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By

Berky Hernandez-Owolabi

May, 2012

A Principal's Journey: The Impact of the Tribes Process in the Development of Positive
Teacher-Student Relationships

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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A PRINCIPAL'S JOURNEY: THE IMPACT OF THE TRIBES PROCESS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

A Doctoral Thesis for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by

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May, 2012

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An Abstract

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Abstract

One of the primary factors in students reaching their optimal academic and/ or social potential are the relationships they may or may not encounter during their educational career. The purpose of this study was to examine the correlation between the implementation of the Tribes Learning Communities process as it relates to developing student-teacher relationships, impacting student achievement, and student discipline. The study involved teachers and students from an urban middle school in Houston, Texas grades six through eight. Both a quantitative and qualitative research approach was used to determine the outcomes of the study. With permission from the district, research data was acquired from various forms. The study involved teachers and students completing pre and post-survey questionnaire regarding classroom activities and teacher traits. The data was then analyzed by teacher's years of experience using the Tribes Process and then again by grade level. Students' report card grades, assessment scores and discipline referrals were also used to determine the impact of the process. An inductive data analysis via teacher interviews was performed to determine teachers' perceptions of the Tribes process as it relates to relationships, achievement, and discipline in their own classrooms.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

One of the key factors in students reaching their highest academic and/or social potential are the relationships they may encounter at school. Student-teacher relationships that are encouraging have been described as relationships that are “mutually respectful and supportive” (Pendergast, 2006). Evidence of this has been seen in adolescents who “work harder for teachers who treat them as individuals and express interest in their personal lives outside school” (Stipek, 2006). There has been much effort in many schools across the nation to improve relationships between educators and students. Many training programs have been introduced to teachers in order to help guide them in not only understanding their content area but also understanding how to relate to their students. Character Programs such as Capturing Kids Hearts, Great Expectations, CHAMPS, PEAK, and TRIBES all emphasize the development of safe, trusting, and harmonic school cultures. Teachers that are trained in these programs are given the tools to create positive teacher–student relationships and if used correctly, students can excel not only academically but socially as well.

The milestone document “Turning Points” warned us two decades ago that, “...the engagement of many youth in learning diminishes, and their rates of alienation, substance abuse, absenteeism, and dropping out of school begin to rise. As the number of youth left behind grows, and opportunities in the economy for poorly educated workers diminish, we face the specter of a divided society: one affluent and well educated the

other poor and ill-educated.” As a result, many students do not have the necessary tools to thrive academically or socially on their own. For this reason, “teacher’s need a broad understanding of the whole student-emotional life, family situation, social condition, cultural capital, cognitive capacities as well as focusing on their academic needs” (Labaree D. , 2010).

The student-teacher relationship has a direct correlation with another school issue which encompasses academic achievement. According to Sara Rimm-Kaufman, “students who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those students with more conflictual relationships” (p.18). An intensive study by Adena Klem and James Connell emphasizes the importance on how much relationships matter in the school setting. The key findings of the research indicates that students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, organized learning atmosphere in which expectations are clear and attainable are more likely to increase academic achievement (p. 270).

Much literature has been written on the issue of resiliency. Literature indicates that when there is an emotional void at the home, supportive school (more specifically teacher) experiences play a critical role in student behaviors (Yoon, 2002). Although, resiliency is not a skill we commonly teach, when teachers provide support systems to enhance this quality through positive relationships, a large percentage of students have been known to withstand difficulties and target negative behavior patterns in a more constructive way (Gibbs, 2007).

According to Haynes and Berkowitz (2011), ...”if done well, character development enhances academic performance, decreases negative behaviors, and increases the genuine concern teachers have for students.

Likewise, the Flippen Group maintains, Capturing Kid’s Heart is a ...”power packed 3-day workshop that will provide skills and strategies to help the participant and their students in achieving higher levels of success. The training emphasizes the creation of a safe, effective environment, how to develop self-managing classrooms, techniques for dealing with behavioral and disrespect issues and how to build production relationship with all students and colleagues.

Great Expectations is a teaching model that is guided by six basic principals called Tenets. These tenets provide the structure for each teacher to value: high expectations, teacher attitude and responsibility, all children can learn, building self esteem, climate of mutual respect, and teacher knowledge and skill. In addition, the Great Expectation Methodology Manual states, “Students need to develop personal values, positive attitudes and high ideals of character to enhance their future employability (p.93).

The Teaching Excellence Summer Institute provided by PEAK LEARN is a weeklong staff development that provides strategies to increase student motivation, engagement and learning while reducing discipline problems in the classroom. The program builds upon 6 keys that help facilitate learning in the classroom. Spence Rodgers, the founder of PEAK, attests that if students and teachers master the Safety and Belonging key, student achievement will increase.

Before a teacher can educate in her classroom, the teacher must have a controlled and orderly environment. This is the premise of another program that encourages the focus of classroom organization as the key to managing discipline. It is called the CHAMPs program. The acronym stands for communication, help, activity, material, and participation.

Lastly, training teachers to facilitate the TRIBES process during a 24 hour professional development series will improve academic learning, lessen behavioral situations, and revitalize the relationships between students and teachers. Jeanne Gibbs, the founder of the program also expresses how this training will not only develop a positive learning environment in the classroom but also transfer responsibility to students to help each other learn academic material, and to maintain the positive Tribes agreements.

Statement of the Problem

With over a dozen character education programs, it will be impossible to implement all of them in one particular school to see the change that may be needed to increase academic and social achievement. Nonetheless, high quality staff development is important and a necessary prerequisite for such improvements to take shape. (Guskey & Sparks, 1996) With this said, using the strategies and skills from a structured and organized professional training session can increase a teacher's knowledge in their core subject, improve the implementation of a positive learning environment and develop specific tools to handle issues that relate to discipline. In the school system, all stakeholders need to monitor and assess if the staff development they are using is truly impacting what happens inside the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the impact of the TRIBES process as it relates to teacher-student relationships. Exclusively, this study was designed to determine the impact of the program on teacher-student classroom relationships, student achievement, and student discipline. The study also determined if the use of the TRIBES process is effective in guiding teachers in developing mutual respect and empathy with students to increase academic achievement. Lastly, the study measured teachers' and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the process along with the implementation of strategies sought from the training provided by TRIBES. The process endorses a caring environment for cooperative learning and provides structure for positive interactions between student and teacher. The researcher will be investigating the impact of the TRIBES process in one particular school where the researcher serves as the academic and social leader on the campus.

Research Questions

The following questions were used for guidance throughout the study:

1. How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact teacher-student relationships and collaboration in the classroom?
2. How does the participation and implementation in the TRIBES staff development program impact student achievement and engagement in class activities?

3. How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact student discipline, attentiveness and enhance resiliency?

Definitions

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

Attentive Listening: To pay close attention to one another's verbal thoughts, opinions and/or feelings; and to let others know that they have been heard.

Appreciations: To treat others kindly and avoid negative comments or hurtful gestures.

Collaboration: Students working together on a common product while the teacher facilitates instruction.

Urban Middle School: An academic campus consisting of 1250 students in grades sixth through eighth located in the western area of Houston, Texas

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

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

Resiliency: The ability to generate protective factors that exist to create competency, wellness, and the capacity to overcome stress.

Right to Pass/Participate: To have the right to choose when and to what extent one will participate in a group activity; to observe respectfully if not participating actively.

Staff development: Structured meetings and training sessions designed to enhance the skills of teachers and to develop strategies and skills previously taught.

District: An urban school district located in the outskirts of Houston, Texas with the enrollment of approximately 37, 000 students.

Student discipline: The student's ability to control their behavior in class and be able to make appropriate decisions when faced with adversity.

TRIBES – TLC: A process that blends the fields of group process and cooperative learning; prevention and resiliency; learning theory and school change into a comprehensive meaningful whole.

Teachers: highly qualified personnel in an urban middle school in Houston, Texas

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

Limitations

The limitations of this study consist of the participation of only one middle school in one district. As campus principal on site, there may be a chance that responses given during interviews and surveys are slightly influenced.

Methodology

Population: The population of this study was eight teachers chosen that have been trained in the program between the summer months of 2009, 2010 and 2011 and a sample of students in their classrooms at a selected middle school in Houston, Texas. The sample size of the population surveyed was 233 middle school aged students. Middle school students were surveyed during their 1st period class. The sample size of the teachers surveyed and interviewed was eight.

Instrumentation: The researcher used a self-made fifteen question survey that was given to students and teachers that asked a series of questions as it relates to their perception of the implementation and effectiveness of the TRIBES process in the classroom. In addition, teachers were interviewed by the researcher in order to provide more insight to the questions being asked in the study. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes in length.

Procedures: Teachers attended a 24 hour TRIBES training during the summer months prior to the academic school year. During the month of January, at the end of the first academic semester cycle, surveys were given to students and teachers to complete. Interviews were scheduled and conducted during the month of February 2012.

Significance of the Study

The motivation that guided the researcher into embarking on this particular study is the passion she had in seeing not only students but teachers succeed in low academic/low socio-economic schools. Previously employed at an elementary school, the investigator noted a safe and academically productive environment within all grade levels while using a school wide process named Tribes. The school functioned harmoniously within their grade groups and worked very hard to accomplish and meet their goals. The elementary school achieved success within a three year academic time frame reaching the highest level of ranking on the state assessment. The researcher was now given the challenge to do similar practices to increase both the academic and social success at a neighboring middle school. The middle school, on the other hand, ran similar to a business. Each department furiously taught the curriculum without ever wondering what the rest of the school was doing to accomplish the common vision of the school. The expectation of this study is to provide a solid understanding to school systems that school business is much more than subjects within the classroom. There is much literature on why building positive relationships with students and staff is essential for academic and social success. This study will examine if, after being suitably trained in the Tribe process, teachers and students can build positive connections that will in truth increase the academic and social well being of students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The rapport between teacher and student has been a primary focus of progressive educators for many years. Starting as early as the 1900's, John Dewey theorized that children prosper if allowed to develop freely in their own way at their own rate without being forced or limited to by too much teaching (1938). This was the beginning to philosophers emphasizing a needed commitment to the student-teacher relationship. These relationships that are developed over time have a big impact if students will progress academically and socially. Robert Pianta describes the student-teacher relationship of one that has open communication, as well as emotional and academic support (Pianta, 1999). These relationships have also been identified as a relationship with compassion, affection, and realness (Motshinig-Pitrik, Cornelius-White, & Hoey, 2004). Unfortunately, many students of today are entering school buildings without the necessary academic and/or resiliency tools needed to survive, which at times, makes it difficult for positive student-teacher relationships to cultivate.

Nonetheless, relationships between teachers and students need to be established early on. According to Alfie Kohn, the extent to which teachers express concern about people in distress and takes the initiative to help, which applies both to how the teacher in particular treats the students, can set a powerful example and be even more effective than edifying instruction in promoting a sense of caring in students (Kohn 1998). The author goes on to say, " Preceding and underlying specific techniques for encouraging particular behaviors is the practice of nesting all kinds of discipline and instruction in the context of

a warm, nurturing, and empathetic relationship with students”(pg. 239). As I reviewed the literature related to my topic, four distinct topics emerged on how educators relate to students and what process is out there to sustain this. These four topics consisted of: (1) the importance of student-teacher relationships, (2) the correlation between the relationship and achievement, (3) how the relationship can impact behavior, and (4) the TRIBES Process.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Jacqueline Zeller’s research on early childhood education shows that high-quality child care experiences sustain the growth of social and academic skills that aid children’s later success in school (Berry, 2009). The 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. One of the strongest correlates of effective teaching is the strength of relationships teachers develop with students. (Goodwin, 2011) Sara Rimm-Kaufman (2009) expresses that 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 at higher levels academically. Theodore Sizer expresses whole heartily, “We cannot teach students well if we do not know them well” (pg. 6).

The role of a classroom teacher is much more than teaching the content or the delivery of the instruction. A teacher needs to find ways in getting to learn their students

academically and socially. It is expected by students for teachers to not only teach them but to get to know their interest to facilitate the learning.

According to Cohen, students will engage in academic activities they do not find particularly interesting if they have a teacher who has demonstrated a high level of care for them (1999). Murray and Greenberg also found that students who testify to having positive relationships with teachers also to having testified positive perceptions of school environments (2000). Students who believe that their teachers care about them are more likely to perform the tasks teachers are asking of them. Spence Rodgers understands this concept well and states in his summer trainings that when certain keys are broken, students will shut down. The keys mentioned are safety, success, fun and enjoyment, freedom and independence, valued purpose, along with love and belonging. Three major keys that emphasize positive teacher-student relationships are: 1) safety; learning will cease if students do not feel safe in their learning environment, 2) love and belonging; developing a trust between student and teacher, and 3) valued purpose; where students need something to work towards to increase self value.

Teachers that possess positive qualities enhance student's academic and social behaviors. James Stronge (2007) list positive qualities that contribute to effective student-teacher relationships:

- Understands students' feelings
- Maintains confidential trust and respect
- Is responsive to situations and students' needs
- Listens attentively to students

- Engages in positive dialogue and interaction with students outside the classroom
- Addresses students by name
- Gives specific oral and written feedback
- Gets to know student's cultures
- Believes that all students can succeed

A review of the research shows that authors have a lot to say about 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 that the most powerful weapon available to teachers who want to foster a complimentary learning climate is a positive relationship with students (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). In addition, Robert Marzano asserts that students will resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions if the foundation of a good relationship is lacking (Marzano, Gaddy, Foseid, & Marzano, 2003). According to Zehm and Kottler (2005), students will 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.

Attachment, as defined by Dr. Bruce Duncan Perry, is the capacity to form and maintain healthy emotional relationships. Students have the opportunity to form these bonds with teachers and if the connection is strong ...the teacher can provide a variety and complementing social and emotional opportunities that guide a child's attachment capabilities mature (2009). The attachment theory formulated by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, John Bowlby, describes the dynamics of long-term relationships between humans. Its most important tenet is that an infant needs to develop a relationship with at

least one primary caregiver for social and emotional development to occur normally. Philip Riley correlates this theory by emphasizing in his book that the core foundation of education can not only be centered around “Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic” (generally known as the 3Rs) that in fact, education can only be built upon a fundamental set of 3Rs: relationships, relationships, and relationships (p.14). He goes on to explain that for schools to function effectively and for students to learn effectively both sets of 3Rs must be in place. To explain further, all three types of relationships are distinct in their function: 1) from the student’s view, 2) from the teacher’s perspective and 3) relationship formation and maintenance from school leadership (2011). Furthermore, he states that a teacher who is able to accurately interpret the underlying relationship process can learn to proactively, rather than reactively, influence the dynamics of the class.

A study by Janice and Charles Kennedy, *Attachment Theory: Implications for school Psychology*, investigated the student-teacher interactions within an attachment perspective and implications for interventions. The study brings out that the quality of the teacher-student relationship may be the single most important factor for positive adaptation to school. As related by Kennedy, teachers may be the single most positive, supportive adult model and thus they have a unique opportunity to guide students in fostering positive representations of themselves, others and relationships” (2004). In reflection with Stephen Peters, he asks the question in his book: Do you know enough about me to teach me? He has conversations with four students about their hopes, dreams, and school life. A recurring question that was asked to each student was, “Who is the best teacher you ever had?” a summary of the student responses are: 1)” ...the best teacher I ever had ever was my fourth grade teacher; she knew where I lived, and never

let me go hungry. Our classroom was bright; she displayed our work so others could admire it. I really wish she could have taught me throughout my school days, she made you feel like you could learn anything.” 2)”...my middle school teacher was like my mom, she made learning fun and wanted all of us to make something of ourselves.” 3)”...every time I looked up in the stands at one of my football games there she was, she said she would come, but I didn’t believe her, the next day I studied for her social studies test and passed.” And 4)”...she goes out of her way to make sure we understand what she’s teaching us. She makes learning fun and she made me feel I was the smartest student she ever had. That was the first time I made an A on my report card.” These student’s perspectives provide evidence on how important it is to have consistent positive relationships with students. Peters further writes how he strongly believes in a three-step process to teaching and learning. He states, “A teacher must first capture a student before he or she can teach that student” (pg. 57), along with inspiring the student to learn and lastly, teaching students under the concept of not “No Child Left Behind” but the notion of “No Child Left Out” (pg. 58).

Student Achievement

The teacher-student relationship can also have a positive or negative correlation to student achievement. Marzano (2011) states, that if the bond between the teacher and 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. The author further goes on to state that teacher actions develop the perception in students that they have a good relationship. These actions are:

1. Showing interest in student's lives: This can be done by teachers getting to know their students beyond their first name.
2. Advocating for students: Teachers can promote advocacy by setting up times for conferences 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 ways 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 conducted by Jeffery Cornelius-White (2007) found that person-centered learning (teachers' displaying warmth and empathy) was associated with large increases in student participation and motivation to learn. Another research study was conducted to confirm if relationships matter in the classroom. Adena Klem and James Connell (2004) researched the link between positive teacher support and student achievement. In their findings they state, "...students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, in a well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in school." They also go on to include that students who are highly engaged are associated with higher attendance and test scores which are variables that strongly predict whether youth will successfully complete school and pursue higher education.

John Hattie (2009) concluded that “teachers using particular teaching methods, teachers with high expectations, and teachers who have created positive student-teacher relationships are more likely to have the above average effects on student achievement.” Relationships in the classroom have an impact on achievement because as Caine and Caine state ...”the brain does not naturally separate emotions from cognition, either anatomically or perceptually.” When one on one relationship skills are developed, the awareness of the needs of students is heightened. When learning in school meets students’ emotional needs, they will more likely engage in learning and be motivated to come to school regularly (Rogers, Ludington & Graham, 1998). Teachers that go out of their way to compliment positive behaviors, show an interest in students’ lives outside school, listen to students’ perspectives are the key actors in helping their students meet high academic expectations (Scherer, 2006). Scherer quotes, “ According to a Public Agenda Poll, 64 percent of high school students say that they would learn more if their teachers “personally cared about their students as people” (pg. 7).

Student Discipline

Research by Boynton and Boynton (2005), proves developing positive teacher-student relationships is one of the most effective steps a teacher can take to establish a proactive discipline climate in the classroom. The authors go on to discuss strategies that teachers can utilize to help develop strong relationships with students, which in turn will help lessen the number of student discipline occurrences. The twelve strategies set forth by Boynton and Boynton are:

- Don't be one of the kids: According to the authors this is an unprofessional act that undermines the discipline system set forth by the campus.
- Never use humiliation or sarcasm: Humor that comes at the expense of a student's character is unprofessional and inappropriate.
- Start parent conference with positive statements: During any parent conference you should always start with encouraging comments before discussing concerns.
- Start difficult conferences with the student outside the room: Disagreements between parents and teachers should be conducted in private; this may hinder any relationship that the teacher and student may have thus far.
- Let the parents get their message out first: Teachers should first listen to what the parents have to say and assure them that they are being heard.
- Make some concessions: A teacher should find points that a parent makes that you can agree with and apologize if a teacher action was not conducted.
- Talk about the future: Teachers need to establish a time to talk to parents about the future of their student in order to move past negativism and develop a plan to improve communication.
- Call parents before a disciplined student gets home: Taking a few minutes to proactively contact a parent before a student, that has been disciplined, gets home is a good way in establishing a home/school connection.

- Actively encourage parents to call the school: Having clear lines of communication is a must for parents to feel welcome.
- Increase the power of praise: Being specific when you praise helps to create a positive learning situation, nonetheless, the teacher needs to keep in mind as students grow older being praised in front of their peers may become embarrassing.
- Smile and greet students: Individually greeting students daily with a positive disposition is an effective strategy for both relationship building and monitoring student behavior.
- Learn students' names: Students will respect and respond to you more readily if they know you know their name. Addressing students by "you" or "boy with the white shirt" can establish the perception of students not being valued.

In over 100 studies researched by Marzano (2003) he found that the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management. According to the meta-analysis of the study, teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had over thirty percent fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and related problems over a year's time than did teachers who did not have high-quality relationships with their students.

Given that teacher-student relationships have a significant influence on diverse outcomes, investigations into how the relationships are shaped and what determines the quality of those relationships are of grand importance for intervention efforts to cultivate nurturing, warm relationships between teachers and students. So far, a number of student

characteristics have been linked to teacher-student relationships. According to Pianta and Steinberg (1992) students' social skills and low internalizing scores are positively associated with affectionate, open relationships with teachers. Students' problem behaviors such as inattention, internalizing, and conduct problems are negatively connected with the quality of teacher-student relationship (Pianta & Nimetz, 1991).

There are times where the punishment following a student's problem behavior may be needed to reduce the likelihood of future bad behavior; the student's repeated exposure to punishment, especially in the absence of positive attention from teachers, is more likely to perpetuate a sense of alienation from teachers and school (Grant & Henry, 1996).

Boynton and Boynton (2005) point out that demonstrating caring is one of the most powerful ways to build positive relationships with students. They go on to state that. "...caring also fosters a preventive approach to discipline, as students who feel cared for are more likely to want to please you by complying with your wishes and policies" (pg. 8). The need for positive interventions to avoid student's frustration level that may lead to explosive behaviors is on the rise. Lieberman and Zeanah (1999) emphasize the need for these interventions that are responsive to the distinctive requirements of the individual, developmentally appropriate, and that do not rely on emotional pressure. Interventions that fall short in meeting these criteria support and enable the apprehensive child's mental representations and any associated conflicted behaviors.

Caring discipline as defined by Gootman (2001); is teaching students to do the right thing. She goes on to establish that teachers need to set limits, give students responsibility for their learning and behavior, while providing guidance in showing students how to work through conflicts. A student friendly disciplinary system is based

on teachers knowing students on a personal and individualized level. The focus of any discipline approach should consist of actions that are fair, respectful, and that is motivated by a concern for the well being of any student (Pomeroy, 1999). A question that can be asked at this point is, “Why the misbehavior in the classroom in the first place?” Robert Sylwester (2000) answers, “In sum, the classroom management literature tends to view management as a teacher responsibility and misbehavior as a problem that teachers have with students rather than the reverse, Regrettably, teacher misbehavior may well be the cause of some (if not much) disruptive student misbehavior” (pg. 31-32). Carol Cummings (2000) informs us through her book entitled *Winning Strategies for Classroom Management*: “To better understand the misbehaviors in our classroom, let’s look at what is behind the behaviors. If we understand the child, then we are equipped to make appropriate decisions. We need to change our approach, not the child” (Pgs. 76-81). Control is the capacity to cause someone to choose to do what you ask, regardless of the consequences. Teachers who have a strong control succeed because they understand the power of language and relationships: they ask respectfully, firmly and confidently, but also with civility and often kindly. They express faith in students (Lemoy, 2010).

The Process Called TRIBES

There are hundreds of character education programs used in schools to promote and develop social skills in our youth. Teacher trainings with strategies and activities have been conducted to help facilitate these very strategies for immediate transfer into the classroom. Nonetheless, for the purpose of my study, I have chosen to review literature of the Tribes Process to gain insight into the history, purpose, and connection it has to the

impact of student-teacher relationships. Also, if teachers use the process correctly there will emerge an increase of academic achievement and positive social skills.

Jean Gibbs states that, “Tribes is a democratic group process, not just a curriculum or set of cooperative activities. It is a process of events that lead to achievement of an outcome. The outcome of the Tribes process is to develop a positive environment that promotes human growth and learning” (pg.9). It is noted that the process not only establishes a caring environment for cooperative learning, but also provides structure for positive interactions between teachers and students (Gibbs, 2001). In summary, Tribes requires teachers to learn how to build community through three stages of group development; inclusion (caring), influence (participation and being valued by others) and community (positive expectations and support), while using four simple agreements; attentive listening, appreciations, the right to pass, and mutual respect. The process of Tribes assures teachers’ success in establishing a positive and safe learning environment. It enables all students to enjoy inclusion and on-going membership in a learning group or “tribe” (Gibbs, 2000). In creating a community of learners the Tribes process emphasizes on the goal of students excelling in academics in schools that have a positive culture. As said by Susan Black (1997), students learn more with positive climate and culture. A study of 296 eighth graders conducted by the University of Michigan discovered that, “... students who perceived their school as emphasizing understanding, effort, and personal development also perceived that teachers cared about, trusted, and respected them” (pg. 3).

Comprehensive studies on cooperative group learning, social development and group process were synthesized for the cooperative learning model. The Tribes approach

trains teachers to build long term small membership groups for peer support and responsibility; to teach students essential democratic group skills; and to integrate academic concepts into cooperative learning strategies. A positive relationship was built and sustained between students and teachers while honoring the four Tribes agreements (Gibbs, 2003). The outcome of trainings that teachers participated in while using the book: *Tribes, A Process for Social Development and Cooperative Learning* (1987) included:

- Significant decreases in student behavior problems
- Increase in teacher collegiality and parent involvement
- Improvement in teacher–student relationships
- Increase in students’ liking of school and motivation for academic learning

Evaluations of the Tribes learning communities have been conducted around the world. The data overall brings clarity and confirmation of the process. The Tribes process has a positive impact on the classroom environment and helps teachers cultivate a collegial relationship with students that promote academic and social growth (Gibbs, 2006). Individual districts across the states, including but not limited to; Beloit, Oklahoma, Oahu, and Spring Branch ISDs reported that after using the Tribes process:

- There was evidence of improved student inclusion, collaboration with teachers, respect, resiliency and student engagement
- Mutual respect was the most common practice for student and faculty

- Teachers had more time to build relationship with student in contrast to managing student behaviors

In Hawaii, Laura Brown investigated a school district where the use of Tribes proved successful. The qualitative and quantitative data proved changes as a result of using the Tribes process as positive. “Significant improvement was reported in student-teacher and student-student relationships along with mutual respect. Teachers reported that the climate of the classrooms and school as more comfortable, settled, and respectful” (pg. 6). Further implications indicated that evidence was granted that students must have skills and knowledge beyond the 3Rs. Tribes allows for educational systems to create and sustain a school-wide environment in which caring and supportive protective factors and positive expectations are a reality of all students (Brown & Ushijima, 1998).

Tribes is a huge advocate of teaching resiliency factors to teachers so they can help build the capacity in their students to survive, though difficulty, and bounce back positively and move on (Gibbs, 2006). Jeanne Gibbs states, “Protective factors are the positive behaviors and conditions within schools (including student-teacher relationships) that support the development of those resilient attributes with you” (pg. 41). Studies investigated by Berliner and Bernard (1993) on how schools can foster resiliency in children collectively yield the understanding both of the personal traits possessed by these resilient children/youth and the environmental characteristics that foster or reinforce those traits well into their adult lives. The personal traits associated with students who overcame risks in their lives are social competence, resourcefulness, autonomy

and sense of purpose. The investigators go on to say, “The research shows that these traits, which make up an individual’s resilient nature, are fostered or reinforced by caring relationships that are trusting, compassionate, and respectful; high expectations that are explicitly communicated and adequately supported...” (pg. 42).

THE RESEARCH-BASED Components of the developmental process of the TRIBES Learning Community

In understanding the connection between the positive effects of student-teacher relationships or lack thereof, one must consider if the character education program being used has components that emphasize youth development and learning. Embedded in the Tribes TLC philosophy are four primary facets that are supported by research which include, but not limited to; human development and learning, a caring culture, creating a community of learners and adhering to responsive education.

The primary focus of the Tribes school is not the academic programs that exist within a school, the focus is on students. In a Tribes school, all policy, structures, decisions, curriculum and pedagogy depends on the learning needs of the child (Gibbs, 2003). With this said the Tribes TLC learning process is grounded in and focused on human development. The creator and leading thinker in multiple intelligence research, Howard Gardner, states, “developmentalists and educators have begun to listen to one another and even to try to speak the same language” (1990, p. 25).

The Tribes process begins with acknowledging that human development is a resilient process. According to Maslow, the process that drives human development,

resilience, and adaptation is an internal force, called intrinsic motivation. Youths are intrinsically motivated to meet basic psychological needs, including needs for belonging, a sense of competence, and feeling secure (Deci, 2000; Richardson, 2003; & Sandler, 2001). As Bonnie Bernard summarizes her own research on the theory of resiliency, she connects how this attribute is a key component of the development of student-teacher relationships. Due to the fact that youths have a psychological need for belonging, they seek to relate to and connect with others, and thus develop social competence strengths. Psychologists refer to this drive as our affiliation/belongingness adaptational system (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This need to feel competent, combines with a psychological need to feel autonomous, leads us to seek people and opportunities that allow us to experience a sense of our own authority and achievement. Our safety motivational system includes the need to avoid pain and maintain physical survival – which drives us to develop not only problem solving but also social competence, autonomy, and even purpose. Youths needing to find meaning in their lives motivate them to seek people (teachers), places (school setting) and transformational experiences that make themselves feel worthy (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2002).

The contribution of the resilience research to the Tribes TLC process is that the personal strengths identified as those associated with healthy and successful human development are exactly what encompasses the Tribes Learning Process. These personal strengths are critical life success skills not only to students but to teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and other members of the school community (Bernard, p. 15).

In addition to resiliency, the Tribes TLC process focuses on the development of the whole child which includes meeting their cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual

needs. In 1999, *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*, was published and identified a number of evaluation studies between a ten year time frame that found positive student achievement outcomes from this developmental approach of teaching the whole child (American Institutes of Research, p. B-12). Another study in favor of teaching the whole child was conducted by Thomas Cook in the year 1999. In this investigation, involving more than 10,000 students, Cook concluded those students are educated using a supportive holistic approach outperform students in three crucial areas: improving school climate, raising students' academic performance, and reducing negative social behaviors (Borton, 1996).

A caring culture is another focal point in which the Tribes learning process anchors its beliefs on. The National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine state, "Supportive relationships are critical 'mediums' of development. They provide an environment of reinforcement, good modeling, and constructive feedback for physical, intellectual, psychological, and social growth." Moreover, "The attentive, caring, and wise voice of a supportive adult goes internalized and becomes part of the youth's own voice (Eccles & Gootman, p. 96), Werner and Smith (1989) alludes to the supportive evidence through research that, "Among the most frequently encountered positive role model in the lives of children...outside the family circle, was a favorite teacher. For the resilient youngster a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but confidante and positive model for personal identification also" (p. 162).

Anthony Bryk along with Barbara Schneider (2002), write that the missing key of school reform is "relational trust" grounded in respect, integrity, competence, and personal regard of others. Without the trusting relationships between students and

teachers school reform can prove to be a downward spiral. A study conducted in Chicago attests to why relationships built on trust are crucial to students performing at their peak. The researchers cumulated data from three years that included: teacher surveys, student performance data that correlate a school's trust levels with its students' academic growth. They found evidence that proved schools performing in the top quartile on standardized test and significant improvement in math and reading scores overall were more often schools with high levels of trust (Gewertz, 2002, p. 4). Tribes TLC is built on the foundation that for the process to function, building trusting and lasting relationships with students and staff is essential throughout implementation.

Jean Gibbs states, "Structuring supportive groups (tribes) throughout the system formalizes connections and re-cultures the school into a working community of trust and respect. Once connected to others within small groups, everyone gains a sense of belonging, value, and social support" (2001, p. 80). The essential work in Tribes TLC is creating communities that are conducive to learning. Much research has been conducted to connect the academic and social achievement in schools with the vital component of adding community learning (Lieberman, 1992, 1994). Cooperative learning is a strategy that many teachers use to enhance the classroom environment. It is used in the Tribes TLC process to engage students and teachers to look beyond the traditional methods of teaching and learning. Research provides evidence that allowing students to discover learning using this approach can change not only the social dynamics in a classroom but augment the academic achievement in students as well. Shlomo Sharan (1990), summarizes his review on cooperative learning by stating, "...research studies on cooperative learning have asserted that this approach to classroom instruction enhances

pupils' intrinsic motivation to learn more than traditional whole-class approach to instruction" (p.173). His research goes on to explain two aspects of cooperative learning that motivates student's academic achievement: enhanced decision making and positive peer interaction. These two aspects coincide with the Tribes TLC process as it relates to students resiliency factors and the need to build caring relationships within the classroom.

Tribes TLC is grounded by a core philosophy of human development and learning. In addition to creating a caring culture and a community of learners, the Tribes process integrates responsive education or learner centered instruction in its efforts to provide a seamless process to develop high levels of academic and social well being. Tribes TLC centers on experiences that are cooperative, active, reflective, integrated, project-based and authentically assessed on a consistent basis. The Northeast Foundation for Children (www.responsiveclassroom.org) has resources that help students, teachers, and communities understand a responsive classroom. The organization is similar to Tribes as it strives to increase academic achievement, decrease problem behaviors, and improve social skills which leads to rigorous instruction. Dr. Sara E. Rimm-Kaufman conducted a longitudinal, quasi-experimental study on how Responsive Classroom approach affects students' academic and social skills. The study yielded six primary factors about children and teachers in the school setting:

1. Children showed greater increases in reading and math scores.
2. Teachers felt more effective and more positive about teaching.
3. Children had better social skills.
4. Teachers offered a more highly-quality instruction.
5. Teachers collaborated with each other more.

One can also call responsive education or student-center learning that of service learning where active learning and project-based learning integrates students' academic learning with service that meets actual community needs. (Bernard, p. 165) According to Cathryn Kaye, the essential elements of service learning are as follows:

- Integrated learning - where students learn skills and content through varied modalities.
- Meeting genuine needs - where student actions are valued by the community and have real consequences while offering opportunities to apply newly acquired skills.
- Youth voice and choice – where students experience significant age-appropriate challenges involving tasks that require problem solving skills.
- Collaborative efforts – where students participate in the development of partnerships and share responsibility with teachers, parents, and community.
- Reciprocity – where students' benefits evolve through mutual teaching and learning, action, or influence between all participants especially the teacher.
- Systematic reflection – where students put cognitive and affective aspects of experience into the larger contexts or self, the community and the world.
- Civic responsibility – where students have a role in improving society, working for social justice, and caring for the environment (2004).

The vision and mission of the Tribes TLC are based on many years of research that support a focus on the development and teachings of the whole child; on resiliency as an intrinsically motivated wisdom; on developmental stage-specific wisdom; on academic, social, and emotional learning (Bernard, 2005). Tribes has the inter-related goal to create an atmosphere that is conducive to classrooms establishing a caring culture, a positive structure of learning communities along with strategies that reinforce responsive education. This coincides with the impact of student-teacher relationships as it affects academic and social behaviors in the classroom.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

This study examined the impact of the TRIBES process as it relates to teacher-student relationships. Exclusively, this study was designed to determine the impact of the program on teacher-student classroom relationships, student achievement, and student discipline. The study also determined if the use of the TRIBES process is effective in guiding teachers in developing mutual respect and empathy with students to increase academic achievement. Lastly, the study measured teachers' and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the process along with the implementation of strategies sought from the training provided by TRIBES. The process endorses a caring environment for cooperative learning and provides structure for positive interactions between student and teacher. The researcher will be investigating the impact of the TRIBES process in a selected middle school where the researcher served as the academic and social leader on the campus.

Research Questions

The chapter is divided into the following sections: population, instrumentation, and procedures. The three guiding questions addressed by this researcher were:

Question I. *How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact teacher-student relationships and collaboration?*

To address this question, the study will utilize a survey that will be given to teachers and students at the beginning and end of the first academic semester in which the

study took place. For clarity, the survey was given to both students and teachers in the month of September and January of the 2011-2012 academic school year.

Question II. How does the participation and implementation in the TRIBES staff development program impact student achievement and engagement in class activities?

In response to this question, the study will utilize data from the beginning and middle of the year using district developed common formative assessments in order to assess the impact on student achievement. The data being used was extrapolated by each participating teacher and their selective class periods. The researcher also analyzed the class average of report card grades from each six weeks of the first semester in which the study was conducted. To reply to teacher/student and teacher/teacher collaboration, results from specific survey questions will be taken into account for effectiveness.

Question III. How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact student discipline, attentiveness, and enhance resiliency?

To address this question, the study will employ data from student discipline referrals entered in the district student database *Zangle* during the time period of early September 2011 to late January 2012. Questions on the survey will attend to the enhancement of resiliency factors of students during the research period.

Population

The population of this study was the teachers who attended the TRIBES TLC training during the summer month of July in the years 2010 and 2011 and the students in their respective first period classes at Claughton Middle School. Claughton Middle School is one of seven middle schools in the Spring Independent School District and one of three middle schools that uses the TRIBES learning process. The district had an enrollment of 36,468 students during the 2011-2012 academic school year and is relatively a large school district compared to surrounding schools districts in the region. In the 2010-2011 school year Claughton Middle School had an enrollment of 1397 students along with 153 staff members. Due to recent district budget reductions and not meeting projected enrollment from the previous year, Claughton Middle School had an enrollment of 1252 students with 101 staff members for the 2011-2012 academic school years.

Participation for all teachers to attend the summer basic TRIBES training was strongly recommended but strictly voluntary. Taking both summer trainings into account, 52 classroom teachers participated in the Tribes process and 8 teachers volunteered to participate in the study (6 core teachers and 2 elective teachers). The following charts illustrate the demographic data for the teachers who attended the training and those who volunteered to participate in the study. Chart 1 demonstrates data based on all teachers that participated in the training. The average teacher's years of experience from this pool is 7 years. Chart 2 illustrates the demographic for the teachers who attended the training and volunteered to participate in the study. Of these teachers, only one teacher has been teaching less than five years. The remaining seven teachers have been teaching between

five and ten years. All teachers that volunteered to participate in the study will complete the survey and have students in their first period classrooms complete the questionnaire as well.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristic of Teachers Attending Tribes Process Training in the Summer Months of July in 2009, 2010, or 2011 at Claughton Middle School.

Gender	African American	Hispanic	White
Male	9	1	6
Female	15	4	17
Total	24	5	23

Note: total teachers 52

Table 2

Demographic Characteristic of Teachers Attending Tribes Process Training in the Summer Months of July in 2009, 2010 or 2011 and Participated in the Study at Claughton Middle School.

Gender	African American	Hispanic	White
Male	1	0	0
Female	5	1	1
Totals	6	1	1

Note: total teachers: 8

The ethnic composition of the student population was 51.2% African American, 41.13% Hispanic, 6.15% Asian, and .01% White for the 2011-2012 academic school

year. Approximately 83% of all students on the campus participate in the free/reduced lunch program. There were 233 students who participated in the study based on the number of students in each of the twelve teachers' first period classrooms. Chart 3 illustrates the demographic composition of the students participating in the study.

Table 3

Demographic Student Composition

Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Asian	12	.05%
African American	121	52%
Hispanic	97	41%
White	3	.01%
Total	233	

Instrumentation

A questionnaire formatted survey was used for collecting and analyzing the data for the perception piece of this study. The reason this method was used was to gather unobservable information. In order to get a true perception from all participating in the study, similar questions were asked to both the teachers and the students. The survey was created and adapted from various surveys designed to measure interactions between teachers and students in the classroom setting. Surveys used were: The Class Activities Questionnaire (Steele, 1969) and The Gallup Student and Teacher Poll (Gallop, 2001). The Class Activities Questionnaire (CAQ) was developed to measure how class activities

were intended by teachers and perceived by students and vice versa. The Gallop Student Poll measures student hope for the future, engagement with school, and wellbeing-factors that have been shown to drive student's grades, achievement scores, retention and future employment.

The survey instrument was comprised of a pre and post questionnaire for both students and teachers. The surveys were similar in nature however; the vocabulary used for the student survey was more kid friendly. Questions were structured to measure perceptions of the defined variables of teacher-student relationships, engagement, attentiveness, collaboration, achievement, and discipline. The survey for both teachers and students contains a total of seventeen (17) questions. Six (6) of the questions dealt with the variable of student-teacher relationships, three (3) questions addressed discipline, two (2) dealt with achievement, two (2) focused on attentiveness, two (2) addressed collaboration, and two (2) questions inquired upon engagement. Table 4 illustrates which questions focused on each of the defined variables.

Table 4

Survey Questions and Measured Variable Correspondence

Variable	Survey Question Number
Student-teacher relationships	4, 5, 10, 13, 16, 17
Discipline	3, 9, 12
Achievement	8, 15
Attentiveness	6, 14
Collaboration	2, 7
Engagement	1, 11

Tables 5, 6, and 7 will disaggregate data by teacher. Teacher A is an African American Male that teaches 8th grade Science with five teachers total teacher experience and two years Tribes experience. Teacher B is an African American Female teacher who received Tribes training in the summer of 2011, she teaches 8th grade math and has a total of seven years teaching experience. Teacher C is an 8th grade Health teacher that has three years teaching experience with two of those years combined with Tribes. Teachers C and D are both 7th grade teachers that teach math and writing respectfully. Both teachers have more than ten years of teaching experience with less than two of those years in the Tribes process. All 6th grade teachers that have three years of Tribes experience are represented by the letters E-H. These teachers teach math, reading, and as an elective. The combined years of experience for these teachers are seven years.

Student achievement data was compiled from results of district created formative assessments. Beginning of the year assessments were given to students in the area of

Reading and Math during the second week of September 2011. A comparison of results to establish growth indicators was determined after students completed the middle of the year assessments that was given during the second week of January 2012. These assessments were timed (four hour limit) and given during each student's first period class. Table 5 represents the average score for each class out of the total possible points of a 100. Although each teacher does not teach the subject that they are expected to assess, the building on positive relationships in class plays an integral role for students to stay focused on the content that is being presented.

Table 5

District Assessment Mean Scores

Teacher	<u>Reading</u>		<u>Math</u>	
	September	January	September	January
Teacher A	62.00	74.00	54.00	68.00
Teacher B	60.00	70.00	42.00	65.00
Teacher C	73.00	77.00	66.00	76.00
Teacher D	62.00	71.00	56.00	66.00
Teacher E	60.00	73.00	47.00	68.00
Teacher F	61.00	74.00	44.00	72.00
Teacher G	68.00	77.00	57.00	78.00
Teacher H	60.00	70.00	63.00	70.00
Mean	63.25	73.25	53.63	70.38

All teachers, as displayed on the chart, had a significant increase between each assessment. Eighth grade teachers who have two or less years using the Tribes process increased a total of 26 average points in Reading and 46 total points in math. Six grade teachers who have the most experience in Tribes had a combined average score increase of a total of 32 points in Reading and 62 points in Math. This fuels the reasoning on

Tribes having a significant impact in increasing achievement scores if the program is used correctly and with consistency.

Data derived from report card grades were accumulated by teacher's imputing grades weekly during a three six-weeks time frame. Teachers were encouraged to have a minimum of twelve grades where 60% comes from daily activities and 40% is comprised from teacher made assessments. Table 6 displays the class average scores for each teacher by six week period. The total mean score for each six weeks is also represented on the chart.

Table 6

Student Report Card Grades by Teacher

Teacher	First Six Weeks	Second Six Weeks	Third Six Weeks	Total
Teacher A	89.00	84.00	80.00	84.00
Teacher B	77.00	83.00	84.00	81.00
Teacher C	95.00	92.00	93.00	93.00
Teacher D	79.00	84.00	80.00	81.00
Teacher E	80.00	74.00	78.00	78.00
Teacher F	77.00	79.00	81.00	79.00
Teacher G	87.00	85.00	88.00	87.00
Teacher H	93.00	89.00	91.00	91.00
Mean	84.63	83.75	84.38	84.25

As reported, six of the eight teachers' scores dropped in the second six-weeks grading period. While only two teachers' class average scores steadily increased each six weeks. Many factors can come into play when analyzing these results: 1) teachers may have decreased the use of Tribes activities while engaging in more traditional

teaching methods, 2) the level of difficulty in content presented during the second six weeks as opposed to the first six weeks, and/or 3) students' personal situations may have changed during the second six weeks time frame that may have impacted their view on the importance of being actively engaged in class and completing assignments.

Discipline information was compiled from the number of teacher referrals that were documented by an administrator and entered into the district's discipline database in *Zangle*. The data for each student were analyzed between the months of September through January during the 2011-2012 academic school year. Table 7 shows the total number of referrals that each teacher submitted to their appropriate administrator during the time frame of the study. A total of 40 referrals between all eight teachers were entered into the district's discipline data base between the months of August 2011 thru January 2012. These referrals were derived from only their first period classes and did not include any disciplinary action of students that were created in other classes, other periods, or during transitional time. The table displays the data that confirms that by using the Tribes process four out of the eight teachers had no referrals to report during a six month time period. Nonetheless, it does not mean that they did not have any disciplinary flare-ups in their classes only that by consistently implementing the Tribes process, interruptions due to behavior implications were defused in class and not reported to an administrator.

Table 7

Teacher Discipline Referrals

Teacher	First Six Weeks	Second Six Weeks	Third Six Weeks	Total
Teacher A	2	0	0	2
Teacher B	5	3	1	9
Teacher C	0	0	0	0
Teacher D	2	2	1	5
Teacher E	0	0	0	0
Teacher F	0	0	0	0
Teacher G	0	0	0	0
Teacher H	7	12	5	24
Total	16	17	7	40

Procedures

Permission to utilize human subjects in research was submitted to the University of Houston for approval. Permission to conduct the study at Claughton Middle School was granted by the Executive Director of Systems Accountability in the Spring Independent School District. A letter to parents explaining the purpose of the study was given to student participants in early September 2011 so parents could be aware of the survey. (Appendix A) In the letter it stated that this survey was strictly voluntary and if any parent wished for their student not to participate, their student's first period teacher should be contacted. Pre-survey questions were given to students and teachers to complete in September 2011 and the post-survey will be given during the later month of January in the year 2012. The survey was given paper-based to each student in the respective teacher's first period classroom. The post-survey was given in the same format.

Student assessments were given by teachers during the district's assessment testing window for each of the months in September and January during the 2011-2012 academic school year. Each student was administered a Reading and a Math assessment on two different days during their first period classroom. Each assessment is timed and students had 60 minutes to complete the exam. All students are required to take the exam. Student assessments were graded through scantron technology and data was pulled from the districts' ADM program.

Discipline referrals that need to be entered into the district's data base are given to respective administrators for each grade level. At the end of the study period data entered into the district's system was disaggregated for each student that participated in the study. Student discipline referrals that are reported for truancy, substantial disruptions, fighting, substance abuse, and/or bullying will be taken into account to show progression or regression in behavior. Those observable behaviors that are handled by the teachers; disrespect, off task in class, non-participation in classroom activities, incomplete or the refusal of completing class/home work and not adhering to the Tribes agreements were discussed and analyzed during the teacher interviews held during the month of February 2012.

Teacher interviews were conducted to gain more insight on the perspective teachers have on the Tribes Process. Teachers were asked to provide their expertise on how the implementation of the program has positively or negatively affected student academic and social well-being along with the development of building relationships with their students. Interviews were conducted by the researcher during the month of February of the year 2012. Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes.

Teachers responses were recorded and written documentation followed up the interview process.

Data Analysis

By using a mix-method format, both quantitative and qualitative data was obtained using questionnaire research techniques. Primary results were analyzed using descriptive statistics such means, variance and range. The results of these measures were reported in different tables. The researcher used descriptive statistics to acquire the standard deviation to determine the significance of the any change in pre and post survey scores for each theme-related group of questions (variables) for both student and teacher responses. This was done to conclude if there was any significant growth or decline in reported scores of the six identified variables of student-teacher relationships, discipline, achievement, attentiveness, collaboration and engagement. Further analysis was conducted to determine if the questions addressing each theme related question showed any variation in reported scores for students across grade levels and/or for the length of time teachers were using the Tribes process. After survey results were analyzed, assessment scores and report card grades scrutinized, discipline referrals reviewed along with the consideration of interview dialogue, the study confirmed that the qualitative data did not support the quantitative data. Although there was small increments of growth from pre to post survey results, teacher's perspective of their classroom as they relate to the variables being asked were much higher in correlation to the student responses on the same survey. Assessment scores and discipline referrals did show significant growth through the study period; nonetheless, report card grades fluctuated thorough out the

semester. The following chapter will go in depth on the findings of each individual research questions being investigated.

Scope and Limitations

There were several limitations to this study that includes: 1) the student population used in this research only included students from one particular urban middle school in the north Houston, Texas who were enrolled during the study window from September 2011-January 2012. The results cannot be generalized to other students in other middle schools. 2) The reliability and validity of the assessments created by teachers in the urban school district in north Houston, 3) the discipline data entered in *Zangle* (district's student data base). Campus discipline data is entered by campus personnel and the research presumes that all data that is documented into the system is entered correctly and without errors and 4) the researcher is the campus principal on site, and therefore; there may be a chance that responses given during interviews and surveys are slightly influenced.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter will include the findings for both the quantitative data in Part I and qualitative data in Part II, respectfully. Data from the findings in regards to each of the three questions are discussed in length as distinctive questions with the attending variables. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the process of Tribes staff development program on student-teacher relationships, achievement, and discipline at an urban middle school in Houston. The study also measured teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the training and how teachers implemented strategies from the Tribes process in their classrooms. A questionnaire instrument (Appendices B and C) were used to measure teacher and student perceptions of classroom climate as it relates to relationships, discipline, achievement, attentiveness, collaboration and engagement.

The Tribes Learning Community Training sessions are held every summer during the months of July and August. The pre-survey questionnaire was administered to teachers and students two weeks after school started in early September 2011. The post-survey was administered to teachers and students last the week of January 2012. Participants' answers to questions on the survey were quantified using a Likert-type scale. The questions on the questionnaire instrument were "almost always" (AA), "sometimes" (S), "hardly" (H), and "almost never" (AN). Numerical weights were assigned on a scale of 4 to 1 with four allied with the most approving response and the one allied with the least approving. The data was analyzed by determining the mean and

variance of the variables of each question for teachers and students. Results from the analysis of the district formative assessments and campus report card grades along with discipline referrals are also included in the findings in Part 1.

The qualitative data was gathered from interviews conducted with all eight of the original teacher participants. Individual interviews were conducted by the researcher during the early month of February 2012. The results of the interview are presented in Part II of this chapter.

Part 1: Quantitative Findings

Teachers that participated in the study attended Tribes training during the summer months of July or August. Two teachers attended the training in August of 2011, three teachers attended the training in July of 2010 and three teachers attended the training in July of 2005. Formative district assessments were given in early September and late January to students, report card grades along with discipline referrals were reported by six weeks during the first semester grading session.

Table 8 represents the mean scores for each variable for all teachers on the pre-survey and post-survey. The teacher group overall showed an increase in mean score for each variable from the pre survey to the post survey. The table indicates that teachers responded more favorably to questions that dealt with student-teacher relationships than any other themed questions in both the pre and the post surveys.

Table 8

Summary of Descriptive Data of Teacher Responses to Survey Questions

Questions	<u>Pre-Survey</u>		<u>Post-Survey</u>	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
S-T Relationships	3.89	3	3.95	3
Discipline	3.79	3	3.91	3
Achievement	3.62	3	4.00	4
Attentiveness	3.50	3	3.62	3
Collaboration	3.56	3	3.75	3
Engagement	3.57	3	3.81	3

Note. N = 8 teachers.

A thorough analysis was given to the mean scores for each variable for the teachers with 1 year Tribes training experience, 2 years Tribes training experience and 3 years Tribes training experience, respectfully. Although there was an overall increase in what was being measured, it was noted that teachers with more Tribes experience had a significantly higher response per question item than those teachers that had less experience using the process of Tribes by the end of the study. First year teachers showed a significantly higher response rate during the pre survey in the area of student-teacher relations as opposed to the teachers that had more experience in using the Tribes process. In the area of discipline, teachers with one and two years experience showed a more positive response in their mean score in relation to those teachers that had three years experience in the pre survey. Teachers with the most experience using the Tribes process indicated through their pre survey results their most favorable response was in

the area of achievement. The tables also indicate that the teachers with three years experience had an overall higher rating in all areas as opposed to those teachers with less experience using the Tribes process.

Table 9 represents the mean scores for each variable for all students on the pre and post survey. The student group showed a slight increase for each variable. Students responded more favorably to the question items that related to student-teacher relationships and least favorable in the area of attentiveness. It was noted that students responded to questions with the answer of “almost never” during the pre survey, whereas during the post survey, no student chose that particular response.

Table 9

Summary of Descriptive Data for Total Student Responses to Survey Questions

Questions	<u>Pre-Survey</u>		<u>Post-Survey</u>	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
S-T Relationships	3.50	3	3.72	3
Discipline	3.19	3	3.37	3
Achievement	3.07	3	3.40	3
Attentiveness	2.88	3	3.31	3
Collaboration	3.05	3	3.32	3
Engagement	3.26	3	3.45	3

Note. N= 233 students

Table 10 represents the descriptive data summary for students by teachers according to their years of experience using the Tribes process. Students with teachers that have more years using the Tribes process responded more favorably in both the pre

and post surveys to each of the variable question items asked. Students who had teachers with only one year of experience responded favorably to the items that related to student-teacher relationships and less favorably to questions dealing with collaboration.

However, in the post survey, the same students answered more positively to the questions that related to attentiveness. Students who had teachers with two years of experience answered questions with a higher mean score in the area of student-teacher relationships in both the pre and post surveys and lower mean score in the area of attentiveness.

Teachers with the most experience had an overall higher response rating in each of the variables being analyzed.

Table 10

Summary of Descriptive Data for Total Student Responses to Survey Questions by Teachers' Tribes Experience

Questions	<u>Pre -Survey</u>		<u>Post-Survey</u>	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
S-T Relationships				
Teachers' 1 yr. exp.	2.97	3	3.35	3
Teachers' 2 yrs. exp.	3.06	3	3.74	3
Teachers' 3 yrs. exp.	3.65	3	3.83	3
All Students	3.50	3	3.72	3
Discipline				
Teachers' 1 yr. exp.	2.94	3	3.11	3
Teachers' 2 yrs. exp.	3.06	3	3.38	3
Teachers' 3 yrs. exp.	3.65	3	3.83	3
All Students	3.19	3	3.37	3

Achievement				
Teachers' 1 yr. exp.	2.90	3	3.07	3
Teachers' 2 yrs. exp.	3.10	3	3.39	3
Teachers' 3 yrs. exp.	3.38	3	3.50	3
All Students	3.07	3	3.40	3
Attentiveness				
Teachers' 1 yr. exp.	2.83	3	3.36	3
Teachers' 2 yrs. exp.	2.88	3	3.37	3
Teachers' 3 yrs. exp.	3.14	3	3.45	3
All Students	2.88	3	3.31	3
Collaboration				
Teachers' 1 yr. exp.	2.59	3	3.04	3
Teachers' 2 yrs. exp.	3.05	3	3.29	3
Teachers' 3 yrs. exp.	3.09	3	3.43	3
All Students	3.05	3	3.32	3
Engagement				
Teachers' 1 yr. exp.	2.81	3	3.08	3
Teachers' 2 yrs. exp.	3.33	3	3.45	3
Teachers' 3 yrs. exp.	3.50	3	3.65	3
All Students	3.26	3	3.45	3

Note. N=233 students; N=57 students T 1yr; N=89 students T 2yrs; N=87 students T 3yrs

Table 11 represents the descriptive data summary for students by grade level. Teachers that teach grade six had the most experience in using the Tribes process while those teachers that taught both seventh and eighth grade had less than two years experience using the process. Again, we see an increase in all variables between the pre and the post surveys on all items asked. Six grade students had the highest mean score in

all areas in both the pre and the post surveys of all grade levels that participated in the study. This may be the result of the teachers who teach this particular grade level having the most experience using the Tribes process. Although the range of scores for all grade levels were the same, seventh grade students had the lowest mean scores in both the pre and post surveys in all areas questioned. As in previous tables analyzed, students in all grade levels; sixth, seven, and eight, had a higher mean score in the area of student-teacher relationships as opposed to any other variables surveyed.

Table 11

Summary of Descriptive Data for Total Student Responses to Survey Questions by grade level

Questions	Pre –Survey		Post-Survey	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
S-T Relationships				
6 th Grade	3.65	3	3.83	3
7 th Grade	2.92	3	3.17	3
8 th Grade	3.56	3	3.65	3
All Students	3.50	3	3.72	3
Discipline				
6 th Grade	3.83	3	3.50	3
7 th Grade	3.02	3	3.33	3
8 th Grade	3.32	3	3.34	3
All Students	3.19	3	3.37	3

Achievement				
6 th Grade	3.14	3	3.45	3
7 th Grade	2.86	3	3.26	3
8 th Grade	3.12	3	3.40	3
All Students	3.07	3	3.40	3
Attentiveness				
6 th Grade	3.06	3	3.43	3
7 th Grade	2.81	3	3.19	3
8 th Grade	2.90	3	3.32	3
All Students	2.88	3	3.31	3
Collaboration				
6 th Grade	3.29	3	3.45	3
7 th Grade	2.81	3	3.28	3
8 th Grade	2.95	3	3.21	3
All Students	3.05	3	3.32	3
Engagement				
6 th Grade	3.50	3	3.65	3
7 th Grade	3.04	3	3.29	3
8 th Grade	3.16	3	3.35	3
All Students	3.26	3	3.45	3

Note. N=233 students; N=87 students in grade six; N=57 students in grade seven; N=89 students in grade eight.

In summary of all tables displayed thus far, the descriptive data for the teacher and student groups showed both similarities and differences on how each group rated each variable. There were similarities in the following:

- Both teacher and student groups showed an increase in higher mean scores between pre and post surveys.
- Both teacher and student groups showed higher mean scores in the area of student-teacher relationships.
- Both teacher and student groups showed lower mean scores in the area of attentiveness in both the pre and post surveys.

The differences include, but are not limited to;

- Teachers used the ranking of “Almost Always” (AA) more frequently than students in all variables. This resulted in an overall higher mean score in each themed variable questioned for the teacher group.
- Students used the ranking of “Hardly Ever” (H) and “Almost Never” (AN) in their responses to questions in the survey contrast to teachers, who never used such ranking in any of their responses. Overall, this resulted in student response mean scores being lower than the teacher group across all variables.
- In comparison to responses between teachers and students having only one year experience with the Tribes process, teachers ranked each question relatively higher than their students which resulted in a significant difference between mean scores.

The Research Questions

Research Question One

How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact teacher-student relationships and collaboration in class activities?

The variable of teacher-student relationships was assessed with seven different questions on the pre and post surveys. The difference between both surveys mean scores was positive for all teachers, grade levels and experience levels. Analysis of teacher and student mean scores reflect the perspective that students in all grade levels felt positive about student-teacher relationships on campus. However, sixth grade students felt a more positive connection with their teachers than their seventh and eighth grade peers. This particular grade level also had the teachers with the most Tribes experience.

Table 12 represents the mean scores and standard deviation for the pre survey and post survey for teachers and students. The difference between the pre survey and the post survey mean scores was positive for both teachers and students in all grade levels. The standard deviation proves to be relatively small in comparison between pre and post surveys for both teachers and students. Analysis of teacher and student mean scores reflect the view that teachers felt more positive about teacher-student relationships than their students. Nonetheless, the table shows how favorable students and teachers believe their relationships are with one another.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistical Data on Student Teacher Relationship

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	Pre Teacher	3.895	8	.124	.043
	Post Teacher	3.96	8	.077	.027
Pair 2	Pre Student	3.560	233	.175	.061
	Post Student	3.727	233	.144	.050

The variable of collaboration was assessed with two different questions on the pre and post surveys. Table 13 represents the mean scores and standard deviation for the pre survey and post survey for both teachers and students. Again, the table shows how concentrated the data due to the fact that the standard deviation is getting smaller between the pre and post survey results. When evaluating the mean scores between both groups, one can conclude that students did not feel as confident as their teachers when they answered questions on the survey relating to collaboration.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistical Data on Collaboration

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	Pre Teacher	3.56	8	.496	.175
	Post Teacher	3.75	8	.378	.134
Pair 2	Pre Student	3.0544	233	.31502	.11138
	Post Student	3.3219	233	.21527	.07611

Research Question Two

How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact student achievement and engagement in class activities?

The variable of student achievement was assessed with two different questions on the pre and post surveys. Table 14 represents the mean scores and standard deviation for all participants that completed the pre and post surveys. Both teachers and students show an increase in the mean scores and a decrease in the standard deviation results reported for the achievement variable.

Table 14

Descriptive Data on Achievement

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	Pre Teacher	3.625	8	.3536	.1250
	Post Teacher	4.00	8	.000	.000
Pair 2	Pre Student	3.0663	233	.26017	.08491
	Post Student	3.3969	233	.24262	.09285

The variable of engagement was assessed with two different questions on the pre and post surveys. Table 15 displays the mean scores and standard deviation for the pre-survey and post survey for teachers and students in relation to the variables of engagement. The teacher group showed a favorable increase in mean scores in contrast to the slight increase in mean scores of the student group. The standard deviation remained the same as in the other tables previously discussed.

Table 15

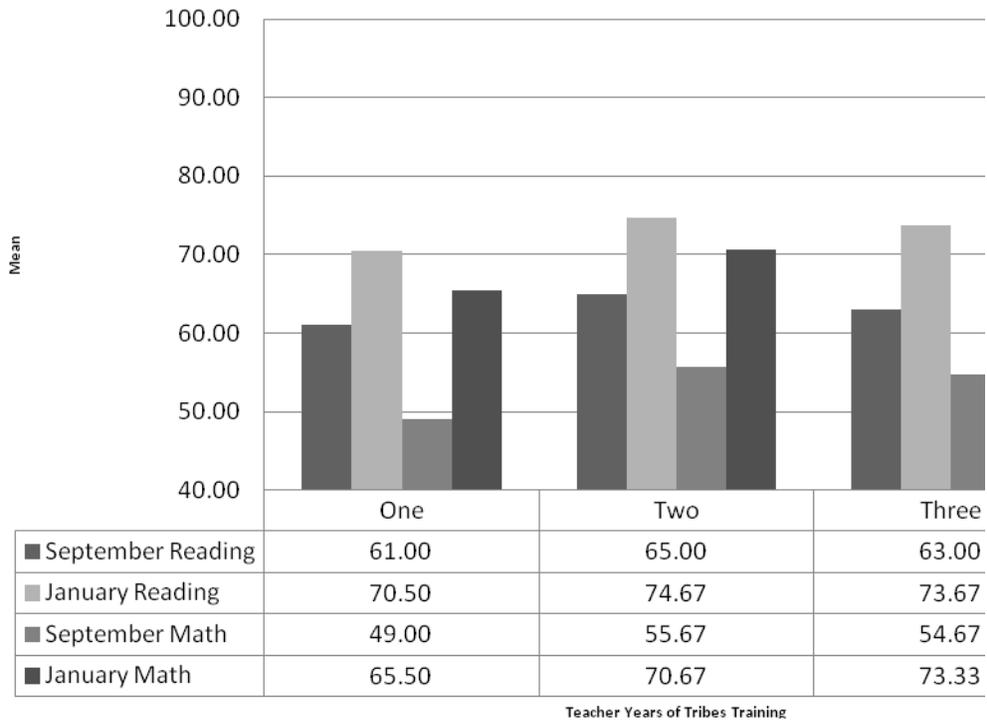
Descriptive Statistical Data on Engagement

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	Pre Teacher	3.56	8	.320	.113
	Post Teacher	3.81	8	.259	.091
Pair 2	Pre Student	3.2600	233	.31530	.11148
	Post Student	3.4513	233	.29578	.10457

Not only was achievement data statistically analyzed using the mean, range, and standard deviation from the questionnaires, local district assessment data and campus report card grades were also taken into account to see if any trends exist to determine whether the Tribes process impacts student achievement.

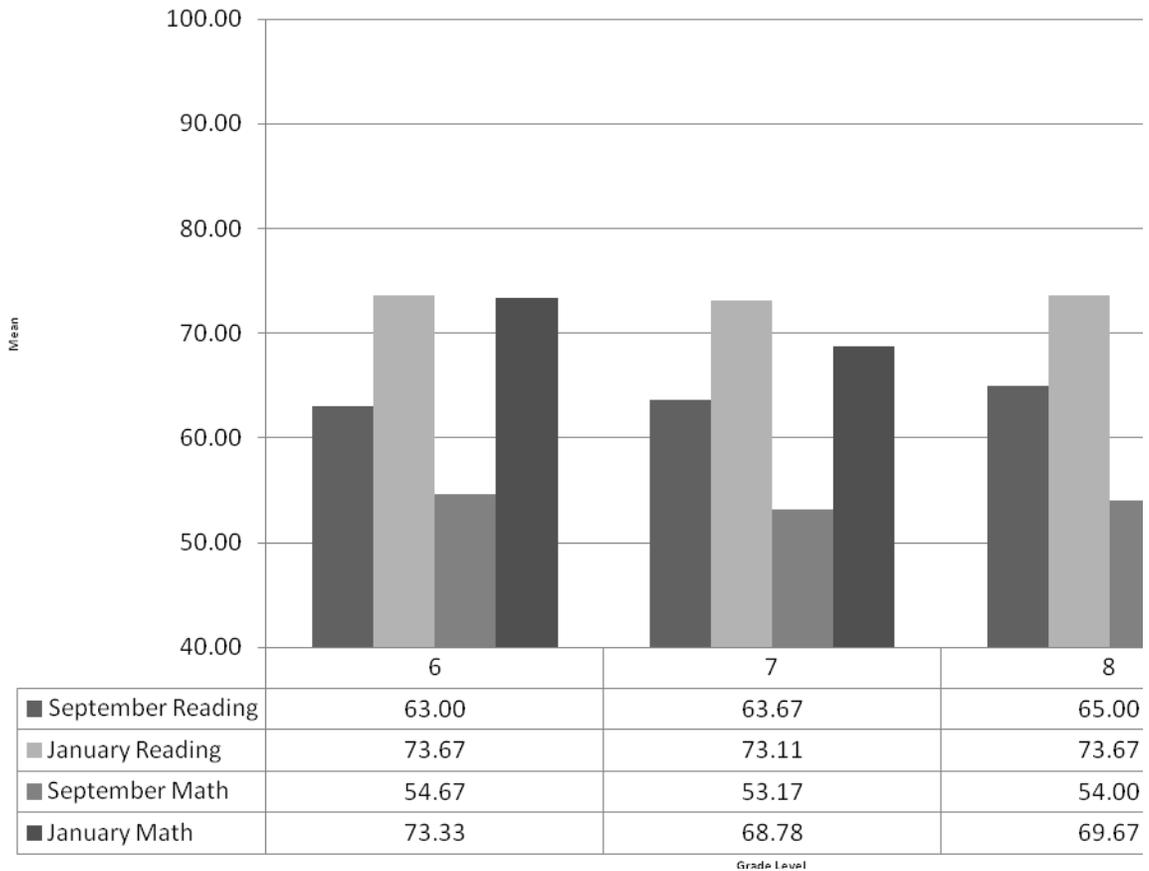
Figures 1 represent the mean scores of local district assessment data that was taken during September and January respectfully. The figure proves, for the subject of math, teachers with the most experience in the Tribes process had a higher percentage than their counterparts. However, that was not the case for the subject of Reading. Teachers with two years experience had a more favorable percentage over their colleagues with one more year of experience. Although all teacher groups show a significant gain between assessment periods, teachers that had less experience with the Tribes process showed an overall lower percentage in their assessment scores.

Figure 1

Teacher Number of Years Tribes Trained vs. Local Assessment Mean

Figures 2 represent the mean scores of local district assessment data by grade level. The grades represented in the figure are 6th, 7th and 8th respectfully. The figure shows, that all grade level mean scores were comparable to one another. All mean scores were within range of each other. Sixth grade students did demonstrate a slightly higher mean score average in comparison to other grade levels.

Figure 2

Grade Level vs. Local Assessment Mean

Report card grades are given to middle school students at the end of each six weeks. Figure 3 represent the report card mean score averages for each teacher according to their years of experience using the Tribes process. Teachers with one year experience had an increase in scores between the 1st and 2nd six weeks and then decreased in scores between the 2nd and 3rd six weeks. Teachers with two years experience had a significant decrease in scores between the 1st and 2nd six weeks and slightly improved during the 3rd

six weeks. Lastly, teachers with three years experience had a fluctuation between scores throughout all three grade periods.

Figure 3

Teacher Number of Years vs. Report Card Mean

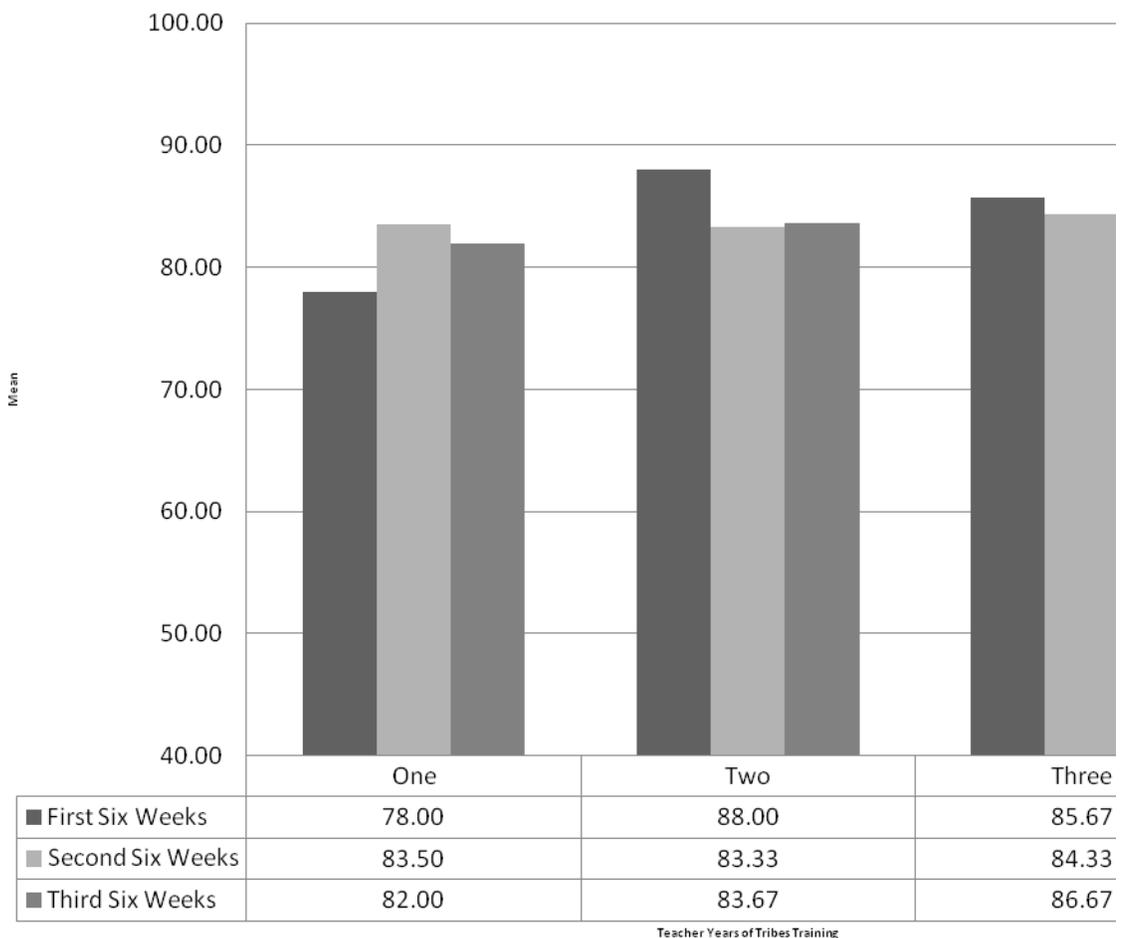
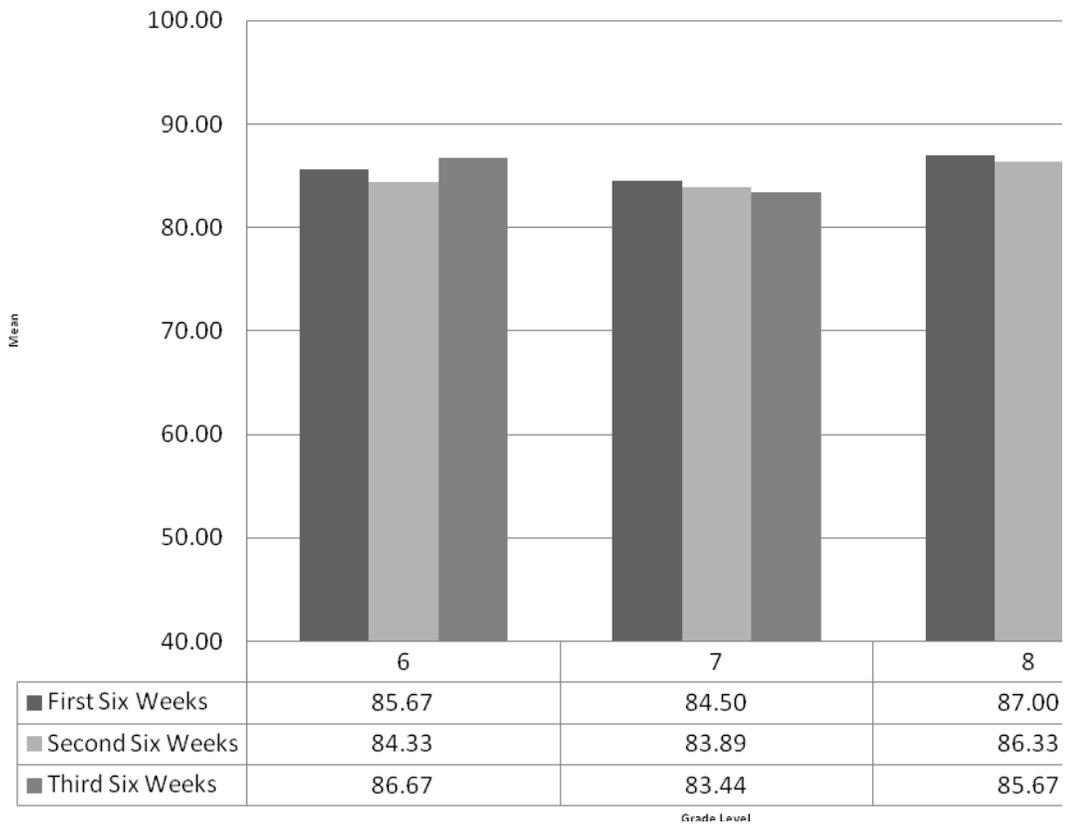


Figure 4 displays the report card mean score by grade level. Although all the scores are closely related to one another, six grade was the only grade level that took a dip and then a slight increase. Nonetheless, seventh and eighth grade took a slight decrease in scores each six weeks.

Figure 4

Grade Level vs. Report Card Mean

Research Question Three

How does the participation and implementation of the TRIBES staff development program impact student discipline, attentiveness and enhance resiliency?

The variable of student discipline was assessed with three different questions on the pre and post surveys. Table 16 represents the mean scores and standard deviation for the pre survey and post survey for teachers and students. An increase in the mean scores

of both teachers and students are evident. It is noteworthy to state that teachers had a much higher perception of their discipline techniques while using the Tribes Process than their students. The standard deviation is significant between the teacher pre and post surveys, student pre and post surveys and between teacher and student pre and post surveys.

Table 16

Descriptive Statistical Data on Discipline

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	Pre Teacher	3.791	8	.172	.060
	Post Teacher	3.92	8	.154	.055
Pair 2	Pre Student	3.195	233	.2228	.0788
	Post Student	3.455	233	.189	.067

The variable of attentiveness was assessed with two different questions on the pre and post surveys. The mean scores and standard deviation for the pre survey and post survey for teachers and students are represented in table #17. Of all the variables questioned, attentiveness is the one theme with the lowest mean score average. As stated earlier these questions were answered by students using the “hardly ever” or “almost never” responses. The table does represent an increase between teacher pre and post surveys as well as with students; however, a significant decrease is noted between teacher responses and that of their students.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistical Data on Attentiveness

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	Pre Teacher	3.500	8	.3780	.1336
	Post Teacher	3.625	8	.3536	.1250
Pair 2	Pre Student	2.8750	233	.21010	.07428
	Post Student	3.3075	233	.17036	.06023

Along with survey questions that related to discipline and attentiveness, teacher referrals of negative student behavior was analyzed throughout the study period.

Between the dates of September 2011 and January 2012, if a teacher had any discipline occurrences in his/her first period classroom, he/she would proceed to document the account and advise an administrator to take proper action.

Figure #5 represents the mean scores of the number of discipline referrals that were documented by teachers according to their years of experience with the Tribes process. Teachers with two years experience showed the most favorable of outcomes in terms of using the Tribes process to defuse situations before they had to be documented and reported. This, in turn, accounts for the increase of resiliency factors students must acquire so that their behavior can be re-directed and learning can continue. Teachers with one year experience steadily decreased while teachers with the most years experience had a significant increase during the second six weeks study period.

Figure 5

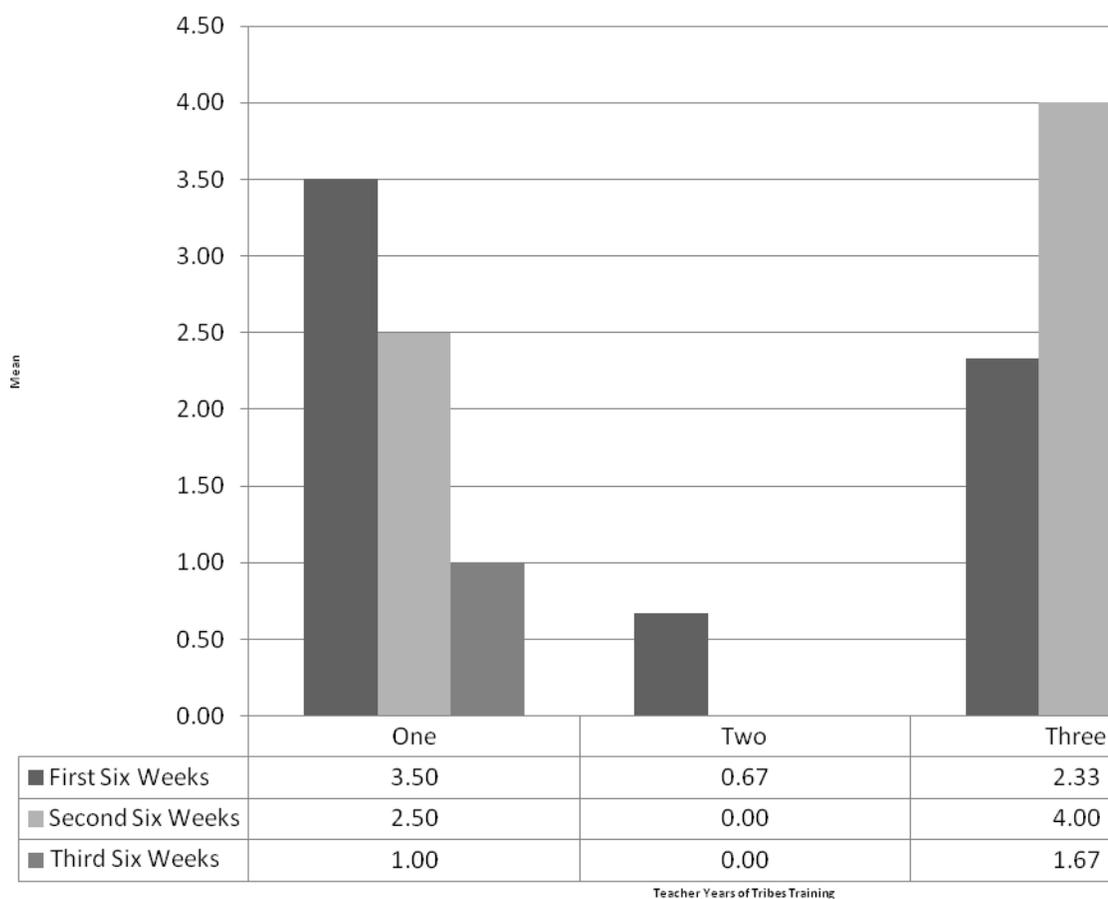
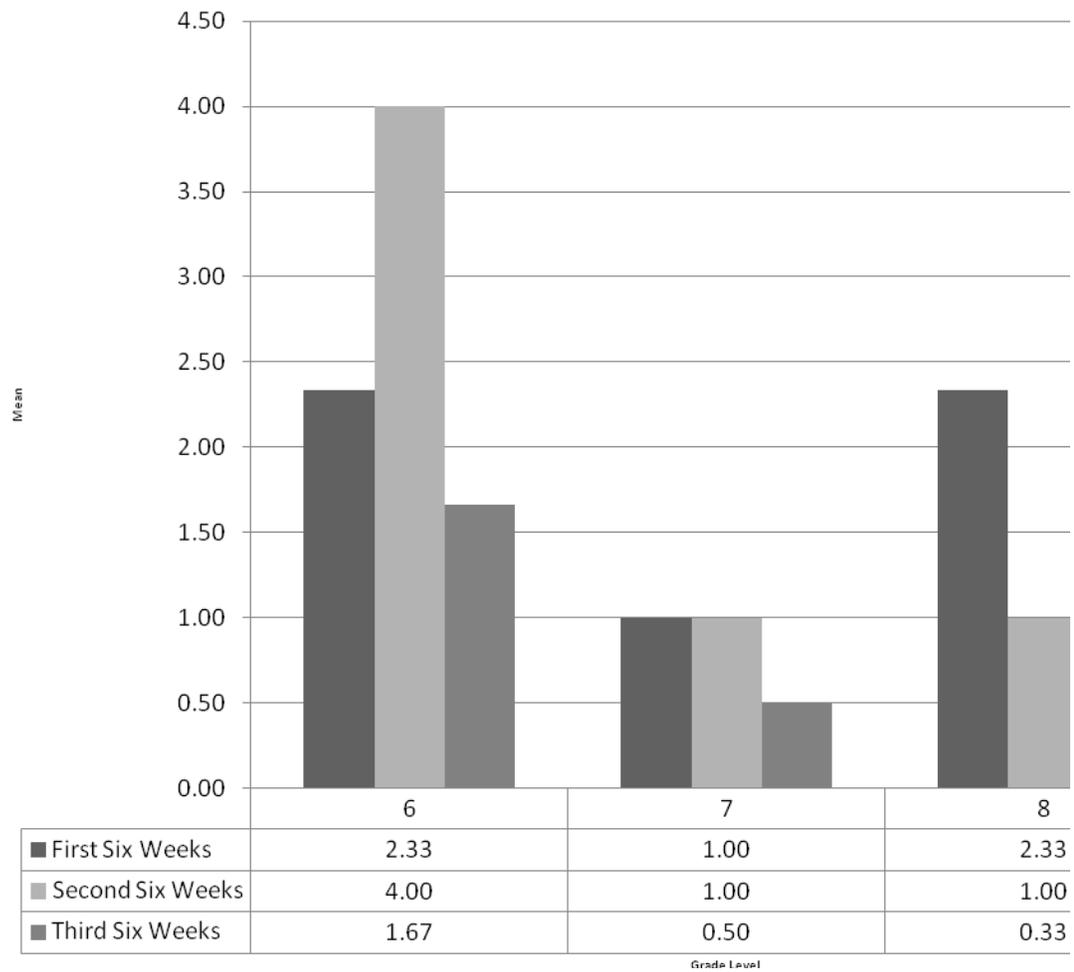
Teacher Number of Years vs. Discipline Referrals

Figure #6 is displayed below. It reflects the mean score of discipline referrals documented by grade level. Seventh and eighth grade teachers showed a significant decrease in documented accounts for behavior, where six grade teachers varied between six week periods.

Figure 6

Grade Level vs. Number of Discipline Referrals

Section II: Qualitative Findings

Review of the Teacher Interviews:

Individual teacher interviews were conducted with all eight of the original teachers in the study. The investigator met the teachers at the middle school campus library and recorded teacher responses and discussions. A copy of the responses to each interview question is provided (Appendix D). The teachers were informed that they would answer a series of questions that related to their experience with the Tribes Process. These questions were:

1. Please explain in your own words the experience you had during Tribes training?
2. Do you feel that the training was beneficial in enhancing your relationship with students?
3. Do you see a correlation between the Tribes process and the increase of your student achievement scores?
4. As you use the Tribes process in your classroom, do you find that you are able to facilitate with less student discipline interruptions?
5. Would you recommend the training and implementation of the Tribes process to your colleagues at another campus? Explain.

In responding to question number 1, (Appendix E), all 8 teachers answered favorably to the question. Examples of the positive responses are, “The experience that I had during Tribes was fulfilling, I was able to plan lessons that are engaging for my

students while allowing them to explore the concepts” and “Tribes training for me was different than other school trainings, it was more interaction between co-workers. The responses were categorized into themes on the expectations the training had for teacher and student academic and social growth. Two teachers focused on the training personally benefiting them while six teachers expressed how the training impacted their professional growth specifically as it relates to having additional resources to improve overall student’s well being.

Question 2, (Appendix F), had seven positive responses and one that was neutral. The seven responses included discussion on how the training taught participants how to build relationships with students while teaching academic content, how the Tribes process not only allows the student-teacher relationship to improve but also encourages the development of positive student-student relationships, and relationships cultivated through trust and respect. The neutral response expressed that it was too early to tell if lasting relationships were being established due to the time frame of the study.

In reviewing question 3, (Appendix G), four teachers responded optimistically on how there is a correlation on implementing the Tribes process and an increase in student achievement. Examples of their responses are, but not limited to, “The students tend to retain the information better and therefore apply it to the standardized test” along with “I have noticed that through the relationships that I have built and maintained with my students while using Tribes activities that my students want to achieve greatness and are performing at a higher level”, and “Tribes encourages learning through relationships and ..., they want to listen to what you have to say and learn the concept being taught.

Neutral responses were expressed by three teachers, examples include, “It depends on the

concept being taught”, and “I see an increase on daily assignments but not yet on major exams”. Another teacher expressed, “At this point, I can’t really say. I do know that it has shown an increase in the quality and the amount of work that is completed and turned in on time.”

Question 4, (Appendix H) dealt with the issue on how the Tribes process affects the classroom climate. Teachers expressed that for the most part, the Tribes process reduces the amount of distractions due to student involvement in meaningful activities. The consistency of the use along with the gentle reminders of the Tribes agreements encourage students to stay on task. Nonetheless, teachers did convey that disruptive situations do arise, in those instances teachers stated, “...students who are disruptions are overlooked by the students who are engaged in their lessons.” Another teacher added, “...it depends on the Tribes activity chosen. Some activities can get very loud and personalities clash.” This is a direct indication that the Tribes process helps with the decrease of discipline interruptions and provides teachers with resources to defuse situations in a timely manner that does not take away from instruction.

Lastly, question 5, (Appendix I) was asked to give insight if the Tribes process would benefit other middle school campuses. If all teachers interviewed would have been in the same room at the same time, there would have been a unanimous, “Yes”. All teachers stated in their own ways how the Tribes process can enable a school to deliver academic and social content in an innovative way. One teacher stated, “Everyone feels included, everyone is respected for their differences, and there is a high positive expectation for participation and achievement.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents a summary of the procedures and outcomes of the study. The following section presents conclusions as a result of the data as well as the literature review. Lastly, section three encompasses recommendations for future practices with educators and recommendations for future research.

The classroom teacher has a huge impact on whether or not students will engage in the learning that is presented each day and respond collaboratively with each other. The relationships that are customary between students and the teacher are important in securing students' engagement and impacting their achievement (Wehlage & Smith, 1992). The classroom climate that promotes collaboration between students has a high potential for achieving academic success. Teachers have the power to create atmospheres that nurture and establish mutual respect that enhance the academic and social learning opportunities for students. Educational leaders should not disregard the importance of creating positive student-teacher interactions as a means to increase student achievement and decrease disruptive encounters in the classroom.

The findings of this study produced data that will benefit educational leaders across districts by allowing them to review the impact of the implementation of the Tribes Learning Community Process as a means of providing teachers with the necessary training to establish a more positive and production classroom atmosphere. Jeanne

Gibbs, the founder of Tribes and the Tribes trainers across the nation may also use data produced from this study to enhance activities and strategies during teacher trainings.

Summary

More than three decades ago, researchers began to study what makes an effective teacher. Brophy and Evertson (1976) concluded that effective teachers were those who demonstrated a genuine interest in all their students. Classrooms that achieve higher levels of academic success are those that have teachers who can effortlessly develop trust and rapport with their students (Rodgers & Renard, 1999). Students are highly motivated when they believe teachers will treat them how they want to be treated and take interest in them as a whole child. The research by Rodgers and Renard showed that students were more focused on reaching their academic and social goals when they believed that their teachers were involved beyond their first name.

Summary of Procedures

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Tribes Learning Communities Process on teacher-student classroom relationships, student achievement, and student discipline. A secondary purpose was to determine the effectiveness in the use of the process in guiding teachers in developing positive and nurturing relationships with their students. The research was designed to measure teacher perceptions of selective variables within their classrooms and to measure students' perceptions of the same variables within the same classroom. A pre and post survey questionnaire was administered to both teachers and students between the months of September 2011 and January 2012. At the end of the study period, teacher interviews

were conducted to finalize thoughts on the Tribes process as it related to enhancing student academic and social success.

The variables of teacher-student relationships, student achievement and student discipline were identified as the focus of the research questions. All variables were expanded to include collaboration as it relates to teacher-student relationships, engagement as it relates to student achievement, along with resiliency and attentiveness as it relates to student discipline. Joe Steele (1969) and The Gallop Student Poll (2001) created questionnaires that guided the questions in the development of the survey instrument used in this study. Eight teachers from a selective urban middle school in Houston, Texas who attended the Tribes Learning Communities training in the summer months of 2009, 2010, and 2011 volunteered to participate in the study. Students in grades six through eight were chosen to participate if they were in the first period class of the teacher who volunteered to participate. Since teachers attended the training throughout various summers and students were selected from each grade, the majority of the data was categorized in three sections: All teachers/All students, Teachers' years of experience using the Tribes Process and Grade level. The intent of the research was to determine if perceptions of the identified variables improved with the consistent use of the program. The data was gathered throughout the 2011-2012 academic school year and analyzed within the same year.

Summary of Findings

The Tribes Process intends to train teachers to build a cohesive relationship with their students while enhancing the academic and social performance. In reviewing the core beliefs of the process, Tribes has a positive impact on the classroom environment and helps teachers cultivate a collegial relationship with students that promote academic and social growth (Gibbs, 2006). The study conducted aimed to demonstrate just that. Data was collected through the analysis of surveys, local assessment scores, report card grades, discipline referrals, and teacher interviews.

A seventeen question pre and post survey instrument was given to both teachers and students at the beginning and end of the study period. Questions were centered around 6 themes teacher-student relationships, collaboration, student achievement, engagement, student discipline, and attentiveness. The survey, as a whole, showed an overall increase in the mean scores for all theme variable questions asked to both teachers and students. Nevertheless, when one compares the teacher group to the student group a decrease of mean scores was evident for each collection of questions asked. Teacher-student relationships was the one theme that both teachers and students responded most favorable to. Students demonstrated a significant increase in the mean scores for the variable of teacher student relationships. These results are also in conjunction with the interview questions that were asked in relation to the Tribes process and the enhancement of relationships in the classroom. The majority of all teachers interviewed stated that the Tribes process does contribute to the building of positive student teacher relationships. The theme that was responded to less favorably was that of attentiveness. Between the responses of the teacher surveys compared to students in the area of attentiveness, a

significant decrease in the mean scores was evident. Those teachers that had the most teaching experience using the Tribes process, had the most favorable responses overall as did the students of the sixth grade. Sixth grade students that participated in the study were taught by teachers that had the most experience using the Tribes process.

Local assessment mean scores showed an increase overall between the exam given in September compared to the one given in January. Although all teacher groups show an increase amid assessment periods, teachers that had less experience with the Tribes process showed an overall lower percentage in their mean assessment scores.

Report card grades showed the most ironic data. One would think that as each grade period proceeds, students acquire and retain knowledge in a chronological type order and increase their success as time passes. However, students did not show progress in grades between each marking period. Student mean average scores changed from one six weeks to the next regardless of teacher's years of experience with the Tribes Process. Also, teachers who taught seventh and eighth graders had a slight drop in average mean scores in each marking period. This denotes a negative correlation between the survey questions related to the variable of student achievement and the actual achievement students displayed during each marking period assessed. This data contradicts, for the most part, the information that teachers provided during their interview in February in regards to the Tribes process impacting student achievement. Many of the teachers stated that they saw an increase in student achievement and that the process stimulates the learning that carries over into classroom activities and assessments. The teachers' statements coincide with Marge Scherer's thoughts, teachers that go out of their way to compliment positive behaviors, show an interest in students' lives outside school, listen to students'

perspectives are the key actors in helping their students meet high academic expectations (Scherer, 2006)

Student behavior in comparison with the survey and actual discipline referrals documented was not parallel. Survey mean scores for sixth grade teachers and students were much higher than their counterparts; nonetheless, sixth grade had the highest documented and reported discipline accounts among all three grade levels. During the interview, teachers spoke highly of the Tribes process as it related to the topic of discipline. Although the overall number of referrals was small, this is a clear indication that Tribes is not the answer to eliminate negative student behaviors. On the contrary, Tribes is used to resolve situations before they escalated into something more serious. The research on the Tribes process along with the research outcomes of Boynton and Boynton (2005), proves developing positive teacher-student relationships is one of the most effective steps a teacher can take to establish a proactive discipline climate in the classroom.

The interpretation of these differences cannot be directly related to the mission of the Tribes Learning Community process. Since all teachers were self-governing agents within their own classrooms, there was no level of accounting for the differences in levels of implementation, teachers' knowledge of the content being taught, teacher's reactions to stressful situations, and teacher consistencies with the Tribes process strategies and goals. The lack of standardized implementation procedures to ensure that all teachers were implementing the process correctly can account for some inconsistency of the data between the survey, teacher interviews, and student products.

Conclusions

Although there are oddities in the study along with limitations caused by a variety of circumstances, a firm conclusion is difficult to reach. However, some interpretations may be uncovered from the study's findings, which in turn will provide a foundation for future research:

1. It seems likely that the benefit of the Tribes process is to some degree a function of not only student maturity but teacher maturity as well. Establishing bonds of trust with unfamiliar adults and peers in order to work together collaboratively to complete assignments and projects does not come naturally. Survey data and responses indicated that the more exposure students and teachers had with the Tribes process the most successful academically and socially the students were.
2. The goal of the Tribes process is to equip teachers with the necessary skills to build better relationships with students in order to enhance not only academic achievement but social well being as well. In doing this, teachers are taught strategies that are very different than traditional methods of teaching in middle school. This all takes time not only to learn but also to implement. The factor of time, at times, casts a shadow on how well teachers implement the strategies of Tribes. With over approximately 50 strategies that are demonstrated during the summer training and over 100 strategies provided in the Tribes book, it is nearly impossible to fully implement all new strategies throughout the course of one academic

school year. Teachers need more time to develop their own understanding of the training and thus make it their own.

3. This new way of learning may not be what all students want. Many students have become so ingrained in being compliant with traditional teaching methods; some students have a hard time adapting to collaborating, participating, trusting one another, etc. Teachers and students need to find a middle ground before making conclusions that the Tribes process works or not. This again, takes time, energy, and commitment from all parties involved.

This falls in line with what researchers have attested too for decades. Again, Carol Cummings (2000) informs us through her book entitled *Winning Strategies for Classroom Management*: “If we understand the child, then we are equipped to make appropriate decisions. We need to change our approach, not the child” (Pgs. 76-81).

Recommendations

The following recommendations for practice are offered for consideration based upon the findings and conclusions of this study:

1. Continue the use of the Tribes Learning Communities process training at the current middle school and other campuses as a means of providing teachers resources for developing stronger relationships with students.
2. Provide follow-up training through-out the year so that teachers can stay up to date on Tribes goals and philosophies. The follow-up trainings can help

teachers regroup and discuss what's going well and what they need more assistance on.

3. Provide teachers with the opportunity to see their Tribes trainer along with other colleagues that are successfully implementing the process in an actual classroom setting.

Recommendation for Further Study

The following are recommendations for further research related to this study:

1. Research that replicates the study where all teachers in a school setting are implementing the Tribes process.
2. Longitudinal research that examines students' attitudes to the identified Tribes goals and objectives over the three years spent in a middle school setting.
3. Research that observes and compares other middle school campuses that consistently implements the Tribes process.

In closing, there are a lot of things that we as a nation cannot reach, but for an educator, reaching students each and every day should be our priority. Implementing the Tribes process consistently, may be a stepping stone that guides teachers into reaching in the right direction

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

School Year: 2011-2012

Dear Parents:

During the past two years my goal is to have all staff members at _____ Middle School trained in the process of TRIBES. This program is designed to help teachers better develop their relationships with students as well as build community inclusion and introducing content to students by first involving them in an activity that connects to their previous experiences or interests. This year 15 teachers were trained in the process that adds to the 34 teachers that were trained last year.

As part of a study to see if the TRIBES process is helping teachers and students, we will be asking students in certain teacher's first period classrooms to answer questions on a survey. Students and teachers participating in this study will complete a paper based survey. No one will see their answers nor will the survey ask for their name, ID, or any personal information. No student will be forced to take the survey nor will they be penalized in any way for choosing not to participate.

If you have any questions about this training program or this survey please call the school and someone will be able to answer your questions. If you do not wish for your child to participate, please fill out and return the bottom part of this letter to your child's first period teacher by the end of the week.

Sincerely,

Berky Hernandez-Owolabi

Principal

I do not want my child _____ to participate in the TRIBES survey at _____ Middle School.

Parent Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Teacher Survey

Please circle the response to each sentence that best reflects what you believe is true.

AA	If you believe the statement occurs Almost Always
S	If you believe the statement occurs Sometimes
H	If you believe the statement occurs Hardly Ever
AN	If you believe the statement occurs Almost Never

1. Students in this class are energized and involved with class activities.
AA S H AN
2. Students in this class cooperate positively with one another.
AA S H AN
3. I am able to discipline students without punishment.
AA S H AN
4. I know each of my student's need to be successful in class.
AA S H AN
5. I am able to make positive connections with each of my students.
AA S H AN
6. Students in my class follow all TRIBES agreements.
AA S H AN
7. Creating is a major part of learning in my class.
AA S H AN
8. Students in my class complete their work to the best of their ability.
AA S H AN
9. I am able to teach class with minimal interruptions from students.
AA S H AN
10. I am able to establish trust with each of my students.
AA S H AN
11. Students in my class work together to complete assignments.
AA S H AN
12. Student in my class are expected to help each other follow classroom expectations. AA S H AN
13. As a teacher I display positive attitudes towards my students.
AA S H AN
14. Students in my class are able to explain and describe the lesson for the day.
AA S H AN
15. Students in my class are able to focus on learning.
AA S H AN
16. Students in my class interact positively with me.
AA S H AN
17. I have a good relationship with my students.
AA S H AN

APPENDIX C

Student Survey

Please circle the response to each sentence that best reflects what you believe is true.

AA	If you believe the statement occurs Almost Always
S	If you believe the statement occurs Sometimes
H	If you believe the statement occurs Hardly Ever
AN	If you believe the statement occurs Almost Never

1. Students in this class are energized and involved with class activities.
AA S H AN
2. Students in this class cooperate positively with one another.
AA S H AN
3. My teacher is able to discipline students without punishment.
AA S H AN
4. My teacher knows each student's needs to be successful in class.
AA S H AN
5. My teacher is able to make positive connections with each student.
AA S H AN
6. Students in this class follow all TRIBES agreements.
AA S H AN
7. Creating is a major part of learning in this class.
AA S H AN
8. Students in this class complete their work to the best of their ability.
AA S H AN
9. My teacher is able to teach class with minimal interruptions from students.
AA S H AN
10. I trust my teacher.
AA S H AN
11. Students in this class work together to complete assignments.
AA S H AN
12. Student in this class are expected to help each other follow classroom expectations. AA S H AN
13. My teacher displays a positive attitude in class.
AA S H AN
14. Students in this class are able to explain and describe the lesson for the day.
AA S H AN
15. Students in this class are focused on learning.
AA S H AN
16. Students in this class interact positively with the teacher.
AA S H AN
17. I have a good relationship with my teacher.
AA S H AN

APPENDIX D

Teacher Interview Questions

- ✓ Please explain in your own words the experience you had during TRIBES training?

- ✓ Do you feel that the training was beneficial in enhancing your relationship with students?

- ✓ Do you see a correlation between the TRIBES process and the increase of your student achievement scores?

- ✓ As you use the TRIBES process in your classroom, do you find that you are able to facilitate instruction with less student discipline interruptions?

- ✓ Would you recommend the training and implementation of the TRIBES process to your colleagues at another campus? Explain.

APPENDIX E

Transcript of Teacher Responses to Interview Question #1

Interviewer: Please explain in your own words the experience you had during TRIBES training?

Teacher A: My experience with Tribes has been great! The four main components of Tribes (attentive listening, no put downs, the right to pass, and mutual respect) are not only setting a pathway for our kids to be successful in a school setting but it also teaches them how to collaborate successfully in a group setting.

Teacher B: TRIBES' training was very enlightening and informative, I had not even experienced learning in that matter and it was surprisingly refreshing.

Teacher C: Tribes training was a way for me to get to know my team and other staff members that I usually don't see or talk to on a daily basis. The training gave me a lot of ideas on what I can do to progress as a teacher.

Teacher D: It was very informative. I learned a lot of new strategies that were great for building relationships in my classroom. I found them really good but I haven't yet found a way to incorporate many of them into my classroom routine for academic lessons.

Teacher E: I enjoyed TRIBES training because it opened my eyes to a variety of opportunities for me and my students. I was already using a combination of strategies in my class, and TRIBES simply added additional tools for my toolbox. It also confirmed that building relationships with all students is vital.

Teacher F: Tribes training for me were different than other school trainings it was more interaction between co-workers. There was an abundance of activities and materials that I could take back into my classroom.

Teacher G: The experience that I had during Tribes was fulfilling, I was able to plan lessons that are engaging for my students while allowing them to explore the concepts. Becoming more of a facilitator and allowing my plans to be student centered are critical elements that I learned during TRIBES training. The training helped further my development in areas of collaboration, exploration, and motivation dedicated to my students and their success.

Teacher H: I liked it. It had a lot of interesting ways on how you can get to know your kids; I still use a lot of what I was taught three years ago.

APPENDIX F

Transcript of Teacher Responses to Interview Question #2

Interviewer: Do you feel that the training was beneficial in enhancing our relationship with students?

Teacher A: Yes.

Teacher B: Yes, the training taught me how to build relationships with my student while teaching math concepts. It also showed me ways to learn personal things about my students in order to teach them on more personal bases.

Teacher C: Absolutely! The training gave positive and descriptive activities that were modeled. We practiced with each other which helped me remember what to do when I got into the classroom.

Teacher D: Yes. I feel that the principles of Tribes is very beneficial to building relationships with the students. I have seen the benefits of this over and over with students choosing their words and behaviors more wisely in my presence.

Teacher E: Yes, it was extremely beneficial. I already made it a priority to build relationships with my students; so again, this gave me additional resources and methods to use. Not only does it allow my relationship with my students to improve, but it helps with their relationships with one another as well.

Teacher F: My Tribes training was beneficial in enhancing my relationships with my students because it gave both the students and myself the chance to step out of the traditional role and teacher and student.

Teacher G: The training was beneficial because it allowed the opportunity for my students and I to build our relationship while applying concepts from the TEKS to activities that promote learning. My students and I continue to have a successful relationship that is based on nurture, trust, and respect.

Teacher H: I don't know it is too early to tell if lasting relationships are going to be established

APPENDIX G

Transcript of Teacher Responses to Interview Question #3

Interviewer: Do you see a correlation between the Tribes process and the increase of your student achievement scores?

Teacher A: Yes. These two factors are definitely positively correlated.

Teacher B: Yes, because TRIBES encourages learning through relationships and after building a relationship with your students, they want to listen to what you have to say and learn the concept being taught.

Teacher C: I don't know if I can answer that at this time. Maybe comparing this year's scores to students next year, I can make a better determination.

Teacher D: I think there is a correlation between Tribes and increasing student's achievement scores. The students are better prepared to understand what active listening is so that they can do it better when they are learning. They also try harder to understand and show mutual respect in their interactions which in turn helps a lot in the classroom to have the kids learn more.

Teacher E: At this point, I can't really say. I do know that it has shown an increase in the quality and the amount of work that is completed and turned in on time. Students take more pride in their work and have somewhat of a desire to complete the assignments and activities.

Teacher F: Yes, Tribes allows the students to be more engaged in what they are learning. They tend to take learning more serious when they are involved in meaningful activities. The students tend to retain the information better and therefore apply it to the standardized test.

Teacher G: I have noticed that through the relationships that I have built and maintained with my students using TRIBES activities that my students want to achieve greatness and are performing at a higher level.

Teacher H: It depends on the concept being taught. In the beginning of the year we were reviewing and everyone was on target, but then when new concepts came into play it was a struggle even when using Tribes.

APPENDIX H

Transcript of Teacher Responses to Interview Question #4

Interviewer: As you use the Tribes process in your classroom, do you find that you are able to facilitate instruction with less student discipline interruptions?

Teacher A: Yes.

Teacher B: Sometimes, it depends on the TRIBES activity chosen. Some of the activities can get very loud and personality clashing.

Teacher C: Yes, I believe that the training on how to make the activities more engaging results in more students working because the lesson is fun, rather than being bored and getting into trouble.

Teacher D: Yes. Tribe's activities give the students a chance to unwind from the normal routine of class work. It gives them a way to interact and build better relationships and in turn relax them a little more for when they have to do the actual class work.

Teacher E: Yes, for the most part I am able to facilitate instruction because I ensure that we all follow the agreements. Prior to beginning any activity, I try to remind the class about the TRIBES agreements. We are all accountable for enforcing the agreements. They remind me as much as I remind them.

Teacher F: Yes because the students are engaged. They are enjoying what they are doing. When my students are having fun and learning they are less likely to get in trouble, because they want to continue with their activities.

Teacher G: There is less discipline issues because through the process my students are engaged in activities and really don't have time to become disruptions, students who are disruptions are overlooked by the students who are engaged in their lessons.

Teacher H: I do tend to repeat the Tribes agreements many times throughout the class period, but they redirect themselves pretty quickly after that.

APPENDIX I

Transcript of Teacher Responses to Interview Question #5

Interviewer: Would you recommend the training and implementation of the Tribes process to your colleagues at another campus? Explain.

Teacher A: Yes. It helps ease the tensions that most teachers face each in and every day in the classroom. It sets a great foundation for classroom management.

Teacher B: Yes, this is a wonderful tool that can be used in successfully educating your students and building well rounded personalities.

Teacher C: I would like to see all the schools in the district trained in Tribes and that all our trainings have activities that we can bring back and use immediately as I experienced during my Tribes training.

Teacher D: Yes, I would. I have seen a difference in the kids that have been taught the Tribes way that I have not seen in kids that have not been taught it. I think it is good for kids to be taught those characteristics because some of the kids never really learn those characteristics unless someone tells them.

Teacher E: Yes, I would because many times teachers find themselves at a loss for activities or ways to reach their students. If everyone is equipped with this training, it would improve each and every campus in our district. Also, since we have students who transfer often within the district, the culture has already been created throughout the district.

Teacher F: I would because tribes create a positive, safe learning environment for students and teachers. Tribe's enables schools to deliver curriculum content in an active and student centered manner. For example, everyone feels included and appreciated everyone is respected for their differences, no matter what culture beliefs they hold and there are high positive expectations for participation and achievement.

Teacher G: I would recommend the training and implementation for other campuses, basing our lessons off of student centered learning and becoming facilitators in order to help our student achievement. Building relationships is also important in our student achievement and TRIBES implements and focuses on that aspect to help make everyone involved in the process better.

Teacher H: Yes, it really would help set the tone of the school starting from the beginning of the year. I believe that all schools should embark in an endeavor that promotes the development of building positive relationships with students.

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