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Exploring the Relationship Between Preschool Teacher Perceptions of Positive Teacher-Child Relationships and Classroom Practice

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Abstract

In 2015, it was estimated that 4 million children entered kindergarten without the necessary skills to succeed (U.S Department of Education, 2015). This academic and social deficit places children at a disadvantage which can be avoided when children are exposed to supportive learning environments characterized by positive relationships (Curby, et.al, 2009). The CLASS observation (Pianta, La Paro, & Hambre, 2008) classifies best practices in teacher-child interactions which are placed in dimensions within three major domains; emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. This research explores which dimensions teachers identify as important and the relationship with observed practices as identified by CLASS. Sixteen teachers ranked CLASS dimensions in order of importance followed by a CLASS observation and relationship between the two was examined. This study supports the idea that educators do practice the aspects of teacher-child interactions that they consider important, however a larger population sample is required to further this belief

Key words: Teacher Perceptions, teacher-child relationships, teacher-child interactions,
preschool environments

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What do educators believe is important as they interact with the preschoolers in their classroom? Are these the same aspects that characterize the experiences of children that they teach? Each day at school, preschool-aged children are learning and developing the skills that not only support their academic success, but allow them to maneuver in social settings for their school career and beyond (Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Shewark, 2015). Yet of the 4 million children who enter kindergarten each year, many enter without the necessary skills to succeed. This academic and social disadvantage is often difficult for children to overcome causing the trajectory of their education to be deficient (U.S Department of Education, 2015).

How do we close this important achievement gap? Preschool children learn best when exposed to supportive learning environments characterized by positive relationships (Curby, et.al, 2009). Educators develop personal perceptions about the important characteristics of teacher-child interactions based on exposure to training and coursework. The way that these beliefs transfer into classroom practice is essential to the quality of the preschool experience (Hambre, et.al. 2012). The importance of these relationships to the quality of children's education is the reason that educator's understanding and their practice must correspond. Without this positive teacher-child relationship at the preschool level, school readiness begins at a disadvantage.

Pianta, La Paro, & Hambre (2008) developed The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), an evidence-based assessment tool based on their research regarding interactions in early childhood and early elementary classroom environments. Three major domains that have been established as essential for children's academic success (Curby et. al, 2009, Martin and Sass 2010); emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Studies show that children in classrooms with higher frequency of these domains achieve greater gains socially and academically (Howes, et al. 2008).

For the purpose of this study, teacher-child interactions will be defined as the daily exchanges between child and teachers relating to emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Emotional support is the interactions that help children develop positive relationships and comfort level that lead to increasing autonomy. Classroom organization surrounds teachers' ability to promote behavior regulation in children in order to get the most out of their education. Instructional support is the exchanges with children that help them to develop cognitive and language growth (Pianta, et. al, 2008).

The value of securely attached relationships between young children and adults has been clearly established (Bowlby, 1982), and extends further than the parent-child relationship. Ladd & Birch (1997) found that as young children spend more time in the care of others, the importance of the teacher-child relationship increases as well. They determined that the more conflict there is between teachers and students, the higher the presence of school dislike and avoidance along with less self- directedness and cooperation. Hamre & Pianta (2001) established the significance of social and emotional well being as fostered by positive teacher-child relationships and its influence on future success in school. Recent research by Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris (2016) continues to supports these claims. It found a positive

correlation between supportive teacher-child relationships and preschool school readiness skills particularly in language and literacy.

Research seeks to determine the consistency of teacher practices regarding their belief in developmentally appropriate practice. Zinsser, Shewark, Denham, & Curby (2014) found that the training received by teachers informs their practice and ultimately determines the teaching strategies that are implemented daily. Other evidence implies that teacher beliefs are not consistent with classroom practice (Wen, Elicker, & McMullen, 2011). Although it is becoming more commonly understood that there is an important relationship between teacher-child relationships and the academic success of children, there is a lack of research that specifically examines the perceptions of teachers in relationship to their identified practice. When evaluating teacher performance regarding teacher -child relationships, what teachers say they believe and what their practice reveals are not consistent. Therefore, it is of interest to examine which elements of the teacher-child relationship educators feel best support greater learning. Further, this study will examine the relationship between the perspectives of teachers and the practices that they exhibit in the classroom, as defined by CLASS observation.

Given the relationship between quality preschool experiences and children's ability to succeed in their academic career, it is vitally important that teacher's roles be examined. Upon completion, the results of this study will identify the current relationship of teacher practice to their beliefs about their interactions with children as defined by CLASS. Additionally, examining this topic will inform practice for educators as well as administrators who will provide or seek professional development for early educators. With this knowledge, administrators can identify the areas that will benefit teachers to implement best practices in the classroom.

Review of Literature

Effective teacher-child interactions

Developmental theory shows that children are the most influenced by the direct interactions that they experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). While children's primary teachers are their parents who exist in their micro system, preschool teachers are in the next sphere, the meso system. The relationship between these two systems affect children's development.

Bronfenbrenner (1981) describes development as lasting change on how a person views and interacts with their environment. Preschool teachers are integral in shaping how children think about and experience learning.

Early research supported Bronfenbrenner's theory when it established the importance of teacher-child relationships. Ladd and Birch (1997) demonstrated that children who have close relationships with their teachers adjust well to school, while those who experience conflict with teachers have negative perceptions of learning. Additionally, children who were too dependent on their teachers were not successful in developing peer relationships and independent learning. Healthy, balanced relationships between children and their teachers emerged as a precipitant of later school success.

The higher quality the preschool classroom interactions are the more positively children feel about school and in turn children achieve higher academic performance. This can be divided in multiple areas of development and performance. Researchers Hambre, Pianta, Downer, DeCoster, & Mashburn (2013) devised a developmental framework of effective teaching. They demonstrate that effective teaching through interactions can be separated into three categories: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

Emotional Support

Emotional support is made up of the interactions that help children develop positive relationships and comfort level that lead to increasing autonomy. In their developmental framework, Hambre, et al. (2013) describe this domain of teacher-child interactions as including positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard of student perspective. This is important as children develop their social and emotional wellbeing. Attachment theory identifies the importance of having relationships that provide a secure base (Bowlby, 1982). Securely attached relationships with early teachers allow children to feel safe. This permits a focus on learning needs and children can therefore venture out toward independent learning (Curby et al, 2009, White, 2015).

Providing emotionally supportive environments in classrooms allows children to develop important skills for interacting with others and becoming self-sufficient. Children who came from classrooms that were rated high on CLASS observations were also rated the highest by Kindergarten teachers in social competence demonstrating a high correlation (Curby et al., 2009). Additionally, children who were emotionally secure were determined to have the highest self-reliance. These and other factors of social/emotional development have been linked to academic success (Dedham, Brown, & Domitrovich, 2010).

Classroom Organization

Classroom organization encompasses teachers' ability to promote behavior regulation in children in order to get the most out of their education. The ways teachers help children learn to manage their organization of time and attention is crucial to furthering their academic endeavors (Hambre, et al., 2013). Having a classroom that is strong in behavior management, productivity,

and instructional learning formats allow children to avoid misbehavior and conduct themselves cooperatively for maximum learning (Curby, et al., 2009, Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008).

Research identifies the cardinal nature of classroom organization. Educators have themselves identified behavior management as more essential to effective teaching than other characteristics (Sak, Tuba, Sak, & Yerlikaya, 2015). Teachers feel more connected to their students when there is control over classrooms routines. This control can be shared with the students, however a sense of understanding and cooperative behavior is imperative. This allows group participation and identity to emerge through classroom norms (Sak, et al, 2015, Quan-McGimpsey, Marziliano, Hassen, Brown,. & Kuczynski, 2015). It is clear that when teachers are well trained in classroom organization, the quality of education goes up (Hambre et al. 2012).

Instructional support

Instructional support is made up of the exchanges between teachers and children intended to help develop cognitive and language growth. The CLASS assessment tool describes instructional support as concept development, quality of feedback, and language development (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Knowledge obtainment is the area of children's education that receives the greatest attention, with Hambre et al. (2013) describing in their developmental framework that cognitive development is more than simply acquiring facts. It is the acquisition of usable knowledge. Curby, et al (2009) further describes this domain as the teacher's role in aiding children to learn on a deeper level. The interactions that constitute this domain promote high order thinking skills that will enhance lifelong learning rather than simply imparting grade-level information.

Support of this level of interaction has been demonstrated as beneficial to children, but requires a great deal of training and attention from teachers (Curby et al, 2009, White, 2015). As a result, classroom scores in this domain are consistently the lowest of the three interaction areas (Hambre et al.,2012, Hambre et al. 2013). The effort required to achieve high scores in this area would certainly relate to the finding that teachers who do not feel close to their students scored lowest in instructional support (White, 2015).

School Readiness

Since 2003, states have increased their funding of public pre-kindergarten programs by more than 200% (U. S. Department of education, 2015). There is a increased emphasis on the expected outcomes of children's education before they enter kindergarten (Zinnser et al. 2015). Teachers have been charged with ensuring that they effectively convey knowledge to children. Preschool teachers must succeed in delivering children who are "school ready" (U.S. DOE, 2015). School readiness includes both academic skills such as pre-math, pre-literacy literacy and language skills and social and emotional competencies such as independent work, following directions, adjustment to school, and pro-social behavior (Dedham et al., 2010, Howes, et al. 2008, Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes, & Reiser, 2007, U.S DOE, 2015)

The emphasis on holistic school readiness skills supports the use of the teacher interaction framework. A recent study conducted by Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris, (2016) found that children who experience teacher supported environments demonstrate the skills that allow success as they move forward in school. Children from classrooms with high scores in the areas of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support had higher proficiency in language and literacy skills as well as social and emotional competency.

The Present Study

The present study seeks to further examine which elements of the teacher-child relationship educators feel best support greater learning. The elements examined will be defined within the domains in emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Secondly, the study will explore the relationship between the perspectives of educators and the practices that they exhibit in the classroom, as defined by CLASS observation. It has been demonstrated that teachers who understand and practice their beliefs will provide higher quality care and education (Wen, Elicker, & McMullen, 2011). This study seeks to identify consistency in teacher child-interactions.

Methods

Research Design

This quantitative study about the relationship between educators' perceptions about teacher-child interactions in a preschool classroom and observed practice collected two sets of data (Creswell, 2015). The information collected identifying teachers' perceptions will be compared to their practices identified in their CLASS scores. The relationships between the two will inform the researcher as to whether or not what educators report as important practice is the same as what they demonstrate when observed.

Population and Sample

A Head Start agency in New England serves as the setting for this study. The researcher is employed in a management role in the agency overseeing education quality and curriculum development. This relationship provides familiarity with teachers, children, and classroom

practices. Each classroom bestows an educational experience for children ages 3-5 years utilizing the High Scope curriculum. This curriculum encourages growth in all areas determined appropriate by research as essential for school readiness (Epstein & Hohmann, 2012). Examples include social/emotional development, literacy, scientific thinking, and mathematics. All teaching staff, including assistants, must minimally hold a credential in early childhood education (CDA). Teachers must have an associate degree in early childhood education or equivalent course work. Lead teachers involved with school collaborations are required to have achieved a bachelor's degree and hold a state issued early childhood teaching credential.

The study involved sixteen teachers and teaching assistants from nine classrooms. This is a convenience sample due to the researcher's access and preexisting relationships with participants. CLASS observations were conducted as part of their typical yearly evaluation as prescribed by Office of Head Start (U.S. DHHS, 2013). Information was provided to participants regarding the study using three methods. A written letter was provided describing the study, email information was provided, and teachers had a face to face opportunity to hear about the study and ask additional questions. Surveys were distributed to teaching staff in person when the majority were gathered for training. Subjects not in attendance on that day received the survey during an in person meeting or via email when requested.

Protection of Human Rights

The study design was submitted for approval to the IRB board at a local university. The researcher strove to protect the rights of participants through informed consent. This included assurance that participation in the study was completely voluntary. Participation or the declination to do so would hold no impact to the employment or evaluation of teaching staff.

Additional protection was provided through anonymous submission of survey results. When surveys were distributed, the researcher left the room and teachers completed surveys and submitted them to an envelope provided. Additionally, they could complete them at a later time and return them through a neutral third party. Surveys were coded to ensure the ability to attach them to the corresponding CLASS score. Codes were stored separately from studies to ensure confidentiality of results.

Instruments

Each classroom was evaluated using the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) tool. This tool measures the quality of classroom interactions using the domains of emotional climate, classroom organization and instructional support. Classrooms are evaluated by a reliable observer four times within one day. Each observation is 20 minutes, while the observer notes all interactions occurring between teachers and children, teachers and teachers, and children and children. Following the observation, observers score the interactions on a 7 point scale. 1-2 is considered *low*, 3-5 is considered *midrange*, and 6-7 is considered *high* quality. Ten dimensions make up three primary domains. Emotional Support is made of positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspective. Classroom organization includes behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats. Instructional support is comprised of concept development, quality of feedback, and language development. The CLASS observation is an evaluation that is conducted as part of classroom's typical feedback. Having the researcher or another reliable evaluator in the classroom observing is familiar practice for participating teachers, therefore ensuring accurate results.

Each individual teacher's perceptions were measured using a survey (see Appendix) created by the researcher. This attitudinal measure was used as a basis of determining teacher's feelings about the importance of different types of teacher child interactions. The survey used the domains identified by the CLASS tool (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support) as its basis of evaluation. Participants were asked to use an ordinal scale to rank the nine dimensions as identified by CLASS. The survey provided a nominal scale 1-5 to identify frequency that statement occur in their classroom. Statements correspond to CLASS dimensions. Additionally, participants were given an opportunity to elaborate on their definitions of typical interaction types in their classroom.

Procedures

Data collection consisted of two parts. CLASS observations were completed within a one month time period all within the first quarter of the school year. All classrooms had one observation completed by one of two reliable observers. All four observations per classroom were completed primarily in the morning hours when the majority of school readiness material was offered. Each observation occurred during a different time of the day. One meal, one large group activity, one small group activity, and child free choice time were observed.

Surveys were distributed and collected within a one month timeframe about halfway through the school year. Upon completion of survey results, participant scores were compiled with CLASS scores for analysis by the researcher. The data was evaluated using quantitative methods (Creswell 2015). The dependant variables were examined to identify trends among participants. The survey served to establish the level of importance that participants placed on each component of teacher child interactions. The trends that emerged from this evaluations

were then compared to the trends that emerging from CLASS results. Descriptive analysis was used to determine relationship between the variables.

Validity of this study is based on internal structure of the CLASS observation. The developers of the CLASS observation tool based their tool on extensive research that had been conducted on the items that constitute quality interactions between teachers and children and effective teaching strategies. They developed the dimensions examined by referring to existing assessment tools, reading literature, consulting focus groups, and conducting pilot studies. As a result of their research, experts have endorsed the measures as having validity (Pianta, La Paro, & Hambre, 2008).

The CLASS observation tool is reliable in terms of the clarity and ambiguity of behaviors. The rater undergoes rigorous training to ensure that they fully understand each item examined as well as the criteria that determines whether the item is in the low, mid, or high range. Additionally, the rater has a manual for reference when assigning a score for each item. Rater's must be trained and pass a test verifying that the scores assigned to five sample video observations are within a percentage of a "master scorer". This test is taken yearly to ensure reliability. (Pianta, La Paro, & Hambre, 2008).

This action research study is used to determine the perceptions of this group of Head Start teachers about their practice in comparison to their observed practice. In order to identify trends among teachers, the researcher identified CLASS dimensions in order of importance to surveyed teachers as well as their perceived frequency of occurrence in the classroom. These were then analyzed in relation to average CLASS scored in each domain.

Results

In the fall of the 2016/2017 program year, classrooms from a Head Start agency in New England underwent assessment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Teacher-child interactions, assessed in the domains of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support as defined by CLASS, were similar to the national average of other Head Start classrooms in 2015 (U.S. DHHS, 2016). In the winter of the same program year, teachers were asked to complete a survey containing information about their views of the important aspects of teacher-child interactions as well as the frequency with which these aspects occur in their classrooms. The researcher examined the responses of the participants and compared them with outcomes of the CLASS observation assessment to determine consistency between what was reported as important and observed practice.

Means scores were determined by averaging participant responses for rating of importance of each dimension and frequency of occurrence in the classroom. CLASS scores of participants were averaged to represent the mean scores. The mean scores in the emotional support domain were all within .53 of the national average. In the domain of classroom organization, the participant means were within 1.2 of the national average with productivity having the highest variance. Instructional support was the domain that demonstrated skills higher than the national average. All dimensions in this domain were above the average score with quality of feedback close to one point above peers.

Emotional Support

Table 1

Domain 1: Emotional Support

| CLASS Dimension | Average Rating | Average Scale | Average CLASS Score |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Positive Climate | 1.2 | 4.3 | 6.3 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 2.2 | 4.4 | 5.6 |
| Response to Student Perspective | 4.7 | 3.6 | 5.9 |

Note. Ratings were determined by teachers on a scale from 1-9. 1 = Most important. 9 =least important. Scale determined teacher identified frequency of occurrence in the classroom on a scale 1-5. 1= never. 5=always. CLASS scores: 1-2 =low, 3-5=mid, 6-7=high

In general, the domain of emotional support was rated highest in importance by participants (see table 1). All three dimensions were in the top 50%. Positive climate was rated as the most important of all aspects of teacher-child interactions. Teacher sensitivity was the second most important. Regard for student perspective proved to be the fourth most important indicator of high quality.

In this domain, educators practice what they identify as important. Participants identify positive climate as the most important element of their interactions with children and it is this dimension that yielded the highest CLASS score. It is also identified as one of the two areas with the highest frequency. Teacher sensitivity followed the same trajectory. It was the second most important part of interactions, the highest of all frequency ratings and scored just slightly lower on CLASS observation. Response to student perspective generally identified the same trend, however showed some variance. Participants rated it as only fourth in importance and identified that it was present less often than other dimensions, yet the average CLASS score was higher than teacher sensitivity.

Classroom Organization

Table 2

Domain 2: Classroom Organization

| CLASS Dimension | Average Rating | Average Scale | Average CLASS Score |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Behavior Management | 4.2 | 3.7 | 5.5 |
| Productivity | 7.25 | 4.1 | 4.9 |
| Instructional Learning Format | 6.6 | 4.1 | 5.2 |

Note. Ratings were determined by teachers on a scale from 1-9. 1 = Most important. 9 =least important. Scale determine frequency of occurrence in the classroom on a scale 1-5. 1= never. 5=always. CLASS scores: 1-2 =low, 3-5=mid, 6-7=high

The results in the domain of classroom organization were mixed (see Table 2).

Participants did exhibit consistency in the dimension of behavior management. This aspect of teacher-child interactions was rated the most important aspect of this domain and third most important overall characteristic. CLASS scores support this assertion with results similar to those in the emotional support domain. Interestingly, despite its perceived importance, teachers did not feel that it was present in their classrooms as often as other items.

Instructional learning format and productivity both fell in the bottom 50% of importance for participants, with productivity ranking the least important. Despite the feeling that these aspects take less precedence in interactions with children, teachers averaged high mid-range score in both areas. Additionally, both were rated higher in frequency than response to student perspective, behavior management, and concept development. However, it should be noted that

the average CLASS score in productivity was the lowest score in this domain therefore consistent with its lower rating.

Instructional Support

Table 3

Domain 3: Instructional Support

| CLASS Dimension | Average Rating | Average Scale | Average CLASS Score |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Concept Development | 6.9 | 3.8 | 3.2 |
| Quality of Feedback | 6.9 | 4.1 | 3.6 |
| Language Modeling | 5.6 | 4.1 | 3.4 |

Note. Ratings were determined by teachers on a scale from 1-9. 1 = Most important. 9 =least important. Scale determine frequency of occurrence in the classroom on a scale 1-5. 1= never. 5=always. CLASS scores: 1-2 =low, 3-5=mid, 6-7=high

Additional parallels between teacher perceptions and observed practice were depicted within the domain of instructional support. All three dimensions were in the lower 50% in terms of identified importance. CLASS scores corroborate opinion as they are the three lowest scores in the CLASS observation.

Concept development and quality of feedback averaged the same score for importance, at seventh. The CLASS scores in this area were consequently two of the three lowest overall. Language modeling was rated the most important dimension in this domain, identified as the fifth most important, however it obtained the second lowest CLASS score. Despite these findings, it is notable to identify that teachers report that all three of these aspects of classroom interactions are present between "sometimes" and "always".

These results indicate that, with a few exceptions teachers largely do practice what they identify as important. For the most part CLASS scores tended to be higher in the areas that teachers identified as more important. In the areas of response to student perspective, instructional learning format, and productivity teachers, teachers scored higher although they identified these as less important. However, in the area of behavior management and language development, teachers placed a greater value on these attributes, but the average score was lower than other areas.

Discussion

Two questions were asked in this study. First, which dimensions of teacher-child interactions educators view as being of the greatest importance and secondly, are these the dimensions that educators exhibit in their actual practice. Given the emphasis that Bronfenbrenner places on the essential development that occurs as children interact with their school environment, it is imperative that teachers identify and consistently practice the relationship building that will promote a successful academic career as children grow (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). Survey results overwhelmingly identified the emotional support domain as the most important part of their relationship with children. One participant summarized this thought appropriately when describing early childhood education as "a foundation to promote life skills for a successful future".

The results of this study demonstrate that educators generally exhibit practice that is consistent with their beliefs. It is notable that all teachers placed the dimensions in the emotional support domain as the most important parts of their relationships. They believe that the

relationships that they build with children are of primary importance. This takes priority over promoting positive behavior and instruction of concepts. Words used by participants to describe the important relationships that are being formed were "positive, nurturing, flexible, supportive, fun, and mutual" all indicating the importance of a strong relationship between teachers and children.

It is interesting that although productivity in the classroom received the lowest rating, the CLASS observation showed that most classroom had scores in productivity that corresponded with the emotional climate of the classroom. In addition, scores in instructional support were slightly higher when the emotional support was high. It may be postulated that when classrooms experience high levels of emotional support higher productivity and instruction will follow suit. This presumption reinforces Bowlby's theory that attachment is of primary importance for young children to thrive (Bowlby, 1982).

One of the surprising results of this study is that information taught and learned in the classroom was not as important as the classroom experience. Not only were these ranked lower on the list of importance, but educators consistently scored in the low or low middle range. The national average scores of Head Start agencies in the areas of instructional support are consistent with the scores identified in this study (U.S. DHHS, 2015). This supports the idea that as a profession, early childhood educators believe that the emotional wellbeing of children is of highest priority (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This picture was painted by participants of this study. When asked to describe a typical preschool education, few mentioned anything considered traditionally "education" related. Most described child-centered, hands-on, activity that is playful and builds relationships.

This study was limited by a relatively small participant pool. All sixteen participants were employed by the same agency and had been trained by the same management team. In addition, the emphasis that the Office for Head Start placed on CLASS scores requires staff to have instruction in these specific areas. It could be surmised that because participants have been trained in all domains that they held preconceived ideas about the way that they should answer questions on the survey. This calls into question the authenticity of the responses provided.

Regardless of this concern, it is evident that when educators provide environments that promote positive, caring relationships that are mutual and respectful of both adult and child perspective, other positive outcomes arise. Therefore, it is recommended that all preschool educators undergo training in all domains outlined by CLASS. This well rounded relationship building will ultimately promote the highest quality education for preschool children.

The question still remains about the generalizability of this information. A small population of educators who are all employed and trained by the same organization provides some information to answer the research questions. Further research is necessary to determine the relevance of these findings for the larger early childhood community.

This study focused on identifying educator-perceived importance placed on domains within teacher-child relationship in preschool classroom. It also sought to examine the relationship that exists between those items that are identified as important and the actual practice demonstrated. It was determined in this study that teachers identify their emotional relationships with children as more important higher than other areas such as positive behavior and concept development. This is consistent with research identifying early relationships as essential to future academic success (Bowlby, 1982, Hamre & Pianta, 2001, Hatfield, et al., 2016). This finding is important as new and existing educators are trained that emphasis should

be placed on ways to enhance this relationship. Further, as the field of early childhood education progresses, it is essential to demonstrate the importance of this developmental approach to interactions with our youngest students in order to achieve the school readiness skills that children need to succeed.

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Appendix

Teacher Survey - Teacher-student interactions

Code

Please answer according to personal experience:

1. How many years have you taught preschool? ☐
2. What is your highest level of related education? ☐
3. How long have you worked for Child and Family Opportunities? ☐
4. Have you ever received training on teacher-student interactions? Yes No
If so, how much? ___ Under 1 day ___ 1-3 days ___ More than 3 days
5. Have you ever received training on CLASS? Yes No If so, how much?
If so, how much? ___ Under 1 day ___ 1-3 days ___ More than 3 days

Rate these 9 items in order of importance from greatest to least important (1 being the most important, 9 being the least important) for a high quality early childhood education program.

Each number should be assigned to only one item

___ **Positive climate** (Teachers and children are enthusiastic about learning and respectful of one another)

___ **Teacher sensitivity** (Consistent and effective response to children based on verbal or behavioral cues)

___ **Regard for student perspective** (Intentional and consistent emphasis on children's interests and points of view)

___ **Behavior management** (Classroom rules are clearly communicated and followed by children)

___ **Productivity** (Clearly defined learning opportunities are provided throughout the day with little interruption or wasted time)

___ **Instructional learning formats** (Instruction is provided in multiple formats-ex. visual, oral, movement)

___ **Concept development** (Fostering deeper and broader understanding of concepts through open-ended questions, problem solving and aiding in making connections to real life)

___ **Quality of feedback** (Children are given specific feedback on their work that helps them reach a deeper understanding of concepts)

___ **Language modeling** (Language is intentionally modeled to respond to, encourage, and expand children's speech)

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| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|---|----------------|---|-------------|
| SCALE | 1 never | 2 | 3 sometimes | 4 | 5 always |
|-------|------------|---|----------------|---|-------------|

(circle the number that best answers statement for your classroom)

6. Children and teachers smile, laugh, and enjoy their time together.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Children's ideas are the basis of their work and play times.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Children are exposed to advanced vocabulary and concepts.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Children with varying learning styles are successful in my classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Children know the rules and they follow them.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Children and teachers are engaged together in learning activities most of the time.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Child receive immediate and informative responses to their work and actions.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Children seek out teachers for comfort and other needs.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Children's work is met with open ended questions that lead to problem solving and application.

1 2 3 4 5

Answer the following in your own words

15. What words describe preschool education?
16. What words describe teacher-child interactions in preschool?
17. Describe a typical interaction in your preschool classroom.
18. Describe behavior management in a preschool classroom.
19. Describe a small group activity that allows children to learn a concept.
20. Describe the role of a teacher in children's play.
21. How do you determine activities to plan for the following week?