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# Effects of the Classroom-Assigned Tasks and Responsibilities Program In Middle Schools

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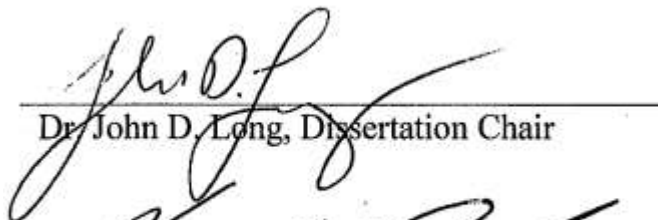In Middle Schools

by

Holly Faye Avis

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

Effects of the Classroom-Assigned Tasks and Responsibilities Program

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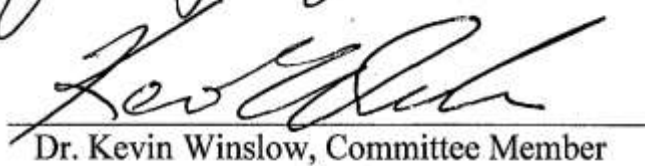
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Dr. Kevin Winslow, Committee Member          2/24/17
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_____          _____
Dr. Yvonne Gibbs, Committee Member          2/24/17
                                              Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Holly Faye Avis

Signature: _____ Date: 2/24/17

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the professors at Lindenwood University of the doctoral program for their continued guidance and support. Specifically, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. John Long, Dr. Kevin Winslow, and Dr. Yvonne Gibbs. I would also like to thank my sister, Laticia Garbarini for venturing through this educational journey with me. We did it! My gratitude extends to my loving and extremely patient husband, Andrew, for supporting me during this process. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Lamona Price, for instilling the value of education, persistence, and encouraging her two daughters never to settle for mediocrity.

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities in middle school classrooms. This mixed methods research study focused on perceptions held by students and educational professionals, both classroom teachers and administrators, of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program in relation to overall classroom environment, overall school environment, and students' sense of connectedness to the school. Quantitative data consisted of secondary data obtained from a survey taken by students exposed to the program and students not exposed to the program. Student survey results were compared to determine if a difference of perceptions existed between the two groups. Qualitative data were collected from educational professionals via electronic surveys and face-to-face interviews. Participant responses were documented and analyzed. The quantitative data showed no significant impact of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program related to students' perceptions; however, the qualitative data pertaining to educators' perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program demonstrated a multitude of positive effects of the program. According to the qualitative data, students exposed to the program exhibited a multitude of positive changes, whereas students not exposed to the program did not exude beneficial changes. The researcher concluded that although the quantitative data could not support the effectiveness of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program, the qualitative data provided enough evidence to support the validity of the program.

**Table of Contents**

# List of Tables

## Chapter One: Introduction

**Background of Researcher**

The researcher taught middle school English Language Arts for eight years prior to this study. The researcher initially worked in a rural, Midwest school district at the beginning of her career. During the first year of teaching, the researcher observed students' lack of classroom responsibility, willingness to participate, and lack of cooperative nature, as well as a decrease in students' intrinsic motivation to perform academically and be responsible classroom citizens. Additionally, students lacked a sense of connectedness to the classroom and overall school community. Moreover, students' perceptions of the classroom and overall school environment were mixed. As a result, the researcher began assigning students in the classroom with small tasks and responsibilities. Classroom jobs were assigned to select students who consistently showed minimal personal, academic, and classroom responsibility. The researcher wanted to test informally the impact of assigning tasks and responsibilities on students' overall performance within the classroom. Ultimately, the researcher wanted to see if students responded, positively or negatively, to having classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities.

Over the course of one year, positive changes were observed in students who were assigned tasks and responsibilities within her class. The following changes were observed in many students: a) student-teacher relationships were strengthened, b) student attitude toward the class improved, c) student outlook on school was more positive, d) student self-confidence was noticeably better, e) students seemed more motivated to learn, f) students were more willing to participate in learning new things, g) students were

more willing to work cooperatively with their classroom peers, h) student leaders began

to emerge, i) student grades increased, j) student attendance improved, and k) the number

of students' behavior referrals decreased.

The researcher thought the changes in student behavior were effects of the

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities; therefore, the researcher decided to assign

classroom responsibilities to all of her students the following year.

During the second year of implementation of student-assigned tasks and

responsibilities within the classroom, the researcher took a more structured approach.  A

list of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities (referred to as jobs) was created by

the researcher, and each job was given a name that was easy for students to remember.

Many job titles, in fact, were alliterative in nature.  The job titles included the following:

**Attendance Assistant** - The job requirements included taking attendance

promptly at the beginning of class and relaying the results to the teacher.

**Binder Buddy** - The job requirements included organizing and mending

individual students' binders used for organizing classroom materials.

**Book Buddy** - The job requirements included managing, organizing, and

mending classroom novels, textbooks, and reference materials.

**Class Comedian** - The job requirements included delivering a school-appropriate

joke once a day to classmates when prompted by the teacher.

**Clean-Up Crew** - The job requirements included cleaning and organizing the

classroom, as well as monitoring classroom waste materials.

**Collection Crew** - The job requirements included collecting assignments and

materials from classmates.

**Emergency Manager** - The job requirements included managing the classroom emergency procedures, ensuring peers followed emergency protocol, and reflecting on emergency drill procedures.

**Flexible Floater** - The job requirements included completing tasks of other students who were absent or unable to complete their jobs.

**Greeter** - The job requirements included greeting classmates at the door before class with a friendly greeting (i.e. high five, smile, etc.).

**Note Taker** - The job requirements included taking neat and organized notes to share with absent students.

**Pass-Out Partner** - The job requirements included distributing assignments and materials to classmates.

**Reliable Runner** - The job requirements included completing teacher errands within the building in a timely and effective manner.

**Technology Team** - The job requirements included managing and cleaning teachers' electronic devices.

**Vigilant Volume Control** - The job requirements included remaining cognizant of the volume level of the classroom and politely reminding classmates to quiet their voices.

After introducing the jobs, the researcher explained the individual tasks and responsibilities each job entailed. Following this explanation, students were required to complete a job application that included providing personal information, past work and educational experience, as well as a list of character references. Throughout the first year of implementation in her own classroom, the researcher continued to observe positive

changes in the students.  In fact, after the noticeable changes in student behavior were

observed, such as improved attendance and more positive peer-to-peer interactions, other

teachers in the researcher's building began to implement the jobs in their own

classrooms.  The researcher, ultimately, wanted to test if these observations concerning

student improvement could be supported with data.

**Purpose of the Dissertation**

The purpose of this study was to determine students' and educators' perceptions

of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program (jobs) in a middle school

classroom, with regard to students' perceptions of the classroom environment, school

environment, and overall sense of connectedness with the school.  The best educators

consistently looked for ways to improve students and educators' school perceptions, to

better ensure success in future education, as well as the work force.  Assigned tasks and

responsibilities promoted leadership, soft skills, and other 21st century skills; these

proficiencies were some of the many that employers looked for in future employees.

Changes in working conditions in the 21st Century might require a new set of skills and

educators must change their paradigm of classroom management; this paradigm needed

to encourage civic participation, like the democratic classroom management approach

(Cetin, 2013; Edelstein, 2011; Meier, 2003). In essence, "Schools must cultivate the

dispositions needed in broader society and become miniature democratic societies where

students learn how their actions affect the well-being and success of the group" (Shields,

2011, p. 51). This was true in the researcher's own classroom.

Dempster and Lizzio (2007) supported the need for leadership education by

stating, "There seems to be a growing shortage of people willing to take on leadership

roles in their careers" (p. 276).  Moreover, there was "a war being waged for leadership

talent," and in the education sector, "the pool of potential leaders is known to have

declined from that available even a few years ago" (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007, p. 276).

Dempster and Lizzio (2007) continued by adding, "There seems to be a decline in general

civic participation that may contribute to a declining interest in community leadership"

(p. 277). More importantly, leadership skills were more often learned than inherent (as

cited in Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  The researcher felt it was important to address the

leadership issue with students.

Students spent a great amount of their time during a school day in the classroom

environment.  Teachers, then, should establish classroom management structures, which

encourage student learning, as well as promote civic participation from all individuals; a

democratic classroom management approach provided teachers a platform for these goals

(Cetin, 2013; Edelstein, 2011; Meier, 2003).  Edelstein (2011) asserted, "Learning

democracy is not just an extension of the serious business of learning for life.  It is the

serious business of learning for life and, as such; it must be a central goal of education in

school" (p.127). The implementation of a more democratic classroom would put this idea

into practice.

**Rationale**

There was a gap, as of this writing, in the literature concerning the students and

educators' perceptions of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities.  Research was

conducted about providing students more power within the classroom; however,

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities had not been exclusively examined.

Teachers were traditionally in charge of student behavior at school, but the idea of shared

responsibility, or including students in the management process, was a growing trend (Marzano, 2011).  In order to gain students' involvement in managing the classroom and the overall school environment, Marzano suggested in 2011, "Students need to be invited" to assist in management strategies by "designing a class list of individual rights and responsibilities along with behaviors that support these responsibilities" (p.86). Students would be more likely to adhere to classroom and school policies if they were an essential part of creating and carrying them out.  Behavior management was as much the students' responsibility as it is the teachers.'  Additionally, students could be held accountable by their classroom peers, as well as the classroom teacher.

Inviting students to be active participants in the learning environment helped develop student autonomy.  Student autonomy "is better thought of from a more inclusive standpoint that includes cognitive choices as well as organizational and procedural choices" Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004, p. 100).  More specifically, "autonomy involves students' need for latitude over decisions in school with regard to the 'initiation, inhibition, maintenance, and redirection of activities,'" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 65). In essence, students responded positively to being involved in decisions made within the educational setting.

When educators took a non-authoritarian approach to management and encouraged student autonomy, studies showed students benefited in several ways (Stefanou et al., 2014).  Another positive effect of a non-authoritarian approach was an increase in intrinsic motivation (Stefanou et al., 2004).  Lastly, students reported an overall higher sense of enjoyment in classes where student autonomy was promoted

(Ryan & Deci, 2000).  Educational structures that encouraged student autonomy had several lasting effects.

Being job-ready was another top priority for educators in the 21st century; employers sought individuals prepared to meet every day workforce challenges (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  Often, individuals entered the workforce without the necessary skills to be successful.  It seemed educational institutions were not fully preparing students for the challenges they would face in their professional careers.  One skill employers sought was leadership; thus, students must develop strong leadership skills during their academic experience, so they could implement those skills in their future jobs (Bisland, Karnes, & Cobb, 2004; Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Marques, 2012; Rost, 1993).

Employers' needs were changing in the 21st century; consequently, individuals were entering the workforce without all the necessary skills needed to be successful. This transformation was due to the following factors: "economic conditions, globalization, and advancements in technology" (Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012, p. 2). Individuals needed a new skillset when entering the workforce in the 21st century. It was up to educational institutions to better prepare individual students.

Educational institutions must provide learning opportunities for all students to identify, develop, and hone leadership skills.  Some research in the area of student leadership was completed and supported the need for teaching leadership skills in the classroom. In fact, many members of academia accepted the notion that organizational leadership theories could be effectively applied to educational settings (Baba & Ace, 1989; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Cheng, 1994; Harvey, Royal, & Stout, 2008; Walumbwa, Wu, & Ojode, 2004). These organizational theories simply needed to be

adapted to meet the needs of specific learning environments and individual students within the educational arena.

Colleges and universities worked to develop leadership skills in their curriculums. In fact, many colleges and universities made leadership development in students a main focus to ensure they graduated students who were career ready (Shertzer et al., 2005). Post-high school institutions worked vigorously to prepare individual students with the professional skills the workforce community desperately needed. Since post-high school institutions were moving leadership to the top of their priorities, K-12 schools must also prioritize leadership development.  It was imperative the leadership training started early in students' educational careers, so individual skills could be honed and perfected over time.  Additionally, incorporating leadership training earlier in K-12 programs allowed for easier transitions in the future.

**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

The central research question for this study was the following: How do students and educators perceive classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities?  For this mixed-method research study, the researcher focused on the following three hypotheses and three questions:

**H1**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall classroom environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

**H2**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall school environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

**H3**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and
responsibilities program will report a higher level of connectedness than students who did
not participate in the program.

**RQ1**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions
of the overall environment of classrooms, which utilize the classroom-assigned tasks and
responsibilities program, and their perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms,
which do not utilize classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

**RQ2**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions
of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the
school environment as a whole?

**RQ3**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perception
of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of
connectedness to the school?

**Limitations**

Many limitations existed within the constraints of the conducted study.  First, the
researcher was a teacher in one school where the study was performed; however, it was
her third year teaching in the participating building.  The researcher was familiar with the
setting where the study took place.  Second, the researcher knew some of the classroom
teachers and administrators involved in the research prior to the study.  She also
continued working relationships with many of the teachers and administrators involved in
the study throughout the data collection period.  Third, the researcher was an eighth grade
teacher; this served as a limitation, because some of the students in the study were eighth
grade students, as well.  However, the students' identities remained unknown to the

researcher. The aforementioned limitations must be considered when evaluating this study.

**Definition of Terms**

**21st century skills** or applied skills were soft skills needed in the next century to be competitive in the workforce (as cited in in Robles, 2012).

**Autonomy**, for the purpose of this study, was defined as "students' need for latitude over decisions in school with regard to the 'initiation, inhibition, maintenance, and redirection of activities'" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 65).

**Character** was defined as including six key traits according to the Character Counts! Coalition: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship (Allman, 1999).

**Hard skills**, according to Marcel Robles (2012), was "the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job" (p. 453). Another definition of hard skills used for this study was "the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, to do something well; competent excellence in performance; and a craft, trade, or job requiring manual dexterity or special training in which a person has competence and experience" (as cited in Robles, 2012, pp. 456-457).

**Leadership** was defined as "the time when a person holds the position of a leader; the power or ability to lead" (Leadership, 2013, p. 2).

**Responsibility** was defined as "a duty or task that you are required or expected to do . . . because it is morally right, legally required, etc." (Leadership, 2013, p. 7).

**Soft skills** were defined as "interpersonal qualities, also known as people skills, and personal attributes that one possesses" (Robles, 2012, p. 453).

**Tasks and Responsibilities** were assigned duties each student was required to complete during the school day. Examples included the aforementioned list of jobs.

**Summary**

The researcher, a middle school teacher in a Midwest suburban middle school, conducted this study to investigate students' and educators' perceptions of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities in a middle school classroom with regard to students' perceptions of the classroom environment, school environment, and sense of connectedness with the school.  Since the students' reactions were overwhelmingly positive during the first few years of implementation of the jobs and responsibilities program, the researcher wanted to collect formal data concerning her observations about the classroom jobs she created for her individual classroom, since students' reactions were overwhelmingly positive during the first few years of implementation.

**Chapter Two: The Literature Review**

**Classroom Management**

Effective classroom management was a goal for teachers because it could determine student achievement and success within a classroom environment (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993).  Classroom teachers and administrators could effectively and productively manage students by inviting them to actively participate in developing the classroom management structure, practices and procedures; moreover, educational professionals could encourage the development of students' autonomy.  By allowing individual students to take ownership within the classroom, students' actions and perceptions could be altered in a positive and profound way (Stefanou et al., 2004).

Teachers and other educational professionals were traditionally in charge of student behavior at school and in other learning environments; however, the idea of shared responsibility, or including students in the management process, was a growing trend in years recent to this writing (Marzano, 2011).  In order to gain students' motivation and involvement in managing the classroom, Marzano 2011 suggested, "students need to be invited" to assist in management strategies by "designing a class list of individual rights and responsibilities along with behaviors that support these responsibilities" (p.86).  Individual students would be more likely to adhere to classroom policies and procedures if they were an essential part of creating and carrying out those policies and procedures.  Classroom behavior management was as much the students' responsibility as it was the teachers.'

Inviting individual students to be active participants in the classroom helped develop and encourage student autonomy within the learning environment. Student autonomy "is better thought of from a more inclusive standpoint that includes cognitive choices as well as organizational and procedural choices" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 100). More specifically, "autonomy involves students' need for latitude over decisions in school with regard to the 'initiation, inhibition, maintenance, and redirection of activities'" (Connell, 1990, p. 65). Individual students needed to feel as if they had some power and choice over what happened to them within the learning environment. In essence, students responded positively to being involved in decisions made within the classroom setting, as opposed to students who were not allowed to participate in the managerial decisions; therefore, teachers and other educational professionals worked to provide more opportunities for individual students to take more ownership within the classroom setting.

When educators took a non-authoritarian approach to management and encouraged more student autonomy within the classroom setting, studies showed students benefitted in a variety of ways (Stefanou et al., 2004). In fact, Lewin, Lippitt, and White in 1939 concluded that this new and supportive approach, often referred to as democratic leadership style, "influenced student motivation, participation, and completion of work by creating an atmosphere in which students persisted and were productive in the absence of a leader" (as cited in Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 99). Another positive effect of a non-authoritarian approach was an increase in intrinsic motivation (Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, & Deci, 1978, pp. 443-446). Lastly, students reported an overall higher sense of enjoyment in classes where student autonomy was promoted (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Classroom structures that encouraged student autonomy had lasting effects in the areas of motivation, participation, work completion, and overall classroom environment.

Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner (2004) identified three types of student-autonomy support that educational professionals could employ in their classrooms: organizational autonomy, procedural autonomy, and cognitive autonomy. Organizational autonomy support encouraged "student ownership of environment and can include teacher behaviors that offer students opportunities for choice over environmental procedures, such as developing rules together, or latitude over rate of progress toward a goal, such as selecting due dates for assignments" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 101). Organizational autonomy allowed students to be more proactive in the educational setting.

The second type of autonomy support outlined in the aforementioned research was procedural autonomy support. Procedural autonomy support was identified as being able to promote and enhance "student ownership of form and can include teacher behaviors such as offering students choice of media to present ideas-for instance, making a graph or a picture to illustrate a science concept" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 101). Providing procedural autonomy support gave students choice and a sense of voice in their learning environment. Procedural autonomy support seemed to have positive effects on students within the educational setting.

The third type of autonomy support suggested for teachers in the research was cognitive autonomy support. Cognitive autonomy support could strengthen and improve

> student ownership of the learning and can include teacher behaviors such as
>
> asking students to justify or argue for their point, asking students to generate their

own solution paths, or asking students to evaluate their own and others' solutions

or ideas." (Turner, 1995, pp. 410-441)

This supportive autonomy approach could provide students opportunities to practice

problem-solving skills.  Moreover, supportive autonomy support improved students'

opportunities to think critically.

In order to establish effective classroom management, educational professionals

should consider the following: students should be invited to take part in developing and

implementing classroom procedures; in addition, classrooms should be run in a non-

authoritarian style that promotes student autonomy.  Incorporating these two principals

can be beneficial to students and the overall classroom environment in all learning

environments.

**Character Education**

A quality education, previous to this writing, was defined in a multitude of ways.

"We [educators] have too often equated excellence of education with the quantity of the

content learned, rather than with the quality of character the person develops" (Shields,

2011, p. 48).  Quality education was often defined by how students performed on high

stakes assessments.  Students' character and sense of morality however were often

ignored.  Developing moral and just citizens for society was not a top priority. Since the

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the real purpose of education was lost due to the

hyper-focus on students' mastery of content standards related to government-mandated

curriculums.  Shields (2011), however, asserted, "Character is the aim of education"

(p.49), and developing moral individuals was the ultimate goal for educational

institutions.  Additionally, Martin Luther King Jr. (1947) stated, "intelligence plus

character-that is the true goal of education" (as cited in Shields, 2011, p. 10).  A truly

educated individual must have knowledge related to various contents as well as

developed and honed character traits.  If educators refused to infuse morality into the

curriculum, individual students would be left without a sufficient education.

Historically, "in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals:

to help young people become smart and to help them become good" (Lickona, 1991, p.

6).  Student knowledge and technical skills were important; nonetheless, individuals

needed more than knowledge and technical skills to be successful in 2016 society.

Content and character were both important aspects in a quality education because

"schools cannot be ethical bystanders at a time when our society is in deep moral trouble"

(Lickona, 1991, p. 5).  Educational institutions had a responsibility to students and

society to embed morality and ethics in the curriculums current at the time.

According to Character Education Partnership (as cited in Lickona, 1991), eleven

principles existed that educational organizations used to determine if a program was, in

fact, an effective character education program.  The following were identified as

attributes of a quality character education program:

1)  Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good
    character.

2)  Character must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling,
    and behavior.

3)  Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and
    comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of
    school life.

4) The school must be a caring community.

5) To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.

6) Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.

7) Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.

8) The school staff must become and learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.

9) Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.

10) The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.

11) Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest character. (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2002, pp. 1-4)

Modeling quality character was considered extremely important.  Moral character must be molded because:

In order for children's moral capacities to become fully formed character dispositions, their natural empathy must develop into sustained concern for others, their sense of fairness must grow into a commitment to justice, their desire for self-control must grow into a sense of personal responsibility, and their feeling of

obligation must become a determination to contribute to noble purposes beyond

the self. (Damon, 2010, p. 37)

Individuals, specifically children, were not born with strong character traits and a moral

compass; therefore, these skills must be developed and honed over the course of an

extended time period.  Moreover, educational professionals and "teachers should make

the effort to present admirable examples to the young, and they should regularly discuss

with students the deep questions of meaning, purpose, and what really matters in life"

(Damon, 2010, p. 39).

What really matters in life?  What character traits were identified as being most

important for individuals to demonstrate?  According to the Character Counts! Coalition

(as cited in Allman, 1999), respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and

citizenship were the six critical traits for students to develop in order to be successful and

members of a progressive society (Allman, 1999).  The following were the Six Pillars of

Character identified by Character Counts!:

**Trustworthiness**: Be honest (do not deceive, cheat, or steal) be reliable (do what

you say you will do); have the courage to do the right thing; build a good

reputation; be loyal (stand by your family, friends, and country).

**Respect**: Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule; be tolerant of

differences; use good manners without bad language; be considerate of the

feelings of others; do not threaten, hit, or hurt anyone; deal peacefully with anger,

insults, and disagreements.

**Responsibility**: Do what you are supposed to do; persevere; always do your best; use self-control; be self-disciplined; think before you act; be accountable for your choices

Fairness: Play by the rules; take turns and share; be open-minded; do not take advantage of others; do not blame others carelessly.

**Caring**: Be kind; be compassionate and show you care; express gratitude; forgive others; help people in need.

**Citizenship**: Do your share to make your school and community better; cooperate; get involved in community affairs; stay informed; vote; be a good neighbor; obey laws and rules; respect authority; protect the environment. (as cited in Cahill, 2006, p. 33)

These traits, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship, once fully developed, could transfer to other areas in individuals' lives (Shields, 2011).  Character was an important element of education because it transferred to other areas of individuals' lives; once individuals developed strong character traits, they could use those at home, in their future jobs, or during interaction with other organizations, they were involved in (Shields, 2011).  Teaching moral character and ethics in educational institutions led to these traits being exhibited in other areas of individuals' lives.

Civic character was also identified as of utmost importance when developing a moral citizen for society (Boston, 2005).  Individuals from 20 organizations created a shared vision for public schools in America that included the following: "In order to sustain and expand the American experiment in liberty and justice, students must acquire

civic character-the knowledge, skills, virtues, and commitments necessary for engaged and responsible citizenship" (Boston, 2005, p. 13).  Additionally, Singh (2001), in her elementary classroom, used a classroom job chart to reinforce charter traits, such as responsibility and teamwork; this strategy also encouraged students' civic participation in the classroom setting.  According to Singh (2001), character education showed many positive benefits, including the following: the classroom began to be "calmer, more positive," students began to "hold one another and themselves to higher standards," and character traits began to be observed at home (Singh, 2001, p. 49).  Developing quality and strong character had many lasting benefits for both individuals, organizations, and society as a whole.

**The Need for Leadership in the 21st Century**

Educators were responsible for educating all students and preparing them for future challenges.  It was imperative students had the skills to overcome academic, social, and professional challenges.  Being job-ready was a top priority; employers were seeking individuals prepared to meet every day workforce challenges (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  One skill employers were looking for was leadership; thus, students must develop strong leadership skills during their academic experience, so they could use those skills in their future jobs (Bisland et al., 2004; Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Marques, 2012; Rost, 1993).

Employers' needs were changing in the 21st century; consequently, individuals entered the workforce without all the necessary skills needed to be successful.  This transformation was due to the following factors: "economic conditions, globalization, and advancements in technology" (Pedersen et al., 2012, p. 2). This movement as a transition from the informational age to the conceptual age, where

our 'left brain' (the logical sequential, analytical side of our brain that has

powered our United States economy during the information age) is no longer

sufficient. Moreover, the qualities and capabilities that were once thought

frivolous, including the 'right brain' skills of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness

and meaning, will now determine who succeeds. (Pedersen et al., 2012, p. 2)

Schools should adapt to meet the needs of these workforce changes by providing

learning opportunities for students to identify, develop, and hone leadership skills. Some

research in the area of student leadership was completed and supported the need for

teaching leadership skills in the classroom. In fact, members of academia accepted the

notion that organizational leadership theories could be effectively applied to educational

settings (Baba & Ace, 1989; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Cheng, 1994; Harvey et al.,

2008; Walumbwa et al., 2004).

Colleges and universities worked to apply leadership skills in their curriculums.

In fact, many colleges and universities made leadership development in students a main

focus to ensure pupils graduated career ready (Shertzer et al., 2005). Since post-high

school institutions moved leadership to the top of their priorities, K-12 schools must also

bring leadership development to the forefront of their to-do lists.

Dempster and Lizzio (2007) supported the need for leadership education by

stating, "There seems to be a growing shortage of people willing to take on leadership

roles in their careers" (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007, p. 276). Moreover, there was "a war

being waged for leadership talent. In the education sector, the pool of potential leaders is

known to have declined from that available even a few years ago" (as cited in Dempster

& Lizzio, 2007, p. 276). Dempster and Lizzio (2007) continued by adding, "There seems

to be a decline in general civic participation that may contribute to a declining interest in

community leadership" (p. 277).  More importantly, leadership skills were more often

learned than inherent (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  It was apparent educators should strive to

address the leadership issue with students.

**Defining Leaders**

Many individuals questioned what leadership really was.  According to Rice

(2011), "Effective leadership begins with the individual.  Until a person is self-actualized,

external relationships and communications are often unpredictable and potentially

flawed" (p. 28).  Moreover, it was suggested, "Young people need exposure to situations

that require them to lead, in order to develop individual skills that will enable them to be

successful group and community leaders" (Rice, 2011, p. 28).  Additionally, "Effective

student leaders step out and risk failure because they know failure and disappointment are

a normal part of growth," and they "work hard to learn about leadership and welcome

opportunities to hone their skills for leadership" (Rice, 2011, p. 28).  Educators,

therefore, should consistently provide opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Leaders were highly sought after and, traditionally found with a similar technique:

"identify those high potentials in high school, college or in the workforce and provide

that select group leadership development opportunities" (Van Velsor & Wright, 2012, p.

2).  The Center for Creative Leadership's plan, Leadership Beyond Boundaries (LBB),

aimed to expand the potential pool of future leaders by focusing on leadership

development in the early years.  The LLB conducted a study that surveyed business,

government, nonprofit, and education leaders and found that 95% of respondents

believed leadership development should have begun by age 21; the study also found 90%

of participants believed leadership development opportunities should be included in every

students' educational experience (Van Velsor & Wright, 2012).

**Leadership Identification Instruments**

How can leadership in students be measured?  What tools can educators use to

gauge students' preparedness to lead?  Several different tools were identified for

educators to determine individuals' leadership abilities.  One instrument, constructed by

Roets (1986), was named the Roets Rating Scale for Leadership - RRSL; this scale

consisted of 26 items placed on a five-point scale.  "The ratings are as follows: almost

always, quite often, sometimes, not very, often, and never. This self-rating instrument

was created for students in grades 5 through 12 with the approximate ages of 10 through

18" (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  A tool such as the RRSL was designed to help students self-

identify their leadership abilities and skills.

Since multiple self-rating instruments were available, educators were not limited

to using just one.  Another leadership identification tool created was the Leadership Skills

Inventory (LSI).  Bisland, Karnes, and Cobb (2004) identified and explained how

educators used the LSI to promote leadership in school.  The instrument identified "nine

areas of leadership that should be developed.  They include fundamentals of leadership,

written communication skills, speech communication skills, character building skills,

decision-making skills, group dynamic skills, problem-solving skills, personal skills, and

planning skills" (Bisland et al., 2004, p. 2).

The LSI rating scale helped educators determine students' current levels, at the

time of testing, in the nine areas and provided teachers a map for areas in need of

improvement.  It was designed, so "students could rate and score themselves, and then

they plotted their scores on a leadership profile that provides a visual representation of

areas of strength and areas in need of further instruction" (Bisland et al., 2004, p. 2).

Additionally, the scale was determined to be superior to other measuring instruments, due

to being viewed as most valid and comprehensive (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  The LSI was a

beneficial resource, because it helped educators identify leadership strengths and

weaknesses in their students.

Another instrument educators used to rate potential leadership characteristics was

the Leadership Strengths Indicator (Ellis, 1990).  According to Ellis (1990), this tool was

designed to include 40 items and eight sub scales that included the following: a) enjoys

group activities, b) key individual in-group activities, c) high-level participator in group

activities, d) journalistic, e) sympathetic, f) confident, g) courageous, h) conscientious,

and i) self-confident.

Since the Leadership Strengths Indicator was designed for grades, 6 through 12,

secondary educators could easily implement this effective tool into classroom instruction.

Sisk and Rosselli (1987) also developed a self-rating instrument; this tool was referred to

as Leadership: Skill and Behavior.  The eight sub-scales included the following: a)

positive self-concept, b) communication skills, c) decision-making skills, d) problem-

solving skills, e) group dynamics skills, f) organizing, g) planning skills, h) implementing

skills, and i) discerning opportunities. Unfortunately, the data concerning reliability and

validity were not provided (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).

The need for more research in the area of adolescent leadership was apparent.

Most research concerning leadership characteristics was centered on adults, rather than

children or young adults (Ogurlu & Emir, 2013).  Understanding the development of

leadership skills in the primary years could improve adult leadership in the future.

**Leadership Programs**

Leadership programs were created and implemented in districts across the

country.  One leadership program Bisland et al, (2004) identified as a helpful resource for

educators was called, Leadership: A Skills Training Program.  The "Leadership: A Skills

Training Program offered a curriculum that followed four parts: famous leaders, language

of leadership, project planning and productivity, and debate and discussion" (p. 3).  This

program also included the RRSL, an identification instrument for ages eight through 18

that allowed "students to rate their frequencies of certain [leadership] behaviors" (Bisland

et al., 2004, p. 3).  Lastly, as authors of "Leadership Education: Resources and Web Sites

for Teachers of Gifted Students," Bisland et al. (2004) suggested educators should have

students individually investigate possible leadership positions they may hold in the

future.  All the resources mentioned in the article were used by educators to support

leadership in their curriculums.

McDonald, Spence, and Sheehan discussed the classroom-as-organization

approach (CAO) (as cited in McDonald, Spence , & Spence , n.d.). The CAO approach

was an additional resource designed for educators to incorporate leadership skill-building

in the educational setting.  The approach was "a topic of much discussion among

management educators" and involved "making organizational properties salient to studies

within the classroom context, giving them [students] the responsibility for planning,

organizing, leading, and controlling the class" (McDonald et al., n.d., p. 67).  Moreover,

the approach "rooted in and signified by a 'learn by doing; orientation" and helped

"students develop greater self- and social awareness, increased self-confidence, and a better understanding of how to perform effectively in 'real world' settings" (McDonald et al., p. 67). More specifically, the CAO approach treated "the classroom as an organization, in which decisions have to be made, goals are set to be later met, work is efficiently allocated, and team members are recruited, trained, motivated, and managed" (McDonald et al., p. 68). The CAO approach forced students into roles that required practicing leadership skills.

Although leadership programs proved very beneficial, not all teachers had access to these resources. Therefore, teachers were encouraged to use their classrooms and instruction as a catalyst to foster leadership in their students. For instance, teachers should "delegate many classroom functions to include assigning group leaders and spokespersons, escorts and assistants" (Rice, 2011, p. 29). By delegating work, students had the opportunity to develop much needed leadership skills and feel a part of the classroom community.

**Leadership Education**

Several large-scale leadership programs were developed to provide students with opportunities to develop leadership skills or aptitude for leadership; however, other approaches could be used on a smaller scale. For instance, Millburn (NJ) Middle School created several approaches to developing student leadership, including a peer leadership program, and developed leadership programs tailored to each grade level (Cahill, 2006). The peer leadership program placed elite students in the position of peer mentors; faculty chose eighth grade students, who demonstrated academic excellence and good behavior, to be peer mentors (Cahill, 2006). These students had the opportunity to learn about

"tolerance, respect, and community membership" and often "led to increased academic

performance, self-discipline, self-esteem, and self-confidence" (Cahill, 2006, p. 35).  The

peer leadership program benefited both the mentors and the mentees in this middle

school.

As the peer leadership program flourished, peer leader groups began to emerge

during the 2005-2006 school year at Millburn Middle School.  Cahill (2006) identified

the following peer leader groups and their responsibilities:

**CHEER** (Children Help Energize Everyday Responsibilities) was a group that

organized monthly themed activities to help students handle their transition from

elementary school to the middle level.  Themes included time management,

conflict resolution, and teacher-pleasing behaviors.

**ESL** (English as a Second Language) peer leaders helped ESL students adjust to

their new school, community, and culture by working in their classroom and

planning cultural activities.

**MASH** (Machine and Software Help) peer leaders fixed computers and helped set

up for presentations.  They also taught workshops on different programs, such as

Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

**MEDIATORS** received two years of training in the peer mediation process.

They assisted guidance counselors and administrators in resolving conflicts

among their peers.

**MOGS** (Mentors of Grade Six) were responsible for organizing and running the

orientation program for incoming sixth graders.  During the school year, they met

with sixth graders every morning to promote leadership, friendship, and active listening skills.

**PIPS** (Personal Improvement Planners) helped sixth and seventh graders improve their academic and organizational skills by providing tutoring in study, note taking, and course-work skills. They tracked individual progress to help their "clients" see their success.

**PLOP** (Peer Leaders Outreach Program) was a community-based group that participated in Dialogue Night, Red Ribbon Week, a local parade, and fifth-grade orientation. The group selected an outreach goal to benefit people outside of our school community. The group even supported Heifer International, a project that uses donations to purchase livestock for communities and countries in need.

**REBEL 2** (Reaching Everyone by Exposing Lies) was an anti-smoking group that focused on educating the community on the harmful effects of tobacco. Eighth-grade peer leaders taught elementary students how to avoid the pressure to smoke.

**SOAR** (Students of Art Respond) designed artistic campaigns promoting peace, respect, and tolerance through a variety of media. SOAR created a peace garden for their school, interviewed and created a portrait of senior citizens, and created works of art for pediatric patients at a local hospital. SOAR sponsored an annual art forum and assisted in set construction for the annual spring musical.

**TECH** peer leaders specialized in assisting the school with any form of help with audiovisual equipment.

**TIGS** (Teen Institute of the Garden State) was a statewide wellness and

prevention program for teenagers in New Jersey.  The main goal of TIGS was to

raise awareness regarding decisions about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

**WISH** (What If Students helped) was a group that raised funds for charitable

organizations.  The primary beneficiary was the Make-a-Wish Foundation (Cahill,

2006, p. 40).

The aforementioned leadership groups provided students with the opportunities to

practice, demonstrate, and hone their leadership skills.  At the same time, these peer

leadership programs supported individual and school initiatives.

**Hard and Soft Skills**

Developing both hard and soft skills was necessary for youth as of this writing,

but hard and soft skills had two very different definitions.  Robles (2012) defined hard

skills, as "the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job" (p. 453).  Another

definition of identified hard skills was "the ability, coming from one's knowledge,

practice, aptitude, to do something well; competent excellence in performance; and a

craft, trade, or job requiring manual dexterity or special training in which a person has

competence and experience" (Robles, 2012, pp. 456-457).  Hard skills were the technical

aspects of a job an individual needed to perform a task.

Soft skills, on the other hand, were defined quite differently than hard skills. Soft

skills were defined as "interpersonal qualities, also known as people skills, and personal

attributes that one possesses" (Robles, 2012, p. 453).  Additionally, "Applied skills" or

"21st century skills" were additional terms suggested for soft skills (Robles, 2012, pp.

456-457).

Soft skills were an imperative aspect of leadership that young people must develop because these skills were heavily requested in the workforce (Marques, 2012; Ch. Radhika, 2013; Robles, 2012).  "There is no confusion or denial possible against the backdrop of the past leadership malfunctioning: the focus on soft skills and the encouragement for the future leaders to work on their soft skills is unequivocal" (Marques, 2012, p. 163).  Moreover, Marques (2012) continued by stating:

> Merely a decade ago, charisma, eloquence, and extroversion were generally praised as the prominent traits for a typical corporate leader; we now see a shift in employees' paradigm about the constitution of preferred leaders, whereby the softer skills that had been considered less salient before can no longer be ignored. (p. 163).

Consequently, it was concluded educators should create opportunities within the classroom setting to develop and mature soft skills.

Young adults headed for the employment arena of the future needed to acquire and perfect many important soft skills. In the article, "Soft Skills- A Buzz Word in the New Millennium," author Ch. Radhika (2013) identified the following soft skills students must develop to be successful: a) interpersonal skills; b) team working; c) negotiating skills; d) communication skills; e) time management; f) stress management; g) thinking skills and problem solving skills; h) life-long learning and information; i) management; j) entrepreneurial skills; k) ethics, morals, and professionalism; l) leadership skills; and m) decision-making skills.

**Democratic Classroom Management**

Throughout history, the purpose of schools was heavily discussed by educators. Meier (2013) stated:

> We have lost sight if the traditional public functions of schools: to pass on the skills, aptitudes, and habits needed for a democratic way of life. These skills, aptitudes, and habits are hard to come by; they are not natural to the species. (p. 16)

Changes in 21st Century schools necessitated a new set of skills, and educators needed to change their paradigm of classroom management. The new paradigm needed to encourage civic participation, like the democratic classroom management approach (Cetin, 2013; Edelstein, 2011; Meier, 2003).  In essence, "schools must cultivate the dispositions needed in broader society and become miniature democratic societies where students learn how their actions affect the well-being and success of the group" (Shields, 2011, p. 51). It was imperative for educational organizations to allow students to have a voice in the learning environment.

Students spent a great amount of their time in the classroom setting.  Teachers, therefore, should establish classroom management structures that encouraged student learning, as well as promoted civic participation from all individuals; a democratic classroom management approach provided teachers a platform for these goals (Cetin, 2013; Edelstein, 2011; Meier, 2003).  Edelstein asserted, "Learning democracy is not just an extension of the serious business of learning for life. It is the serious business of learning for life and, as such; it must be a central goal of education in school" (p.127).

One way teachers could create a democratic classroom from the start of a course was to "invoke . . . democratic principles when writing the rules" (Urban, 2008, p. 139). According to Urban (2008), "the most effective way to help students become responsible was to give them a voice in the rules and procedures affecting them on a daily basis" (p. 139). Allowing students to participate, democratically, in the rule and procedure-making process was imperative in the educational setting.

Munkler (2008) and Crouch (2004) identified severe threats to society's democratic systems; Munkler and Crouch asserted *individualism, globalization,* and obedience to authority were a few factors that affected the *socio-moral resources of democracy* (as cited in Edelstein, 2011). Edelstein (2011) explained these factors impacted the power of democracy, and "the only institution that can provide opportunities to cultivate democratic experience-not for elite groups, but of all children and youth- is the school" (Edelstein, 2011, p. 128). One way educators could provide opportunities to cultivate democratic experiences was to establish democratic classroom management strategies.

Democratic classroom management strategies were proven beneficial because they "ensure active participation of students" by empowering students to participate in the managerial aspects of the classroom (Cetin, 2013, p. 180). After effective educators taught and modeled positive examples of civic participation, students began taking on these roles. Students participated in completing simple managerial tasks or tackled complex school governance issues. Students learned how to be effective citizens within the classroom; and, later, those skills would translate to meet societal civic needs (Cetin, 2013). Additionally, Roache and Lewis (2011) concluded, "teachers need to avoid

coercive styles of management in favor of strategies that reinforce positive relationships"

(p.144).  In essence, student participation empowered students, taught them civic

responsibility, and strengthened personal relationships with their teachers.  Students must

be encouraged and empowered to assist in management strategies in their K-12

experiences in order for the most beneficial effects in later years.

Student participation in a classroom not only worked to meet societal needs, but

student participation also provided positive individual effects.  Active participation by

students in the learning environment led to many beneficial effects when there was

"evidence of active learning or engagement that benefits learning, critical thinking,

writing, appreciation of cultural differences, time management and interpersonal,

listening and speaking skills" (Czekanskik & Wolf, 2013, p. 1).  In order to be effective,

educators should consistently encourage students to take an active role in the classroom

environment.

Rubrics were a beneficial tool mentioned in the research, used to help aid in

evaluating student participation in the classroom (Lyons, 1989; Steven & Levi, 2005).

Rubrics often appeared as a table and consisted of a list of the tasks, a description of the

tasks, a scale explaining the success of task completion, and a point system (Steven &

Levis, 2005).  In addition to evaluating students' participation performance, rubrics

helped teachers provide valuable feedback in a timely manner (Stevens & Levi, 2005).  In

addition , when Craven and Hogan (2001) used a rubric to assess college students'

participation, they were able to "connect class participation classroom management,

arguing the instructors' ability to maximize students' participation resulted in their

learning how to organize knowledge and apply it to new situations" (Czekanski & Wolf,

2013, p. 5).  With the use of rubrics, democratic classroom educators could properly

evaluate student participation. The most effective rubrics were not created by educators

independently. Rubrics had the greatest effect when teachers and students created the

rubrics together because students had a better understanding and were more prone to

meet the expectations outlined and identified in the rubrics (Urban, 2008).

Democratic classrooms had other positive effects beyond the increase of pupil

participation.  Democratic classrooms also promoted the sharing of different viewpoints

and allowed students to practice making shared decisions together.  Consequently, this

classroom management structure allowed students to learn how to effectively

communicate their ideas, as well as deal with others' differing viewpoints (Cetin, 2013).

In a diverse society, tolerance was a character trait students must possess. Through the

democratic classroom procedures, students were encouraged to practice demonstrating

tolerance of others' ideas.

**Building Positive Relationships through Effective Praise and Feedback**

Building positive relationships among individuals within a classroom was

imperative.  The teacher-student relationship was key, and teachers must work to create

positive and caring relationships with every student. It was been found that "great

teachers of the past all agree that learning is usually the result of a good relationship

between the teacher and the student" (Urban, 2008, pp. 7-8).  Urban (2008) expanded on

this idea by stating, "Kids don't care how much you know until they know how much

you care," and "if you can reach 'em, you can teach 'em" (p. 8).  According to the

research, until teachers build positive relationships with their subjects, learning was not

likely to take place.

One way classroom teachers could work to build healthy relationships with students was through praise. Whitaker (2004) reported, "Effective teachers treat their students with positive regard. In particular, effective teachers understand the power of praise" (p. 46). In order for educators to provide effective instruction, it is imperative for praise to be "authentic, specific, immediate, clean and private" (Whitaker, 2004, p. 47). To be authentic, the praise must be true and accurate; the praise cannot be made up. In order to be specific, praise must pinpoint exactly what a student does correctly. The praise cannot be generalized, broad, or vague. Praise needs to be immediate to be effective, so it must be given in a timely manner. Praise should also be clean, which means it cannot be a compliment intended to motivate the students to do something, or include the word 'but.' Finally, in order for praise to be effective, the praise must be given in private. Private praise is most effective, because it has been found to eliminate resentful feelings from other students and saves the child from possible embarrassment (Whitaker, 2004). In addition,

> Praise can positively influence intrinsic motivation if students perceive the praise to be sincere and if the praise promotes self-determination, encourages students to attribute their performance to causes they can control, and establishes attainable goals and standards . . . praise that is more person-or ability-oriented (rather than task- or process-oriented) can have unintended negative effects on intrinsic motivation. When students have setbacks in the domain that was praised, they might think they have lost their ability and react with helplessness. Therefore, teachers must praise with caution (Pitler & Stone, 2012, p. 57).

One type of praise found to be worthwhile was acknowledging students' efforts. Many teachers came to the learning environment with two misconceptions: "Not all students realize the importance of believing in effort," and "students can learn to change their beliefs to an emphasis on effort" (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 49). Moreover, classroom teachers must teach students the relationship between effort and achievement, because many students have misconceptions about how effort and achievement are related (Pitler & Stone, 2012).  Pitler and Stone identified three recommendations to help educators teach necessity of effort:

1) Teach students about the relationship between effort and achievement. Teaching about effort can positively influence students' thinking, behavior, and beliefs about their ability to succeed. This is particularly true if it helps students understand that success comes because of effort and that they alone control the amount of effort they put forth.

2) Provide students with explicit guidance about exactly what it means to expend effort. Teachers can help students develop and operational definition for what it means to work hard by being explicit about the actions and behaviors associated with the effort in a variety of academic situations.

3) Ask students to keep track of their effort and achievement. A powerful way to help students make the connections between effort and success is to have them keep track of their effort and its relationship to achievement. (Pitler & Stone, 2012, p. 41)

In addition to providing effective praise, giving students useful feedback was another way teachers worked to build positive and trusting relationships with students in

the past. Too often, when teachers provided feedback, they did not do it in an effective manner.

**Meeting the Needs of All Students**

Creating a caring class community was important for effective teachers, because classrooms, as of this writing, were more diverse than previously (Demongraphic Factors in American Education, 1995).  Classroom populations were increasingly diverse with many different components.  In fact, "Student diversity factors include culture, religion, primary language, race, socioeconomic level, ethnicity, family composition, gender and previous experience, as well as ability level" (Copple, 2003, p. 1).  More and more students with disabilities were included in the general education setting than ever before (Harriott & Sylvia, 2004). Due to these factors, teachers worked to meet all students' needs and ensured all students felt a part of the learning environment.

Due to social competency issues, students with disabilities had a difficult time establishing themselves in diverse classrooms.  Teachers, therefore, must take the time to create a caring and nurturing environment for all students to feel accepted (Harriott & Sylvia, 2004).  Especially in middle school, students' needs for social acceptance were critical.  Educators must create a warm and nurturing environment before learning can take place.

Developing student independence was one way to help students with disabilities feel more socially accepted and competent.  In fact, "A goal of special education is to teach students to become more independent in their academic endeavors" (Kincaid & Jackson, 2006).  Assigning manageable tasks and responsibilities allowed students with

disabilities an opportunity to be successful (Kincaid & Jackson, 2006). Teachers could help individual students feel accepted by allowing them to be responsible for tasks.

One way teachers helped students with disabilities establish themselves in a diverse classroom was by creating learning opportunities that led to social competence and acceptance. Students with disabilities must find success in the classroom setting before they are willing to open themselves up to the learning process. Harriott and Martin (2004) identified the following classroom opportunities that aid students in gaining social competence and acceptance: a) practicing social skills, b) practicing communication skills, and c) promoting classroom community. Teachers must work to provide learning opportunities for all students, especially those with disabilities, that affected students' ability to gain social competence and acceptance (Harriott & Sylvia, 2004, p. 50). Helping students feel socially adept and included was the first step to ensuring academic success.

Before educators could help students with this process, identifying the definition of social competence was critical for teachers. According to the article, "*Why Social Skills Training Doesn't Work: An Alternative Model,*" by Vaughn, McIntosh, and Hogan (1990) there were four components of social competence:

1) Positive relationships

2) Age-appropriate social knowledge

3) Absence of inappropriate behavior

4) Appropriate social acceptance. (p. 281)

According to Harriott and Martin (2004), the learning opportunities for gaining social competence and communication skills were limited in classrooms. In fact, the

classroom teacher was most responsible for the promotion of social competence.

Teachers must understand the four components of social competence and provide

learning activities in the classroom for students with disabilities, so all students felt a part

of the classroom culture (Vaughn et al., 1990).  If learning opportunities were not

imbedded in the classroom structure, social competence and acceptance within students

was not likely to flourish.

Strahan and Krystal (2006) concluded that positive classroom cultures were

essential to maximize student learning.  Students must care for themselves and one

another for adequate learning to take place (Strahan & Krystal, 2006).  Additionally,

teachers' goals should be to create students who were healthy, competent, and moral

inside and outside the classroom setting (Noddings, 1992).  A caring culture was

foundational to successful classrooms where students demonstrated social competence.

Coffman (2003) understood the need for students to be competent individuals.

She concluded, "By teaching our students to be responsible learners, we can change our

classrooms in dramatic ways" ( p. 3).  She continued by suggesting, "Participation and

interaction [are] integral parts of the course" (Coffman, 2003, p. 3).  Teachers must create

opportunities for all students to participate in the classroom.

In essence, all educational "instructors are in a unique position to help students

learn two important lessons: (a) to be less dependent on external authorities, and (b) to

take ownership and responsibility for their own lives" (Magolda, 2002, p. 8).

Furthermore, "responsibility can (and should) shift, depending on time in the semester

and the level of the students" (Coffman, 2003).  Additionally:

Instructors may take more of the responsibility at the beginning of the semester. As the class progresses, they can slowly relinquish control and prepare their students to take over, so that by the end of the semester, the students are shouldering most of the responsibility. (Coffman, 2003, p. 4)

Lastly, it was important for teachers to remember that "by teaching responsibility, we not only enhance learning and raise the level of our classrooms, but we help produce responsible citizens and productive members of society" (Coffman, 2003, p. 4). In order to make students productive adults and citizens, responsibility education was key.

**Establishing a Positive Culture**

School administrators worked diligently to create positive cultures within their buildings; likewise, creating a welcoming environment where students felt safe and could learn was pivotal in the classroom. Shields (2011) described this as a "culture of character" where "individual virtues must be developed simultaneously as group norms" (p. 52).

One way to create a positive school environment was to use leadership as a platform for success. Covey (2008) described how A. B. Combs Elementary was transformed when leadership was made its top priority. The school created the following mission statement: "To develop leaders one child at a time" (as cited in Covey, 2008, p. 47). Next, the school unified its members under the umbrella of leadership. In fact, "A. B. Combs Elementary takes its culture so seriously that it devotes the better part of the first week or more of each school year to working with students to create . . . it," and they focused on "nothing other than how they [students] are to be leaders in the school" (Covey, 2008, p. 92).

Throughout the first week of school, students took part in creating classroom rules, decorating the school, and setting goals; these activities "ensure that students get to know each other and feel 'connected,'" (Covey, 2008, p. 92). All students were encouraged and expected to play a role in these processes. As a result, A. B. Combs Elementary established a culture that involved every student, built from leadership principles.

In order for all students at A. B. Combs Elementary to feel a part of the school, students were given specific jobs. For instance, students were responsible for broadcasting the morning announcements, greeting their classmates, and providing leadership-themed artwork around the school. Providing leadership roles for students in schools helped establish a positive school-wide culture and atmosphere that promoted learning (Pedersen et al., 2012). Thus, empowering students to complete these tasks led to students feeling more confident, important, and valuable members of the school culture (Covey, 2008). The addition of assigning specific responsibilities to elementary students had many valuable effects in the educational organization.

According to Van Velsor and Wright (2012), some schools were working with organizations to "develop a culture of leadership, grounded in a common leadership framework" (p.16). These partnerships worked to establish an environment where leadership skills were nurtured and thrived. These programs proved to be beneficial in the organizations in which they were implemented.

**Summary**

Incorporating character education, civic responsibility, and student leadership in the educational setting was found to be imperative in the classroom setting. Additionally,

it was found equally important for educations to build positive relationships with all students by providing adequate praise and effective feedback.  Educators were responsible for preparing all students to meet workforce needs, and one major need was leadership skills.  These leadership skills prepared individuals to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Some research existed on the topic; however, more information was needed.  Specifically, studies on how to develop leadership skills in children and young adults needed completion to determine their full effects.  Additionally, professional educators, especially K-12 educators, should seek to learn more about leadership in the educational setting and the best practices associated with implementation and development of those practices.

Several instruments and programs were available to educators who wanted to implement leadership development in their curriculums and were proven effective.  More resources needed to be added to the body of research concerning this topic, in order to better meet the needs of preparing all students to be successful in in the 21st century workforce and society.

**Chapter Three: Methodology**

**Overview**

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to determine students' and educators' perceptions of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities in a middle school classroom, with regard to students' perceptions of the classroom environment, school environment, and sense of connectedness with the school.  The researcher wanted to understand whether students' viewpoints changed if they were exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program.  Moreover, the researcher was interested in how educators, including teachers and administrators, perceived the implementation of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities.

**The Research Site**

The researcher conducted this study at a Midwest suburban middle school during the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year.  The middle school consisted of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades with a total student population of approximately 845 pupils. The student population consisted of the following races and ethnicities: a) 83% White, b) 11% African American, c) 3%  Asian, d) 2% Hispanic/Latino, e) 1% two or more races, and f) 0.002% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. In summary, 17% of the total student population was from a minority, 83% of the total student population was from the White majority.  Additionally, the student population consisted of 14% on free and reduced lunch assistance.

The culture of the studied school focused on building students' character and leadership.  Character education was already a platform from which teachers built

instruction and was engrained in classroom instruction and activities.  In fact, the school

was a National School of Character six years prior to the study.

In addition to promoting good character, all students participated in a class known

as Character Connect Class (CCC).  Every teacher in the building taught a small, 20-

minute course four times each week; this course's main objective was to provide students

with an opportunity to learn and practice character skills needed to be successful in the

21st  century.  CCC classes included a mix of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students

working together to meet the school's vision and mission statement.  In addition, students

learned seven lifestyle habits developed by Covey (2008).  They included the following:

a) be proactive, b) begin with the end in mind, c) think win-win, d) seek first to

understand, then to be understood, e) synergize, and f) sharpen the saw.

**Developing the Intervention**

Although the faculty and staff worked to foster leadership opportunities in the

building where the study was conducted, the building administrator felt a need to know

more about students and teachers' perceptions regarding the leadership opportunities

available for students.  Many opportunities were available to students outside of the

classroom for students to hold leadership roles; however, the building principal felt

students could benefit from more responsibility inside the classroom.  Discussions

between the administration and faculty concerning how to proactively involve students in

the classroom were held during the year prior to the study in order to gain a clearer

perspective.

During the school year prior to the study, the administrator took notice of the

classroom tasks and responsibilities program used in the researcher's classroom.  He also

observed how several teachers implemented classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities

in their own classrooms after the researcher shared the instructional program.  The

administrator inquired about the classroom jobs to the researcher, and they had many

conversations on this topic.  The administrator wanted more information concerning how

students felt about the assignment of classroom tasks and responsibilities in the classroom

setting, and created a small committee of educators, including the researcher, to learn

more.  This committee was the research team.

**Null Hypotheses and Research Questions**

The researcher used the following null hypotheses and questions:

**NH1**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program will rate the overall classroom environment higher than students

who did not participate in the program.

**NH2**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program will rate the overall school environment higher than students

who did not participate in the program.

**NH3**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program will report a higher level of connectedness than students who did

not participate in the program.

**RQ1**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions

of the overall environment of classrooms, which utilize the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program, and their perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms,

which do not utilize classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

**RQ2**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the school environment as a whole?

**RQ3**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perception of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of connectedness to the school?

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year. The building's lead administrator requested information concerning students' perceptions of the assigned tasks and responsibilities. He, with the help of a small research team, surveyed students at the end of the first semester during December 2015. The research team surveyed two groups of students: students enrolled in a course where classroom tasks and responsibilities were assigned and students who were not enrolled in classes with classroom tasks and responsibilities assigned.

Students enrolled in a class using the classroom tasks and responsibilities program completed a four-question survey; the first three questions involved students choosing from answer choices. The directions for these questions read as follows: On a scale from one-to-five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, please select one answer for each section. Below are the three questions that followed:

1) How do you feel about the overall classroom environment where you are assigned a classroom task or responsibility?

2) How do you feel about the overall school environment?

3) How connected do you feel to your school?

The last question was open-ended, and asked students to include comments concerning the assignment of a classroom task or responsibility. The open-ended question provided students an opportunity to include additional commentary concerning the jobs.

The building research team also surveyed students not exposed to the classroom jobs program. These students were also asked four questions, and the first three questions were worded similarly to those in the survey completed by students with classroom tasks and responsibilities assigned.

1) How do you feel about the overall classroom environments at this school?

2) How do you feel about the overall school environment?

3) How connected do you feel to your school?

The final portion of the survey to students who had not participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities gave students an opportunity to include additional information. Some students chose to answer the final section; but some students did not include additional commentary.

Students' survey information was anonymous, so students remained unscathed throughout the data collection process. The building's research team leader entered information obtained from the paper surveys into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The researcher received the survey results to quantitatively analyze students' responses. The researcher presented the analysis of the survey results to the building administrator and research team in January of 2016.

In addition to quantitative data, the researcher collected qualitative data for the purpose of this study. The researcher, through face-to-face communication, recruited a

total of 11 adult educators from two different school districts for the study.  The

researcher selected educators who previously implemented classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities in their classrooms.  Once educators agreed to participate in the study,

they received an electronic survey via school email at the end of the semester in

December 2015.

The teachers participating in the study answered the following survey questions:

1) How have you, if at all, implemented the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program in your own classroom?

2) Please indicate how long, if at all, you have implemented the classroom-

assigned tasks and responsibilities program in your classroom?

3) What grade level and content area did you implement the classroom-assigned

tasks and responsibilities program if at all?

The administrators participating in the study answered the following survey

questions:

1) How have you encouraged teachers in your building to implement the

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program in their classrooms?

2) Approximately how many teachers in your building have implemented the

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program in their classrooms?

3) How long has the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program been

implemented in your building?

4) What grade levels are included in your building?

After the researcher received the electronic survey results, she entered the data

into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.  Teachers participating in the study were identified by

the term 'Teacher' followed by a number (Ex.: Teacher 1).  Administrators participating in the study were identified by the term 'Administrator' followed by a letter (Ex.: Administrator A).

In addition to qualitative data from surveys, the researcher collected qualitative data from interviews.  In December 2015, the researcher conducted a follow-up face-to-face interview of the same educators who completed the electronic survey.

Teachers participating in the study were asked the following questions during the interview:

1) How do you think students' perception of the classroom environments which implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities is different from students' perception of the classroom environment which do not implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities?

2) How do you think students' perception of the school environment as a whole is affected by the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

3) Describe any correlation between students participating in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of connectedness to the school?  If so, how?

Administrators participating in the study were asked the following questions during the interview:

1) How do you think students' perception of the school environment as a whole is affected by the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

2) How do you think students' perception of the classroom environments which implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities is different from

students' perception of the classroom environment which do not implement

the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities?

3) Describe any correlation between students participating in the classroom-

assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of

connectedness to the school?

The researcher conducted the face-to-face interviews before and after-school

hours in the buildings where the educators worked. The researcher recorded the

interviews, and later transcribed the dialogue on a word processor. All interviews

exceeded five minutes, but no interview lasted longer than 15 minutes.

**Participants**

The researched school building had a total student population greater than 700

and less than 800. The exact number of students varied throughout the semester, due to

students enrolling, un-enrolling, and transferring to different schools. Secondary data

was collected from 528 students, who completed the paper survey given by the research

team. Surveys were obtained from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle school

students; 331 surveys were taken by students enrolled in a classroom that implemented

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities during the entire first semester, and 197

surveys were completed by students not enrolled in a classroom that implemented

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities during the first semester. No students were

excluded from the student sample.

The committee leader of the school's research group documented students'

responses in an Excel spreadsheet. Later, the researcher used the random number

generator function in the Excel program to select the random sample of students used for

the purposes of this study. One hundred students were randomly selected by this process; 50 students exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and 50 students not exposed to the program.

**Quantitative Analysis**

After selecting the responses from 100 random students, the researcher conducted three $z$-tests for difference in means. The $z$-tests, which compared the means of two sample populations, were used to compare answers from students exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program to students who had not participated in the program. The $z$-test was appropriate for this study, because both population samples were large. A $z$-test was performed on the means of the numeric choices for each of the three questions on the student survey:

1) How do you feel about the overall classroom environments at this school?

2) How do you feel about the overall school environment?

3) How connected do you feel to your school?

Since students answered with a numeric response, the researcher compared the means of the two population samples for each question using the $z$-test for difference in means.

It was important to note the students surveyed for this study were not considered participants since the survey was not created for the purposes of this study. The building administrator, with the help of the research team, desired information about classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities before this study began; however, the researcher was able to include the survey results as quantitative data of a secondary nature.

**Sampling**

A purposive sample (judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling), was used in this study.  Unlike probability sampling, purposive sampling is not random.  The researcher chose participants based on individuals' implementation and/or observation of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program.  This purposive sampling was not representative of the general population; however, the intent of the researcher was to include participants who had prior knowledge of the program investigated.  Moreover, for "researchers pursuing qualitative or mixed methods research designs, this is not considered a weakness.  Rather, it is a choice, the purpose of which varies depending on the type of purposing sampling technique that is used" (Laerd Dissertation, 2012, p. 42). All teachers were implementing classroom jobs in their classrooms, and the administrators who participated in the survey were overseeing the implementation in various classrooms; therefore, all adult participants were knowledgeable about the program.  No educators were excluded from this study for any reason.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The researcher obtained qualitative data through survey results of adult educators. The researcher recruited 11 adult educators to complete a three-question survey.  The educators selected were from two different school districts, including Francis Howell School District and City of St. Charles School District.  Survey-takers participated as individuals, and included eight teachers and three administrators.  Eligible participants were familiar with the assigned tasks and responsibilities program.

In addition to surveys, the researcher conducted follow-up face-to-face interviews.  The researcher also interviewed the same adult educators who participated in

the electronic survey. The researcher hoped to gain further insight into the individuals'

perceptions of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities. The researcher was able to

ask more probing, open-ended questions concerning students' perceptions of the

classroom jobs.

**Conclusion**

The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data for the purpose of

this study. All data directly collected related to the research hypotheses of this study, and

questions revolved around students' and adult educators' perceptions of the classroom-

assigned tasks and responsibilities program. The researcher included secondary data

obtained from the Student Climate Survey; the building research team under the direction

of the building principal gave this survey to students. The researcher included the

anonymous student responses for the purposes of this study. Qualitative data was

included in this study, as well. The researcher surveyed eight teachers and three

administrators through an electronic survey, and the researcher conducted follow-up face-

to-face interviews with the same adult educators. The researcher documented all

qualitative results, including surveys and interviews, electronically.

## Chapter Four: Results

**Introduction**

The results for this mixed method study are outlined in Chapter Four. The results include the information concerning three hypotheses and three research questions. The quantitative data is discussed first; tables and graphs are used to display the findings, along with explanations. The quantitative results indicate findings obtained from secondary student data from 100 student participants. Fifty students were enrolled in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities, and 50 students were not enrolled in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities. Information concerning the qualitative data from this research study is presented after the quantitative data. The qualitative data contributed results from electronic surveys and face-to-face interviews with professional educators from two neighboring districts. Eight classroom teachers and three building administrators provided input for the qualitative data.

**Null Hypotheses and Research Questions**

The researcher used the following null hypotheses and questions:

**NH1**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall classroom environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

**NH2**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall school environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

**NH3**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will report a higher level of connectedness than students who did not participate in the program.

**RQ1**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms, which utilize the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program, and their perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms, which do not utilize classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

**RQ2**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the school environment as a whole?

**RQ3**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perception of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of connectedness to the school?

## Results

The quantitative data presented corresponded to three null hypotheses, which were derived from the three initial hypotheses:

## Null Hypothesis 1:

**Null Hypothesis 1 ($H_{01}$)**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will not rate the overall classroom environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

For Null Hypothesis 1, the researcher ran a *z*-test for difference in means to compare the means of two samples. The first sample consisted of 50 students exposed to classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities, and the second sample included 50

students not exposed to classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities. In order to select

the samples, the researcher used the random number generating function in the Excel

program to select the random sample of students used for the purposes of this study from

the 528 students whose data was originally collected by the researcher. The researcher

felt it was appropriate to have the samples be the same for the purposes of this study.

This sample group was used for the additional hypotheses, as well. To address Null

Hypothesis 1, students from both samples were asked this question: On a scale from one

to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how do you feel about the

overall classroom environment where you are assigned a classroom task or

responsibility?

The results from both samples pertaining to the aforementioned question for

hypothesis one are detailed in Table 1:

Table 1

*Students' Ratings of Overall Classroom Environment*

|  | Program Participant | Non Program Participant | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mean of Sample Population | 3.9 | 3.7 | -.2 |

After running the *z*-test, the researcher identified the two means of the samples:

sample one had a mean of 3.9 and sample two had a mean of 3.7. The standard deviation

for both samples was 0.863, while the *z*-test value equaled 1.16, and the *p*-value equated

to 0.123. The researcher failed to rejected (z-critical = 1.69) the null hypothesis,

indicating no significant difference in the two means.

**Null Hypothesis 2:**

     **Null Hypothesis 2 ($H_{02}$):** Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will not rate the overall school environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

     For Null Hypothesis 2, the researcher ran a second *z*-test for difference in means to compare the means of the two samples.  The researcher used the same samples used for hypothesis one.  Again, students were asked a ranking question:  On a scale from one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how do you feel about the overall school environment?

     Students' rankings from both samples concerning this question were used in the second *z*-test. Table 2 indicates the data obtained from the test:

Table 2

*Students' Ratings of Overall School Environment*

|  | Program Participant | Non Program Participant | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mean of Sample Population | 3.78 | 3.8 | +.02 |

     The researcher found the mean one equaled 3.78, while mean two totaled 3.8. The standard deviation for sample one was equivalent to 1.18, whereas 0.78 was the standard deviation for sample two.  The *z*-test value measured -0.1, and the *p*-value was 0.540; therefore, the researcher failed (z-critical = 1.69) to reject the null.  Again, no noteworthy difference in means was observed.

**Null Hypothesis 3:**

**Null Hypothesis 3($H_{03}$):** Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will not report a higher level of connectedness than students who did not participate in the program.

The final null hypothesis, Null Hypothesis 3, was run last by the researcher.  The same samples used in previous *z*-tests for difference in means for this study were used. Similar to the first and second question, students from both samples were asked this question:  On a scale from one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how connected do you feel to your school?

Responses pertaining to the above question from both sample sets were included in the data illustrated in Table 3:

Table 3

*Students' Ratings of Connectedness to School*

|  | Program Participant | Non Program Participant | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mean of Sample Population | 3.1 | 3.74 | -.64 |

Mean one was found to be 3.1, and mean two was determined to be 3.74. Standard deviation one was 1.22, and standard deviation two was 0.83.  The *z*-test value totaled -3.08 while the right-tailed *p*-value equaled .999.  Due to these factors, the researcher failed to reject (z-critical = 1.69) the null indicating no substantial difference between mean one and mean two. Though there was a significant difference in the means, the Program Participant mean was not higher than the Non-Program Participant mean; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

**Research Questions**

Qualitative data was collected from a total of 11 educators, including eight teachers and three building administrators. These participants were employed by two neighboring districts from a middle-class, suburban area. The individuals were selected for participation in the study because of their familiarity or use of individual student jobs within the classroom. Individuals were emailed electronic surveys, and responses were received digitally. Once the surveys were sent back to the researcher, the researcher transferred the responses to an Excel spreadsheet. Later, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the same participants. Survey responses were entered into an additional Excel spreadsheet while the interviews were held. All participants were asked the same questions on the survey, as well as in the interview.

**Research Question 1:**

Research Question 1 for this study focused on educators,' both teachers and building administrators, perceptions of the overall classroom environments of classrooms that implemented classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities and those that did not. Research Question 1 is stated below:

> What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms which utilize the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms which do not utilize classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

During the face-to-face interview process, teachers were asked this question: How do you think students' perception of the classroom environments which implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities is different from students' perception of the classroom environment which do not implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities? Teacher participants reported the following, concerning classrooms with student assigned tasks and responsibilities:

- Students had a greater sense of purpose in the classroom environment.

- Students took on more ownership in the classroom.

- Students felt included and had a greater sense of belonging in the classroom.

- More established classroom community and supportive culture was evident.

- Students held other students accountable in the classroom.

- Students' voice increased in the classroom.

- Students were more eager to participate in the classroom.

- Students were more open to learn new things in the classroom.

- Students had more buy-in in the classroom.

- Students' confidence increased.

- Students' sense of pride increased.

- New leaders emerged.

One of the themes that emerged during coding was responsibility. This theme ran throughout the responses of the adults in the study.  Multiple teachers reported that the inclusion of classroom tasks and jobs had a positive effect on the classroom as a whole. This positive benefit they described was to the group and not the individual student. Teacher 4 reported classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities led to students' having a

'greater sense of purpose in the classroom because they [students] are required to do their part' each day. Teacher 1 stated the program allowed students to help their 'classroom community' and their efforts 'benefits everyone' in the classroom. Teacher 5 described the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities as 'a role for students to play in the day to day operations of the class.'

A second theme was that of ownership, which many felt flowed from the first theme of responsibility. Teacher 3, Teacher 6, and Teacher 7 concluded students in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities were more inclined to take ownership in the classroom. According to Teacher 3, 'because students feel a part of the classroom, they take ownership' in it. Teacher 6 insisted, 'students take ownership in the classroom due to the fact that they have responsibilities outside themselves,' and 'other students count on them to do their assigned jobs.' Moreover, Teacher 7 commented that the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program led to students taking 'more ownership in the classroom' as well as 'in their [students] learning.'

The next theme that emerged during coding was that of belonging. Students at the middle school level have a need to belong. The assigned tasks and responsibilities helped to give them this feeling of belonging. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 reported students involved in the program felt included and had a greater sense of belonging in the classroom. Teacher 3 reported, a 'greater sense of inclusiveness is evident' in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities. Teacher 4 stated the following: 'I think the assigned tasks give students a sense of belonging in my classroom . . . because every student does their part to better the class as a whole.'

Classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities 'helps to establish more of a

classroom community and supportive culture' (Teacher 4).  Teacher 8 asserted, 'the

student jobs allow individual students to work together as a team' which 'builds students'

trust and stronger relationships among each other.'  Teacher 7 said the program had 'a

huge, positive effect on . . . the learning climate.'  Oppositely, Teacher 2 observed,

'students not involved in the program usually have more clique-ish social behavior before

class begins.'

The theme of peer accountability was also expressed by multiple teachers.  This

moved beyond the expected teacher driven setup to manifest itself as peer accountability.

Students' holding one another accountable was another observation provided by Teacher

5 and Teacher 6 in the interview process.  This accountability not only contributed to a

smoother running classroom, but in addition shifted a portion of the responsibility for the

success in the classroom to the students themselves.  Students 'take it upon themselves to

enforce the expectations' associated with the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities; therefore, 'teachers are not the only ones who have to ensure students are

being proactive' in completing the tasks (Teacher 5).  In fact, because 'students take their

jobs very seriously . . . they notice when other students do not' said Teacher 6.

Another positive benefit of the assigned tasks in the classroom was the sense of

empowerment that the program brought to the students.  A few teachers made mention of

this important topic.  Teacher 1 relayed, "students perceive classroom environments with

these programs as a place in which they have a voice."  The classrooms with assigned

tasks and responsibilities were "more like a club where they [students] have a say'

(Teacher 1).  Teacher 7 mentioned, 'students' voice in choice can sometimes have a positive effect.'

Participation in class was an expectation in this program.  Two teachers pointed out that the expectation led to an increased willingness of the students to participate in various mundane portions of classroom activity.  Teacher 2 discussed how students in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities showed more 'eagerness' than those in classrooms without assigned tasks and responsibilities.  Students demonstrated an 'eagerness to pass out papers or supplies, eagerness to greet peers to the class, eagerness to help with technology, eagerness to take attendance' and 'eagerness to collect homework (Teacher 2).  Teacher 7 stated students with jobs showed 'a huge increase in participation' in the classroom.

Multiple teachers commented that the assigned tasks led to a greater investment in the classroom by the students, both in terms of learning and interaction with their peers.  Teacher 5 argued, 'students have more buy-in in the classroom' where the program was implemented.  'They [students] are more willing to open-up to the learning and their fellow leaners' once the classroom jobs have been established (Teacher 1).  Teacher 8 added students 'seem more inclined to take on challenges and . . . complete difficult tasks' in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities because 'students have the ability to excel at something other than academics' in the classroom setting.

Three teachers reported an increase in self-efficacy among the students in the program.  It was reported, 'students involved in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program seem to take more pride in their class than those not involved in the program' (Teacher 2).  According to Teacher 5 students 'take pride in the task

assigned.' Moreover, Teacher 7 reported a 'huge increase in student confidence' after being responsible for a classroom job.

According to Teacher 8 and Teacher 7, new leaders emerged in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities, because 'students who are not academically strong can demonstrate proficiency and even excel in their assigned role' (Teacher 8). More specifically, Teacher 7 provided this example:

> I have a student who had a job in the last leadership rotation…she is a very quiet and reserved student who never really stood out as a participator or confident leader. In the last two weeks . . . she was my TOP leader in class, and her confidence is astounding! I tell her often how proud of her I am . . . she is such an incredible leader in our class.

Teacher 7 added this: 'In my twenty-four years or teaching, this [assigned tasks and responsibilities program] has been one of the most effective ways to get students involved, stay motivated, encouraged their peers, and achieve success as individuals. The individual results are staggering.'

In reference to Research Question 1, building administrator participants were also asked the same interview question as classroom teachers: How do you think students' perception of the classroom environments which implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities is different from students' perception of the classroom environment which do not implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities? The building administrator participant groups reported classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities led to noticeable differences including the following:

- Students had a greater sense of responsibility in the classroom.

- Students took more ownership in the classroom.

- Students' overall attitudes were more positive in the classroom.

- Students were more active participants in the classroom.

- Students' sense of connectedness to the classroom was greater.

- Students' voices were validated.

- Students were more willing to collaborate.

- Students were more invested in the classroom.

- Less discipline within the classroom existed.

- Stronger teacher-student relationships were built.

Two of the administrators commented on the affective impact of the assigned tasks on the students in the classrooms. They touched on the theme of responsibility as had the teachers. Administrator A commented how students in classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities seemed to have 'a greater sense of responsibility' within the classroom environment. Administrator B added classroom jobs provided a platform for students to 'accept, complete, and relish in individual, non-academic success within the classroom.'

Ownership was also an administrative theme in parallel with the teacher themes. Two administrators made a connection between student ownership in the classroom and the positive attitude they saw exhibited. Administrator B and Administrator C both observed students taking more ownership in classrooms that implemented the program. 'With the leadership roles, students are given more ownership in the classroom' (Administrator B). Additionally, according to Administrator C, 'students tend to take more ownership of their actions' when given assigned tasks and responsibilities.

Administrator B and Administrator C also included another similar observation concerning students' attitudes.  There existed a 'noticeable difference in students' attitudes within the classrooms' that implemented the program (Administrator B). Moreover, 'students are much more positive and receptive to their peers, teachers, and the content being taught' (Administrator C).

Another theme mentioned by all the administrators interviewed was that of connection to the classroom.  This connection was expressed in a variety of ways. Although administrators mentioned several of the same observations in their interviews, all participants included individual effects of classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities.  Administrator A noted, 'students with jobs are more active participants,' and Administrator B felt students with classroom jobs seemed 'much more connected to their classmates, teacher, and the curriculum.'  Moreover, 'students' voices seem more validated' because they are given 'choices and opportunities' to take on 'non-traditional roles' in the classroom setting (Administrator B). Administrator C interpreted the implementation of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities led to students being 'more willing to collaborative effectively with peers,' and 'students were observed being 'more invested in the subject and class assignments' than students not enrolled in classes with the program.  Consequently, students exposed to the assigned tasks and responsibilities had 'far less discipline reports' and 'stronger, more positive student-teacher relationships' (Administrator C).

**Research Question 2:**

Qualitative data obtained for Research Question 2 was collected from the same teachers' and building administrators' interviews. Research Question 2 was: What is the

observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the school environment as a whole? All interview participants were asked the following question: How do you think students' perception of the school environment as a whole is affected by the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program? Teacher participants, during the interview process, identified the following school environment effects of the program implementation:

- Students' overall perception of the school improved.

- Students' felt a greater sense of responsibility to the school.

- Students took more ownership in the school.

- Students' attitudes concerning school became more positive.

- Students' school pride increased.

- Students felt a greater sense of purpose in their school.

- Students were given more voice in the school.

One of the overarching themes that emerged from the qualitative coding was the idea of responsibility. Although the comments about responsibility may have manifested differently, the idea was central to the perception of why some teachers found the practice valuable. Teacher 2 reported, 'students' perception of the school environment as a whole was positive when they [students] were involved in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities.' One positive observation made by Teacher 3 was: 'I think they [students] like the responsibility of having things to do that are not related to the curriculum.' Responsibility was also mentioned by Teacher 8 when addressing this question: 'Students' have a better understanding of the need for their help, so they are

more willing to take on greater individual responsibility. I think students feel happier,

too, when they are given a responsibility.'  Lastly, Teacher 8 stated:

> Students tend assume their classroom responsibilities throughout the building.
>
> For instance, a Greeter from one class will being greeting peers in other classes
>
> even when they aren't expected to, or someone in charge of picking up trash on
>
> the floor in one class will continue to do it in the hallways.

The theme of responsibility segued naturally into another theme. That theme was

ownership. While some teachers might think of the class as 'theirs,' the assigned tasks led

students to think of the class as 'ours.' When 'students take on responsibility in and

outside the classroom . . . they begin to take ownership in the school' as a whole (Teacher

8).  According to Teacher 7, 'the overall effects . . . of ownership feelings begin to

transfer to a school wide climate!' In addition, 'students tend to feel more positive about

school when they have ownership in the school' (Teacher 5).  Students given classroom-

assigned tasks and responsibilities 'are more likely to have a better attitude about the

school as a whole compared to students not given the same opportunity' as their peers

(Teacher 8).

The theme of ownership then grew into pride of ownership as well as a purpose

for the student to be in the school that extended beyond her or his academic learning.

The program analyzed in this study 'helps students to see school as something they are a

part of rather than something being done to them' (Teacher 1).  'They [students] feel as

though they are working with everyone in the building' to better the environment

(Teacher 8).  Teacher 2 reported students involved in the program 'seem to take more

pride in their school.'  Students also 'seem excited to have a specific purpose at their

school,' and 'some students arrive to school because they take pride in the role they play'

at school (Teacher 4). 'It [classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities] gives them

[students] a real purpose and belonging within the school environment' according to

Teacher 4, and 'it makes the feel special.' Lastly, the program provides a platform for

'student voice to extend outside the classroom' Teacher 7.

Building administrators were asked the same interview question pertaining to

Research Question 2: How do you think students' perception of the school environment

as a whole is affected by the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

Building administrators reported the following concerning students who were exposed to

the program of this study:

- Students took more ownership in the school.

- Students took on more responsibility in the school.

- Students felt trusted.

- A greater sense of school unity was observed.

- Student demonstrated leadership qualities.

Some of the same observations concerning the program's effect on the overall

school environment stated by teacher participants were also mentioned by building

administrators. Exposure to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities led to 'a

spike in responsibility among middle school students' because 'students are consistently

held accountable and to high standards' (Administrator B). The program can make

'leadership flourish among students who typically don't exhibit leadership qualities in the

school' environment (Administrator C). According to Administrator C, 'our school

culture is changing because students are encouraged and expected to be leaders, and they are rising to the occasion.'

The theme of ownership present in the teacher's comments was also present in the administrator's comments. All administrators interviewed mentioned student ownership in the overall school was 'enhanced' due to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities (Administrator A). Administrator B assessed, 'students who have jobs take more ownership in their learning . . . and in the school environment as a whole.' Students 'who have been in classrooms with the assigned jobs are much more willing to take charge outside of the classroom. Students also seem more engaged . . . and have a higher sense of ownership overall' (Administrator C).

Administrator B mentioned students in the program showed 'definite differences' from their peers who did not participate in the program. For instance, the classroom tasks and responsibilities program led to 'students feeling trusted…by peers and adults in the building.' Students also seemed more 'connected to the overall mission and vision of the school,' as well as having a 'greater sense of school unity because they [students who participated in the program] served a piece to a larger puzzle' (Administrator B).

**Research Question 3:**

The researcher interviewed the same aforementioned teacher and administrator participants pertaining to Research Question 3. For the purposes of this study, Research Question 3 was: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perception of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of connectedness to the school? Participants were asked one question related to the research question: Describe any correlation between students participating in the

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of

connectedness to the school?

　　　　The responses from the teachers to this question were overwhelmingly positive.

Seven of the eight teacher participants indicated there was a correlation in their opinion

between students participating in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities; those

teachers included Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, and

Teacher 8.  According to Teacher 1, the program 'helps students feel like school can fit

with their individual personalities, skills, and interests.  School becomes a place they feel

connected to and a part of.'  Teacher 1 went on to say 'students want to have choices, and

they feel a strong need to see their own efforts and interests connect with the school

community.'

　　　　Teacher 2 explained:

　　　　Students involved in the assigned tasks and responsibilities program share an

　　　　ownership for the efficient running of the classroom thus helping them feel more

　　　　connected to school versus those students not involved in the classroom tasks

　　　　program…these students tend to leave ownership of the class schedule and

　　　　management to the adults in the school.

These sentiments were echoed by Teacher 3 who stated, 'because it [the classroom-

assigned tasks and responsibilities program] makes students feel like they are wanted and

needed, the correlation of students feeling connected to the school is apparent.'

　　　　Teacher 4 provided the following answer to the question:

　　　　My students seem to feel more connected to the school, and especially to my

　　　　class, because they feel important.  They have a specific and important job to do,

and they don't want to let me or the other students down. Not only has this (program) helped with my classroom environment and community, but it has increased students' effort, engagement, and attendance. Students don't want to be absent because they know it's important for them to be here (school) to do their job. If that doesn't demonstrate connectedness, I don't know what does.

Teacher 5 observed, 'more of a sense of connectedness to individual classrooms rather than the whole school when students have an assigned task.' Teacher 5 continued by stating 'students feel more comfortable with the routines of the classroom, so they are more connected to the environment and people in it.' Both Teacher 6 and Teacher 8 indicated there was a correlation between students participating in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of connectedness to the school, but neither participant gave an explanation of how the correlation existed.

Teacher 7 was the only teacher participant interviewed who did not believe a correlation existed between students participating in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of connectedness to the school. However, the participant did indicate a correlation to between student participants in the program and the classroom. Below is the response Teacher 7 provided:

I have not yet seen any direct correlation between classroom leadership and student connectedness to the school in general but definitely increased connectedness to my classroom…I believe that if classroom leadership were offered in more subjects, grade levels, etc., then perhaps we would see more of a correlation. Even a small student leadership role in each classroom could have a profound effect on a school wide climate. I also think that many teachers often

give their students voice and small leadership roles without actually giving them

an official name.  Perhaps, just common language or use of terminology could

increase a more widespread leadership climate, and more students could feel more

connected…not just within the boundaries of their classroom walls but within the

entire school building.  What amazing opportunities that could provide for

students if all educators were on board!

Responses to the aforementioned Research Question 3 were also collected from

building administrators.  All three administrators stated there was a correlation between

students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities and

students' sense of connectedness to the school.  For example, Administrator A illustrated

how students exposed to the program had been 'entering building and district

organizations and groups with an understanding of responsibility as well as leadership.'

Furthermore, students given classroom jobs had 'more passion to take on new

responsibilities' within specific groups and organizations such as 'Honor Society,

Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Where Everyone Belongs (A school wide

organization)' (Administrator A).  Administrator B made a similar comment: 'We

(building administrators) see students who are in classrooms with assigned jobs are much

more inclined to take on additional leadership roles outside the classroom,' such as

'clubs, organizations, and other groups in our school and district.'  Administrator C

argued, 'a strong and definite correlation exists,' and 'it is apparent which students are

given individual responsibilities in the classroom and those that are not given the same

opportunity.'  Administrator C continued by explaining, 'they [students exposed to the

program] feel as though they are an integral part of the school, they work harder, and they are more willing participants.'

**Conclusion**

For the purposes of this study, quantitative data and qualitative data were collected. There were three hypotheses in this study, which provided analysis of secondary data comparing students' perceptions of the overall classroom environment, overall school environment, and sense of connectedness to school. One sample included students exposed to classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities, and the other sample included students not enrolled in classrooms with the program. A $z$-test was used to determine a difference in means. All three $z$-tests resulted had the same result: the researcher failed to reject the null indicating no significant difference in means. The quantitative data presented in this study included three research questions. A mix of both teachers and building administrators provided responses related to the three research questions. The research questions included teacher and building administrators' perceptions of the effects of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities in the same three areas mentioned with regard to the hypotheses: overall classroom environment, overall school environment, and sense of connectedness to school. Overwhelmingly, the educators participating indicated, through qualitative data, the program produced positive changes.

**Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine students' and educators' perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program (jobs) in a middle school classroom, with regard to students' perceptions of the classroom environment, school environment, and overall sense of connectedness with the school. Due to a building administrator's interest of the impact of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program, the researcher developed a mixed method study that included both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data collected included secondary survey results concerning 100 students' perceptions of classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program. Fifty students from the sample were exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program, while the other 50 students had not been exposed to the program. The qualitative data collected for the purposes of this study included survey results and personal interviews from 11 educational professionals from two neighboring school districts: three building administrators and eight teachers.

**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

The researcher used the following hypotheses and questions:

**H1**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall classroom environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

**H2**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall school environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

**H3**: Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program will report a higher level of connectedness than students who did

not participate in the program.

**RQ1**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions

of the overall environment of classrooms, which utilize the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program, and their perceptions of the overall environment of classrooms,

which do not utilize classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

**RQ2**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions

of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the

school environment as a whole?

**RQ3**: What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perception

of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of

connectedness to the school?

## Quantitative Results

This study included three hypotheses, and all three hypotheses compared the

means of two samples whose sizes included 50 student responses. A $z$-test for difference

in means was run for each hypothesis in the same fashion, and all tests resulted in the

same conclusion. The first hypothesis is stated below:

**Hypothesis 1 ($H_{01}$):** Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks

and responsibilities program will rate the overall classroom environment higher than

students who did not participate in the program.

To address Hypothesis 1, students from both samples were asked this question:

On a scale from one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how do

you feel about the overall classroom environment where you are assigned a classroom task or responsibility?  After completing the z-test, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis; therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported and there was no real difference in the means of the two samples.

**Hypothesis 2 ($H_{02}$):**  Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will rate the overall school environment higher than students who did not participate in the program.

To address Hypothesis 2, the researcher used the same samples from the previous hypothesis.  Secondary student data was collected from a school-wide climate survey conducted each year by the school administration for their own purposes. The results used to answer this question were based on responses from this question:  On a scale from one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how do you feel about the overall school environment?

The results from this second *z*-test for difference in means led the research to fail to reject the null hypothesis.  Therefore, the alternate hypothesis was not supported and there was no major statistically significant difference between the two sample means.

**Hypothesis 3 ($H_{03}$):**  Students who participated in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program will report a higher level of connectedness than students who did not participate in the program.

To address Hypothesis 3, the researcher, again, used information obtained from the same student samples.  Students responded to this question:  On a scale from one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how connected do you feel to your school?

After the *z*-test for difference in means was conducted, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and the alternate hypothesis was not supported, indicating no substantial difference between mean one and mean two.

**Analysis of the Three Hypotheses:**

Based on the results of all the *z*-tests for difference in means concerning Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, and Hypothesis 3, it appeared the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program did not have a significant impact on students' overall perceptions of the classroom environment, as reported in the school-wide climate survey. This could be due to several factors. The first possible factor was that the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program was not implemented with the same fidelity and consistency in each classroom. As with almost any school based program, once teachers close the door to their rooms it was often difficult to know with certainty what occurred. In the original design of the program, the teacher was to use the assigned tasks and responsibilities daily. Each student had a specific task or responsibility giving a sense of engagement in the classroom. If the teachers did not implement the program with fidelity, the results could be altered or become misleading. The second factor was that individual classroom teachers facilitated the jobs differently. Each teacher had tremendous latitude to implement the tasks and responsibilities as they thought best. It was still true that how they were implemented may have materially affected how satisfied the students were with the program in general. As the students had no frame of reference for comparison, they would not have been in a position to offer suggestions or complaint. The third factor was that individual classroom teachers chose to implement different jobs from the program for different amounts of time. Some students held the same job all

school year, while other students changed roles throughout the course of the year. For

those students in a position they liked and valued, if they were in for an entire year it may

have resulted in a positive perception of the program. Being removed from a position

they enjoyed or valued could have a negative effect on their perceptions of the program.

The converse of these two was also true. Being put in a position they did not like or did

not value for the year could result in a negative impression, as being moved out of a

position they did not enjoy or value could result in a positive perception. All of these

factors may have led to the data indicating no significant impact on students' perceptions

of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program, related to the overall

classroom environment, overall school environment, and sense of connectedness to

school.

**Qualitative Analysis**

For the purposes of this study, qualitative data was collected from 11educational

professionals, including eight classroom teachers and three building administrators.

Participants completed an electronic survey and were interviewed face-to-face by the

researcher. Questions asked on the survey and in the interview pertained to three

research questions.

**Research Question 1**

What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the

overall environment of classrooms which utilize the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program and their perceptions of the overall environment of

classrooms which do not utilize classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities

program?

To address Research Question 1, teachers and administrators were asked this question:  How do you think students' perception of the classroom environments which implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities is different from students' perception of the classroom environment which do not implement the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities?

Classroom teachers overwhelmingly reported positive effects of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program.  In fact, not one negative comment was made concerning the impact of the classroom jobs.  Teachers mentioned the program led to the many changes within classrooms that implemented the program:

Students had a greater sense of purpose in the classroom environment.  The classroom-assigned jobs provided students with the opportunity to take on more responsibility within the learning environment.  Teacher 4 declared the program led to students' having 'a greater sense of purpose in the classroom,' because they [students] 'are required to do their part' each day.

Students took on more ownership in the classroom.  Four-of-the-eight classroom teachers interviewed observed an increase in students' sense of ownership within the classroom.  In fact, Teacher 6 stated, 'Students take ownership in the classroom due to the fact that they have responsibilities outside themselves,' and 'other students count on them to do their assigned jobs.'  Increased student ownership was definitely a common item mentioned by classroom teachers.

Students felt included and had a greater sense of belonging in the classroom. Because students were all given jobs, individuals felt a part of something greater. Teacher 4 reported the following: 'I think the assigned tasks give students a sense of

belonging in my classroom . . . because 'every student does their part to better the class as a whole.' Two-of-the-eight classroom teachers interviewed reported students' sense of belonging increased within the classrooms that included the program.

More established classroom community and supportive culture was evident. Three-of-the-eight classroom teachers reported a positive change in the overall classroom culture. According to Teacher 8, 'the student jobs allow individual students to work together as a team' which 'builds students' trust and stronger relationships among each other.'

Students held other students accountable in the classroom. Because every student was responsible for a classroom task, students held one another accountable. According to one classroom teacher who was interviewed, 'Teachers are not the only ones who have to ensure students are being proactive' in fulfilling their responsibilities (Teacher 5). Two classroom teacher participants discussed peer accountability in their responses.

Students' voices increased in the classroom. According to Teacher 1, 'Students perceive classroom environments with these programs as a place in which they have a voice.' The students felt more comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings due to the institution of the program.

Students were more eager to participate in the classroom. The classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program forced students to actively participate within the classroom environment. Teacher 2 and Teacher 7 noticed an increase in participation. In fact, Teacher 2 observed 'eagerness to pass out papers or supplies, eagerness to greet peers to the class, eagerness to help with technology, eagerness to take attendance' and 'eagerness to collect homework.

Students were more open to learn new things in the classroom. The program encouraged students to step out of the traditional student role and take on roles outside their comfort zones; therefore, students learned it was beneficial to attempt new things. Three-of-the-eight classroom teachers interviewed alluded to this theme. Teacher 8 concluded that students involved in the program 'seem more inclined to take on challenges and . . . complete difficult tasks' because 'students have the ability to excel at something other than academics' in the learning environment.

Students had more buy-in in the classroom. Because students were more involved in the managerial aspects of the learning environment, the willingness to participate in other aspects of the classroom activities increased. Teacher 5 mentioned, 'Students have more buy-in in the classroom' where the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program were instituted.

Students' confidence increased. Three of the participating classroom teachers witnessed a noticeable change in students' confidence levels. In fact, Teacher 7 observed a 'huge increase in student confidence' after being assigned a classroom job.

Students' sense of pride increased. The classroom jobs led to students finding success within the classroom setting, which, in turn caused students' pride to rise. Teacher 2 reported, 'students involved in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program seem to take more pride in their class than those not involved in the program.'

New leaders emerged. The classroom tasks and responsibilities program created new space within the learning environment for student leaders to emerge. Two-of-the-

eight classroom teachers noticed the trend of new leaders being created in their

classrooms when the program was carried out. Teacher 7 asserted:

> I have a student who had a job in the last leadership rotation…she is a very quiet
>
> and reserved student who never really stood out as a participator or confident
>
> leader. In the last two weeks . . . she was my TOP leader in class, and her
>
> confidence is astounding!  I tell her often how proud of her I am . . .  she is such
>
> an incredible leader in our class.

Additionally, Teacher 7 concluded the following: 'In my twenty-four years or

teaching, this [assigned tasks and responsibilities program] has been one of the most

effective ways to get students involved, stay motivated, encouraged their peers, and

achieve success as individuals. The individual results are staggering.'

Building administrators concurred that the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program had many benefits.  Administrators commented classrooms that

implemented the program saw these changes throughout the course of the school year:

Students had a greater sense of responsibility in the classroom.  Administrator A

and Administrator B felt the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program

increased students' sense of responsibility within the classroom learning environment.  It

was noted students with classroom jobs 'accept, complete, and relish in individual, non-

academic success within the classroom' (Administrator B).

Students took more ownership in the classroom.  Two-of-the-three administrators,

Administrator B and Administrator C noticed classroom that instituted the program had

students who demonstrated greater ownership in the learning environment.

Administrator C commented, 'students tend to take more ownership of their actions' when exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program.

Students' overall attitudes were more positive in the classroom. Administrator B and Administrator C insisted the classroom jobs led to more positive student attitudes within the classroom setting. Administrator C noticed, 'students are much more positive and receptive to their peers, teachers, and the content being taught,' and Administrator B reported similar findings.

Students were more active participants in the classroom. Administrator A clearly stated, 'Students with jobs are more active participants' in the classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities. Since students were encouraged to fulfill additional roles and responsibilities, they were forced to be less idle classroom participants.

Students' sense of connectedness to the classroom was greater. According to Administrator B, students exposed to the program were 'much more connected to their classmates, teacher, and the curriculum' than students who were not given the opportunity to have classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities within their learning environment.

Students' voices were validated. Administrator B asserted, 'students' voices seem more validated' in classrooms where the jobs were implemented because they are provided with 'choices and opportunities' to fulfill 'non-traditional roles' within the classroom environment.

Students were more willing to collaborate. Having classroom jobs and responsibilities forces students to work with one another in a productive way. According

to Administrator C, students were 'more willing to collaborative effectively with peers' after fulfilling a classroom role or responsibility for an extended period of time.

Students were more invested in the classroom. After serving in the classroom setting, Administrator C observed students were 'more invested in the subject and class assignments,' and Administrator C felt the jobs led to this positive change in students' behavior among students who were exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program.

Less discipline within the classroom existed. According to Administrator C, the students exposed to the program had 'far less discipline reports' and 'stronger, more positive student-teacher relationships' compared to students who were not exposed to the program.

Stronger teacher-student relationships were built. Allowing students to be more active participants in the learning environment led to students having 'stronger, more positive student-teacher relationships' according to Administrator C.

The researcher was able to conclude both classroom teachers and building administrators observed significant benefits to the overall classroom environment where the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program was implemented. All participants perceived the program as effective and valuable to the classroom setting.

**Research Question 2**

What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and their perceptions of the school environment as a whole?

Similar to the approach for Research Question 1, teachers and administrators were asked this question:  How do you think students' perception of the school environment as a whole is affected by the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program?

Classroom teachers reported the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program impacted the overall school environment in several positive ways.

Students' overall perception of the school improved.  According to multiple classroom teachers who were involved in the study, students who were exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program perceived school in a much more positive light. One comment mentioned, 'Students' perception of the school environment as a whole was positive when they [students] were involved in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities' (Teacher 2).

Students' felt a greater sense of responsibility to the school. Since students were required to fulfill tasks within the classroom, this sense of responsibly transferred to the entire school.  Teacher 8 reported the following:

Students tend to assume their classroom responsibilities throughout the building. For instance, a Greeter from one class will begin greeting peers in other classes even when they are not expected to, or someone in charge of picking up trash on the floor in one class will continue to do it in the hallways.

Students took more ownership in the school.  Teacher 8 explained that when 'students take on responsibility in and outside the classroom . . . they begin to take ownership in the school' as a whole.  Responsibility within the classroom setting manifested itself to a greater sense of ownership of the overall school.

Students' attitudes concerning school became more positive.  According to one classroom teacher interviewed, 'Students tend to feel more positive about school when they have ownership in the school' (Teacher 5).

Students' school pride increased.  Four participants in the study identified students' sense of pride increased over time when given classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities.  Teacher 2 clearly stated that students 'seem to take more pride in their school' due to the classroom job assignments.

Students felt a greater sense of purpose in their school.  Because students were responsible for specific tasks, students involved in the program felt more valued than students who were not participants in the program.  Teacher 4 reported, 'It [classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities] gives them [students] a real purpose and belonging within the school environment,' and 'it makes the feel special.'

Students were given more voice in the school.  According to Teacher 7, the program allowed 'student voice to extend outside the classroom' and extend throughout the school environment.

Building administrators, too, responded the program led to impressive changes in the overall school climate.

Students took more ownership in the school.  Administrator B reported, 'students who have jobs take more ownership in their learning . . . and in the school environment as a whole.'

Students took on more responsibility in the school.  One administrator commented the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program resulted in 'a spike in

responsibility among middle school students' because 'students are consistently held

accountable and to high standards' (Administrator B).

Students felt trusted.  According to one participating administrator, the program

resulted in 'students feeling trusted . . . by peers and adults in the building,

(Administrator B).

A greater sense of school unity was observed.  Students assigned a classroom job

or responsibility developed a 'greater sense of school unity because they [students who

participated in the program] served a piece to a larger puzzle' (Administrator B).

Student demonstrated leadership qualities.  Administrator C concluded, 'our

school culture is changing because students are encouraged and expected to be leaders,

and they are rising to the occasion.'

Based on the comments made by both classroom teachers and building

administrators, it is clear the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program

directly impacts the overall school environment.

**Research Question 3**:

What is the observed relationship between educators' reported perception of the

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students' sense of

connectedness to the school?

Participants were asked this question:  Describe any correlation between students

participating in the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students'

sense of connectedness to the school?

Seven-of-the-eight classroom teacher participants reported the program directly

correlated to students' sense of connectedness to school.  Teachers identified the

following ways the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program aided in

students' sense of connectedness to the school:

Helps students fit in.  Because students who participated in the program had a

specific role, they felt like they belonged. It was reported the program 'helps students feel

like school can fit with their individual personalities, skills, and interests.  School

becomes a place they feel connected to and a part of' (Teacher 1).

Allows students to see how their efforts and interests can be utilized within the

school community.

Makes students feel wanted and needed by others.  Because 'students want to

have choices, and they feel a strong need to see their own efforts and interests connect

with the school community' according to Teacher 1.

Encourages fewer absences due to greater responsibility.

Develops greater sense of connectedness to the learning environment.  Teacher 4

offered this information concerning the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities

program:

My students seem to feel more connected to the school, and especially to my

class, because they feel important.  They have a specific and important job to do,

and they don't want to let me or the other students down.  Not only has this

(program) helped with my classroom environment and community, but it has

increased students' effort, engagement, and attendance.  Students don't want to be

absent because they know it's important for them to be here (school) to do their

job.  If that doesn't demonstrate connectedness, I don't know what does.

Although the majority of classroom teacher participants identified a correlation between the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program, one teacher did not feel the program led to students' sense of connectedness to the school. Although Teacher 7 did not feel the program impacted students' connectedness to the school, Teacher 7 did report the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities would have a significant influence if more teachers in the building implemented the program.

Even though all classroom teachers did not feel the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program correlated to students' sense of connectedness to the school, all building administrators felt otherwise. The building administrators reported students who were exposed to the program:

Developed an increased understanding of responsibility and leadership within specific groups and organizations. Administrator A asserted students who were exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program were 'entering building and district organizations and groups with an understanding of responsibility as well as leadership.'

Became more inclined to take on leadership roles outside the classroom setting. All administrators who were interviewed witnessed an increase in student leadership when students were given classroom jobs. Administrator B concluded, 'We (building administrators) see students who are in classrooms with assigned jobs are much more inclined to take on additional leadership roles outside the classroom'

Felt more included in the school culture. The classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program led to students feeling as though they were an 'integral' part of the school's mission and vision (Administrator C).

Worked harder and more willing to participate.  According to Administrator C, students involved in the program 'work harder, and they are more willing participants' compared to students not exposed to the program.

It was clearly evident the building administrator participants perceived the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program correlated to students' sense of connectedness to the school.

**Personal Reflections**

Some research was conducted concerning students given power within the classroom; however, a gap, as of this writing, existed in the research concerning students taking on managerial tasks within the educational setting.  When the researcher began implementing classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities in her own classroom (years before this study), she observed the jobs had positive effects on students.

The researcher found students who took on responsibility within the classroom became more active participants within the classroom, rather than passive members of a group.  Students became much more willing and, over time, comfortable to take on individual responsibilities.  The researcher discovered students with classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities developed a stronger work ethic throughout the course of the school year.  Students developed a greater understanding and appreciation for the amount of time and effort involved in running a classroom.  The researcher felt students were more inclined to be empathetic to other teachers in the building through their comments and actions.

Providing students with personal responsibility within the classroom setting also seemed to lead to students being more accountable for their actions.  Students were more

willing to take ownership of their actions, and students seemed more honest about how their behavior impacted others around them as well as the environment. The researcher felt the classroom jobs helped students understand this connection since students were able to see, first hand, how their actions created a ripple effect.

The researcher, through trial implementation of the classroom jobs program, discovered students seemed to hold higher expectations for themselves and others. Since students discovered their power and ability to create positive change, students expected more out of themselves as well as others. For instance, the researcher observed students apologizing for being absent to class and unable to complete assigned duties. Students also policed one another by reminding fellow students to complete their assigned tasks and/or finish them correctly. The researcher found the teachers' facilitation role lessened as the school year progressed because students began taking over the tasks.

Students not only held their classmates accountable, but they also began providing assistance to peers in completing classroom obligations. The researcher observed students became more willing to help each other complete the managerial classroom responsibilities. Through this process, students within the same classes began building a stronger kinship. Positive relationships flourished, new friendships were established, and conflicts decreased. These effects seemed to translate to the teacher-student relationships as well. The researcher found she was able to, more quickly, build stronger and more positive relationships with her students than in past years.

Because individual relationships within classrooms with assigned tasks and responsibilities were positively transformed, the overall classroom environment improved as well. The classrooms where students were assigned individual tasks became much

more conducive to learning.  The environment became more comfortable and inviting.

The atmosphere was pleasant, inclusive, and caring.  Additionally, students seemed more

inclined to take academic risks, accept academic failure, and take on more difficult

academic challenges.

The researcher observed students also developed higher self-esteem when they

participated in the classroom jobs program.  The researcher felt students' self-esteem was

improved because they found success in accomplishing their personal tasks.

Academically low performing students, particularly, seemed to exhibit the most

noticeable increase in self-esteem. It seemed those underperforming students were having

success in the classroom setting-an environment where they typically struggled to meet

personal goals.  Confidence among most students with classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities increased within the researcher's classrooms.  Students involved in the

program also seemed excited to be a part of something larger than them.  The students

seemed enthusiastic to be a single participant of a larger enterprise.

When classroom tasks and responsibilities were implemented, the researcher

found that new leaders within the classroom emerged.  The new leaders were often

atypical student leaders.  It seemed the individual roles met the needs of a wider spectrum

of students.  Students' leadership skills were able to be practiced and honed. Moreover,

the researcher was able to use the classroom jobs as a platform to discuss leadership.

Although the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program led to many

positive changes in students, the researcher found the program also benefited the teacher

(the researcher) as well.  During the implementation, the teacher found more time within

the school day to complete other, more important, educational tasks.  The teacher was

able to spend more time working with students in small groups and individually to meet

the needs of all students.  The teacher also found more time to provide valuable and

timely feedback to students because the managerial tasks were being completed by

individual students in the classroom.

**Recommendations to the Program**

Due to the limited research concerning assigning individual tasks and

responsibilities to middle school students within the classroom setting, more research

needs to be completed.  Educational institutions should support the ongoing efforts of

individuals to investigate this issue.  Inquiries into assigning classroom jobs could lead to

more discoveries about the positive correlation of this program to students, teachers, and

the institutions in which the program is implemented.

In addition to supporting further examination of this research topic, educational

institutions should seriously consider providing more opportunities for students to take

more individual responsibility within the educational setting.  Educational institutions

should allow educators within their organization the ability to conduct formal and

informal research that mirrors this study.  Educational institutions would be able to draw

individual conclusions concerning the validity of assigning classroom tasks and

responsibilities to students.

Individuals, specifically educators, should also act upon the information presented

in this study.  Individual teachers should informally or formally conduct research within

their own classrooms to see if similar results are found. Individuals, too, should examine

the types of classroom jobs presented in this study, and determine if the roles are

conducive to their classrooms.  Moreover, individuals should brainstorm additional

classroom jobs that could be used in a similar program.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As stated previously, further investigation concerning the impact of the

classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program should be researched; however,

many alterations to the method of the research could be made to improve the overall

quality of the study.  One such modification would be the length of time in which the

study is conducted. This study was conducted over the course of one typical school year.

It would be beneficial for future researchers to extend the timeframe of the study;

therefore, the effects of the program could be more accurately analyzed over the course

of time.  It would be interesting and informative to see the impact of this program on

students throughout their Pre-K and K-12 educational experience.

Future research could be conducted using more research participants.  For the

purpose of this study, secondary student data was collected from a total of 528 students;

331 surveys were completed by students who were currently enrolled in the classroom-

assigned tasks and responsibilities program, at the time of the study, and 197 surveys

were fulfilled by students who did not participate in the program. Of the students

surveyed, a random sample of 100 students' responses were selected to represent the

quantitative data presented in this study.  Each sample size totaled 50 student participants

with half having been exposed to classroom tasks and half not being exposed.  It would

be useful to have secondary student data from a much larger sample size, so the

quantitative data could be more detailed and accurate.  Furthermore, research involving

qualitative data from more educational professionals would be favorable.  This study's

qualitative data was limited to only eight classroom teachers and three administrators.  It

would be constructive to survey and interview more educational professionals so more

opinions and perspectives could be analyzed.

        This study only examined the implementation of the classroom-assigned tasks and

responsibilities program on middle school students.  It would be useful for further

research to be administered in other grade levels.  It would be valuable to know how the

classroom jobs program would be perceived in Pre-K classrooms or K-5 classrooms.

Additionally, data including students at the high school level would be helpful.  If

research were to be conducted at various grade levels, researchers could determine if the

program presented in this study is more or less useful with certain grade levels.

        This research study was conducted in two neighboring middle schools from two

different school districts.  The school districts were similar in student population,

demographics, and academic achievement.  More research should be conducted that

included participants from more than two school districts.  The various school districts

included in future studies should also be more diverse.

        Since the demographics from both school districts included in this study were

alike, it is recommended future research be conducted in schools or districts with

different demographics.  Both school district in this study included mostly Caucasian

students from suburban middle-class families.  It is imperative more research to be

completed to include how the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program

would impact students from different demographics.  For instance, researchers could

complete studies in rural and urban school and districts to see if differences arise

compared to suburban schools.  It would be advantageous to include studies that have

participants from a more diverse ethnicity and participants from low-income or high-income groups.  Future research should definitely include individuals and populations from a different demographic than those who participated in this study because demographics could play a major role in the results.

Region may also have an impact on the results confirmed in this study. researchers, in the future, should consider completing a similar study in a region other than the American Midwest.  Also, researchers should consider conducting a study concerning the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program outside the United States.  It would be beneficial to collect data concerning the program's implementation in other countries and/or with participants from different cultural backgrounds.

This study was limited to researching the impact of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program within the constraints of a traditional school within a nine month, agrarian school calendar year.  More research should be performed in non-traditional schools such as charter schools, magnet schools, alternative schools, and home schools.  The results of the classroom jobs program could be drastically different based on the school being a traditional or non-traditional setting.  It would also be equally important to collect data concerning how students enrolled in a summer school program would respond to the treatment in this study.

This study was limited to collected secondary student data from students who were enrolled in classes that implemented classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities. Future research needs to be conducted that includes students' individual perceptions to the program. It would be beneficial for researchers to interview student participants to get a better understanding of their feelings, likes, and dislikes.  Since individual students are

most directly affected by the individual classroom duties, getting a wider and deeper understanding of their perceptions is imperative.

For the purposes of this study, parents and guardians were not interviewed. Parent and guardian interviews, however, would be helpful to include in the data. Not only could parents and guardians provide their perceptions of the assigned tasks and responsibilities program within the classroom, parents and guardians could also identify, if any existed, effects the program had at home. Therefore, seeking survey and interview responses from parents and guardians would be valuable in future research.

Ensuring more consistency and fidelity concerning the implementation of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program would greatly improve this study and future studies. During the course of this research process, the program was not implemented in the same fashion by every participating classroom teacher. First, some teachers assigned students one classroom job for the entire year while other educators insisted students change tasks regularly. Second, some teachers expected students to perform tasks daily, and other educators did not require students to take on the responsibilities as consistently. Third, some teachers assigned jobs while other educators allowed students to assign themselves. Lastly, many teachers incorporated all the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities listed in the program, and some educators opted to implemented only a few of the classroom jobs. The data would be much more accurate if the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program was implemented in the same manner by every participating classroom teacher.

**Conclusion**

This mixed method research study investigated students' and educational professionals' perceptions of the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program related to the classroom environment, school environment, and students' sense of connectedness to school. Participants from two middle schools in two neighboring school districts were involved in the study. Quantitative secondary data was collected from a 100 student surveys with ranking questions. Fifty students from the sample had been exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program while the other fifty students had not been exposed to the program. The secondary data collected provided information related to three research hypotheses presented in this study. To address the three hypotheses, three different $z$-tests for difference in means were conducted. The quantitative results indicated no significance in the sample means; therefore, the data did not indicate the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program substantially impacted students' perceptions of the classroom environment, school, environment, or sense of connectedness to school.

Although the quantitative data did not demonstrate the classroom jobs program led to noteworthy changes in students' perceptions, the qualitative data demonstrated otherwise. Qualitative data was collected using surveys and personal interviews. Eleven educational professionals, including eight classroom teachers and three administrators, participated in the study. Three research questions were included in this study, and the responses from the educational professionals in the surveys and interviews supplied data to address the research questions.

All respondents indicated they perceived the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program greatly impacted the overall classroom setting. Participants included numerous, positive comments concerning the affects the program had within classrooms that implemented the program. All 12 educational professionals also perceived the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program influenced the overall school environment. Eleven of those surveyed and interviewed perceived the classroom jobs played a meaningful role in students' sense of connectedness to the school. Only one participant did not believe the classroom jobs impacted students' sense of connectedness to the school.

The quantitative data collected in this study did not support the researcher's hypotheses; however, the qualitative data did indicate the researcher's assumptions concerning the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program. According to the quantitative data, students did not perceive the program as significantly impacting the classroom environment, school environment, or students' sense of connectedness to the school. Oppositely, based on the qualitative data, educational professionals overwhelming perceived the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program as greatly influencing the classroom environment, school environment, and educational professionals.

At the end of this study, the researcher concluded the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program was a useful instructional strategy. Although the quantitative data did not show significant changes among the two student sample groups, students exposed to the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program and students who were not, the overwhelming amount of based qualitative data collected

proved otherwise. Based on the responses provided by the educational professionals, both classroom teachers and building administrators, the researcher concluded the classroom-assigned tasks and responsibilities program is a useful and beneficial instructional tool when implemented in middle schools.

More research, however, must be completed concerning this program. Several limitations did exist in this study; therefore, the program could be modified in various ways to produce more accurate and thorough results. The researcher encourages others to complete research concerning this topic in the future.

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