Increasing Student Engagement and Connectedness

A Senior Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Graduation in the Honors College

By
Cynthia Hansen
Psychology Major

The College at Brockport
May 11, 2015

Thesis Director: Dr. Melissa M. Brown

*Educational use of this paper is permitted for the purpose of providing future
students a model example of an Honors senior thesis project.*

Introduction

In order to understand the importance of increasing student engagement and connectedness we first need to understand what the terms mean. First we will look at a simple definition of student engagement. "In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education" ("Student Engagement Definition", 2013). Next is the definition of connectedness, The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defined connectedness as "belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals" (2009). These are the most simple definitions for these two concepts, however in many studies done on connectedness and engagement the definitions vary slightly, in order to get a better understanding of what they both mean we will also review what constructs are most commonly used to measure connectedness and engagement.

In 2003 Jimerson, Campos, and Greif reviewed studies investigating student engagement. They focused on the varied ways student engagement has been measured. They discovered that engagement is commonly measured by observable traits related to academic effort and achievement. Components most often studied in direct relation to engagement are: involvement in school activities, grades, time dedicated to homework, and consistency of homework completion. Some researchers also include measurements of delinquency, truancy, or misbehavior in their investigation of engagement.

School connectedness also has been defined in a variety of ways. Waters and Cross (2010) identified that a students' sense that the adults in their school care about their learning and them as individuals was at the core of most definitions. Accordingly, many other studies under

review measure it by high academic expectations from teachers with support for learning, positive teacher–student interactions, and feelings of safety. Other constructs frequently used to measure school connectedness are: school bonding, school climate, school connection, attachment, and orientation to school.

Student connectedness and engagement are important. In 2009 the CDC reviewed studies on the positive effects of school connectedness and found many benefits including: decreased substance use, decreased school absenteeism, decreased early sexual initiation, decreased violence, decreased risk of unintentional injury, decreased emotional distress, decreased disordered eating, and decreased suicidal ideation and attempts. Additionally school connectedness correlates with positive academic outcomes such as: higher grades, staying in school, better attendance, and being less likely to carry a weapon, smoke, drink or have sexual intercourse.

Similarly, students' engagement in their education is also associated with positive outcomes. Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesman, VanDulem (2005) found that school engagement, for example, is linked to higher GPA, increased student involvement and increased parent involvement. Additionally Jessor, Van Den Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, and Turbin (1995) found that student engagement in school acts as a protective factor against problem behaviors, such as: smoking, drinking, unsafe sexual activity, and interacting with anti-social peers. Manlove (1998) reported that student disengagement was linked to an increased rate of school age pregnancy and high school dropout.

Literature Review

There has been research done on methods to increase student engagement and connectedness. The intention of this paper is to review what methods have been considered, decide which ones were most successful, which were not, and take that information and turn it into a new and improved approach to increase student engagement and connectedness.

Definitions

Much of the criticisms in this field of research are directed at scientists studying school engagement as a uni- rather than a multi-dimensional characteristic. Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro (2013) reviewed the North American literature and recommended a multi-dimensional concept of student engagement. It is at once, behavioral, emotional and cognitive. In the North American literature, a typical definition of school engagement included a variety of components: psychological, academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective. Psychological engagement refers to the students' feelings of belonging, relatedness and identification with their school and members of the school. Academic engagement is a focus on time spent on task, credits completed and homework completion. The affective or emotional component refers to students' enjoyment and interest in school-related challenges, positive and negative reactions to teachers and classmates, and willingness to do schoolwork. The cognitive aspect is the student's willingness to learn and their investment in putting the necessary effort into school work. The last component, behavioral, is about attending school and following the school's rules. They concluded that school engagement is a combination of students' behaviors, emotions, and cognitions. Studying all aspects together will give a more complete understanding of how students act in school. Research that has studied multiple aspects discovered that the aspects are

independent of the students, meaning that some students may score high in some aspects and low in others.

European research conceptualizes student engagement as three faceted: energy, dedication and absorption (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2012). Energy is defined as resilience while working, a willingness to put in effort and a positive attitude while approaching work. Dedication is defined as a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, identification and inspiration regarding school. Absorption is defined as having a flow-like experience when engaged in school work. This means the student has total focus on their work so much so that it seems as if time flies by. This new line of research is derived from European studies on work engagement. Being a new line of research it is understudied. A common criticism of the European approach is that it does not measure the students' behavior, feelings towards teachers, feelings towards peers, or their overall feeling of their school environment. Strength of the European approach is it examines students' psychological points of view on engagement, as well as continuity of engagement from school to the work place.

The majority of research on student engagement has been cross-sectional. Cross-sectional research is done in a short time frame comparing groups of different aged students. Cross-sectional research is beneficial for looking at multiple areas at once, but it only provides information at a different point of development, but provides no information on how the students develop over time. Cohort is a major confound in cross-sectional research as a students of different ages have different historical influences. Longitudinal studies follow a group of participants through an expanded period of time, allowing them to chart how students' engagement changes over time. Studies that have utilized the longitudinal approach found that during middle school student's engagement plummets along with academic motivation (Simons-

Morton & Crump, 2003; Wang & Eccles, 2012). This has implications for when to most effectively intervene.

Another research trend in engagement research is to focus on individual personalities rather than just grade level. These person-oriented studies have highlighted the fact that all students are different, with different patterns of development. Students are individuals with different reactions to environments. The important thing to do with students is to try to find a good person-environment fit (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2012).

Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan. Shochet (2013) define connectedness as "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school social environment". They reviewed the literature on interventions to increase connectedness and decrease student risk behavior. The majority of the studies reviewed focused on school wide changes. The programs included variations of class room sessions focused on self-esteem and problem solving skills, family engagement sessions, new training for teachers and activities for the whole school such as assemblies, family night and, competitions. The studies that implemented large scale changes all had positive outcomes. The students showed less risk taking behavior, higher engagement and better social skills. One paper (Hawkins et al. 1992) reviewed had a smaller approach and had teachers attend a class on ways to better connect with their students. The result of this one study showed that having a strong relationship with an adult in the school can increase the student's connectedness and commitment to school. Thus, if the students feel the way the school is run is consistent and fair, they have curriculum that helps them relate to their peers and adults and they have teachers who make an effort to get to know them it will lead to students feeling connected to their school, making safer choices and having a stronger commitment to school.

Social Development

The social development model hypothesizes that the primary social units: peers, family, or neighborhood, in an adolescent's life will form their attitudes and beliefs. The social development model takes into account the child's protective factors and risk factors in order to predict if they are in need of early intervention to avoid problem behaviors. If the adolescent's primary social unit has prosocial beliefs that is how the adolescent will act, if the social unit has antisocial beliefs then the adolescent will adopt those beliefs and behaviors accordingly (Catalano, Kosterman, Hawkins, & Newcomb, 1996).

Henry (2008) examined the social development model from the angle of prosocial engagement. Prosocial engagement in school and home are presumed to lower the chance of engaging in antisocial activities such as drug or alcohol usage. The effects of being disengaged from prosocial entities while also being engaged with antisocial entities (such as friends who use drugs) has been studied and revealed to be a critical contributor to adolescent drug use. The studies that have been done in the past examined this trend theoretically (e.g., Catalano & Hawkins, 1996) and empirically (e.g., Guo, Hill, Hawkins, Catalano, & Abbott, 2002). The social development model (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996) suggests that students learn social habits from social units such as peers, family and school. If a child bonds with other peers with positive social behaviors they are more likely to conform to fit in. If a child joins a new group of friends who have positive morals and ideals then that child will be likely to make the same positive choices. However, if a child bonds with a group of peers with negative morals and ideals then they will likely conform to those bad habits. When a child is younger it is more common for the family and school to affect their social choices, however as they grow older they pick a more permanent friend group and those friends become the primary influential group.

Many empirical studies have validated up the idea that family, (e.g., Velleman, Templeton, & Copello, 2005) school (e.g., Catalano, 2004; Maddox & Prinz, 2003), and peer groups (e.g., Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2002) are the primary influences on an adolescents' drug use. Henry (2008) hypothesized that poor family and school attachment would lead to a higher level of involvement with friends who use drugs therefore leading to more drug use themselves. The participants in the study were 1,065 6th and 7th graders from four different schools. The study surveyed the students four times across two years, assessing attachment to parents, attachment to school, friends' drug use and their drug use. The results indicated that family and school attachment were both predictors of having friends who use drugs and usig drugs. This study indicates that a solution to student drug use can be found in the home and in the school. If parents and schools can find ways to make students feel more accepted and positively attached to their family and school, then perhaps they can decrease the amount of negative influential friendships formed, and decrease the amount of student drug use.

Lynch, Lerner and Leventhal (2013) proposed peer culture theory, hypothesizing that it is not only what is happening in students' immediate peer groups that affects students' choices it is also school-wide peer behavior and the overall nature of peer relationships within a school that affect individual outcomes. For example, the conceptualized peer theory would mean that if the student body views their principal as "stupid", the fact that so many students in the school have that opinion would sway one individual student, or even that individual student and his or her three close friends to adopt the same opinion.

Lynch, Lerner and Leventhal (2012) identified two facets of peer culture that affect engagement: relational and behavioral. The relational component of peer culture is how students view the quality, fairness, and general positive or negative nature of school-wide peer relations.

The behavioral component is a measure of students' actual behaviors in relation to academic achievement and engagement. Their study is longitudinal and still ongoing. They began their research with 5th graders, and have been re-examining them in every grade. The participating students fill out surveys regarding their school engagement, GPA and their views on their peers. In the study they found that academic engagement is a precursor to a high GPA. However it was not clear as to whether or not behavioral peer culture and relational peer culture are a precursor to academic engagement. Although they did conclude that it is more than just a student's close group of friends that influences how they act. Part of the study found that if a student had a close group of friends who did not share a class environment with them, those friends had less influence over their actions than their broader group of peers who did share a class environment with them.

It is also important that Lynch, Lerner and Leventhal (2012) noted the work of Dodge and colleagues (2006) which investigated how time spent with antisocial peers leads to bad decisions: they found that it is not the mere fact that adolescents are spending time together, rather it is how they are spending time together and the amount of capable adult monitoring. For example if individuals spend structured time together in events such as sports, extra-curricular or academic clubs that have adults around in to monitor their time to see that it did not result in destructive decisions.

Lynch, Lerner and Leventhal (2012) provide insight in where to start improving student academic engagement. They should widen to focus beyond individual groups of friends to include on the whole attitude of a school's student body. Unfortunately this study provides little insight on what practices to implement in order to positively increase peer culture. Fortunately it

does provide the findings from Dodge (2006) giving us the helpful suggestion to make sure that

students have quality safe options to spend time together.

      Shin and Ryan (2014) conducted a study in order to determine if friendship choices

influence adolescents' school motivation, achievement and engagement. The participants of the

study were ten sixth grade classrooms from twenty-four self-contained classrooms. The students

stayed in the same class all day with the same teacher and peers. The study lasted from the

beginning of the sixth grade school year to the end. There were surveys done at the beginning of

the academic year and again at the end. The surveys measured students' intrinsic value of school,

academic self-efficacy, classroom engagement and GPA. The survey that measured intrinsic

value of school asked questions to gauge students' interest and enjoyment of their schoolwork.

Academic self-efficacy for school work measured students' judgment of how well they can

handle schoolwork. Classroom engagement measures students' effortful and disruptive behavior.

To identify friends students were given a class list and asked to put check marks next to the

names of students' they consider to be friends with or spend a lot of time with. Researchers kept

track of friendship changes across the study by having students check of the classmates they

considered to be friends on a class rooster, the students marked their friends at the beginning and

end of the school year. They found that when students are choosing their friends at the beginning

of a school year they seek out other students' with similar GPA history and self-efficacy views.

Over the course of the year their GPA begins to match their friends more closely; however their

views about what work they can accomplish stay the same. It was also shown that after students

choose their friends over time they start to resemble their friend's intrinsic value and effortful or

disruptive behavior. Overall this study discovered that students' seek out friends who are similar

to themselves in GPA and self-efficacy. However, if they made friends with students' who value

school and behave well over time, their value and behavior in school positively changed. In turn if they made friends with students who dislike school and misbehave in school their own values and behaviors in school changed negatively throughout the year.

Classroom Engagement

Covell, McNeil and Howe (2009) conducted a study on how to improve student engagement. They took a program called RRR (Rights, Respect and Responsibility) and studied its effects on student engagement. The program is implemented by letting students in schools have a say in the way their school is run. The staff and students share responsibilities in creating school rules, policies, hiring and expenditures. The belief behind this program is that a crucial part of creating student engagements is an environment with high expectations for students, discipline policies that are clear and fair, respect for students and rules that are consistently enforced. Another important factor for student engagement is classroom activities that are inclusive, supportive and participatory. In the RRR program where the students get to have a say in how students and staff should behave and be treated this helps raise their investment in their school. RRR studies show that students who receive this type of education show high levels of engagement, decreased anti-social behavior, increased social behavior, increased learning outcomes and an increase in respect for others (Covell and Howe, 1999, 2001; Decoene and De Cock, 1996; Howe and Covell, 2007). Covell, McNeil and Howe (2009) hypothesized that RRR education environments would in fact increase student engagement, and thereby decrease teacher burn out. The study was conducted over three years and the schools were allowed to implement the RRR environment at their own pace. This made it so the study could examine the level of implementation in each school, and how the different levels of implementation affected student engagement and teacher burn out. The teachers involved in the study completed surveys to

measure the teacher burn-out using the MBI (Masalch Burnout Inventory) scale, student

engagement, and how much their school implemented the RRR program. Based on the ratings

teachers provided regarding the level to which their school had implemented the RRR program

they split the schools into two groups fully implemented (FI) and partially implemented (PI). FI

schools had more positive results than PI schools. The results showed that the implementation of

RRR was successful at increasing student engagement. The students showed more respect for the

property of peers, respect for others emotions, and more participation in school. The positive

effects on students' engagement were associated with less teacher burn out.

As discussed earlier middle school is often a low point for an adolescent's academic

engagement and motivation. (Orthner, Jones-Snapei, Akos and Rose 2013, Upadyaya and

Salmela-Aro 2013, Orthner et al., 2010; Woolley & Bowen, 2007) condoned that in order for

students' to have an interest in their education, they need to know that it is beneficial to them

now or in the future. In this study, the authors hypothesized that increasing educations' relevance

to each student's career goals would help them feel like education and school were worth their

time. They evaluated the effectiveness of the approach called Career Start, a program for

increasing engagement in middle school. This program was implemented by teachers of math,

language arts, social studies and science. The research examined if Career Start and career

relevant instruction (CRI) would increase middle school students' psychosocial school

engagement. With the findings at hand that Middle School is a downfall for students'

connectedness and engagement, it is reasonable to say that examining programs that can increase

engagement in middle school will be beneficial in the effort to increase student engagement in

high school. If students loose motivation and engagement while in middle school it is likely that

they will not feel engaged when they start high school. If middle school programs can increase

engagement before high school and then high school programs can continue the engagement it

could lead to a higher percentage of students who graduate high school. CRI aims to get

students' to think about what careers they may want to pursue and to learn about them during

school. Career Start works on incorporating real world facts into core curriculum. Such as giving

examples of what sort of careers use the information they are learning during class. Helping

students connect what they are learning in school to what adults do for a living makes students

feel like they are learning skills that could really help them later in life. The research questions of

this study were (a) if eighth grade students who completed three years of Career Start education

showed more engagement and education value compared to students with regular instruction and

(B) if eighth grade students who completed three years of CRI showed higher education value

and engagement than students who received less CRI. Fourteen middle schools in one North

Carolina school district were used for this study. Seven schools were treatment schools and

seven were control schools. The findings confirmed the benefits of Career Start and CRI.

Students who were in the test schools who received Career Start showed significantly higher

scores for valuing their education and being engaged in school. Also students who reported

having more CRI from their core teachers, showed higher value of their education and higher

engagement than students who reported having low CRI. This study demonstrates that middle

school programs can increase student engagement. Furthermore middle school programs

focusing specifically on careers and the future can result in significant improvements on

student's engagement and value of their education. If this study were taken one step farther and

continued evaluating these children through high school it could show us if middle school

engagement continues on into high school. It is important to know that this program can in fact

help middle school students appreciate school more, but it is also important to know if this type of program can lead to higher graduation percentages.

Counseling

Lapan, Wells, Petersen and McCann (2014) believed that an important part of student connectedness was counselor involvement. In 2009 the CDC defined school connectedness as the "belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals". The impetus for this study was school violence. Previous research indicates a relationship and effective counseling can result in K-12 and postsecondary success (e.g., Carrell & Carrell, 2006; College Board National Office for School Counselor Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Lapan & Harrington, 2009; Lapan, Turner, & Pierce, 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Trusty, Spencer, & Carney, 2005; Whiston & Quinby, 2009; Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2010). Counseling programs are one way to help students feel more connected. If students are going through a hard time whether it be from violence in school or problems at home or anything in between and they can feel safe to talk to their counselors that gives them the sense that people at their school do care about them, therefor giving them a more defined sense of connectedness.

The purpose of this study was to see if a solid counselor program in an urban school could increase students' sense of connectedness and if the counselling program could help protect students from negative side effects due to harsh school experiences. The schools counseling program made sure that each student met with a counselor at least once a year from 7th till 12th grade. In these meetings they discussed classes, personal strengths, weaknesses, career plans and any other topics that may be relevant. The counselors also met with each student's parents at least once a year. The school provides counselors with professional development opportunities to stay up to date with everything they need for their job. The study

conducted surveys to see how students felt about their counselors. The survey also let them

measure how connected students felt. The study found that the improved counseling program

significantly increased students' sense of connectedness. The study also found that the

counseling program acted as a protective factor for students who have faced harsh situations.

Another strategy for increasing connectedness is to increase awareness of the curricula

for current and future success. They attempted to increase perceived relevance by providing

educational and career planning learning activities that help students understand their interests

and develop future vocational goals, ensuring that their academic schedules matched these

interests and future plans by engaging them in personally relevant and interesting CTE learning

experiences. The relevance of their learning experience helped students' to feel more engaged

during classes and more willing to put in necessary effort on school work. Surveys were used to

measure connectedness, counselor effectiveness, and individual school risk factor, lower

graduation rate, higher crime rate and lower test scores. The risk factor score was a strong

predictor of academic achievement for each school. The results of the study show that a strong

counseling program can increase students' sense of connectedness. The study also found that

students of schools with higher risk factors did feel less connected, however better counseling

programs can decrease risk factors. The last question was if having a better counseling program

can act as a protective factor against adverse effects from negative experiences. The strong

counseling can help students by providing them with a trusted adult and giving them somewhere

to go for help and emotional support. Overall this study found highly positive results for strong

counseling programs and student connectedness.

Mentoring

Assigning a peer mentor is another avenue for increasing connection. Past research on cross age peer mentor programs have shown positive effects for both mentors and mentees. The mentees in past studies have demonstrated or reported improvements in attitudes toward and connectedness to school and peers (Bowman & Myrick, 1987; Karcher, 2005; Stoltz, 2005), self-efficacy (Stoltz, 2005; Tomlin, 1994), grades or academic achievement (Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002; Stoltz, 2005; Tomnlin, 1994; Westerman, 2002), social skills (Karcher, 2005; Noll, 1997), and behavior problems (Bowman & Myrick, 1987), as well as gains in conventional or prosocial attitudes toward illicit and antisocial behavior (Sheehan, DiCara, LeBailly 1999). Mentors have reported similar positive results such as the feeling of connectedness and social improvements (Karcher 2009).

Karcher (2009) believed that counselors play a part in student connectedness; however he did not feel that it was just counselors that could make a difference. His idea was that students helping other students in cross age peer mentor programs would make students feel more connected, and the counselor's job was to oversee the mentor meetings and train the mentors to make sure they did the best job possible. Karcher (2009) investigated the effect of a peer mentoring program on both the mentees and the mentor. The study had 45 mentors mostly from grades 10 and 11; the control group had 46 students that were not mentors, just regular students. The mentees were 4th and 5th graders. The mentees were chosen from students who were showing negative signs in grades and social life; others were recommended by their parents or came on their own accord. There was an initial meet and greet where the mentors introduced themselves and mentees could choose a mentor that they felt they could relate to. The students all completed surveys assessing their current level of connectedness in September before any meetings had taken place and again in May when the study finished. From September to May the

mentees and mentors met once a week at school, and one Saturday a month. The results showed

that the mentors showed no negative effects from acting as mentors to younger students. They

did however show positive signs from the program. The mentors had an increase in student

connectedness, teacher connectedness and school connectedness. Both mentors and mentees had

an increase in student achievement, connectedness and self-esteem. Overall this study shows that

cross age peer mentor programs do increase student connectedness and can have other positive

effects on both the mentors and mentees.

Proposal

The literature on student engagement and connectedness that approaches targeting

multiple areas is likely to be the most effective. In order to help students' feel engaged and

connected to school it is beneficial to make the material they learn in classes relevant to their life

and their future. Students also need to know that there are adults in the school who they can trust

and rely on. They also need to feel that there are other students in the school who care about

them and are similar to them. Students also need to know that each year of their education is

important and that each year helps them prepare for the next year and ultimately life after school.

In order to really make an improvement on student's engagement and connectedness to school

programs should focus on three areas. The first area being the classroom; the structure and

material needs to hold their attention and inform them on why it matters. The second area is

counseling; the students' need to have a strong counseling system where they know that there is

always at least one adult who knows them, knows their goals in life and knows their family. The

third area is the student atmosphere. Students' need to know that their peers are going through

the same things they are and that there are other students in their school that care. If a program

that focuses on all three of those areas can be designed and successfully implemented in schools

it could lead to great improvements on students' engagement and connectedness to school.

The first area to focus on is the classroom. In the literature review the study (Orthner,

Jones-Snapei, Akos and Rose 2013) was examined, that study aimed to increase engagement in

school by implementing the CRI and Career Start methods of teaching. That article showed us

that these types of teaching were very effective in increasing students' school engagement. The

other method that was found to have a positive effect on students' engagement was letting

students have a say in how the school is run. If a program combines CRI, Career Start and

student governing in the classroom settings it could have a very positive effect on engagement

and connectedness in the classroom. Helping students feel that their education is really preparing

them for life and that their opinions are taken seriously is a starting point for improving their

education. Instead of starting this program with the students' jumping right into creating rules for

the whole school it could start with them just deciding on rules for each of their classes. At the

start of the school year each class can have a discussion with their teacher and make up a set of

classroom rules. For the sake of example let us say that each teacher has seven classes, the

teacher would create a set of rules for each seven classes and post them on a board. The second

day of school each class would then vote on which of the seven sets of rules they agree with

most and after all seven classes have voted the set of rules with the highest votes becomes the

classroom rules for the year. This method makes it so each class gets a say in the rules that are

made and gets a say in choosing which set would be followed for the year, all while making it

easier for the teacher by not making them remember a different set of rules for each class during

their day. However the students will still have to remember multiple sets of rules as they will

have a different set for each classroom, but that is no different than how school is run regularly,

each teacher has their own set of rules they expect students to follow while in their class, but this way the students get a say in the rules they are expected to follow in each teachers room. The rule for the most part will be what the students' feel there should be rules about. However, it is not implausible to think that students will try to get away with no rules. So if a teacher has a class that does not have any idea what type of rules to come up with teachers could give examples. For instance the teachers could read the rules they previously used and ask the students if they agree with them or think they should be modified. Or they could ask the students guided questions, such as: what should the rule about late homework be, how should make up tests work, how do we handle cell phone use in class, should interruptions be tolerated if not how to we handle them, does the bell or the teacher dismiss the class, is their punishment for falling asleep in class or should it be seen as a sign that the class needs to change pace, and what should the dress code be. The dress code question could be tricky because if the rules for clothes are different in each class it could be hard for adolescents to follow, overall though it seems if one class has a harsher dress code they could just put on a hoodie and some sweat pants for that class or the classroom could have sets of clothes/sweats to put on if a student is breaking dress code rules for the class. Those are just examples of what the teacher can ask for student opinions on, the students' or the teachers can have other types of rules they would wish to add to the code of conduct. If there are any disagreements about if a rule should be allowed it can be put to a vote, however rules should not be allowed to harm any students' and the final judgment call about a rule would be left up to the teacher. Having the teacher decide on rules that are up in the air helps show the students' that there are still people who are in charge of them and trying to make sure they stay safe and happy.

The measurements for this portion of the program would be taken from the Orthner, Jones-Snapei, Akos and Rose (2013) study which would cover the CRI and Career Start measurements. The measurement scales for engagement are "school valuing" and "school engagement". The school valuing scale includes seven questions such as "school is important, school and what I learn there is useful, school and what I learn there will be useful in getting a job, dropping out would be a mistake". The school engagement scale includes three questions; "school is fun and exciting," "I look forward to going to school," and "I look forward to learning new things." Both scales use a Likert scale range of 1-5, 1 being the lowest. CRI and Career Start are measured by a student survey that asks them to rate how much they feel their teachers included CRI and Career Start into their curriculum. Measuring how beneficial the classroom democracy is for students' engagement and connectedness would use the measures created in the Covell, McNeil and Howe (2009) study. The measurements include the Maslach Burnout Inventory, a thirty one item questionnaire to assess the amount teachers feel the students' show engagement to school and a twenty two item questionnaire to assess how much the teachers feel the student governing has changed students' engagement. The measures used in this study have the benefit of measuring teacher burnout and student engagement.

The second aspect of the new program is counseling. Earlier in the paper it was discussed how counseling can provide a safe environment for students' so they can talk through their problems and feel like they have a connection to at least one adult who can help them. As we learned in the Lapan, Wells, Petersen and McCann (2013) study a strong counseling program can be used to increase a students' sense of connectedness to school. The aspects of this study that we will actively incorporate to the new program will be the counselor meeting requirements, meaning that the students' will meet with all students and their parents at least once and the

proper training to keep counselors up to date about the best ways to work with their students. The new program will also be using the measurements provided in the Lapan, Wells, Petersen and McCann (2013) study to measure how students' feel about their counselors and how they feel about school.

The third component of the new program will work on improving pupil's student atmosphere. In order to do this the program will incorporate their counselor program with a peer mentor program. As discussed in the Karcher (2009) study peer-mentor group can provide benefits for both the mentees and the mentors. The participating school(s) would implement the peer-mentor program much like it was used in the Karcher (2009) study. Students to participate will be selected by their counselors, parents and by their own choice. There will be notifications sent to all the parents and announcements so students are aware of the peer-mentor program so they can sign up if they wish. There will be a meet and greet so the mentees can choose their mentors, they will then meet once a week and one Saturday a month just as it was set up in the Karcher (2009) study. Replicating the Karcher (2009) study for the third portion of the new program will help the schools participating observe if the peer-mentor program will be beneficial for them. If after the first year of the new program has been used at a school the school wishes to continue using it they could adjust the peer-mentor program if they believe it will benefit their students. Some examples of how schools may wish to adjust the peer-mentor program are: (a) choosing if the mentors will be older or the same age as the mentees, (b) deciding which grades to incorporate, since in the replicated version it will be 4th and 5th graders as the mentees and 11th and 12th graders as the mentors, instead they could do middle school students paired with high school or lower high school students paired with upper high school students (c) they could adjust how many meetings the program has, there are also many other options available to the schools,

it is all about what they feel will be the best fit for their students. If schools choose to use the program a second year and make adjustments they would be provided with materials to keep track of their changes and their results just as they would keep track of the results and set up the first year of the program. For the first year, when the peer-mentor section of the program is implemented by replicating the Karcher (2009) study, the measurements will be the same as the ones provided in the Karcher (2009) study.

The new program will be implemented in schools willing to participate in a new study. The goal of this program will be to increase students' engagement and connectedness to their school. By increasing these qualities it is believed that the students will perform better in school, schools will have a better graduation percent and that teachers will enjoy their job more. In order to measure these additional expected outcomes there will be measurements at the beginning and the end of the study. The study will start at the beginning of a school year and finish when that school year ends. The graduation percent will be easy to measure; they will provide their percent from the previous year and compare it to the percent of the study year. However in order for this particular measurement to be most accurate it would be preferable for schools to participate in this study for multiple years to see if there is a continuous percentage increase. The measure of teacher enjoyment will be measured by surveys given to participating teachers asking them at the beginning to rate their job enjoyment and again at the end of the study. The student measures will be scored by the individual measures that are provided for each of the three program sections.

It is believed that implementing this program will have statistically significant effects on student engagement and connectedness. The counseling program and the peer mentor program should positively increase students' connectedness by giving them faith that there are adults and

students' in their school that care about their success. The classroom programs; CRI, Career

Start and student governing are hypothesized to increase student engagement. Giving students' a

reason to believe that their education is relevant to their life and to their personal goals has been

shown to increase engagement. As well as giving students' power to control some aspects of

their education has also been shown to have a positive increase on engagement.

References

Bowman, R. P., & Myrick, R. D. (1987). Effects of an elementary school peer facilitator

program on children with behavior problems. School Counselor, 34, 369-378.

Carrell, S. E., & Carrell, S. A. (2006). Do lower student to counselor ratios reduce school

disciplinary problems? Contributions to Economic Analysis & Policy, 5, 1–24

Catalano, R. F. (2004). The importance of bonding to school for healthy development: Findings

from the Social Development Research Group. *The Journal of School Health*, *74*(7), 151–

162.

Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (1996). The social development model: A theory of antisocial

behavior. In J. D.Hawkins (Ed.), *Delinquency and crime: Current theories* (pp. 149– 197).

New York: Cambridge University Press.

Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (1996). The social development model: A theory of antisocial

behavior. In J. D.Hawkins (Ed.), *Delinquency and crime: Current theories* (pp. 149– 197).

New York: Cambridge University Press.

Catalano, R. F., Kosterman, R., Hawkins, J. D., & Newcomb, M. D. (1996). Modeling the

etiology of adolescent substance use: A test of the social development model. *Journal Of

Drug Issues*, *26*(2), 429-455.

Chapman, R. L., Buckley, L., Sheehan, M., & Shochet, I. (2013). School-based programs for

increasing connectedness and reducing risk behavior: A systematic review. *Educational

Psychology Review*, *25*(1), 95-114. doi:10.1007/s10648-013-9216-4

Covell, K. and Howe, R. B. (2001) 'Moral Education Through the 3 Rs: Rights, Respect and

Responsibility', Journal of Moral Education 30: 29–41.

Covell, K., McNeil, J. K., & Howe, R. B. (2009). Reducing teacher burnout by increasing

    student engagement: A children's rights approach. *School Psychology International*, *30*(3),

    282-290. doi:10.1177/0143034309106496

Decoene, J. and DeCock, R. (1996) 'The Children's Rights Project in the Primary School "De

    vrijdagmarkt" in Bruges', in E. Verhellen (ed.) Monitoring Children's Rights, pp. 627–36.

    The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Dodge, K. A., Dishion, T. J., & Lansford, J. E. (2006). Deviant peer influences in intervention

    and public policy for youth. Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy

    Report, 20(1), 3–19.

Fergusson, D. M., Swain-Campbell, N. R., & Horwood, L. J. (2002). Deviant peer affiliations,

    crime and substance use: A fixed effects regression analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child*

    Psychology, *30*(4), 419– 430.

Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., Morrison, D. M., O'Donnell, J., Abbott, R. D., & Day, L. E.

    (1992). The Seattle Social Development Project: effects of the first four years on protective

    factors and problem behaviors. In J. McCord & R. E. Tremblay (Eds.), Preventing antisocial

    behavior: interventions from birth through adolescence (pp. 139–161). New York: Guilford.

Henry, K. L. (2008). Low prosocial attachment, involvement with drug-using peers, and

    adolescent drug use: A longitudinal examination of mediational mechanisms. *Psychology Of*

    Addictive Behaviors, *22*(2), 302-308. doi:10.1037/0893-164X.22.2.302

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2007). School counseling to close the achievement gap: A social justice

    framework for success. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Howe, R. B. and Covell, K. (2007) Empowering Children: Children's Rights Education as a

    Pathway to Citizenship. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Jessor, R., Van Den Bos, J., Vanderryn, J., Costa, F. M., & Turbin, M. S. (1995). Protective

factors in adolescent problem behavior: Moderator effects and developmental

change. *Developmental Psychology*, *31*(6), 923-933. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.31.6.923

Jimerson, S. R., Campos, E., & Greif, J. L. (2003). Toward an Understanding of Definitions and

Measures of School Engagement and Related Terms. *California School Psychologist*, 87-27.

doi:10.1007/BF03340893

Karcher, M. (2009). Increases in academic connectedness and self-esteem among high school

students who serve as cross-age peer mentors. Professional School Counseling, 12(4), 292-

299. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-12.292

Karcher, M. J., Davis, C., & Powell, B. (2002). Developmental mentoring in the schools: Testing

connectedness as a mediating variable in the promotion of academic achievement. School

Community Journal, 12, 36-52.

Karcher, M.J. (2005b). The effects of school-based developmental mentoring and mentors'

attendance on mentees' self-esteem, behavior, and connectedness. Psychology in the Schools,

42, 65-77.

Lapan, R. T., & Harrington, K. M. (2009). Paving the road to college: How school counselors

help students succeed. Amherst, MA: Center for School Counseling Outcome Research.

Lapan, R. T., Turner, S., & Pierce, M. E. (2012). College and career readiness: Policy and

research to support effective counseling in schools. In N. A. Fouad, J. A. Carter, & L. M.

Subich (Eds.), APA handbook of counseling psychology (Vol. 2, pp. 57–73). Washington,

DC: American Psychological Association.

Lapan, R. T., Wells, R., Petersen, J., & McCann, L. A. (2014). Stand tall to protect students:

School counselors strengthening school connectedness. *Journal Of Counseling &*

Development, *92*(3), 304-315. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00158.x

Lynch, A. D., Lerner, R. M., & Leventhal, T. (2013). Adolescent academic achievement and

school engagement: An examination of the role of school-wide peer culture. *Journal Of*

Youth And Adolescence, *42*(1), 6-19. doi:10.1007/s10964-012-9833-0

Maddox, S. J., & Prinz, R. J. (2003). School bonding in children and adolescents:

Conceptualization, assessment, and associated variables. *Clinical Child & Family*

Psychology Review, *6*, 31– 49.

Manlove, J. (1998). The Influence of High School Dropout and School Disengagement on the

Risk of School-Age Pregnancy.*Journal Of Research On Adolescence (Lawrence*

Erlbaum), *8*(2), 187-220.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (DHHS/CDC). Division

of Adolescent and School, H. (2009). School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing

Protective Factors among Youth. *Centers For Disease Control And Prevention*,

Noll, V. (1997). Cross-age mentoring program for social skills development. The School

Counselor, 44, 239-242.

Orthner, D. K., Akos, P., Rose, R., Jones-Sanpei, H., Mercado, M., & Woolley, M. (2010).

CareerStart: A middle school student engagement and academic achievement program.

Children and Schools, 32, 223– 234.

Orthner, D. K., Jones-Sanpei, H., Akos, P., & Rose, R. A. (2013). Improving middle school

student engagement through career-relevant instruction in the core curriculum. *The Journal*

Of Educational Research, *106*(1), 27-38. doi:10.1080/00220671.2012.658454

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Roehlkepartain, E. C., Sesma, A. J., & van Dulmen, M. (2006). The

    Role of Developmental Assets in Predicting Academic Achievement: A Longitudinal

    Study. *Journal Of Adolescence*, *29*(5), 691-708.

Sheehan, K., DiCara, J. A., LeBailly, S., & Christoffel, K. K. (1999). Adapting the gang model:

    Peer mentoring for violence prevention. Pediatrics, 104, 50-54.

Shin, H., & Ryan, A. M. (2014). Early adolescent friendships and academic adjustment:

    Examining selection and influence processes with longitudinal social network

    analysis. *Developmental Psychology*, *50*(11), 2462-2472. doi:10.1037/a0037922

Simons-Morton, B. G., & Crump, A. D. (2003). Association of parental involvement and social

    competence with school adjustment and engagement among sixth graders. *Journal of School*

    Health, *73*, 121– 126. doi: 10.1111/j.1746-1561.2003.tb03586.x

Stoltz, A. D. (2005). The relationship between peer mentoring program participation and

    successful transition to high school Unpublished dissertation, University of California at

    Davis.

Student Engagement Definition. (2013, December 13). Retrieved April 19, 2015, from

    http://edglossary.org/student-engagement/

Tomlin, V. E. (1994). A mentor program for improving the academic attainment of Black

    adolescent males. Unpublished dissertation, University of Denver, CO.

Trusty, J., Spencer, N. G., & Carney, C. V. (2005). Education-career planning and middle school

    counselors. Professional School Counseling, 9, 136–143.

Upadyaya, K., & Salmela-Aro, K. (2013). Development of school engagement in association

    with academic success and well-being in varying social contexts: A review of empirical

    research. *European Psychologist*, *18*(2), 136-147. doi:10.1027/1016-9040/a000143

Velleman, R., Templeton, L., & Copello, A. (2005). The role of the family in preventing and

    intervening with substance use and misuse: A comprehensive review of family interventions

    with a focus on young people. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, *24*, 93– 109.

Wang, M.-T., & Eccles, J. S. (2012). Social support matters: Longitudinal effects of social

    support on three dimensions of school engagement from middle to high school. *Child*

    Development, *83*, 877– 895. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01745.x

Waters, S., & Cross, D. (2010). Measuring students' connectedness to school, teachers, and

    family: Validation of three scales.*School Psychology Quarterly*, *25*(3), 164-177.

    doi:10.1037/a0020942

Westerman, J. J. (2002). Mentoring and cross-age mentoring: Improving academic achievement

    through a unique partnership. Unpublished dissertation, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

Whiston, S. C., & Quinby, R. F. (2009). Review of school counseling outcome research.

    Psychology in the Schools, 3, 267–272.

Whiston, S. C., Tai, W. L., Rahardja, D., & Eder, K. (2010). School counseling outcome: A

    meta-analytic examination of interventions. Journal of Counseling & Development, 89, 37–

    55.

Woolley, M., & Bowen, G. L. (2007). In the context of risk: Supportive adults and the school

    engagement of middle school students. Family Relations, 56, 92–104. doi:10.1111/j.1741–

    3729.2007.00442.x