, open and secure, that involve a minimum of control, are cooperative, and are conducted in a reciprocal, interactive manner. Within this type of involvement, students are more willing to take a risk in the learning situation, participating more and being more actively involved. These actions, in turn, create better learning.

Wells (1989) states that through the school years, the students' learning environments become increasingly more diverse. As this happens, students can become more disengaged from developing student-teacher relationships. He argues that students who stay in school often cite a good teacher as one of the most positive elements in their school experience, thus reinforcing the idea that student-teacher relationships directly correlate with school success. "Students are less likely to leave school when they work with teachers who are flexible, positive, creative and person-centered, rather than rule-oriented" (Bhaerman & Kopp, quoted in Wells, 1986, p. 3).

Tauber (1997) outlines the effect of people's first impression on another, and its impact on the relationship that we may develop with that person. He describes how, as teachers, we can be influenced by the physical appearance, previous records or teacher talk about any given student. These first impressions are not always consistent among teachers; thus, each impression-holder formulates different expectations of the student, creating relationships that are different among all individuals. Therefore, it is important that teachers are not always influenced by their first impressions but, rather, take the time to get to know their students as people.

Students also have the same experience when they enter a classroom. They instantly assess the environment, read the situation, and judge whether or not the atmosphere is positive or negative. From their assessment they respond accordingly. Each person in the classroom behaves in a manner which either creates a mutually satisfying atmosphere, or not. As noted by Tauber (Goldenberg, 1999, p. 522), “[a]lthough expectations are important, what a teacher expects matters less for a child’s achievement than what a teacher does.”

McCroskey and Teven (1997) have based their research on the idea of perceived caring in the instructional context. Their study indicates that students' perceptions of caring on the part of the teacher influences the students’ assessment of their affective learning and cognitive learning. However, it is noted in their paper that further research is necessary to examine the specific behaviors of teachers that communicate caring.

Yau (1995) developed a questionnaire which was given to ten schools in the Toronto Board of Education. Eight hundred forty-seven students in grades four to eight and one hundred thirty-four teachers were surveyed. Although this questionnaire was designed to explore the idea of conflict resolution, the findings indicate that student–teacher relationships contribute to a more positive school climate. The results show that through the development of positive student–teacher relationships, individuals learn to behave in a socially acceptable manner and have stronger communication skills for interpersonal relationships.

Raddysh (1992) has based her thesis work on studying students’ elementary school experiences and whether or not these experiences, may have contributed to students’ high school success, or lack thereof. In her study she intensively interviewed ten high school

graduates and ten high school dropouts. She claims that the act of leaving school begins long before high school and that several factors have an influence over this action. The study encouraged the students to reflect on their feelings of belonging in the school environment, relationships with school personnel, and school involvement. Parent values, student efficiency and student-teacher relationships were areas of focus. The findings indicate that student-teacher relationships have an effect on successful high school completion.

In another study, forty-six students of the University of North Dakota were polled to help identify the characteristics of an outstanding faculty. Teacher-student relationships were considered the most important characteristic. "Students' own relationships with teachers were valued more highly than a teacher's actual performance in the classroom. Students want teachers to be sensitive to them as individuals as well as students, to be interested in their academic and nonacademic growth" (Jacobson, 1995, p.17). Clearly, the relationships that are developed in the classroom surpass course content. Students who feel that they contribute to what happens in the classroom are more likely to have successful school experiences.

Pianta (1999) addresses his audience by asking the question, "Why do teachers teach?" His findings show consistently that teachers teach because of the kids. He then notes that most teachers will go on to explain the effect that the kids have on them as people. Often, teachers will relate stories about a particular student or students and, frequently, the story will lead to how they have been effected by that student. Relationships between teachers and students, whether positive or negative, have an intense impact on the personal reflections and behavior of most teachers.

Pianta (1999) uses theories of social development to understand how social processes can be enhanced. He emphasizes child–teacher relationships, stating that “child competence is often embedded in and a property of relationships with adults. In other words--adult –child relationships are critical regulators of development, they form and shape it” (p.17).

Throughout the book Pianta explores systems theory in the development of the child and of child–teacher relationships. His research has prompted him to explore how the enhancement of positive student–teacher relationships is essential in the school environment. He concludes with the statement, “as schools contend with the challenges of educating more and more children who are at high risk for educational failure because of eroded social development, this relationship perspective can become increasingly valuable as a tool for supporting the construction of school and classroom contexts that use these resources”. (p. 192).

Teachers must be willing to share some of themselves, demonstrate empathy for their students, and create an atmosphere or environment that radiates a positive, safe, caring place for students. Fouts (2001) describes the relationship between the teacher and the student as affect attunement, an emotional connectedness in which the internal states of two people come together and match. From his research, he concludes that teaching is at least partially an emotional activity and often involves a connection or relationship. His findings also indicate that the more a student is attuned with a teacher, the more the student learns. Similar evidence in the research supports this emotional attunement between student and teacher.

Medina and Luna (1999), in a qualitative study, explored student-teacher relationships in classrooms for emotionally and behaviorally disturbed adolescents. The students repeatedly responded in favor of the relationships developed between themselves and the teacher or teaching assistant. Comments such as, “my teacher understands me, listens to me, and has befriended me without judgement; cares for me; is empathetic toward my needs; and my teacher values me,” are statements that demonstrate the need for developing positive student-teacher relationships. The study exemplifies the importance of building relationships, especially in the special education setting, but the results suggest high quality teacher-student relationships are equally important in all classrooms.

Effective communication can be seen as the foundation for building positive student-teacher relationships. Communication techniques, both verbal and nonverbal, can support or destroy relationships within just a few seconds and it is critical that we as educators understand the importance of the art of communicating to ensure that relationships are sustained.

One text, Humor in the Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers, by Deborah J. Hill (1998) is a practical resource for any reader. She demonstrates how to defuse conflict and retain academic course material with the use of humour. Too often, teachers are too serious to laugh at themselves and they display behavior that tells their students that it is not okay to make a mistake.

The research that Walsh and Maffei (1999) have conducted supports the social dimension associated with the art of teaching. They surveyed two hundred ninety-five undergraduate students and one hundred sixteen faculty members in one university to isolate factors that promoted student learning. A general analysis of the student

responses include the idea that the students really do care about the little things teachers do (or don't do). They want to be treated fairly, to be cared about as individuals, and to be respected. The research concludes with the belief that teachers are never in a room by themselves and that teaching has a profound social dimension that cannot be ignored.

The educational literature, in this study, supports the idea that student-teacher relationships have an impact on the learning process. The positive relationships that develop between the student and teacher influence academic achievement, drop out rates, school climate and, more generally a willingness or wanting to be in school. The school environment, primarily a social institution, is positively enhanced by the presence of teachers who demonstrate care, understanding, and sensitivity toward student needs.

### Method Proposed for the Project

To answer my proposed research question I chose to use a stratified random student survey, and student interviews as my methodological research tools. I administered a survey to eighty students, twenty of each in grades nine, ten, eleven and twelve. As the school has a population of seven hundred fifty students, the survey sample represented approximately eleven percent of the total school population.

The students were randomly chosen and included students in academic and non-academic courses. I approached teachers in the specific grade levels and course assignments and asked them to randomly choose the appropriate number of males and females to be surveyed. For example, a teacher was asked to choose five males and five females in an English thirteen classroom. After the students had been randomly chosen, a letter of consent for permission to be part of the study was sent to each of the students' parents. The letter outlined the intent of the survey and also indicated that attendance and academic achievement are areas that would be considered in data collection and analysis.

Students were asked to complete the survey by one of their core subject teachers. The breakdown of participants consisted of:

- Ten male grade nine students

- Ten female grade nine students

- Five male grade ten students in the academic courses

- Five female grade ten students in the academic courses

- Five male grade ten students in the non-academic courses

- Five female grade ten students in the non-academic courses

- Five male grade eleven students in the academic courses

Five female grade eleven students in the academic courses

Five male grade eleven students in the non-academic courses

Five female grade eleven students in the non-academic courses

Five male grade twelve students in the academic courses

Five female grade twelve students in the academic courses

Five male grade twelve students in the non-academic courses

Five female grade twelve students in the non-academic courses

I asked another teacher to administer the survey to randomly chosen students in their classrooms to help eliminate any undue influence or personal biases.

The students participating in the survey were given specific instructions regarding the completion of the survey and were asked, as well, to indicate their desire to participate in a personal interview. The students were informed that their responses to the survey and interview would be strictly confidential and their names would remain anonymous.

The survey consisted of twenty-four questions that could be answered with a *Yes* or *No* response, as well as personal reflection responses. Neuman (1997) suggests using an approve/disapprove response category in a survey tool, thus I anticipated students would be less reluctant to respond if given the opportunity to respond using a simple Yes or No structure. Of those students indicating a willingness to participate in an interview, ten random names were pulled from a hat. The results from the survey were tabulated. The results from personal interviews would be analyzed for thematic content, consistency, and discrepancy.

The key variable of personal satisfaction will be dealt with in the survey and interview components of the study.

The survey and the interview tools were chosen for a number of reasons:

1. A survey easily identifies a respondent's attitude. (Runte, 2000, ED5400-The Nature of Educational Research, University of Lethbridge)
2. A single variable is readily identified and the relationship between two or more variables can also be compared.
3. Confidentiality of responses to the survey questions is ensured.
4. A survey allows students to express freely their responses without interference.
5. The research in this area indicates that surveys have been an effective tool for obtaining information.
6. The survey provides a stratified random sample of 50% female and 50% male participants. (Neuman, 1997)
7. The survey is easily administered and accessible to the academic and non-academic students, so academic bias is not a factor.
8. A survey reduces personal influence from the researcher.

The interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to gain insight from the subjects on a more personal level. Neuman (1997) suggests, although interviews are administratively the slowest method to obtain data, they are the most effective in obtaining a response. Further to his finding, the interview technique allows the researcher to probe a respondent if necessary, specifically sequence questions, and have the opportunity to analyze any visual observations. The interview questions, based on Neuman's (1997) suggestions, were designed to elicit responses that confirmed or denied the hypothesis of the influence of student-teacher relationships and student success. Each of the ten interviews were taped and transcribed.

The number of Yes and No responses to each question was tabulated. The survey and interview questions were theoretically organized and each theoretical issue was analyzed in correlation to the responses.

The interviews were analyzed as qualitative data. Qualitative research requires that the researcher examines and attempts to understand human behavior in its social context. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Personal responses were organized as reflective data and explored in detail in the final research document. Through analysis of the survey data, and the personal interviews, it was my intent to support the hypothesis that positive student-teacher relationships influence student success.

## Data Analysis

### Survey Data

Eighty students, forty males and forty females from grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve responded to the survey questions. Each question and the number of “yes” and “no” responses has been graphed, and the results described in terms of percentages will be discussed in this chapter.

Table 1 shows the results of the student survey. Students were asked to circle the answer in the right hand column with the best answer to the question.

Table 1

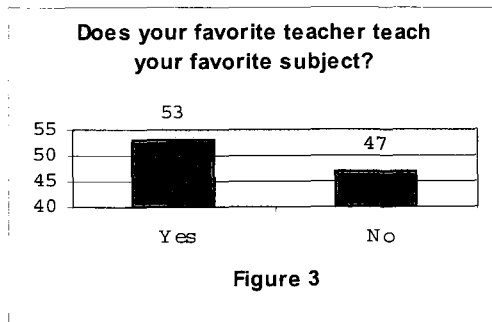
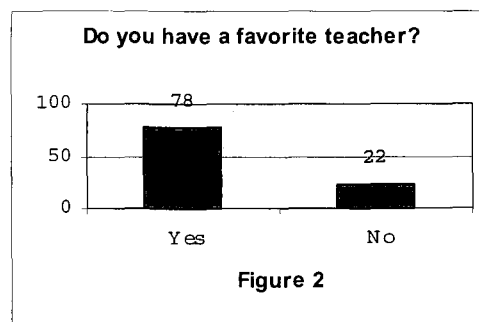
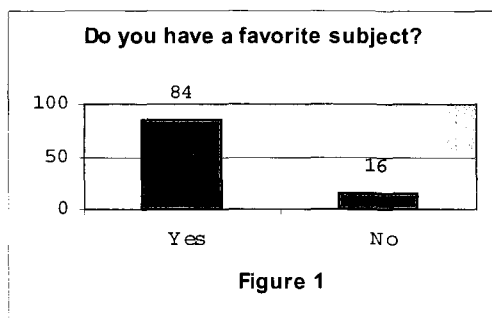
Student Survey

1. Are you male or female?	Male	Female
2. What grade are you in?	9 10 11 12	
3. Do you have a favorite subject?	Yes 84%	No 16%
4. Do you have a favorite teacher?	Yes 78%	No 22%
5. Does your favorite teacher teach your favorite subject?	Yes 53%	No 47%
6. Does your favorite teacher display an interest in you?	Yes 69%	No 31%
7. Does your favorite teacher encourage you to work harder?	Yes 78%	No 22%
8. Is it important to you that teachers display a personal interest in you?	Yes 65%	No 35%
9. Has it been your experience that when a	Yes	No

teacher displays a personal interest in you that you achieve higher grades?	69%	31%
10. Has it been your experience that a teacher has negatively influenced your success in achieving higher grades?	Yes 61%	No 39%
11. Do you feel that any teacher has ever made you feel as if you could take a risk in your learning? e.g. It was okay to raise your hand and answer a question even if you thought you were wrong.	Yes 81%	No 19%
12. Do you feel that any teacher has ever made you feel worthy?	Yes 86%	No 14%
13. Do you feel that any teacher has ever made you feel respected?	Yes 89%	No 11%
14. Has it been your experience that you have taken a risk in your learning in an environment where you were not made to feel worthy and respected?	Yes 55%	No 45%
15. If you answered yes to the previous question, did you have a positive response to your risk taking?	Yes 56%	No 44%
16. Do you feel that the teacher needs a sense of humor?	Yes 90%	No 10%
17. Do you feel that the teacher needs to create an environment that is caring?	Yes 80%	No 20%
18. Do you perform as well in school in an environment that you do not perceive as caring?	Yes 22%	No 58%
19. Do you feel that the relationship that you have with the teacher is important?	Yes 86%	No 14%
20. For the teachers who made you feel respected and worthy, did you get higher grades?	Yes 85%	No 15%

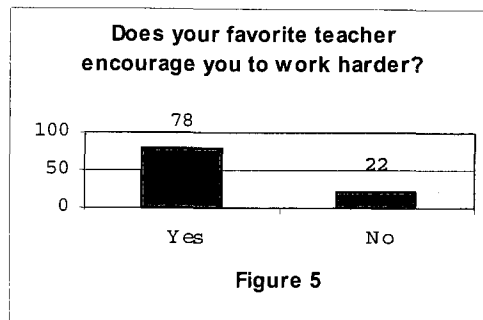
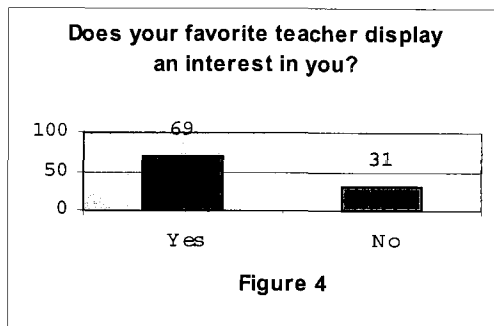
21. Do you think the relationship between yourself and a teacher has an impact on your success?	Yes 85%	No 15%
22. Do you think that building positive relationships with teachers has an impact on your personal satisfaction outside of school?	Yes 69%	No 31%
23. If you answered yes to the previous question, do you think your success is influenced both inside and outside of school?	Yes 92%	No 8%
24. Are you willing to participate in a personal interview to discuss this topic further?	Yes 42%	No 58%

The responses to the first three questions are displayed in Figures 1, 2, and 3. They were developed to identify the idea of favorite teacher, and subject, and the relationship between the two. The data indicate that these students do, in fact, have favorites, and in fifty-three percent of the cases the favorite teacher does teach the favorite subject. This information leads me to assume that the subject matter may perhaps be a student's favorite because of the teacher.

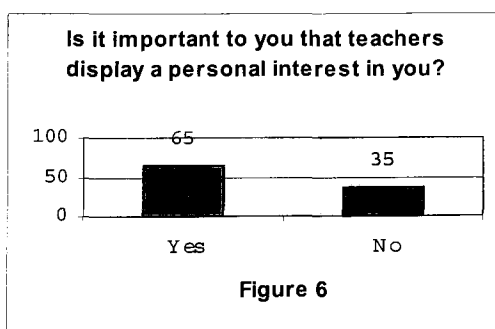


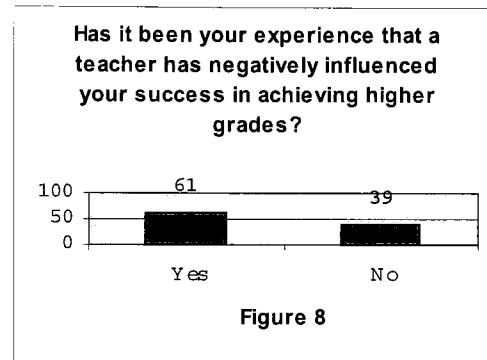
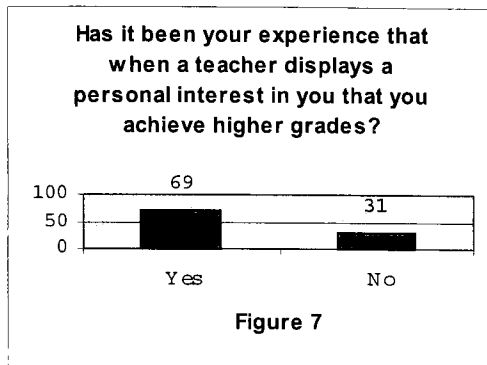
I also deduce from the results that some qualifying characteristics are essential to be deemed a favorite teacher. The results displayed in Figures 4 and 5 identify criteria for characteristics that teachers exhibit to qualify them as favorites. Displaying an interest in their students, and encouraging students to work harder are two qualifying characteristics which favorite teachers exhibit. The data does not indicate as strong a need for a teacher to display an interest in them as students, with only sixty-nine percent of the students

indicating this as an important qualifying characteristic. However, seventy-eight percent of the students said that they do work harder for their favorite teacher, the identical percentage as those who indicated that they had a favorite teacher.

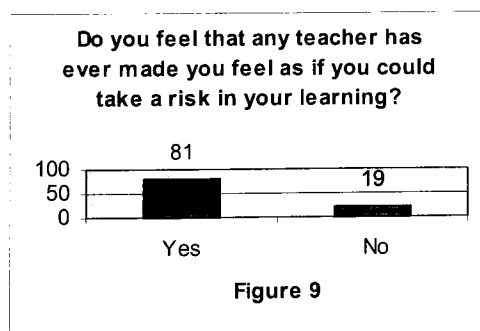


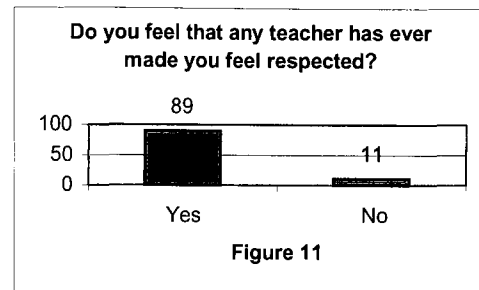
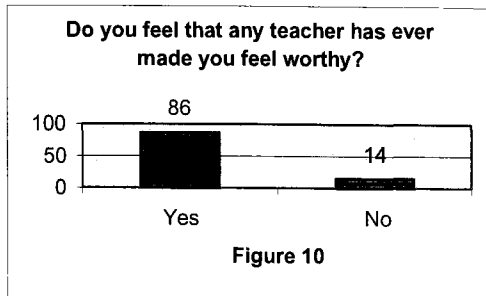
The next set of data is intended to display connections between student-teacher relationships and academic success. As evidenced in Figure 6, sixty-five percent of the students feel that it is important for teachers to display a personal interest in them. Further displayed in Figures 7 and 8 is evidence of the interdependence between the student-teacher relationship and its impact on academic success. Academic success, as illustrated here, is directly related to a positive student-teacher relationship. It is possible, then, that lack of academic success is partially attributed to more negative influences from a teacher.



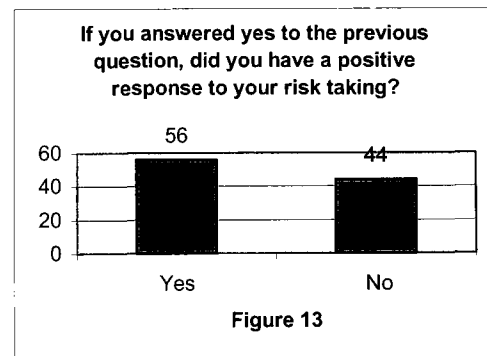
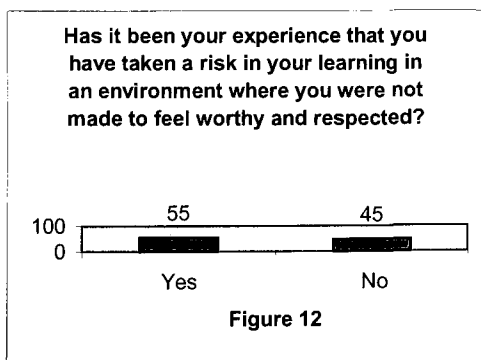


In Figures 9, 10, and 11 the data is reflective of the students perception of how teachers make them feel. The results displayed in Figure 9 indicate that a large majority-eighty-one percent of students have experienced teachers who have encouraged them to take risks, but there were nineteen percent of the respondents who felt that had never happened for them. Similar results of student perceptions are evident in Figures 10 and 11. While eighty-six percent of the respondents acknowledged that a teacher had made them feel worthy, it is important to note just how many (fourteen percent) had not ever been made to feel worthy by a teacher. Similarly, although eighty-nine percent of the respondents confirmed they had been made to feel respected by a teacher, eleven percent said they had not been made to feel respected by a teacher.



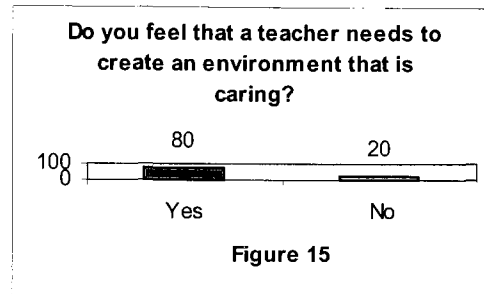
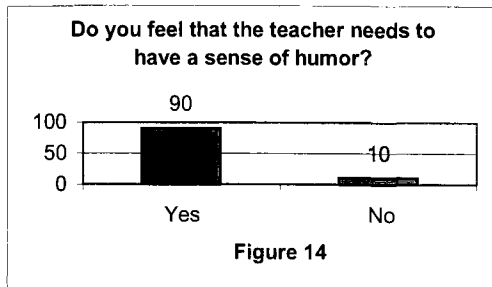


The answers provided in Figures 12 and 13 may be evidence of confusion on the part of some respondents, or they may show that a particularly large number of students in this sample were willing to take risks with their learning, regardless of their perceptions of the environment. Perhaps some students were indicating that the fact they took a risk did not encourage their teachers to show them a greater sense of worthiness, or more respect. Others may have been saying that they did take a risk in such a learning environment and they were pleasantly surprised when their risk-taking was positively acknowledged by the teacher.

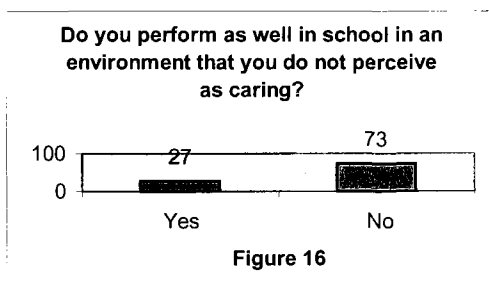


Student perceptions of classroom atmosphere and environment are displayed in Figures 14 and 15. Interestingly, ninety percent of the respondents favored the idea that a teacher needs to have a sense of humor, while ten percent said that it was not necessary. Similarly, eighty percent of the students indicated that a teacher needs to create an

environment that is caring, with twenty percent of the students indicating that this is not issue of importance.

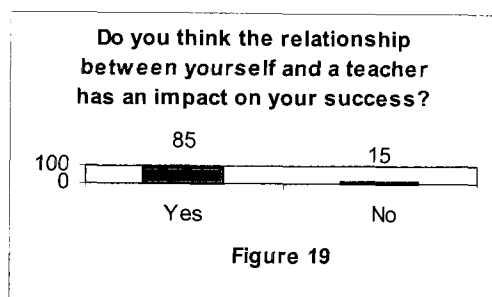
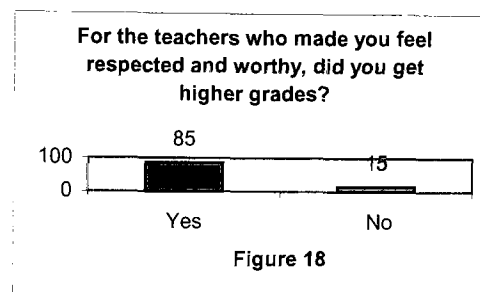
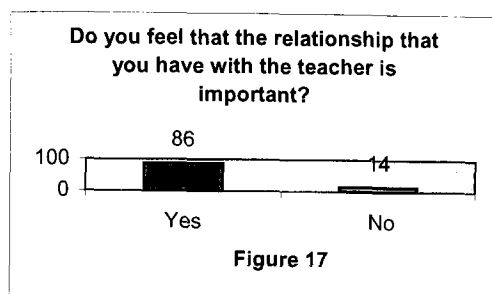


In Figure 16, the assumption of performance versus environment is challenged. As evident from the data, the students in the study feel they do not perform as well in an environment that they do not perceive as caring. Research supports this result, as much of the literature suggests that teachers need to create an environment that nurtures and supports students to engage them more productively in the learning process.



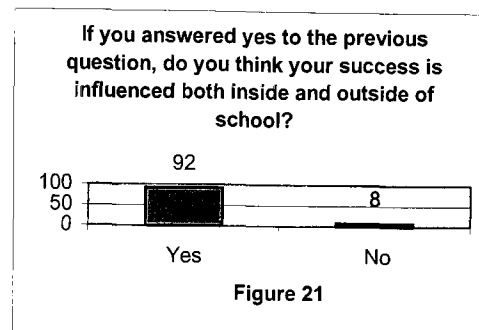
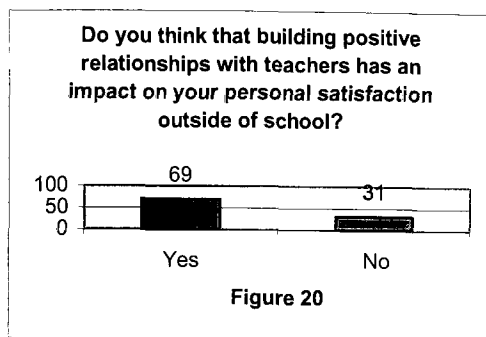
In Figure 17, the most telling finding is that fourteen percent of respondents did not feel the relationship they had with the teacher was important. The results in Figures 18, and 19 show a high degree of consistency of student responses. Eighty five percent of respondents acknowledged a connection between their relationships with teachers and academic success, and between feelings of respect and worthiness and their higher grades. However, a surprising fifteen percent reported that they did not necessarily get

higher grades for those teachers who made them feel worthy and respected, and they did not believe the relationship they had with the teachers had an impact on their success.



In yet one more area of this study, respondents provided evidence that is slightly at odds with the conclusions established in the literature review. Figure 20 shows that only sixty-nine percent of the respondents felt that positive relationships with teachers had an impact on their personal satisfaction outside of school, while thirty-one percent of the respondents disagreed with that proposition. As the results displayed in Figures 20 and 21 show, there is a clear division in this sample between those respondents whose perceptions are consistent with those reported most frequently in the literature and those (fewer in number but, nevertheless, important to understand) who do not accord teacher-student relationships with such importance as the literature suggests they have.

The survey also included four response questions that were optional.



The survey also included four response questions that were optional.

- Describe your idea of success in school?
- How important is the teacher to your success?
- Do you think that good teachers have a lasting effect on your life?
- Do you have any further comments?

Sixty-four out of eighty students chose to respond to the questions. Many of the responses were similar in nature, supporting the general hypothesis of the importance of student–teacher relationships.

The first question asked the students to define their idea of success in school. The majority of responses included the concept of good grades. Nonetheless, the responses also included the idea of having fun, building relationships with peers and teachers, and reaching personal goals. One student responded in the following way: “Success in school is success in life because success in school determines what you become.”

The second question in the survey asked the students to identify the importance of the teacher in their perception of success. Overwhelmingly, the students responded that the teacher is very important to their success. Comments such as the following are indicative of the students’ perceptions:

- “If I get a teacher that doesn’t care then I tend not do very well.”

- “The teacher totally is a major role in your learning and you do achieve better marks when they encourage you to do better.”
- “When your teacher becomes more of a friend it’s a better, more comfortable learning atmosphere.”
- “If I know that if the teacher really wants me to do well and shows that concern, it’ll help motivate me to achieve higher grades.”

In these responses, words that described teacher attributes and learning environments were key to identifying the teacher as an important contributor to students’ success.

“Encourage”, “understand”, “exciting”, “attitude”, “comfortable”, “supported”, “safe”, “coach”, “easier to ask questions”, “caring and fun”, were all examples of words that the students used to demonstrate their understanding of the qualifications that contribute to positive student–teacher relationships.

The next question on the student survey asked the students to respond to the idea of teachers having a lasting effect on people’s lives. Sixty-one out of sixty-five students responded with a definite *yes*. It was demonstrated in the student responses that the effect could be either positive or negative. As one student so clearly put it, “yes, you will always remember what your teachers taught and said to you, good or bad.” In just a few comments the ideals of teaching and learning were explained through sincere words from the students’ hearts.

The final question on the survey, “Do you have any further comments?” proved to be the most telling question of all. The following are some of the student responses:

- “It matters a lot whether teachers are there just to teach or are there to also have some fun, which makes the whole environment a lot better. Thanks for listening.”

- “Teachers with no humor in their work make it less desirable to be in that class and learn.”
- “These questions really made me think and realize how important my teachers are.”
- “Some teachers need to chill out and at least act like they’re having fun being there. If you think your teacher doesn’t want to be there, you won’t want to be either. No one likes being around grumpy people with no sense of humor.”
- “More people will show up to school and accomplish more when they feel wanted and welcome.”
- “With some personal experience I have had some “heartless” teachers--I failed to succeed.”
- “I think that a good teacher-student relationship is important to achieving and being successful. Successful means something different to everyone and having a good teacher that makes you feel important makes you feel successful whatever your definition may be. Having a teacher that listens and cares about your personal life makes you more successful and feel better about yourself from the moment you walk in their classroom.”
- “It is important for the teacher to realize different students learn in different environments and they must try to accommodate all individual needs. Everyone’s definition of success is different, and it’s the teacher’s responsibility to encourage the student to reach their potential to their level of success.”

### Interview Data

Because this was an anonymous survey, it did not including specific questions that would allow me to identify the classes in which the students had positive student-teacher relationships. Similarly, it did not lend itself to identifying the correlation between student-teacher relationships, academic achievement, and attendance. Therefore, the conclusions that I have been able to incorporate into this paper, regarding academic achievement, and attendance, are a result of the personal interviews.

The students who participated in the interviews were quick to describe an experience they had had as a student. Some students talked about their early years in elementary school and others spoke of the present day. The teacher's impact on a student was more readily identified in those instances where the student had not had a positive interaction with a teacher, confirming that educators must be cautious of their actions or reactions. One student in particular spoke of the time when, as a young student, he repeatedly saw the teacher whack the desk with a meter stick. This memory, albeit a negative one, may have been perceived differently if the teacher had developed a relationship with the students. Another student spoke of working on the yearbook. Passionately, she described the teacher as a caring individual who trusted the students to make decisions regarding the layout of the yearbook. To quote this student, "the teacher was really good, she let us decide which pictures went into the yearbook, and took time to talk with us." Teachers must be aware that their actions sometimes speak more loudly than their words.

Actions of teachers were what the students describe as characteristics that made them feel valuable and respected. Many of the students told stories of how a teacher had understood their feelings, respected them for who they were, and demonstrated an open,

friendly, acceptance of where they, the students, were grounded emotionally, physically, and spiritually. One student talked about losing a loved one. In one instance, a teacher volunteered to “listen” if he/she needed someone to talk to, and to quote the student, “the teacher made me feel like I was important”. Demonstrating caring, understanding, respect, friendliness, and attention to students are characteristics that students deem as favorable in a teacher.

Many of the students suggested that they had a favorite teacher. In an effort to obtain approval from, or please this teacher, the students worked hard, and in turn, that effort earned higher grades. One student remarked, “yes, I work harder for teachers [who have a positive relationship with me] because it’s easier to; otherwise you feel like you’re letting them down.” Other students indicated that they worked harder and obtained higher grades because their teachers, encouraged them, gave them positive feedback, and believed in them. All are attributes of creating positive relations, supporting the notion that most students achieve higher grades when they are involved in positive student-teacher relationships.

The personal interviews with the high school students confirmed the idea that attendance in a particular class is directly related to the relationship that is developed between the teacher and the student. Overwhelmingly, the students suggested that if they *liked* the teacher they went to class. “Liked” could more than likely be assumed to mean that that they had a good relationship with the teacher. Since the teacher has the ability to affect peer problems, help with feelings of inadequacy, and enhance the quality of student-teacher relations, the teacher is therefore an influence in the issue of attendance.

All students interviewed said that teachers are important to their success. Some of the student responses include:

- “Lots because if you totally hate the teacher and they have a terrible attitude then you won’t pay attention or do well.”
- “They are important because they give you the information that you need to succeed.”
- “Very important. I need to feel supported and understood.”
- “Very important. If the teacher is fun and understanding, they make you want to work. When they are strict and grumpy it makes you mad so you don’t want to do anything.”
- “A teacher is important to help coach you through tough times and give you a direction to the right answer.”
- “Depends on certain teachers, but some of them make a very big difference. Some have affected my grades completely.”
- “If a teacher reminds a student that the teacher believes in you and is willing to help, a student will succeed.”
- “Very important. They create either a comfortable or uncomfortable environment which either encourages or discourages students to learn and try.”
- “It is essential because having a teacher you dislike, makes working hard difficult.”

Each of these students described their idea of success, relating to characteristics that teachers portray, which support their success. Teachers who demonstrated an understanding of individual learning styles, make students feel confident, valued, respected, and were tolerant of students’ learning abilities were characteristics of ideal

teachers. As they described their ideal teachers, the students' emotions were evident on their faces.

The students supported the idea that teachers have a lasting effect on their lives. Their comments include:

- “Yes, my first favorite teacher was amazing but I never had that kind of relationship until grade six. She made me go outside my comfort zone to be a better me in all areas of academics.”
- “Yes, because the more they believe in me the more I believe in myself.”
- “Yes, because there always will be one thing about them (joke or knowledge) that will help you get through a rainy day.”
- “Definitely. A teacher that effects me continues to do so everyday of my life.”
- “Hell Yes! I strongly believe that I will remember Mr. H’s words of encouragement for the rest of my life.”
- “Yes, they are motivating and caring and constantly encourage students to improve – not only their academic standing but personal achievement and personal satisfaction as well.”
- “Yes, you will always think back to things they said, almost inspired by them sometimes.”
- “Yes they do, because the way you are shaped in your high school years affects the way you will live the rest of your life.”

The students who participated in the interviews confirmed the idea that teachers are important to their success both inside and outside of the school environment. Through out the interviews the students spoke sincerely about how teachers had made them

feel. They used expressions like, “talked to me like an equal”, “treated me like a friend”, “didn’t laugh at me if I made a mistake”, and “they displayed excitement about what they were doing”. All of these statements demonstrate that how teachers behave toward their students affects the learning that takes place, in turn shaping the development of young people.

Overall impressions from the students, in particular, those that participated in the interview, support the development of positive student-teacher relationships. Each student, without hesitation, said that teachers are very important to their success both inside and outside of the school setting. The students sincerely told stories of how teachers had made them feel. Not all stories are demonstrations of positive experiences, which, in my opinion speaks volumes about how a teacher behaves in a classroom and the importance of teachers’ actions speaking louder than words.

## Conclusion

Teaching is a multifaceted profession, but as the data suggests, the most important responsibility a teacher has is to demonstrate a sincere interest in the students. Moreover, the emotional involvement that has been substantiated by the educational literature further supports the findings in this research project. Since the art of teaching is based on a strong foundation of social skills, the educator must be consciously aware of social interactions and the impact of those actions. Educators, must also, create an environment that allows them to get to know the students, and one that demonstrates a sense of safety and security. The importance of developing positive relationships with students has been demonstrated in this research project. A large majority of the students responded that teachers are very important to their success and the influences of those relationships are long lasting.

A majority of subjects in the research project unanimously demonstrated support for the development of positive student-teacher relationships. The students in this study, as well as those in the research, confirm that positive student-teacher relationships promote more active engagement in the learning process, fostering higher grades, and attendance. Building relationships in the classroom is an essential component to the teaching and learning process. “The teacher’s success in facilitating learning is directly related to the quality of that relationship”. (Tiberius, 1999, p. 1). The students in this research project have confirmed that teaching is not one sided, but rather a complex, interactive, connection process between teacher, and student providing the opportunity for social development.

Being social creatures, and learning social skills from those around us, students are in a vulnerable position should their role models be somewhat lacking in such things as social graces, and communication skills. Many students come to rely on teachers as their source of modeling for refining the art of building relationships. Moreover, they use school as a practice ground for the social skills that will enable them in their futures. In schools, teachers are the dominant role models of appropriate behavior for developing relationships, which places significant emphasis on attaining and maintaining relationships with students. Through the development of these relationships, both parties benefit from the acquisition of respect, trust, and security, which in turn, fosters a society of young people who are well adjusted, responsible citizens.

Creating an environment that is perceived as caring is essential for optimum learning. The data collected in this study supports this statement as eighty percent of the subjects responded favorably to this idea. The subjects felt that they were more comfortable to take a risk in their learning, and they performed better academically if they were in an environment where they were respected and made to feel worthy.

In addition to being respected, students also want to be seen as individuals with emotions, feelings, and sensitivities that need to be addressed by caring individuals.

Many of our happiest memories involve other people and there is little of long-term value in our lives that is not in some way related to an ethic of care...[t]he care of others, the footprints on our heart, helps us become what we are. (Collison, quoted in Medina & Lunn, 1999, p. 450)

Overwhelmingly, the students in this study confirmed that they wanted teachers to treat them as equals, be their friend, someone they can talk to, and to empathize with their unique needs. Fouts (2001) supports this connection between teacher and student. He has labeled the connection as “affect attunement” which can be defined as “a special kind of

emotional connectedness in which the internal states of two people come together and match” (p. 14). The students in this study and particularly those involved in the interview process described their personal experiences of an emotional connectedness with a teacher.

Teachers who recognize that learning is not entirely a cognitive activity demonstrate an understanding of the qualities or characteristics of ideal teaching. As noted earlier in this study, ninety percent of the students identified having a sense of humor as an important characteristic that a teacher should possess. A sense of humor in the teaching environment can defuse conflict, squelch negative behavior, and enhance a teachable moment. A learning environment that radiates fun, and allows the students to laugh at their mistakes, or even the teacher’s mistake, is one which encourages learning, and provides a sense of security.

The students also identified additional characteristics demonstrated by teachers that they deem as essential. The students felt that teachers who were empathic of their needs, sensitive to their emotional states, and encouraged them to do their personal best, were better teachers, in that they [the teachers] confirmed a respect for the student’s individual learning needs, styles, and abilities.

Teachers who demonstrate a passion for teaching have a profound positive impact on student success. The students in this study emphasized that teachers are very important to achieve what each one of them deems as success. Eighty-five percent of the students surveyed indicated that teachers are important to their success, and an overwhelming number of students responded to a similar short answer question on the survey, also denoting that teachers are influential in enabling them to achieve success. To quote one

student, “I think that a good teacher-student relationship is important to achieving and being successful. Successful means something different to everyone and having a good teacher that makes you feel important makes you feel successful whatever your definition may be. Having a teacher that listens and cares about you personally makes you more successful and feel better about yourself from the moment you walk in their classroom.”

Not only are students affected by relationships with teachers while in the school, but the influences are a part of each student both inside and outside of school. Sixty-nine percent of the students felt that their success outside of school was indeed a result of the relationships that they had with teachers. One student said, “I am more confident outside of the school setting because one teacher told me that she believed in me and that I could accomplish almost anything”. To deny that educators impact students both inside and outside of the school setting is absurd. Adults, who have long been out of the formal school setting, can still tell stories of teachers and the way those teachers made them feel.

Building and sustaining student-teacher relationships in the classroom setting is an essential component to ideal teaching and learning. Personal qualities that both students and teachers demonstrate toward one another have the ability to enhance meaningful relationships. However, the teacher plays a prominent role in initiating positive relationships with students. Only once a positive relationship is developed between the teacher and the student is the environment safe and caring. Thus, caring environments support positive relationships and positive relationships support caring environments.

In closing, this quote, it's origin unknown, summarizes my feelings about education at the end of this project.

“Genuine education, leading from darkness to light, is accomplished with the brilliant flame of intuition, the passionate blaze of imagination, the luminous kindling of caring, and the radiant glow of love.”

## Implications for Education

Building positive student-teacher relationships is essential for learning. Therefore, in the school environment, there need to be people who share this idea as a common theme in their teaching philosophy. Although this may not be the case in all educational systems today, the concept of the importance of building positive student-teacher relationships can be supported in a variety of ways. To support this concept, the universities that prepare teachers could change their entrance requirements, and courses. Also, for those teachers already in the school system, professional development can foster the importance of this concept. Administrators and division office personnel can play a role in this, as they can become more aware of the qualities that ideal teachers possess, and encourage the hiring more teachers who approach that ideal. Students too, play a role, as the development of a positive relationship involves them. Students can be taught that in their lives they will most certainly come across individuals whom they are not too inclined to like, and they can be encouraged to be tolerant of individual differences.

People who enter the teaching profession need to be aware of what is involved in teaching and learning. Therefore, entrance into the teaching profession needs to be cautiously screened, and carefully explained to applicants considering the profession. As a requirement upon entrance into the teaching faculty, personal interviews between applicants and trained faculty members need to take place to evaluate the applicants' understanding of what is essential to learning. The applicants' communication skills, personality, and philosophy of teaching need to be carefully considered before they are accepted for entrance into the profession. Once they are accepted into the profession,

early placement into a school would identify to applicants and others, the applicants' suitability for the profession.

The quality of teacher training must also be considered in light of these findings. A portion of the training needs to impart the concept of the importance of effective communication, and provide opportunities for developing, and refining those skills. Workshops that involve leadership, and team building skills among the applicants, would provide the learning environment for the development of effective communication skills. Simultaneously, while developing communication skills in the workshops, the relationships that are developed between the students can be examined to identify characteristics that they [the students] deem as essential to creating positive relationships. Further to identifying characteristics in positive relationships, emphasis on the impact, influence, and importance of building relationships can be examined.

Generally, part of the teacher training must address the realities of everyday interaction in any given classroom. A heightened awareness of, and the understanding that in the school setting situations arise where they [the teacher], must diffuse conflict, empathize with individual needs, provide emotional security, and more importantly, a sincere desire to interact with students must be imparted in teacher training. This research project supports this idea as the students in the research felt good teachers showed greater empathy and a greater ability to accept student differences. Teacher education programs must be designed to prepare teachers for greater social and cultural diversity than they typically experience in university classrooms.

Subtle reminders, of the concepts mentioned in the previous paragraph, are necessary through out the careers of those already in the profession. Professional development

provides opportunities for workshops or courses that would refresh our minds of the importance of building positive relationships with our students. The workshops or courses could be designed to encourage self-reflection, peer coaching, or action research. Collaboration among colleagues, engaged in the encouragement of positive student-teacher relationships, is also a catalyst for modeling *ideal* teaching for other staff members. Alberta Learning, in collaboration with University of Calgary, University of Alberta and University of Lethbridge have developed a number of resources available through the Learning Resource Center to foster safe and caring school environments. Although these resources are promoting safe and caring schools, it is my opinion that these resources would encourage the development of positive student-teacher relationships.

Consideration, on the part of administrators, and division office personnel, for hiring new staff must also include the personal characteristics of that new teacher, and how the new teacher fits, or can accommodate him/herself into the school environment. Hiring practices require administrators to really understand the climate of a school, and to hire teachers that can bring to the teaching profession a true commitment to students. This may require an administration team to have training in personality indicators, such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, or trained to be astute interviewers. Administrators must have the skills to see beyond what a person has done, and come to an understanding or an explanation of whom they are hiring.

Once the teacher is in the classroom, the dynamics of the relationships between themselves and the students becomes the responsibility of the student as well. Students need to be taught to develop an understanding that differences in personality can

contribute to or demolish relationships. Tolerance, and acceptance of differences needs to be encouraged to sustain academic achievement, and personal satisfaction even in a situation that may be undesirable. Learning to still achieve, and be successful regardless of the impact of one person on another is a skill that will be required through out life. Students, who have learned this early in their careers as students, benefit from the experience, and can easily make the transition from one learning situation to another. The Safe and Caring School resources would support the development of tolerance and acceptance among students as well.

Building, and sustaining positive student-teacher relationships requires both parties to be equally involved. For those people thinking of entering the teaching profession, carefully consider your reasons for wanting to be a teacher. For those who are presently in the profession, also carefully consider your reasons for staying in teaching. The act of teaching implies more than just imparting information, you must be willing to give of yourself – you must get to know your students on a personal level and to some degree allow the students to know you on a personal level. As demonstrated in this research project, teachers are very influential in the lives of our students. We have all been students at one time or another, and when asked to recall a school experience it is most often that a teacher comes to mind, rather than a subject.

As I began to think about my passions for teaching at the onset of this project, I was sharing some ideas with my parents. My dad, seventy years of age, became physically agitated and I could see anger in his face. He said, “I will never forget how that miserable Mrs. D made me feel. I still dislike her to this very day”. Now that this research project is complete, I realize that it was that story that prompted my work. It was then, when I

realized that there are probably countless people who have similar feelings toward teachers. Therefore, it is my hope through this research to persuade teachers to take the necessary action to put an end to negative experiences that do in fact last a lifetime.

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Appendix A

Survey Blueprint

Guiding Questions	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Survey Questions
Introduction	Gender		1. Are you male or female?
	Grade		2. What grade are you in?
Outcomes	Student – teacher relationships are important	Criteria for favorite teachers	3. Do you have a favorite subject?
			4. Do you have a favorite teacher?
			5. Does your favorite teacher teach your favorite subject?
			6. Does your favorite teacher display an interest in you?
			7. Does your favorite teacher encourage you to work harder?
Importance of Issue	Impact of student – teacher relationships	Correlation between academic success and student – teacher relationships	8. Is it important to you that teachers display a personal interest in you?
			9. Has it been your experience that when a teacher displays a personal interest in you that you achieve higher grades?
			10. Has it been your experience that a teacher has negatively influenced your success in achieving higher grades?
	Actions or qualities of teacher	Criteria for relationship building	11. Do you feel that any teacher has ever made you feel like you could take a risk in your learning?
			12. Do you feel that any teacher has ever made you feel worthy?
			13. Do you feel that any teacher has ever made you feel respected?

			14. Has it been your experience that you have taken a risk in your learning in an environment where you were not made to feel worthy and respected?
			15. If you answered yes to the previous question, did you have a positive response to your risk taking?
			16. Do you feel that a teacher needs a sense of humor?
			17. Do you feel that a teacher needs to create an environment that is caring?
			18. Do you perform as well in school in an environment that is not perceived as caring?
Results	Student –teacher relationships impact success both in and outside of school	To determine validity of issue	19. Do you feel that the relationship that you have with the teacher is important?
			20. For the teacher who made you feel respected and worthy, did you get higher grades in that class?
			21. Do you think the relationship between yourself and the teacher has an impact on your success?
			22. Do you think that building positive relationships with teachers has an impact on your personal satisfaction outside of school?
			23. If you answered yes to the previous question, do you think your success is influenced both inside and outside of school?
Conclusion		To provide an opportunity to clarify and elaborate on ideas	24. Are you willing to participate in a personal interview to discuss this topic further?

## Appendix B

### Interview Blueprint

Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Interview Question
Introduction		To establish interviewee's role	1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and your life as a student.
Outcomes	Student – teacher relationships are important		2. Please describe for me an experience you had as a student, either a good experience or a bad experience?
	Actions or qualities of teacher	Criteria for relationship building	3. Describe for me instances or situations in your experiences as a student that lead you to believe that you were respected and valued?
			4. What did the teacher do, or what characteristics did he/she have that made you feel valuable?
			5. Did you feel as if you could take risks with your learning in that classroom? Why or Why not?
Importance of Issue	Impact of student – teacher relationships	Correlation between academic achievement and student – teacher relationships	6. Describe for me your work habits or behavior in that classroom.
			7. Do you think that if you were made to feel respected and worthy you would work harder?
			Do you have higher grades in the courses where you have developed a positive relationship between yourself and the teacher? Why do you think that is?
Results	Student – teacher relationships impact success both in and outside of school	Validity of issue	9. Do you think that the relationship between yourself and the teacher is an important influence

			in what you consider personal success?
			10. How important are your teachers, to your success?
			11. Do you think that you are more successful inside and outside of school because of the relationships between you and your teachers? If so, in what ways?
			12. What kinds of things do teachers do to have a lasting positive effect on your life?
Conclusion	Validation of Interviewee	To provide an opportunity to clarify and elaborate on ideas	13. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your life as a student.
2. Please describe for me an experience you had as a student, either a good experience or a bad experience?
3. Describe for me instances or situations in your experiences as a student that led you to believe that you were respected and valued?
4. What did the teacher do, or what characteristics did he/she have that made you feel valuable?
5. Did you feel as if you could take risks with your learning in that classroom? Why or Why not?
6. Describe for me your work habits or behavior in that classroom?
7. Do you think that if you were made to feel worthy and respected you would work harder?
8. Do you have higher grades in the courses where you have developed a positive relationship between yourself and the teacher? Why do you think that is?
9. Have you experienced what you perceive as a “bad” teacher? What made that teacher “bad”?
10. How important are your teachers, to your success?
11. Do you think that you are more successful inside and outside of school because of the relationships between you and your teachers? If so, in what ways?
12. What kinds of things can teachers do to have lasting positive effects on your life?
13. Do you have anything else you would like to add?