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# The Effects of "Capturing Kids' Hearts" and Building Student-Teacher Relationships in an Arkansas Suburban Elementary School Setting

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**THE EFFECTS OF “CAPTURING KIDS’ HEARTS” AND BUILDING  
STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS IN AN ARKANSAS  
SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SETTING**

A Dissertation Proposal Submitted  
to the Graduate College  
Arkansas Tech University

in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

in the Department of School Leadership

in the Center for Leadership and Learning  
of the College of Education

May, 2019

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Title: The Effects of “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” and Building Student-Teacher Relationships in an Arkansas Suburban Elementary School Setting

Program: Educational Leadership

Degree: Doctor of Education

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this journey for the pursuit of knowledge and personal growth to my two children, Morgan Neathery and Ty Neathery. I want to encourage you to reach for the stars and go for your dreams! Always remember - “For with God, all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26. As your mom, I believe in you and hope you will always believe in yourself. I want to help provide a path for your success. My next goal is to help you achieve your dreams by helping, leading the way, and showing my support.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process as it relates to student-teacher relationships. This study sought to determine teachers' perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships. The study was to ascertain the effect of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process on: (a) student attendance, (b) student achievement, and (c) student discipline. This qualitative study used the results of surveys, discipline, attendance, and student achievement data to address two suburban elementary schools' problem of students not reaching their highest academic and social potential due to the absence of establishing relationships at schools. Analysis of the data revealed the Capturing Kids' Hearts process did have a positive impact on student-teacher relationships, student achievement, and student discipline in a suburban school district bordering Little Rock, Arkansas. The data collected in this study should help other school districts in fostering increased student academic achievement through positive student-teacher relationships by implementing the training in teachers' professional development plans. This study found the Capturing Kids' Hearts process can be used to strengthen the training of teachers through this process in order to improve high-quality trusting and respectful relationships within the school setting.

*Keywords:* dissertation; student-teacher relationships

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# CHAPTER I.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

According to Davis (2010), one of the key factors in students reaching their highest academic and social potential are their relationships encountered at school. Improving students' relationships with teachers has an important, positive, and long-lasting implication for both students' academic and social development (Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Marzano's research (2010) indicates there is a connection between student achievement and positive relationships. Positive relationships between teachers and students are among the most commonly cited variables associated with effective instruction (Marzano & Pickering, 2010). School leaders need to know how to influence the learning process to help pave the way for academic success.

Students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected to school (Blum, 2005). According to Blum (2005), school connectedness refers to an academic environment in which students believe adults in their school care about learning and about the students as individuals. Connecting students to school is especially crucial during adolescent years in order to reduce the likelihood students will engage in health compromising behaviors (Blum, 2005).

According to Solar (2011), teachers are the central and most powerful force in the lives of young people. It is through teachers' consistency in behaviors and methods, as well as persistence help kids excel in the classroom (Solar, 2011). Nieto (2012) found in her study of caring educators, as well as from her own experiences in teaching, if learning is to take place, true teaching must be accompanied by a deep level of care. Educators

need to study their students (Nieto, 2012). The results of Nieto's study revealed educators need to learn about students in the classroom, what students value and believe, and what students hope for and desire. This kind of learning leads to empathy, respect, and support in the classroom.

Hagenauer, Hascher, and Volet (2015) conducted a study that examined teacher emotions, in particular how emotions were predicted by students' behavior and the interpersonal aspect of the teacher-student relationship. One hundred thirty-two secondary teachers participated in a quantitative study relying on self-report questionnaire data. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed the interpersonal relationship formed between teachers and students was the strongest predictor for teachers' joy and satisfaction. The results of this study suggest interpersonal teacher student relationships play an important role in students' emotional experience in class (Hagenauer, Hascher, & Volet, 2015).

Student-teacher relationships have a large impact on students' social and emotional experiences in schools, primarily because such relationships influence students' perceptions of connection and belonging (Osterman, 2010). Osterman's (2010) research suggests positive social relations between students and teachers can be considered through the lens of support and caring behaviors. Osterman (2010) proposes the following: (a) offering constant support for students having difficulties, (b) constant support for students in order for them to meet the standards and skills required by the school, (c) constant support so students feel included in society, and (d) constant efforts to help students establish and maintain respectful relationships. Teachers who make positive connections and exchanges with students establish meaningful relationships with

students, provide caring, discipline and structure, have high expectations and teach students social skills (Parker, 2013). Osterman (2010) noted research consistently identifies teachers as having the most powerful impact on students' psychological experiences in classrooms.

Cooper (2014) conducted a research study explored the role of high school students' perceptions of teacher understanding in the development of caring student-teacher relationships. Cooper analyzed 33 interviews with high school students discussing 65 student-teacher relationships to consider the nuances within these different types of relationships. Cooper (2014) found the student-teacher relationship is so critical because of the power to communicate worth, respect and care to students.

Student-teacher relationships have a large impact on students' social and emotional experiences in schools, primarily because such relationships influence students' perceptions of connection and belonging (Osterman, 2010). Students feel more connected to a teacher who they perceive cares about them academically and personally (Cooper, 2014). Cooper (2014) identifies one of the main problems with schools is the inability to promote caring: and caring relationships lead to interpersonal trust, which is the basis for moral and individualized education.

Through his experience working with at-risk youth, Flippen (2016) saw the need for a program to help adults create meaningful and healthy relationships with children and youth. Flippen (2016) developed an after-school program called Teen Leadership. This model led to the same leadership processes made available to educators, delivered through the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. Flippen (2016) believes improving

relationships with adult role models helps all students; including at-risk students succeed in life.

Capturing Kids' Hearts is a skill-intensive, systemic process designed to develop high-performing school cultures, align organizational and individual behavior to outcome, and increase school connectedness (Holtzapple, 2011). Holtzapple (2011) notes that by implementing this integrated approach, faculty members build intentional cultures, emphasize connectedness with students, and with each other; thereby, negative behaviors are minimized while learning is maximized. Students also acquire communication and conflict resolution skills that help them succeed both in school and after graduation.

Evidence-based longitudinal research studies and comprehensive literature reviews have demonstrated connectedness to an appropriate role model (teacher) and effective classroom management exert a positive impact on students' behavior (Resnick et al., 1997) and academic achievement (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). In a meta-analysis of more than 100 studies, Marzano (2003) reported the keystone for all aspects of effective classroom management was the quality of teacher-student relationships.

The goal of Capturing Kids' Hearts is to develop leaders who have the knowledge and skill-sets to develop healthy relationships with students, colleagues, and members of the community. Holtzapple (2011) notes through these relationships, adults model the character traits students must acquire in order to reach their full potential. Flippen's Capturing Kids' Hearts not only identifies a process designed to build high-quality relationships, but also provides an opportunity for participants to learn and practice skills that exert a positive impact on classroom management.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process as it relates to student-teacher relationships. This study was designed to determine teachers' perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships. This study also ascertained the effect of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process on: (a) student attendance, (b) student achievement, and (c) student discipline.

Through a 4-item 5-point Likert Scale, the study sought to determine teachers' perceptions as to whether the Capturing Kids' Heart professional development process was effective in assisting them to develop mutual respect and rapport. The study also measured teacher perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships (via a series of 40 questions on a 5-point Likert Scale). Lastly, the study measured student attendance, student achievement and student discipline through the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool.

## **Conceptual Definitions of Terms**

Achievement: The completion of given activities to the highest level of ability.

ACT Aspire: A vertically scaled battery of achievement tests designed to measure student growth in a longitudinal assessment for grade 3-10 in English, reading, writing, mathematics, and science. ACT Aspire was designed to measure students' progress toward college and career readiness.

Capturing Kids' Hearts: A teacher training process that focuses on teaching participants how to engage students, build trust with and between students, foster rapport with students and build positive relationships.

Engagement: The act of engaging or the state of being engaged in classroom activities or lessons.

EXCEL Model: An acronym for engaging, exploring, communicating, empowering, and launching students in the Capturing Kids' Hearts Process.

eSchool: A student management and gradebook system utilized by all public schools in the State of Arkansas provided by the Arkansas Department of Education.

Mutual Respect: To affirm the values and uniqueness of each person and other feedback with encouraging words.

Participation: Having attended the two-day staff development process and subsequent follow-up training sessions.

Professional Development Process: Structured meetings and training sessions designed to enhance the skills of teachers and to develop strategies and skills previously taught.

Student Achievement: Academic achievement in grades 3 and 4 as measured by the ACT Aspire test scores during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years

Student Attendance: Student attendance in grades 3 and 4 as measured by the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool before and after Capturing Kids' Hearts implementation.

Student Discipline: Student behavior records entered into a student management and gradebook system utilized by all public schools in the State of Arkansas provided by the Arkansas Department of Education.

Student Engagement: The extent to which students willingly and actively participate in classroom activities, and accept their roles and responsibilities for their own learning.

Teachers: Highly qualified personnel in two suburban elementary schools in Arkansas.

Teacher-Student Relationships: The special connection between students and teachers that provides a framework to increase academic and social success.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

1. Mutual respect and rapport between teachers and students will be operationally defined as a measured perception by teachers via their responses and feedback from the professional development survey. (Teachers' perceptions of the effect the process had on student-teacher relationships will be operationally defined by their responses to a survey.
2. Student attendance will be operationally defined as students' in third and fourth grade attendance through eSchool during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years.
3. Student achievement will be operationally defined as the data from third and fourth grade ACT Aspire results from the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years,.
4. Student discipline will be operationally defined as student behavior records entered into a student management and gradebook system utilized by all public schools in the state of Arkansas provided by the Arkansas Department of Education during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years.

## **Hypotheses**

- H1:** The Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of student-teacher relationships.
- H2:** The Capturing Kids' Hearts model will have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this process.
- H3:** The Capturing Kids' Hearts model will have a positive effect on student discipline.
- H4:** The Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on student attendance.
- H5:** The Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on student achievement.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are teacher perceptions of student-teacher relationships as measured by an independent survey given to teachers participating in the Capturing Kids' Hearts model?
2. What perceptions will teachers have regarding the Capturing Kids' Hearts process at two suburban elementary schools?
3. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process have on student discipline in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?
4. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process have on student attendance in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the Arkansas

Department of Education student management system, eSchool before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?

5. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professionals development process have on students' academic achievement in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the ACT Aspire test scores during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years at two suburban elementary schools?

### **Limitations**

The limitations to this study include: (a) the student populations used in this research study only include students from two particular suburban elementary schools located near Little Rock, Arkansas who were enrolled during the study window from August 2016-May 2018. Because these two schools were conveniently sampled, (b) the results cannot be generalized to other students in other suburban elementary schools. (c) the reliability and validity of the ACT Aspire assessments given to students in Arkansas, (d) the discipline and attendance data entered in Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool, campus discipline and attendance data was entered by campus personnel, and the research presumes that all data being documented into the system was entered correctly and consistently across campuses, (e) the researcher, an administrator in the district, and therefore; there may be a chance responses given during surveys were slightly influenced (f) teachers' perceptions regarding the model will be generated through self-report surveys. (g) The teachers' perception of the student-teacher relationships was generated through a self-report survey.

## **Delimitations**

This study utilized quantitative methodology to examine: (a) teachers' perceptions of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process, (b) student discipline, (c) student attendance, and (d) the ACT Aspire achievement scores of students in a suburban school district outside Little Rock, Arkansas.

The researcher employed quantitative evaluative methodology to ascertain teacher perspectives regarding Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process and teacher perception of student-teacher relationships. Quantitative methods were utilized to compare discipline, attendance, and ACT Aspire test scores before and after the implementation of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process.

This study was conducted in a suburban school district outside of Little Rock, Arkansas that serves approximately 5,300 students in Pre-K through twelfth grade. The research utilized two Likert-type surveys, created in Google Docs format to gain knowledge of teachers' perceptions of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The researcher also collected and analyzed archived data regarding attendance, discipline, and test scores before and after implementation of the process.

## **Theoretical Framework:**

The theoretical framework underlying the Capturing Kids' Hearts model is the Social Cognitive Theory developed by Bandura (1986). A central premise of Social Cognitive Theory is that behavior is dynamic, dependent upon both personal constructs and environmental factors that influence each other (Perry, Baranowski, & Parcel, 1991). Social Cognitive Theory asserts the likelihood a behavior will be repeated is a function of

the individual's expectancy the behavior will lead to a particular outcome and of the extent to which that outcome is valued (Norman, 1991).

Bandura's social learning theory proposed learning can occur simply by observing the actions of others (Cherry, 2018). Bandura's theory added a social element, arguing people can learn new information and behaviors by watching other people.

Observational learning can be used to explain a wide variety of behaviors, including those that often cannot be accounted for by other learning theories (Cherry, 2018).

There are three core concepts at the heart of social learning theory (Bandura, 2004). First is the idea that people can learn through observation. Next is the notion internal mental states are an essential part of the process. Finally, this theory recognizes just because something has been learned, it does not mean it will result in a change in behavior (Cherry, 2018).

### **Significance of Study**

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process in establishing positive student-teacher relationships in a suburban school district bordering Little Rock, Arkansas. It is believed, the data collected in this study may help other school districts determine how to foster increased student academic achievement through positive student-teacher relationships. The results of this study can be used to strengthen the training of teachers through this process in order to improve high-quality trusting and respectful relationships within the school setting.

The student-teacher relationship can affect student achievement, student perceptions of school, and student involvement in school (Davis, 2010). Creating programs and initiatives to affect change in student-teacher relationships may be

desirable, but difficult to achieve. Improving students' relationships with teachers has important, positive, and long lasting implications for both students' academic and social development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The question then arises as to how to manage the establishment of initiatives designed to foster more positive student-teacher relationships considered a cornerstone in a student's social maturation process (Gonzalez, 2016).

According to Goodman (2015), the best teachers understand putting students as a priority makes the learning experience more successful. The information collected in this study may help districts determine more effective means of creating processes to foster positive student-teacher relationships. This study will examine if, after training in the Capturing Kids' Heart model, teachers can build positive connections that will, in time, increase academic and social wellbeing of students.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The relationship between students and teachers plays a large role in the trajectory of a child's academic success and social development. Establishing a positive relationship with teachers allows a student to feel more comfortable and safe in his or her classroom environments (Gonzalez, 2016). According to Riddle (as cited in Gonzalez, 2016), positive relationships with teachers are game changers for students. Gonzales (2016) notes for children who struggle in school, having a good relationship with a teacher is critical to their success and can be the most important thing one can do to improve education.

In Cronin's (2017) study of social emotional learning with second grade students, an interesting point was made clear; how important it is for schools to create an emotionally supportive environment where students may continue to develop the social and emotional skills and character traits crucial to work and home life.

Cronin (2017) found an emotionally supportive environment was not happening in students' homes due to family instability, socio-economic factors, and increased screen time. These are just some of the barriers that stunt these valued character traits. According to Cronin, children need to feel safe and supported at school in order to learn. Many children come to school dealing with trauma, feelings of loss, sadness, low self-esteem, or anxiety. For some students, school provides them with structure and consistency and allows them to feel safe and well cared for (Cronin, 2017).

A fair amount of literature has been generated over the past decade about social emotional learning (SEL) factors in the classroom. In fact, educators, policymakers, and

researchers now agree student-teacher relationships have a significant impact on student learning, both positively and negatively (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011).

Researchers generally agree social emotional learning is composed of five key competencies (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). These competencies, which include: (a) self-awareness, (b) social awareness, (c) self-management, (d) relationship skills, and (e) making responsible decisions, create the foundation for maintaining high-quality social relationships and for responding to the challenges of life. According to Flippen (2016), perceived home or school connectedness to an appropriate adult was found to reduce risk factors for adolescents, which can improve educational outcomes.

The body of literature concerning school culture is growing. Results show improving children's social-emotional skills and school culture have been found to lead to an average gain of 11 percentile points on standardized academic achievement test scores, significant declines in conduct problems and disciplinary issues, and increases in measures of emotional and social well-being (Flippen, 2016).

Evidence-based longitudinal research studies and comprehensive literature reviews have demonstrated connectedness to an appropriate role model or teacher and effective classroom management exert a positive impact on students' behavior (Resnick et al., 1997) and student achievement (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). In a meta-analysis of more than 100 studies, Marzano (2003) reported the keystone for all aspects of effective classroom management was the quality of teacher-student relationships.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The sections describe how teacher-student relationships affect student relationships, achievement, attendance, and discipline.

The first section provides an overview of teacher-student relationships and the basis for an effective classroom. The second section describes student achievement and the emotional connections to learning. Student achievement is addressed as collaboration in class activities with attentiveness and the role that positive teacher-student relationship assumes. Section three addresses the impact of student discipline and classroom management. Section four describes the Capturing Kids' Hearts process.

### **Student-Teacher Relationships**

The relationship between a student and teacher plays a large role in the trajectory of a child's academic success and social development (Gonzalez, 2016). Gonzalez (2016) conducted a study of one thousand stressed-out A-students, struggling B and C students, and some students with learning and behavior disorders. The common thread with these students was emotional intelligence increased when they were challenged to perform and function at their very best in the midst of a safe, structured environment. Gonzalez (2016) notes establishing a positive relationship with a teacher helps a student feel more comfortable and safe in the classroom environment. Gonzales (2016) found changing children's attitude and beliefs about their relationship with their teacher is the single most important thing educators can do to improve their students' education.

According to Riddle (as cited in Gonzalez, 2016), the student-teacher relationship is a cornerstone of a student's social maturation process. Gonzalez (2016) found cultivating a positive rapport with a non-parental authority figure allows students to define themselves, adapt to their environment and grow their emotional and social intelligence.

Maison (2017) conducted a study noted teachers found it hard to connect with their students, yet the students complained teachers could not understand them.

According to Maison's (2017) research, developing positive relationships between teachers and students has a positive, significant, and long-lasting impact on the students' lives, both academically and socially. Students worked better in class if they felt their teacher valued and cared for them. Students feel valued if the teacher not only cares about their grades, but also their well-being and social lives (Maison, 2017). Several recommendations on how to create a good relationship with students, offered by Maison's (2017) study included:

- A teacher should share some personal information during the first class
- When teaching a new class, a teacher should gather any information he/she can on the students and use it in ways the students feel significant.
- In the first few minutes before class starts, a teacher should engage in casual conversation about student interests.
- A teacher should attend extracurricular activities.
- A teacher should be available to students with an open door policy.
- When in class, a teacher should incorporate humor in the lessons.

Jacqueline Zeller's research on early childhood education shows high-quality childcare experiences sustain the growth of social and academic skills that aid children's later success in school (as cited in Berry, 2009). Zeller's study also acknowledges evidence that close relationships between teachers and students are an important part of creating high-quality care environments and positive child outcomes. As found in Goodwin's (2011) book *Simply Better*, one of the strongest correlates of effective

teaching is the strength of relationships teachers develop with students. Rimm-Kauffman (2009) expresses if a student who feels a special connection to a teacher, experiences frequent communication with a teacher, and receives more direction and praise than criticism from the teacher, then the student is likely to become more trustful of that teacher, show more engagement in the academic content presented, display better classroom behavior, and achieve higher levels academically.

McNeeley (2005) examined components of school connectedness and found the student-teacher relationship to be the key predictor of decreased at-risk behavior.

Cothran, Kulinna and Garragy (2003) interviewed 182 students with emotional and behavioral disorders and asked what teacher actions had helped them to manage their behavior the most. The main themes that emerged focused on relationships, caring, and respect.

Two components of caring that students described were teacher attentiveness and active listening. Noticing absences, telling students they were missed, knowing their names, speaking to them in the hallway, and active listening were identified as the small things that had the largest effect (Cothran et al., 2003). Students in these focus groups reported desiring teachers to care about them as people, as well as learners. According to Cothran et al. (2003), students perceived attention from teachers as an indication they mattered, and this contributed to increased engagement.

A review of the research shows a substantial amount of discussion concerning positive relationships with students. Kohn (1998) expresses, "Children are more likely to be respectful when important adults in their lives respect them. They are more likely to care about others if they know they are cared about" (p. 111). Researchers agree the most

powerful weapon available to teachers who want to foster a complimentary learning climate is positive relationships with students (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Zehm and Kottler (2005) observed students never trust or open themselves up to hear what a teacher has to say unless there is value and purpose given to the relationship in the classroom.

A research study conducted by Goodman (2015) examined the importance of teaching through relationships. Goodman (2015) found teaching through relationships, when done well, recognizes the human stories of the learners themselves, as well as that of the teacher. This approach embraces the complex identities, biographies, and the stories teachers bring that serve to humanize the students they teach.

Goodman's (2015) study identified the best teachers understand genuinely getting to know kids, their strengths, their interests, their backgrounds, and their areas for growth, then acting upon this knowledge in planning for instruction every day makes the learning experience more successful. This body of knowledge opens up the possibilities of social and academic growth with dramatic learning opportunities for students (Goodman, 2015).

In Parker's (2013) study on teacher-student interactions in the elementary classroom, she found one of the vital goals of education is to improve student success through high quality teaching. Parker (2013) utilized open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations to identify teachers' perspectives and classroom activities that develop supportive teacher-student relationships. Four themes emerged from Parker's (2013) data as major components that not only allow teachers to create positive interactions with their students daily but also cultivate resilient teachers. The themes are:

1. Teachers with knowledge about teaching and learning, along with pre-service experiences possess an interest in children and teaching have gained adequate training through experiences with diverse children in varied school environments.

2. Teachers who demonstrate endurance are persistent with addressing bureaucratic issues, maintain a sense of humor in the classroom, keep striving and defy the everyday pressures associated with being a classroom teacher.

3. Teachers in harmony with school staff and families seek supportive administration and staff, engage and connect to parents, and embrace and understand the cultures of their students.

4. Teachers who make positive connections with students establish meaningful relationships with students, provide caring, discipline and structure, have high expectations and teach social skills. Teachers' pedagogy and knowledge of content coupled with the interactions between the student and teacher is one of the most critical components influencing academic success of students (Parker, 2013).

Many researchers have studied the qualities of an effective teacher. Orlando (2013) narrowed down many characteristics of an effective teacher regardless of the age of the learner. Respecting students, creating a sense of community, and setting high expectations were listed as important qualities of a great teacher (Orlando, 2013). In an effective teacher's classroom, each person's ideas and opinions are valued, and it is in this classroom that students feel safe to express their feelings and learn to respect and listen to others. This teacher, states Orlando (2013), creates a welcoming learning environment for all students. After many years of K-12 administrative experience, giving

hundreds of teacher evaluations, and input from graduate students, Orlando's (2013) study identified research that showed the following:

- A great teacher respects students.
- A great teacher creates a sense of community and belonging in classrooms.
- A great teacher is warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring.
- A great teacher sets high expectations for all students.
- A great teacher has his own love of learning.
- A great teacher is a skilled leader.
- A great teacher can "shift-gears."
- A great teacher collaborates with colleagues on an ongoing basis.
- A great teacher maintains professionalism in all areas.

Lumpkin (2008) advocates lessons learned inside the classroom and through teacher-student interactions outside of the classroom, should be based on the following virtues: (a) trust, (b) integrity, (c) honesty, (d) respect, (e) fairness, and (f) responsibility. Lumpkin (2008) believes these virtues should characterize teachers in their relationships with students. Teachers with character deal honestly with students in a trustworthy manner, nurture mutual trust and respect with and among students, and treat others respectfully by believing in the dignity of every person (Lumpkin, 2008). Lumpkin (2008) states society is best served when teachers teach and model trust and respect, and students develop character and moral virtues.

### **Student Achievement**

According to a 2014 report released by Gallup Education, students who strongly agree that when they have at least one teacher who makes them feel excited about the

future and their school is committed to building the strengths of each student show higher signs of engagement in the classroom—a key predictor of academic success. According to Busted’s (Executive Director of Gallop Education), “State of America’s Schools” report (2014), school leaders should not neglect the social and emotional factors that help students thrive, and they should empower teachers so they are more engaged and effective in the classroom. Busted (2014) believes the engagement of teachers and students are all one very important ecosystem.

To build engagement, districts should encourage students to discover and apply their strengths. Gallup (2014) shows teachers should take a differentiated approach to building hope by focusing on what motivates each student as an individual. Motivating students is one of the major challenges teachers face on a daily basis (Stephens, 2015). Conceptualized as students’ energy and drive to engage, learn, and work effectively, as well as achieve their potential at school, motivation and engagement play a large role in students’ interest and enjoyment of school (Martin, 2006). Students who are motivated by and engaged in learning tend to perform considerably higher academically and are better behaved than unmotivated and un-engaged peers (Frederick, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

Motivation in education can be summarized as a student’s willingness to undertake and persist in challenging tasks, seek help, and endeavor to perform in school (Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006). Teachers play a vital role in their students’ engagement and motivation (Martin, 2006). Although much is intrinsic to the student, research has found teachers play a vital role on their students’ motivation and engagement. Specifically, Martin (2006) found a teacher’s enjoyment and confidence in

teaching, pedagogical efficacy, and affective orientations in the classroom have a positive impact on student engagement and motivation.

The teacher-student relationship can have a positive or negative relationship to student achievement. Marzano (2010) states, that if the bond between the teacher and the student is strong, instructional strategies are more effective. Nonetheless, if the connection is weak, the most effective strategies will be void in a classroom that promotes a hostile atmosphere. Marzano (2010) goes on to state teacher actions develop the perception in students that they have a good relationship. These actions are:

1. Showing interest in students' lives: teachers getting to know their students beyond their first name can do this.
2. Advocating for students: Teachers can promote advocacy by setting up times for conference for students and teachers to discuss and review the expectations needed to do well in class.
3. Never giving up on students: Promoting this action means that even when students are not performing well or get behind, the teacher continues to offer way to help them catch up.
4. Acting friendly: Teachers fostering this action use behaviors that include smiling, appropriate eye contact, and hand gestures that ensure positive results.

A research study conducted by Gawron, (2015) examined the importance of engaging students in their classrooms. Gawron interviewed eighth grade students on what they believed would help engage them in class. After reviewing student responses, Gawron noted ten recurring themes with engagement:

- Working with their peers
- Working with technology
- Connecting the real world to the work we do/project-based learning
- Clearly love what you do
- Get me out of my seat!
- Bring in visuals
- Student choice
- Understand your clients—the kids
- Mix it up!
- Be human

### **Student Discipline**

Good classroom management goes hand-in-hand with student discipline (Bennett, 2017). According to Bennett (2017), educators from the novice to the experienced need to practice good classroom management to reduce student behavioral problems. Bennett (2017) concluded classrooms with management that meets academic, social, and emotional learning goals requires less disciplinary action.

Mendler's (2014) research on discipline shows that in order to manage student behavior effectively, teachers must establish an atmosphere conducive to learning in the classroom early in the school year. Mendler's (2014) study has worked extensively with children of all ages in regular education and special education settings on developing frameworks and strategies for educators to manage behavior and classrooms. Mendler (2014) noted four keys for effective classroom discipline:

- Make your first words and actions confident, enthusiastic and welcoming to students.
- Set guidelines for how to handle misbehavior by letting students know routines, rules and consequences.
- Let students know when and how they can give feedback for the teacher.
- If a student breaks a rule, do whatever is best to help that student fix the mistake.

Bennett (2017) has seven classroom management tactics that reduce misbehavior so teachers can focus their energy on making effective use of their instructional time:

- Planning for blocks of time
- Planning engaging instruction
- Preparing for disruptions
- Preparing the physical environment
- Being fair and consistent
- Setting and keeping high expectations
- Making rules understandable

The purpose of a classroom management plan is to hold students accountable for misbehavior without having to yell, scold, or lecture. Linsin (2011) believes this approach allows teachers opportunities to build meaningful and influential relationships with their students.

A research study conducted by Solar (2011) examined the differences and challenges of students with emotional or behavioral disabilities. Solar (2011) studied five high school students who faced a great deal of trauma were craving attention and

acceptance from teachers, just like every other student. After reviewing student responses, Solar (2011) noted ten tips teachers could utilize in managing students with behavior disorders:

- Prioritize your tasks and make a list.
- Accept that you wear multiple hats throughout the day.
- Remember you are an adult.
- Do not be afraid of the students with emotional behavioral disorders, they just need extra attention
- Actively listen to the student with a behavioral disorder.
- Keep training and reading.
- Be open to criticism.
- Do not challenge students with an emotional behavior disorder. They are acting that way for a reason.
- Develop firm boundaries and expectations and stick to them no matter how much they push you.
- Relax and breathe! You are a teacher for a reason.

A research study conducted by Cothran, Kulinna and Garrahy (2009) examined classroom management and student misbehavior. Cothran et al. (2009) interviewed 23 secondary physical education teachers and 182 secondary students from a variety of school districts in the United States. This study found teachers most often attributed student misbehavior to home factors while students were more likely to attribute misbehavior to the need for attention or lack of meaningful class content. According to Cothran et al. (2009), students and teachers must take ownership of student misbehavior

in order to solve it. For teachers, reflection and ownership needs to include taking a broader view of management in order to see the interactions of instruction with class management.

In a well-known study in child psychology, Bandura demonstrated children learn and imitate behaviors they have observed in other people (Cherry, 2018). The children in Bandura's studies observed an adult acting violently toward a Bobo doll (Bandura, 2004). When the children were later allowed to play in a room with a Bobo doll, they began to imitate the aggressive actions they had previously observed (Cherry, 2018).

It is important to note not all observed behaviors are effectively learned (Cherry, 2018). Factors involving both the model and the learner can play a role in whether social learning is successful (Bandura, 2004). Certain requirements and steps must be followed. The following steps are involved in the observational learning and modeling process:

- Attention: In order to learn, students need to be paying attention.
- Retention: The ability to store information is also an important part of the learning process.
- Reproduction: Once you have paid attention to the model and retained the information, it is time to actually perform the behavior observed.
- Motivation: Finally, in order for observational learning to be successful, students have to be motivated to imitate the behavior that has been modeled (Cherry, 2018).

Social learning theory can have a number of real-world applications. For example, it can be used to help researcher understand how aggression and violence might be transmitted through observational learning (Bandura, 2004). Social learning can be

utilized to teach people positive behaviors (Cherry, 2018). Researchers can use social learning theory to investigate and understand ways positive role models can be used to encourage desirable behaviors and to facilitate social change (Bandura, 2004).

### **The Capturing Kids' Hearts Process**

Countless teachers all over the world make a difference in the lives of students. They are often unsung heroes who have the unique power to shape the future of young people. Flippen (2016) understood this when he created the Capturing Kids' Hearts model. He believed if teachers built meaningful relationships with their students, they not only created an effective classroom environment with few discipline problems, they also had the amazing opportunity to prepare young people for a successful future (Barton, 2014).

The Capturing Kids' Hearts model has been widely disseminated throughout the United States. By the end of 2017, this process has been implemented in more than 5,500 schools in 47 states. Capturing Kids' Hearts is based upon a multifactorial causal model of youth risk behaviors and is closely aligned with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986).

Character education programs encourage schools to create learning environments that foster the development of ethical, responsible students who demonstrate caring concern for others (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007). The Flippen Group (2009) developed Capturing Kids' Hearts in order to promote a healthy school climate. A positive school culture includes developing a safe, caring environment, establishing rules that hold all school members to a high standard of behavior, and building healthy

relationships that create a professional culture and increase student connectedness (Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Character Education Partnership, 2010).

Connectedness to a parent or school-based role model (teacher) is a protective factor that protects youth against every measure of health-risk behavior except history of pregnancy (Resnick et al., 1997). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2004) states programs that have the ability to increase students' attachment to their school are often highlighted as models for violence prevention.

Results from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Flippen, 2016) demonstrated student connectedness reduced negative behaviors in four domains: emotional health, violence, substance abuse, and sexuality. Therefore, the Capturing Kids' Hearts process is considered both a character and violence prevention intervention because it is designed to strengthen students' connectedness to school through enhancing protective factors and targeting modifiable risk factors.

Capturing Kids' Hearts (Flippen, 2009) is a skill intensive, systemic process designed to develop high-performing school cultures, align organizational and individual behaviors, and increase school connectedness. Because of implementing this integrated approach, faculty members build intentional cultures that emphasize connectedness with students and each other (Flippen, 2009). Flippen's model (2009) helps minimize negative behaviors while learning is maximized and students acquire communication and conflict resolution skills that help them succeed in school and after graduation.

The goal of Capturing Kids' Hearts process is to develop leaders who have the knowledge and skill-sets to develop healthy relationships with students, colleagues, and members of the community (Holtzapple, Griswold, Cirillo, & Rosebrook, 2011).

According to Flippen (2016), through these relationships, adults model the character traits that students must acquire in order to reach their full potential. Capturing Kids' Hearts not only identifies a process designed to build high-quality relationships, but also provides an opportunity for participants to learn and practice skills that exert a positive impact on classroom management.

According to Flippen (2004), Nacogdoches ISD in Texas implemented a quantitative and qualitative survey methodology. An analysis of over one hundred respondents from three different schools to determine the impact of Capturing Kids' Hearts revealed the following:

- 100% of all respondents from each school responded affirmatively to “Were the skills you learned in Capturing Kids' Hearts valuable?”
- Over 85% responded “Capturing Kids Hearts has provided me with useful, effective discipline techniques.”
- Over 95% responded “I highly recommend this to other schools.”

South Middle School in Kentucky took part in an extensive longitudinal study to explore the impact of Capturing Kids' Hearts (Flippen, 2004). The research committee compared the first nine weeks of fall 2002 to fall 2003. The middle school saw significant improvement in student discipline after implementation of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The study found:

- Decrease in total infractions from 1719 to 1110
- Decrease in total infractions for males from 1178 to 694
- Decrease from total infractions for females from 541 to 416
- Decrease in classroom disruptiveness from 702 to 348

- Decrease in tardies from 526 to 357
- Decrease in dress code violations from 76 to 12

Wayne Community High School in Iowa performed an in-depth longitudinal study that captured significant results (Flippen, 2004). All staff were trained in Capturing Kids' Hears process and saw a dramatic impact after only one year; they then saw even more improvement after the second year. Examples of results found from the study were:

- Class of 2003 test scores up-increase of 11 percentile points
- Class of 2004 test scores up-increase of eight percentile pints
- Class of 2005 test scores up-increase of eight percentile points
- Discipline referrals down 40% decrease
- Total suspension down 47% decrease

Flippen (2008) hopes to help good teachers become better by equipping them with tools, which they can build meaningful relationships with their students, provide a safe environment in which to learn, and develop a dialogue for team-building. This environment, in turn, paves the way for their students to be able to use the skills they have learned with confidence and enthusiasm. With that goal in mind, Flippen (2008) created the Excel teaching model that is a reflection of what one might see going on in the classrooms of master teachers. All teachers desire to be effective in their teaching; Flippen (2008) desires to come alongside and enhance that effectiveness. The steps outlined in the Excel Teaching Model prepare teachers to influence their students each time they come together, from the beginning of class to the end:

- Engage will draw students into a relationship from the moment they enter class

- Explore will identify students' needs, because not all students learn the same
- Communicate because a good communicator is both a facilitator and a resource, understanding that communication is a two-way process
- Empower happens when students gain the ability to use and do the things they have been taught
- Launch is how you end the classroom experience each day (Barton, 2014).

Flippen's (2008) first step in the EXCEL Teaching Model is engage. Engage begins by greeting the students at the door with a handshake at the beginning of each class. Teachers draw students into a relationship upon which they can build as the class progresses. This step starts the day with a positive greeting, affirms each student, welcomes the students into the class, and gives full attention to the students.

Flippen (2008) believes the skills used in greeting are the same teachers use to prepare for a professional meeting. Students practice these skills daily, and at the end of the school year, will be very comfortable meeting adults. Students will be able to turn these social and professional techniques into skills they can use in daily life.

Explore is a component of the Excel teaching model that will get teachers in touch with where the students are personally, emotionally, and academically. Flippen (2008) identifies students as customers, and teachers must identify student needs before serving effectively in the classroom. The skills teachers use when employing the Explore method with students are much like those of a counselor: listening, attending, conveying, empathy, probing, and asking open-ended questions.

Flippen (2008) is convinced that a successful exploration can take place only in a secure environment. According to Flippen (2008), students do not disclose needs,

whether personally or academically, until they feel safe from ridicule and rejection.

Learning cannot take place until students are able to discuss needs openly.

Flippen's (2008) step three in the EXCEL Teaching Model is the communication of the content of the class. The teacher addresses the needs discovered in the explore step. Communication is a two-way process of dialogue between teacher and students. The process is dynamic and experiential, requiring the teacher to be facilitator and resource to the class. Teachers who are powerful communicators in this model are team builders.

A very important task in the communication step is the ability to translate material taught into real world benefits. Flippen (2008) feels the students must be able to see how their studies will assist in future efforts at earning a living and finding meaning for life. When students object to the need to learn certain material, the teacher, like a good salesperson, must be able to convey the need for learning to take place.

Empowerment occurs when students gain the ability to use and do the things taught. Possessing the same skills as the teacher is the goal of education. Flippen (2008) believes when students can do what they are taught, they are truly empowered. The students learn information in the communication step and then practice and apply what was learned until it becomes a skill.

Flippen (2008) believes a key to empowerment is to build an atmosphere of trust in which the students feel free to fail while going through the learning process. This common understanding provides for the students the foundation for positive interaction with the teacher and with each other. In this environment, the students are empowered because they experience encouragement and support.

In the EXCEL Teaching Model (Flippen, 2008), launching has to do with the way teachers “end and send.” It is the way teachers “end” a classroom experience and the way they “send” charges forth to face the future for students. Every great speaker and teacher realizes the importance of ending on a powerful note. Teachers must be able to use quotes, poems, and stories from experience to drive home the points they want students to remember. Passion is the thrust to use to propel students toward a destination. The EXCEL model helps to change individual teachers as well as educational communities to help capture kids’ hearts. Teachers are in privileged positions that can make a difference in students that lasts a lifetime.

Flippen’s “*Capturing Kids’ Hearts*” (2008) has a social contract component that is created by students with assistance from the teacher. The social contract (Flippen, 2008) includes four questions:

- How do you want to be treated by the teacher?
- How do you want to be treated by each other?
- How do you want the teacher to be treated by you?
- How do we want to treat each other when there is conflict?

The social contract is a living document that is referred to and serves as a guide when problems arise in the classroom. This creates a positive classroom environment and helps teachers build relationships with students (Barton, 2014).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) provides strategies that will help create an environment that facilitates student health and academic achievement. The strategies addressed by the Capturing Kids’ Hearts Campus by Design model include (a) providing students with social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school, (b)

using effective classroom management methods to foster a positive learning environment, (c) providing professional development for teachers to enable them to meet the emotional needs of adolescents, and (d) creating trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication (Holtzapple et al., 2011).

According to Flippen (2009), implementing the EXCEL Leadership Model through the Capturing Kids' Hearts Campus by Design process results in a culture in which students and staff model leadership qualities, show respect for others, share and celebrate each other's' successes, demonstrate caring concern for others, communicate effectively, listen attentively to others, have a sense of justice and fairness, help others, resolve conflicts, and work together as a team.

Flippen's *Capturing Kids' Hearts* is based on the belief that if teachers are to make the difference in students' lives, then teachers must have the keys that open the doors to students' hearts and minds (Barton, 2014). The real keys are the ones that can turn a child on to learning and life (Barton, 2014). Flippen's (2009) mission with kids is a simple one: To win their hearts and to lead them to their personal best.

### **Summary of Review of the Literature**

The relationship between students and teachers plays a very important role in a child's academic success and social development. Establishing a positive relationship with teachers allows students to feel more comfortable and safe in their classroom environments. According to Flippen (2016), students connected to an appropriate adult were found to reduce at risk behavior, which can improve educational outcomes.

The teacher-student relationship can have a positive or negative effect on student achievement. Marzano's (2010) research found if the bond between the teacher and the

students is strong, instructional strategies are more effective. Marzano identified some key actions that develop strong relationships with students: showing interest in student's lives, advocating for students, never giving up on students, and acting friendly in the classroom to foster student engagement.

Capturing Kid's Hearts (Flippen, 2009) is a systemic process designed to develop high performing school cultures and increase school connectedness. Because of implementing an integrated approach, faculty members build intentional cultures that emphasize connectedness with students and each other. Flippen's model helps minimize negative behaviors while learning is maximized and students acquire communication and conflict resolution skills that help them succeed in life.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study examined the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process as it related to student-teacher relationships. Specifically, this study was structured to determine teacher perceptions regarding student-teacher classroom relationships. In addition, the study set out to determine if the Capturing Kids' Hearts process is effective with students, thus increasing student attendance, student achievement, and decreasing student discipline. Additionally, the study measured teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the model as well as their perceptions of the student-teacher relationships following the implementation of the model.

The process endorses a caring environment that provides structure for positive relationships between students and teacher. I will be investigating the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process at two elementary schools where I serve as an administrator within a suburban school district outside of Little Rock, Arkansas.

#### **Population**

The population of this study were the 77 teachers who attended the Capturing Kids' Hearts training during the month of August of the 2017-2018 school year. These teachers worked at two elementary schools in a suburban school district outside Little Rock, Arkansas that utilized the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The district had an enrollment of approximately 5,300 students in the 2017-2018 school year and is the second largest school district by enrollment compared to surrounding school districts in Saline County.

In the 2017-2018 school year, one elementary school had an enrollment of 593 students with 41 staff members and the other elementary school had an enrollment of 509 students with 36 staff members. Participation for all teachers to attend the Capturing Kids' Heart Training in August was a requirement for all certified staff. Taking both summer trainings into account, 77 classroom teachers participated in the Capturing Kids' Hearts process.

The ethnic composition of the student population at one of the elementary schools was 85.69% White, 5.89% African American, 3.37% Hispanic, .34% Asian, and .17% Hawaiian for the 2017-2018 academic school year. At the other elementary school, the ethnic composition for the 2017-2018 academic year was 89.15% White, 3.75% Hispanic, 2.96% African American, .20% American Indian and .20% Hawaiian. Approximately 39.23% of all students at the first elementary school campus participated in the free/reduced priced lunch program, while 24.26% of all students at the second W. elementary school participated in the free/reduced priced lunch program. There were 441 student participants in the study. This number includes all third and fourth grade classrooms at the two elementary schools.

### **Research Design**

This quasi-experimental study used a quantitative approach designed to evaluate the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts Model implemented into two elementary schools in a suburban school districts outside Little Rock, Arkansas. The evaluation employed two surveys designed to identify teachers' perceptions, regarding the Capturing Kids' Hearts model on student-teacher relationships and as an evaluation of the Capturing Kids' Hearts model as professional development approach.

The quantitative approach identified the effect of the Capturing Kids' Hearts model on: (a) student discipline, (b) student attendance, and (c) student achievement of these two elementary schools.

### **Instrumentation**

Two Google surveys were used for collecting and analyzing the data for the teacher perceptual piece of this study. The reason this method was used to gather unobservable information from teachers was to gain authentic feedback on the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The survey instruments comprised a post questionnaire for teachers.

The surveys developed in Google summarized and graphed individual responses by teachers. The first survey questions measured perceptions of the defined variable of student-teacher relationships, engagement, achievement and discipline. Through a four-item, 5-point Likert Scale, the study sought to determine teachers' perceptions as to whether the Capturing Kids' Heart professional development process was effective in assisting them to develop mutual respect and rapport. The second Google survey also measured teacher perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships through a 40-item 5-point Likert Scale.

Student achievement data were compiled from results of the ACT Aspire state test data in the areas of literacy, math and science from third and fourth grade students at the two elementary schools being studied. ACT Aspire end-of-year results from 2016-2017 were compared to ACT Aspire end of year results from the 2017-2018 school year by employing an Independent t-test. A comparison of results would establish whether or not there was growth on the achievement scores of the ACT Aspire assessment. Data derived

from the ACT Aspire scores should reveal if there is a statistically significant increase in achievement scores when the Capturing Kids' Hearts process is implemented.

Discipline information was compiled from the number of teacher referrals that were documented by an administrator and entered into the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool at both the elementary schools in the third and fourth grades. The data for students was analyzed between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years. The discipline data revealed the total number of student referrals that were submitted during the period of the study.

Attendance information was compiled from the number of absences that were documented at both the elementary schools in the third and fourth grades and entered into the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool. The attendance data consisting of the total number of absences for each student during the period of the study, was analyzed between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years.

## **Procedures**

Capturing Kid's Hearts was a two-day teacher and administrator workshop that equipped attendees with the techniques necessary to model and teach relationship building, communicative competencies, problem solving, citizenship, and consequential thinking. This foundational teaching provided the research-based process for administrators and teachers to be able to model the following for students:

- Proper engagement and proper conduct
- Positive thinking and the art of affirmation
- Relational conflict resolution skills

According to Flippen (2016), the resulting cultural change has the following impact:

- Creates connectedness at school and home
- Creates a healthy social emotional climate
- Aligns behaviors to outcomes and creates academic, social, and emotional safety in the classroom
- Creates student self-management via a social contract
- Builds high performing teams and a high performing school culture

The school district organized a plan to commit to action with the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The district first provided district-level training and coaching of executive leadership through all administrators in order to help identify and overcome personal constraints to improve relationships and enhance organizational culture. All administrators were trained through the Flippen Group's Leadership Blueprint (2014) process to help develop a personal growth plan and traction plan to help leadership with accountability of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process.

The next step was to identify a leadership team for the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The leadership team consisted of the professional development director and, the three principals and two teacher leaders at each of the three schools where implementation would take place during the 2017-2018 school year.

These teachers were identified as teacher leaders who would go back and introduce the concepts to staff for faculty buy in of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. This district team of ten were sent to Little Rock, Arkansas to Capturing Kids' Hearts Training on January 24 and 25, 2017. This team was charged with bringing the process

back into the district and spreading the good news of what the Capturing Kids' Hearts process might bring to improve relationships with students and faculty in the district.

The school district's Capturing Kids' Hearts leadership team chose to utilize the Capturing Kids' Hearts Campus by Design model for implementation. This systemic package for an intact campus included an onsite trainer for each campus, Capturing Kids' Hearts workbooks for each teacher, and explicit directions necessary to provide cultural transformation at each campus. The leadership team set up Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development training for three elementary schools in the district on August 8 and 9, 2017. The district's goal was to build relationships and help grow and shape the culture and climate at the elementary level. The district team chose August so the training was set as close to school starting as possible.

The Flippen Group sent two trainers so each elementary school would receive individualized instruction tailored to fit the needs of each campus. The goal of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process was to help teachers become better equipped with the tools to build meaningful relationships with students.

The school district staff members who attended the training agreed the training was a positive life-altering experience. Teachers were charged with using what was learned to make a difference in the lives of all students at the two chosen elementary schools. Trained staff members met once a week in their grade level meetings to discuss how the EXCEL model was being used in classrooms and to provide support for each other (Flippen, 2016). The EXCEL teaching model engages, explores, communicates, empowers, and launches students in order to build relationships. The Flippen Group (2016) provided both elementary schools with a Capturing Kids' Hearts implementation

walkthrough checklists administrators could utilize when visiting classrooms to target specific improvements needed in the process.

The school district also chose to implement the follow-up training to Capturing Kids' Hearts with Process Champions Plus. It was a three-day event on campus, offered to a core group of up to 30 selected teachers and campus administrators in the Benton School District on October 3,4, and 5, 2017.

The workshop reinforced Capturing Kids' Hearts skills and developed leaders who were able to act as onsite mentors and coaches, helping their colleagues apply and master all aspects of the EXCEL model to ensure the process would be implemented with fidelity. The two elementary campuses received one coaching day with Bob Case, a Flippen consultant on February 6 and 7, 2018.

The second phase of procedures collected archived data on the ACT Aspire scores, discipline data and student attendance at both elementary schools. ACT Aspire end of year assessments were given by teachers during the school district's assessment testing window in April during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years. Each student was given a literacy, math, and science assessment on five different days during their first period class.

Each assessment was timed and students had 40-75 minutes to complete the exam. All students were required to take the ACT Aspire exams. Student assessments were graded through the Arkansas Department of Education scoring process and results were returned electronically.

Discipline referrals that were entered into the district's database were given to respective administrators for each school. The discipline data was disaggregated for the

two elementary schools that participated in the study. Student discipline referrals that were reported for in school suspension or out of school suspension were taken into account to show progression or regression of behavior.

Student attendance records were entered into the district's database were given to respective secretaries for the two elementary schools. At the end of the study period, archived attendance data entered into the district's system was disaggregated for the two elementary schools that participated in the study. Attendance was analyzed to determine if there was any change before and after implementation.

### **Data Analysis**

By using a quantitative format, all data was obtained using questionnaire/survey research techniques and archival data. Primary results were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics to identify the impact of the model on achievement, discipline, and attendance.

The quantitative elements generated for the study addressed the questions related to student discipline, student attendance, and student achievement, as well as test the directional hypotheses. The study could be considered a pre-test posttest design, which would employ Dependent t-tests for matched samples; however, due to the differences in the ages (a comparison of third and fourth grade students), the data generated for these three quantifiable variables were analyzed via Independent t-tests. Statistical significance was established at an alpha level of  $p < .05$  to accept or reject the three directional hypotheses on the areas of discipline, attendance and achievement. The results of these measures were reported in different tables.

In addition, results were analyzed to address the first research question and test the first directional hypothesis. Because the two surveys, one to identify teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Capturing Kids' Hearts Model as a Professional Development evaluation and the other to identify the teachers' perceptions of the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts Model on student-teacher relationships are structured to reflect a Likert-type scale the responses can be numerically coded.

Because this was the first time the two surveys were used to measure teachers' perceptions of student teacher relationships, and teachers' perceptions of the model, both survey responses are presented in a descriptive statistics format through means and standard deviations. The results should enable the school district to analyze and better interpret the teachers' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and their perceptions of the model. Thereby, allowing for adjustments and modifications of the model and making decisions based on generated data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study contributed to the literature regarding Capturing Kids' Hearts and building student-teacher relationships in a suburban school district outside Little Rock, Arkansas. The information and data collected was kept in confidence and no identifying information was used. Permission from the participating school district was obtained for this study. Consent forms were provided to the teachers in which the purpose of the study was described. The teachers were informed participation in the survey process was voluntary. There was no risk to participate in this research study. Permission was granted through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting any research.

## Summary

Marzano's (2003) research indicated there is a connection between student achievement and positive relationships. Positive relationships between teachers and students are among the most commonly cited variable associated with effective instruction. School leaders need to know how to influence the learning process to help pave the way for academic success.

Through his experience working with at-risk youth, Flippen (2016) saw the need for a program to help adults create meaningful relationships with children. Flippen developed an after-school program called Teen Leadership teaching leadership processes to students. This led to the same leadership process delivered through Capturing Kid's Hearts. Flippen (2016) believed improving relationships with adult role models will help all students including at-risk students succeed in life.

The Capturing Kids' Hearts model has been widely disseminated throughout the United States. By the end of 2017, this process has been implemented in more than 5,500 schools in 47 states. The Capturing Kids' Hearts is based upon a multifactorial causal model of youth risk behaviors and is closely aligned with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986). Researchers use social learning theory to investigate and understand ways positive role models can encourage desirable behaviors and to facilitate social change (Bandura, 2004).

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process on student-teacher relationships. Exclusively, this study was designed to determine the impact of the process on student-teacher relationships, attendance, student achievement, and student discipline. The study sought

to determine if use of the Capturing Kids' Heart model is effective in guiding teachers in developing mutual respect and rapport with students thus increasing attendance, achievement, and decreasing discipline. Lastly, the study measured teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the process along with the implementation of strategies sought from the training provided by the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process.

The relationship between students and teachers plays an important role in a child's academic success and social development. Establishing a positive relationship with teachers allows students to feel more comfortable and safe in their classroom environments. According to Riddle (as cited in Gonzales, 2016), positive relationships with teachers are game changers for kids. Gonzales (2016) notes for children who struggle in school, having a good relationship with a teacher is critical to their success and can be the most important thing teachers can do to improve education.

Capturing Kids' Hearts (Flippen, 2009) is a skill intensive, systemic process designed to develop high-performing school cultures, align organizational and individual behaviors, and increase school connectedness. Because of implementing this integrated approach, faculty members build intentional cultures that emphasize connectedness with students and each other. Flippen's model (2009), helps minimize negative behaviors while learning is maximized and students acquire communication and conflict resolution skills that help them succeed in school and after graduation.

This study examined the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process as it relates to student-teacher relationships. Specifically, this study was structured to determine the teachers' perceptions of the impact of the process on student-teacher

classroom relationships, as well as the impact of this model on student discipline, student attendance, and student achievement. Additionally, the study measured teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the model and how teachers implemented methods and strategies from the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The process endorsed a caring environment that provides structure for positive relationships between students and teachers. I investigated the impact of the Capturing Kids Hearts process at two elementary schools where I serve as an administrator within the school district.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts Model as it relates to student-teacher relationships in an Arkansas suburban school district. This study was designed to determine teachers' perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships within the sampled elementary schools. This study also sought to ascertain the effect of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process on student attendance, student achievement and student discipline. Based on the research (Flippen, 2016), the Capturing Kids' Hearts model has been found to also affect the academic achievement as well as the attendance of the students involved.

A questionnaire instrument (Appendix A) was used to determine teachers' perceptions as to whether the Capturing Kids' Heart professional development process was effective in assisting them to develop mutual respect and rapport. The study also measured teacher perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships through a questionnaire instrument using a Likert-type scale (Appendix B). Lastly, the study measured student attendance, student achievement, and student discipline through Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool.

The findings of this study are presented in this chapter. Five hypotheses and five research questions guided this research:

## **Hypotheses**

- H1:** The Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of student-teacher relationships.
- H2:** The Capturing Kids' Hearts model will have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this process.
- H3:** The Capturing Kids' Hearts model will have a positive effect on student discipline.
- H4:** The Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on student attendance.
- H5:** The Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on student achievement.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are teacher perceptions of student-teacher relationships as measured by an independent survey given to teachers participating in the Capturing Kids' Hearts model?
2. What perceptions will teachers have regarding the Capturing Kids' Hearts process at two suburban elementary schools?
3. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process have on student discipline in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?
4. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process have on student attendance in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the Arkansas

Department of Education student management system, eSchool before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?

5. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process have on students' academic achievement in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the ACT Aspire test scores during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years at two suburban elementary schools?

### **Results/Findings**

The Capturing Kids' Hearts training sessions were held in the Arkansas suburban school district on August 8 and 9, 2017. The post-survey questionnaire was administered to teachers in November 2018 after the process had been implemented to gain authentic feedback on the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. Participants' answers to questions on the survey were quantified using a Likert-type scale. The choices on the questionnaire instrument were "strongly agree," "agree," "no opinion," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Numerical weights were assigned on a scale of 5 to 1 with five allied with the most approving response and the one allied with the least approving. The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics determining the mean and standard deviation of each question for teachers.

**Hypothesis H1:** states the Capturing Kids' Heart process will have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of student-teacher relationships. The complementary research question asks; What are teacher perceptions of student-teacher relationships as measured by an independent survey given to teachers participating in the Capturing Kids' Hearts model?

To address this hypothesis and research question, a 40-item, 5-point Likert survey was distributed to 77 of the elementary teachers involved in the study and 52 teachers responded. Because there was no comparison survey provided as a baseline last year, descriptive statistics will be presented to analyze the teachers' responses. Table 1 represents the descriptive data summary for the teachers' perceptions of the student-teacher relationship this past school year.

Table 1

*Teachers' Perceptions of the Student-Teacher Relationship This Past School Year*

Survey Items			
(T=Teacher S=Student)			
Answers as compared to previous years experiences	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q1 Teacher feels more connected to student this year	52	3.84	.857
Q2 Teacher feels better communication with student this year	52	3.83	.856
Q3 Teacher feels social climate in classroom is improved this year	52	4.04	.766
Q4 Teacher feels relationship with student not as positive as last year	52	1.50	.780
Q5 Teacher knows students better this year than in previous years	52	3.48	.980
Q6 Teacher feels students care more about me as a teacher and person	52	3.50	.789
Q7 Teacher feels students respect me more as a teacher and person	52	3.52	.918
Q8 Teacher feels students trust me more than in previous years	52	3.50	.897
Q9 Teacher feels students and teachers are more trustful and honest	52	3.54	.959
Q10 Teacher believes she respects her students more this year	52	3.33	1.013
Q11 Teacher feels students' behavior was better this year	52	3.58	1.091

Table 1 (cont.)

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Survey Items  
(T=Teacher S=Student)

Answers as compared to previous years experiences

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q12 Teacher feels student and teacher are more connected	52	3.58	.931
Q13 Teacher feels students have enjoyed learning more this year	52	3.67	.931
Q14 Teacher feels she has been a better role model this year	52	3.58	.846
Q15 Teacher feels students are socially closer to each other this year	52	3.55	.832
Q16 Teacher feels students have struggled more in class this year	52	2.09	.995
Q17 Teacher feels students have been more active participants	52	3.75	.835
Q18 Teacher feels rapport between teacher and student was better	52	3.31	.875
Q19 Teacher feels more mutual respect between T and S this year	52	3.65	.905
Q20 Teacher feels CKH has a positive effect on relationships	52	3.60	.905
Q21 Teacher was able to expect more out of students this year	52	4.25	.738
Q22 Teacher feels students seemed to have matured faster this year	52	3.67	.909
Q23 Teacher had more positive comments about school from students	52	3.50	.939
Q24 Teacher observed few disruptions due to inappropriate behavior	52	3.29	1.035
Q25 Teacher feels student's attitudes toward learning improved	52	3.53	.879
Q26 Teacher learned more about and from students this year	52	3.54	.851
Q27 Teacher felt she actually liked her students more this year	51	3.19	1.082
Q28 Teacher believes she and students are better listeners	51	3.55	1.012
Q29 Teacher believes she did a better job of teaching than last year	52	3.44	1.028

Table 1 (cont.)

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Survey Items  
(T=Teacher S=Student)

Answers as compared to previous years experiences	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q30 Teacher feels she and students have more positive connections	52	3.60	.796
Q31 Teacher feels students have been more engaged in their learning	51	3.47	.880
Q32 Teacher feels she has worked harder to motivate students	52	3.71	.977
Q34 Teacher believes she and students worked collectively more	52	3.37	.908
Q35 Teacher believes her enjoyment of teaching has helped learning	51	3.39	.961
Q36 Teacher feels that students shared warmer relationship	52	3.52	.896
Q37 Teacher feels students often openly share their experiences	52	3.54	.979
Q38 Teacher feels more in tune with students this year	52	3.57	.782
Q39 Teacher's relationships with students leave her drained	52	2.65	1.251
Q40 Teacher finds she is advocating more for her students	52	3.40	.995

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Note: Responses were generated from a 5-point Likert Scale (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=No Opinion, 2=Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree)

Based on the data represented in Table 1, the responses tended to produce positive means regarding the teachers' perceptions of their relationships with their students.

Although the survey was not presented the previous year, the teachers' responses are based on their experiences from last year's experiences. Note three questions were written to generate a possible negative response (Questions 4, 16, and 39). Although the analysis cannot generate any statistical indication that Hypothesis 1 can be accepted; it

does appear Research Question 1 has been answered. The Capturing Kids' Hearts Model appears to have a positive effect on the perceptions of teachers regarding the relationships between students and teachers.

This experimental study used a quantitative approach design to evaluate the impact of the capturing Kids' Heart model implemented in two elementary school in a suburban school district outside of Little Rock, Arkansas. The post-survey questionnaire was administered to teachers in November 2018 after the process had been implemented to gain authentic feedback on the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process. Participants' answers to questions on the survey were quantified using a Likert-type scale. The questionnaire instrument options were "strongly agree," "agree," "no opinion," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Numerical weights were assigned on a scale of 5 to 1 with five allied with the most approving response and the one allied with the least approving. The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics determining the mean and standard deviation of each question for teachers.

**Hypothesis H2:** states the Capturing Kids' Heart model will have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this process. The complementary research question asks; What perceptions will teachers have regarding the Capturing Kids' Hearts process at two suburban elementary schools?

To address this hypothesis and research question, a 4-item, 5-point Likert survey was distributed to 77 teachers in the study and 58 responded. Because there was no comparison survey provided as a baseline last year, descriptive statistics will be presented to analyze the teachers' responses. This information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Capturing Kids' Heart Process*

Survey Items	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q1 Overall it was a positive learning experience	58	4.47	.73
Q2 I identified ways to build on my current skills and knowledge on building relationships with students/classroom management	58	4.40	.79
Q3 I have identified new strategies I can implement	58	4.48	.68
Q4 I would recommend CKH training to other educators	58	4.40	.79

Based on the data represented in Table 2, the responses tended to produce positive means regarding the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this process. Although the survey was not presented the previous year, the teachers' responses are based on their experiences from last year's experiences. Although the analysis cannot generate any statistical indication that Hypothesis 2 can be accepted; it does appear Research Questions 2 has been answered. The Capturing Kids' Hearts Model appears to have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of this process.

**Hypothesis H3:** states that the Capturing Kids' Hearts model will have a positive effect on student discipline. The complementary research question is: What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process have on student discipline in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool, before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?

The Capturing Kids’ Heart process also was shown to influence the discipline of students. The study tested the variable by identifying In-school suspension over the third and fourth grade years as well as Out of School Suspension over the third and fourth grade years. Discipline was measured through the Arkansas Department of Education Student Management System, eSchool before and after Capturing Kids’ Hearts implementation. This information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*A Comparison of Discipline Incidences between Third and Fourth Grade Students*

Discipline Approach	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Percentage Differences
In-School Suspension	11	6	55% Decline
Out-of-School Suspension	3	1	33% Decline

The data in Table 3 indicates that there was a reduction in discipline issues in both In-school suspension (55% decline) and Out-of-school suspension (33% decline) between the two years. Hypothesis 3 is accepted and Research Question 3 has been addressed.

**Hypothesis H4:** states the Capturing Kids’ Hearts model will have a positive effect on student attendance. The complementary research question asks: What effect will the Capturing Kids’ Hearts professional development process have on student attendance in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool, before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?

Attendance information was compiled from the number of absences documented at the two elementary schools and entered in to the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool. The attendance dates for students were analyzed

between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years. The attendance data were then loaded into an Excel sheet and transferred to SPSS where they were analyzed. An independent t-test was used to analyze the difference between the two school years (third and fourth graders). It should be noted these are the same 179 students who experienced the Capturing Kids’ Hearts process over a two-year period. An alpha level of  $p < .05$  was established to accept or reject this directional hypothesis. This attendance information is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Student Attendance of Third and Fourth Grade Students*

Student Attendance	Third Grade			Fourth Grade			<i>t-value</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ES</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Absences	179	8.61	5.77	9.54	7.09	1.366	.173	.015	

The data in Table 4 indicated there were no statistically significant differences in absences from 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  $M=8.606$  and 4<sup>th</sup> grade  $M=9.539$  were not statistically significant. The effect sizes related to absences indicated the magnitude of difference was too small to be considered of practical significance.

Hypothesis 4 is rejected, and Research Question 4 has been answered.

**Hypothesis H5:** states the Capturing Kids’ Heart model will have a positive effect on student achievement. The complementary research question asks: What effect will the Capturing Kids’ Hearts professional development process have on students’ academic achievement in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the ACT Aspire test scores during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years at two suburban elementary schools?

Academic achievement was operationally defined as scaled scores generated from the ACT Aspire exam in the areas of: (a) literacy, (b) math, (c) science. These scores were also converted from an Excel sheet to an SPSS program. It should be noted these are scaled scores and not raw scores. Because scaled scores were used, an Effect Size (Cohen’s D) was also calculated to provide additional analysis for interpretation of the magnitude of differences between the third and fourth graders’ data in the three academic areas. Academic achievement information is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Academic Achievement between Third and Fourth Grade Students*

ACT Aspire Test Scores	Third Grade			Fourth Grade			<i>t-value</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ES</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Literacy Scores	179	411.28	5.47	417.75	6.14	2.71	.0001***	43.0	
Math Scores	179	414.70	4.21	416.86	4.17	4.89	.0001***	72.5	
Science Scores	179	417.17	5.92	419.73	5.98	4.07	.0001***	43.0	

Notes: a Note the data are presented in scaled scores as generated from ACT Aspire

\*\*\* $p < .0001$

The data in Table 5 indicated the three areas of achievement (Literacy, Math and Science) were statically significant at  $p < .0001$ . Literacy scores: Third grade ( $M=411.28$ ) Fourth grade ( $M=4.17$ ); Math Scores: Third grade ( $M=4.14.70$ ) Fourth grade ( $M=4.16.8$ ); Science Scores: Third grade ( $M=4.17.17$ ) Fourth grade ( $M=4.19.73$ ). The three Effect Sizes indicate the magnitude of differences between the two groups is to be considered of Practical Significance. Hypothesis 5 is accepted and Research Questions 5 has been addressed.

## **Summary/Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process as it relates to student-teacher relationships in an Arkansas suburban school district. The findings of the study were presented in this chapter. Five hypotheses and five research questions guided this research.

The Capturing Kids' Hearts model appears to have a positive effect on the perceptions of teacher regarding student-teacher relationships, as well as a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of the process. The Capturing Kids' Hearts process was shown to influence the discipline of students through a decline of in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Student attendance in the study indicated there was no statistically significant differences in absences from 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, while ACT Aspire student scores in the study were statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Capturing Kids' Hearts study was conducted in a suburban school district outside of Little Rock, Arkansas that serves approximately 5,545 students in Pre-K through twelfth grade. This action research documents teachers' perceptions after attending Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development. The results of the surveys, discipline, attendance, and student achievement data were used to answer the following research questions:

1. What effect will the Capturing Kids' Hearts model have on teachers' perceptions of student-teacher relationships as measured by independent survey given to teacher participants in the process?
2. What effect will the CKH process have on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this process at two suburban elementary schools?
3. What effect will the CKH professional development process have on student discipline in grade 3 and 4, as measured by eSchool before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?
4. What effect will the CKH professional development process have on student attendance in grades 3 and 4, as measured by eSchool before and after its implementation at two suburban schools?
5. What effect will the CKH professional development process have on students' academic achievement in grades 3 and 4, as measured by the ACT Aspire test scores during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years at two suburban elementary schools?

These research questions were developed to address two suburban elementary schools' problem of students not reaching their highest academic and social potential by establishing relationships at schools. The classroom teacher has a significant influence on whether or not students will engage in learning and respond in a positive manner to each other. According to Davis (2010), one of the key factors in students reaching their highest academic and social potential are the relationships encountered at school. Improving students' relationships with teachers has an important, positive and long-lasting implication for both students' academic and social development (Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Marzano's research (2010) indicates there is a connection between student achievement and positive relationships. Positive relationships between teachers and students are among the most commonly cited variables associated with effective instruction (Marzano & Pickering, 2010). School leaders need to know how to influence the learning process to help pave the way for academic success.

The findings of this study produces data that will benefit the educational leaders at this suburban school district by allowing them to review the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process as a means of providing teachers with the training necessary to establishing more positive classroom environments with caring and trustful relationships. The authors and trainers of the Capturing Kids' Hearts Process may also use the data produced from this study for further refinement of the program's strategies and goals. Other district interested in establishing more positive student-teacher relationships or considering the implications of future professional development may also use the data produced from this study.

## **Summary of Results/Findings**

The relationship between student and teacher plays a large role in the trajectory of a child's academic success and social development. Establishing a positive relationship with teachers allows a student to feel more comfortable and safe in his or her classroom environments (Gonzalez, 2016). According to Riddle (as cited in Gonzalez, 2016), positive relationships with teachers are game changers for students. Gonzalez (2016) notes for children who struggle in school, having a good relationship with a teacher is critical to their success and can be the most important thing one can do to improve education.

Countless teachers all over the world make a difference in the lives of students. They are unsung heroes who have the unique power to shape the future of young people. Flippen (2016) understood this when he created *Capturing Kids' Hearts*. He believes if you build meaningful relationships with your students, you not only create an effective classroom environment with few discipline problems, but you also get the amazing opportunity to prepare young people for a successful future (Barton, 2014).

*Capturing Kids' Hearts* (Flippen, 2009) is a skill intensive, systemic process designed to develop high-performing school cultures, align organizational and individual behaviors, and increase school connectedness. Because of implementing this integrated approach, faculty members build intentional cultures that emphasize connectedness with students and each other (Flippen, 2009). Flippen's model (2009), helps minimize negative behaviors while learning is maximized and students acquire communication and conflict resolution skills that help them succeed in school and after graduation.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process as it relates to student-teacher relationships. This study was designed to determine teachers' perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships. The study was to ascertain the effect of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process on: (a) student attendance, (b) student achievement, and (c) student discipline.

Two google surveys were used for collecting and analyzing the data for the teacher perceptual piece of this study. The reason this method was used was to gather unobservable information from teachers to gain authentic feedback on the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The survey instruments were comprised of a post questionnaire for teachers.

Discipline information was gathered from the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions that were documented by an administrator and entered into the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool, at both the elementary schools in third and fourth grades. The data for students was analyzed between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years.

Attendance information was compiled from the number of absences that were documented at both elementary schools in the third and fourth grades and entered into the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool. The attendance data for students was analyzed between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years consisting of the total number of absences for each student during the period of the study.

Student achievement data were analyzed from results of the ACT Aspire state test data in the areas of literacy, math and science from third and fourth grade students at the two elementary schools being studied. ACT Aspire end-of-year results from 2016-2017 were compared to ACT Aspire end of year results from the 2017-2018 school year by using paired sample t-tests. A comparison of results was established whether there was growth on the achievement scores of the ACT Aspire assessment. Data derived from the ACT Aspire scores revealed there is a statistically significant increase in achievement scores when the Capturing Kids' Hearts process was implemented.

### **Conclusions/Interpretations/Discussion**

Teacher perceptions of student-teacher relationships survey data were analyzed with descriptive statistics determining the mean and standard deviation of each question for teachers. The responses to the survey tended to produce positive means regarding the teachers' perceptions of their relationships with their students. The Capturing Kids' Hearts model appears to have a positive effect on the perceptions of teachers regarding the relationships between students and teachers.

The effectiveness of the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process was analyzed with descriptive statistics determining the mean and standard deviation of each question for teachers. The responses tended to produce positive means regarding the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this process. The Capturing Kids' Hearts model appears to have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of this process.

The Capturing Kids' Hearts process was shown to positively influence the discipline of students. There was a reduction in discipline issues in both in-school suspension and out of school suspension between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. In-

school suspension showed a decline of 55%, while out of school suspensions showed a decline of 33%.

On the variable of attendance, the 179 students showed no statistically significant difference in absences from 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 at an alpha level of  $p < .05$ . The third grade  $M=8.606$  and fourth grade  $M=9.539$  were not statistically significant. The effect sizes related to absences indicated the magnitude of difference was too small to be considered of practical significance.

Academic achievement on the ACT Aspire exam in the areas of literacy, math and science indicated they were statically significant at  $p < .0001$ . The three Effect Sizes indicate the magnitude of differences between the two groups is to be considered of Practical Significance. This increase was significant at a  $p < .001$  for the variable of achievement.

Based on the analysis of the teacher perceptual survey of student-teacher relationships, schools should consider including the Capturing Kids' Hearts professional development process in order to improve high-quality trusting and respectful relationships within the school setting. Feedback from the Google survey showed teachers feel more connected to their students, communication is better, social climate is more positive, students respect and trust them more, and teachers feel more connected to students than in previous years. A research study conducted by Goodman (2015), examined the importance of teaching through relationships. Goodman (2015) found teaching through relationships, when well done, recognizes the human stories of the learners themselves, as well as that of the teacher. This approach embraces complex

identities, biographies, and the stories teachers bring that serve to humanize the students they teach.

Feedback from the teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process survey indicated this training was a positive learning experience, teachers identified ways to build student-teacher relationships and new strategies to implement, and teachers would recommend Capturing Kids' Hearts to other educators. The goal of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process is to develop leaders who have the knowledge and skill-sets to develop healthy relationships with students, colleagues, and members of the community (Holtzapple, Griswold, Cirillo, & Rosebrook, 2011). According to Flippen (2016), through these relationships, adults model the character traits that students must acquire in order to reach their full potential. Capturing Kids' Hearts not only identifies a process designed to build high-quality relationships, but also provides an opportunity for participants to learn and practice skill that exert a positive impact on classroom management.

Based on the analysis of the discipline data, the Capturing Kids' Hearts process did have a positive effect on student discipline by showing a decline in out-of-school suspension as well as in-school suspension. Good classroom management goes hand-in hand with student discipline (Bennett, 2017). Bennett (2017) concluded classrooms with management that meets academic, social and emotional learning goals requires less disciplinary action.

Although the Capturing Kids' Heats process did not show any statistically significant differences in attendance, it did have a positive effect on student achievement. The ACT Aspire scaled scores in literacy, math, and science were shown to be influenced

by the implementation of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. The student-teacher relationship can have a positive or negative correlation to student achievement. Marzano (2010) states if the bond between the teacher and the student is strong, instructional strategies are more effective. Marzano (2010) goes on to state teacher actions develop the perception in students that they have a good relationship through showing interest, advocating for students, never giving up on students and acting friendly.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provides a pilot on which more in-depth research could be done. Future research should include comparison groups and multiple schools to increase the number of participants and make the data relevant to more school districts. One recommendation for further study would be to utilize research that replicates this study in a district setting in which all classrooms are utilizing the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. Teacher observations could be done to determine whether the Capturing Kids' Hearts process benefits student outcomes.

A longitudinal school district study done to gather student attitudes to the identified Capturing Kids' Hearts variables, student discipline, attendance, and achievement data would provide evidence of long-term effects of the Capturing Kids' Hearts process. Studies to determine the level of implementation fidelity are also warranted. Such research would be useful for districts in determining whether to implement the program.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The research findings of this study parallel Davis' (2010) research that one of the key factors in students reaching their highest academic and social potential are the

relationships encountered at school. Improving students' relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for both students' academic and social development (Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Marzano's research (2010) indicates there is a connection between student achievement and positive relationships. School leaders need to know how to influence the learning process to help pave the way for academic success.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) provide strategies that will help create an environment that facilitates student health and academic achievement. The strategies addressed by the Capturing Kids' Hearts Campus by Design model includes providing students with social skills necessary to be actively engaged in using effective classroom management methods to foster a positive learning environment, providing professional development for teachers to enable them to meet the emotional needs of adolescents, and creating trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication (Holtzapple et al., 2011). According to Flippen (2009), implementing the EXCEL Leadership Model through the Capturing Kids' Hearts Campus by Design process results in a culture in which students and staff model leadership qualities, show respect for others, share and celebrate each other's' successes, demonstrate caring concern for others, communicate effectively, listen attentively to others, have a sense of justice and fairness, help others, resolve conflicts, and work together as a team.

As shown by the data, The Capturing Kids' Hearts process did have a positive impact on student-teacher relationships, student achievement and student discipline in a suburban school district bordering Little Rock, Arkansas. The data collected in this study should help other school districts in fostering increased student academic achievement through positive student-teacher relationships by implementing the training in teachers'

professional development plans. As shown by this study, the Capturing Kids' Hearts process can be used to strengthen the training of teachers through this process in order to improve high-quality trusting and respectful relationships within the school setting.

The ultimate goal of all educators is successful student outcomes. Evidence-based longitudinal research studies and comprehensive literature reviews have demonstrated connectedness to an appropriate role model (teacher) and effective classroom management exert a positive impact on student behavior (Resnick et al., 1997) and academic achievement (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). If teachers want to open students' hearts and minds, the real key is to win their hearts and lead them to their personal best through positive student-teacher relationships.

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**Appendix A**  
**Capturing Kids' Hearts Survey**

# Capturing Kids' Hearts

\*Required

## Professional Development Evaluation Form \*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall it was a positive learning experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I identified ways to build on my current skills and knowledge on building relationships with students/classroom management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have identified new strategies I can implement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend Capturing Kids' Hearts training to other educators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**SUBMIT**

Never submit passwords through Google Forms

## **Appendix B**

### **Elementary Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Student-Teacher Relationships**

## Elementary Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Student-Teacher Relationships

Directions: Please select the number that best reflects your present perceptions regarding your relationships with your students.

### Five point Likert Scale

(1=Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3=No Opinion 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree)

1. I feel I am more connected to my students this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
2. It seems the students and I are communicating better and in a more positive manner compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
3. I believe the social climate in my classroom this year is more positive than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
4. My relationship with my students, overall, is not as positive as it has been in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
5. I have gotten to know my students better this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
6. It seems my students care more about me as a teacher and as a person this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
7. It seems my students respect me more as a teacher and as a person this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
8. I feel my students trust me more this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
9. My students and I seem to be more trustful and honest with each other this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
10. I believe I respect my students more this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
11. I feel my students' behavior this years has been better than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5

12. It seems my students and I are more connected this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
13. Because of our positive relationship, I feel my students have enjoyed learning more this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
14. I feel I have been a better role model to my students this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
15. My students seem to be socially closer to each other this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
16. My students seemed to have struggled more in class this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
17. My students have been more active participants in their learning this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
18. I feel the rapport between me and my students is better this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
19. There appears to be more mutual respect between my students and me this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
20. I believe the Capturing Kids Hearts Process has had a positive effect on my relationship with my students.  
1      2      3      4      5
21. I believe I have been able to expect more out of my students, and they have responded more positively this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
22. My students seemed to have matured faster this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
23. I had more positive comments about school from my students this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5

24. There have been fewer disruptions in class due to inappropriate behavior this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
25. My students' attitudes toward learning and school seems to be better this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
26. I have learned much more about my students and from my students this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
27. I actually believe I liked my students more this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
28. It seems my students and I have become better listeners to each other this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
29. I believe I did a better job of teaching my students this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
30. I believe the students and I have had more positive connections this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
31. It seems my students have been more engaged in their own learning this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
32. I believe I have worked harder to motivate each child this year compared to previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
33. It seems my students have been willing to undertake more challenging tasks this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5
34. My students and I have worked collectively together more this year than in previous years.  
1      2      3      4      5

35. I believe my own enjoyment for teaching this year has had more of an impact on student learning than in previous years.

1      2      3      4      5

36. My students and I seem to share a more affectionate, warmer relationship this year than in previous years.

1      2      3      4      5

37. My students often openly share their feelings and experiences with me more this year than in previous years.

1      2      3      4      5

38. I feel I am more in tune with my students this year than in previous years.

1      2      3      4      5

39. My relationship with my students tends to leave me drained at the end of the day more this year than in previous years.

1      2      3      4      5

40. I find I am advocating more for my students this year than in past years.

1      2      3      4      5

**Appendix C**

**Informed Consent Document – Teacher Survey**

**TEACHER SURVEY**  
**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

Center for Leadership and Learning  
Arkansas Tech University

This consent form explains the research study. Please read it carefully. Ask questions about anything you do not understand. If you do not have questions at this time, you may ask at any time.

**FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH, CONTACT:** This study is being conducted under the supervision of Mrs. Karla Neathery (kcheanult1@atu.edu). Mrs. Neathery can be reached through the Center for Leadership and Learning, Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, AR 72801, by email, or by dialing (501) 860-3062.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project, you should contact (anonymously, if you wish) the Institutional Review Board, Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, AR 72801. You may also contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Masanori Kuroki, directly via email (mkuroki@atu.edu)

**PURPOSE:** I understand that the purpose of this research is to add knowledge to the field of education. I understand that, although there may be several indirect benefits of this study, its direct benefit is adding to the current body of knowledge on the effects of Capturing Kids' Hearts and building student-teacher relationships.

**PROCEDURES:** The procedure involves taking a survey about experience with Capturing Kids' Hearts and building relationships with students. The duration of your participation will last roughly five minutes. You may withdraw from the experiment at any time.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All recorded data are anonymous. There is no connection between your name and the recorded data. The completed questionnaire will be kept separately from the data in a secured location.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Anyone is welcome to participate in this study who has experience with the Capturing Kids' Hearts training and implemented the process as an instructor.



**RISKS:** There are no known hazards or risks involved in participation in this experiment.

**BENEFITS:** There are no direct benefits to you from your participation other than learning about the nature of this experiment and the process of scientific investigation.

**COSTS and COMPENSATION:** There is no cost to you for participation in this research with the exception of time spent participating.

**JOINING ON THE BASIS OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL (VOLUNTEERING FOR THE STUDY):** Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled as an employee with your respective school district. You do not have to answer every question or respond to every trial and may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the investigator.

**SUBJECT STATEMENT:** I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

**SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT and DATE (please sign here)**

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

"I certify that I obtained the consent of the participant whose signature is above. I understand that I must give a signed copy of the informed consent form to the participant, and keep the original copy on file in the repository location designated on my IRB application files for 5 years after the completion of the research project."

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR and DATE (please leave blank)**

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix D**

**Informed Consent Document – District**

**DISTRICT/SUPERINTENDENT**

**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

Center for Leadership and Learning  
Arkansas Tech University

This consent form explains the research study. Please read it carefully. Ask questions about anything you do not understand. If you do not have questions at this time, you may ask at any time.

**FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH, CONTACT:** This study is being conducted under the supervision of Mrs. Karla Neathery (kcheanult1@atu.edu). Mrs. Neathery can be reached through the Center for Leadership and Learning, Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, AR 72801, by email, or by dialing (501) 860-3062.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project, you should contact (anonymously, if you wish) the Institutional Review Board, Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, AR 72801. You may also contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Masanori Kuroki, directly via email (mkuroki@atu.edu)

**PURPOSE:** I understand that the purpose of this research is to add knowledge to the field of education. I understand that, although there may be several indirect benefits of this study, its direct benefit is adding to the current body of knowledge on the effects of Capturing Kids' Hearts and building student-teacher relationships.

**PROCEDURES:** The procedure involves utilizing district achievement, attendance and discipline data obtained through the Arkansas Department of Education student management system, eSchool. The duration of the district participation will last roughly one week. The district may withdraw from the experiment at any time.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Because of the nature of this study, archived data cannot be considered anonymous. The district will be kept confidential and all data will be anonymous. There is no connection between the district and the data. The data will be kept separate in a secured location and the district given anonymity within the written log using pseudonyms.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Anyone is welcome to participate in this study who has experience with the Capturing Kids' Hearts training and implemented the process as an instructor.



**RISKS:** There are no known hazards or risks involved in participation in this experiment.

**BENEFITS:** There are no direct benefits to you from your participation other than learning about the nature of this experiment and the process of scientific investigation.

**COSTS and COMPENSATION:** There is no cost to you for participation in this research with the exception of time spent participating.

**JOINING ON THE BASIS OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL (VOLUNTEERING FOR THE STUDY):** Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled as an employee with your respective school district. You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the investigator.

**SUBJECT STATEMENT:** I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

**SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT and DATE (please sign here)**

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

"I certify that I obtained the consent of the participant whose signature is above. I understand that I must give a signed copy of the informed consent form to the participant, and keep the original copy on file in the repository location designated on my IRB application files for 5 years after the completion of the research project."

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR and DATE (please leave blank)**

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

