EFFECTS OF THE CONTINUUM OF LEARNING THROUGH LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS ON STUDENT SUCCESS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in elementary grades. This study gathered the perceptions of looping teachers, parents, and students. Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with elementary teachers, parents, and students all of whom had been in a looping classroom for at least two years. Data was then triangulated with classroom observations and the examination of artifacts. The basic research design utilized for this study was the phenomenography approach. Individual interviews were conducted with each group of participants where the same open-ended questions were asked and later compared and analyzed. Participants were selected and categorized into four groups- teachers, parents, and students for a total of 12 members. The researcher conducted an intensive literature review where interview questions were developed based on recurring themes within the existing literature.

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences and perspectives of the effects of looping on student success. Qualitative data was examined in detail. The findings suggested that while some disadvantages existed within the looping program, the advantages far outweigh the drawbacks. The results indicated (a) all research participants indicated positive experiences with looping and would most certainly recommend the program to others, (b) staying with the same teacher improved relationships among teachers, parents, and students, (c) looping had a positive effect on student success, academically and emotionally, and (d) looping provided additional time which had a positive effect on instructional support.

Keywords: looping, multi-year teaching, teacher-student relationship
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Dedication

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction and Background

As the accountability continues to grow for today’s educators, the search for effective, innovative teaching strategies is ongoing. While many policies have transformed and curriculum standards have been altered, little has changed in the structure of the American classrooms. In the 1800s, Horace Mann configured the Factory Model of Education. The model was characterized by compulsory attendance, teacher colleges, standardized national tests, national age-graded curriculum, compulsory kindergarten, the fragmenting of concepts into separate subjects with fixed periods of study, and the state ultimately asserting a superior claim to the child over the rights of the parents (Chase, 2015). The model was a radical reform in the education of America and one that continues to exist in most schools today. In short, this was the model which moved schools away from the one-room schoolhouse where students were placed in grade-specific classes and instructors taught a certain set of standards for each grade. With the implementation of this model, students no longer remained with the same teacher for more than one year. While the configuration of many schools remains unaltered, the American education system is now being held more accountable for improving student success than ever before, leaving teachers and administrators continuously looking for new methods to increase student knowledge and success.

According to Mann’s recommendations, teachers were obligated to teach for the mandated 10-month period. After that, students were promoted to the next grade and the next teacher, and teachers inherited a new group of students (Compayre, 1907; Cremin, 1957; Hinsdale, 1898). Much has changed in 200 years, and most schools are still following this plan, leaving teachers with little to no time to get to know their students and target their specific
learning needs. Communities and families have diversified and become much more complex, requiring different needs than those during the 1800's. Unfortunately, in today's society, consistency and stable relationships are absent in the homes of many American students. For those students who cannot go home to a stable support system, school is the most consistent part of their lives and the place they often feel most loved. Because of the time restraints of the traditional one-year classroom, many teachers are left focusing more on curriculum and assessments rather than building relationships with their students and parents.

Thus, some schools have challenged the traditional one-year classroom model by implementing the looping design. Looping, also known as multi-year teaching, is not the same as multi-age placement. In a looping program, a relationship-centered framework is extended over a two-year or longer period. It presents an opportunity that encourages teachers and students to invest in, and perhaps risk, a long-term relationship (Bogart, 2002). Austrian educator and philosopher Rudolf Steiner first endorsed the looping design. In the early 1900's, Steiner founded the Waldorf Schools in Germany. These schools educated the children of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory workers. Steiner believed that a long-term relationship with the teacher was beneficial to children (Lab at Brown University, 1997). Waldorf teachers remained with their students from grades 1-8. Over the years, the model has transformed, and currently Waldorf students and teachers stay together from grades 1-4.

Unfortunately, teachers have often found themselves packing up for the summer just as they have become familiar with their students' learning styles and needs. Relationships and bonds which took all year to form, nurture, and maintain are severed at the end of each academic year. If one were to consider school relationships from a general perspective, parents, teachers, and administrators would have a similar opinion that if children are happy at school, and relate
well to their teacher, they will most likely be more motivated to do well at school. It is often anticipated that teacher-student relationships are the basis for student success. The relationships that teachers develop with their students are significant in a student’s academic growth and overall success. Additionally, the establishment of social relationships can impact effective teaching and accurate evaluation in a classroom (Gablinske, 2014).

Fortunately, there has been various research carried out in this regard. Klem and Connell (2004) illustrated that students with caring and supportive interpersonal relationships in school exhibited more positive academic attitudes and values, along with additional satisfaction with school. These students were also more engaged academically. Hallinan (2008) stated, “Learning is a process that involves cognitive and social psychological dimensions, and both processes should be considered if academic achievement is to be maximized” (p. 271). Previous research also investigated parent opinions. According to Ford (2000), parents showed overwhelming support for looping. When asked if the parents were happy with the looping program, 97% responded that they agreed and 97% of the parents also responded affirmatively when asked if they would enroll their child in a looping program again and if the child benefited academically from being a part of a looping classroom.

According to Bunce (2009), improved teacher-student relationships can be attained by using the looping technique. Looping occurred when a teacher was promoted with their students to the next grade level and stayed with the same group of children for two or three years (Rasmussen, 1998). Various schools used this method to primarily allow students to remain with the same teacher for more than a single year. By utilizing a multi-year cohort teaching practice, students naturally established a stronger and deeper relationship with their teacher. The familiarity established with looping helps to improve students' well-being, motivation, and
academic success (Bogart, 2002). The need for continuity of research on this practice was necessary so that looping could be considered as an alternative, yet effective teaching method to the traditional one-year classroom.

Existing research (Hampton et al., 1997; Lincoln, 2000; Nichols & Nichols, 2002) supported looping as a method of providing a positive, alternative learning environment for students and focused on the social aspect of the method. Looping, however, has both its proponents and opponents. Educational systems differ a great deal in regard to administration, teachers, and student body, which leads to varying teaching procedures and methods within schools and districts. Looping or multi-year teaching, are among these highly-debatable procedures. Supporters of looping often expanded on the practice's simplicity, low-cost efficiency, and easy implementation, along with the many known academic and social advantages. Opponents believed the practice to be too disadvantageous for the benefits to outweigh the drawbacks. Challengers also claimed that while it is beneficial for students to become comfortable with their peers and teachers, it did not provide students with a variety of teaching methods, making it harder to adjust to change. Personality clashes and teacher expertise are other components of the design that were considered disadvantageous. Although little quantitative research existed on the benefits of looping, qualitative research consisted of teacher perspectives that supported the process and indicated that looping had several advantages for both students and teachers (Lab at Brown University, 1997).

**Statement of the Problem**

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, all education stakeholders have been challenged to raise student achievement, and teacher effectiveness. The NCLB legislation established requirements involving highly-qualified teachers, high-stakes
testing, progress monitoring, and meeting the needs of all students. Attempting to respond to such high demands, educators were left to determine which research-based instructional methods would be most effective. During this time of scrutiny, several schools implemented the looping design, thus emphasizing on building stronger teacher-student relationships. Although many factors contribute to student success, Bergin (2009) indicated children's' socio-emotional well-being is critical to school success. While the recent renewed interest in looping has fostered an increasing number of studies examining the effectiveness of structure, most of the research has qualitatively focused on perspectives, rather than quantifying academic achievement. Looping, the classroom practice that builds on attachment and continuity of care, has been examined in the literature, but not practiced in a widespread fashion in the United States. Also, various stakeholders believed looping has not been given adequate attention in teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities (Lab at Brown University, 1997). However, when Tucker (2006) examined the perspectives of parents, teachers, and students who had participated in the looping design, several of the participants reported the experience to be a positive one.

With the increased pressure from members of the federal government, student achievement became a critical concern of educators. Presently, years after the implementation of the NCLB Act, Tennessee educators are still scrutinized closely. In accordance with Tennessee’s accountability system, designed through the state’s waiver from No Child Left Behind, the Tennessee Department of Education categorized schools as either Reward, Priority, or Focus schools based on achievement (TDOE, 2015). Priority schools were those performing at the lowest 5% in the state while focus schools had the largest achievement gaps. Though new textbooks, teacher evaluation processes, assessments, and curriculum standards such as TNReady and Common Core were adopted, a disconnect still existed between teachers and
students. Teachers were challenged to address all curriculum standards in time for end-of-year testing, leaving little time to form relationships with students and parents. It is important to avoid correlating teacher and student success with test scores alone because there are so many other components that define success for students, such as positive and trusting learning environments. The constant change of teachers and classmates from year to year could make it difficult to form lasting relationships and cohesion. Long-term teacher-student relationships are imperative for numerous reasons. However, student success could be the primary incentive. Teachers who participated in looping taught and directed students academically while helping these students personally and socially. Teachers who were willing to invest time in developing relationships were successful in creating effective learning environments (Noddings, 2002). Bogart (2002) concluded that teacher-student relationships, communication, and academic performance could be significantly improved when looping is utilized. Such relationships were healthier, more positive, and fostered improved academic and social experiences. When a sense of community and partnership was created between the teachers, parents, and students, all were set to gain in a myriad of ways, and the results were positive and conducive to constructive learning outcomes. All children and young teens in the American education system deserve a seamless school experience as rich and supportive as the one offered by schools with multi-year relationships.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of looping on student success through the analysis of teacher, parent, and student perspectives. While most accountability falls on the classroom teacher, parents and students are also pivotal to positive school experiences. As a result, it was important to investigate the perspectives of those involved in the looping
design. To understand the experience conceptually, the researcher investigated the perspectives of teachers and parents who had participated in the looping design. Through interviews, themes were identified to analyze the impacts of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on the academic success of elementary students. Using this type of research allowed the researcher to explore and validate the impact of looping on the experiences of elementary students. This study was designed to benefit elementary education stakeholders in Tennessee. Minkel (2015) indicated that the looping design is more frequently implemented in lower grades. Additionally, Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos (2017) suggested that early educational environments are influential in student development and teacher-student relationships in which children's' most meaningful learning occurs through positive and supportive relationships with caring and nurturing adults.

**Research Question**

The following research question was designed to guide the investigation and provide data for educators examining the impact looping has on the learning experience of elementary students:

1. What are the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in elementary grades?

**Rationale**

In today's shifted society, it is important for school systems to adequately train and prepare students for their next step in life, even at an elementary level. To be successful, it is essential for learning environments to be consistent and structured. To ensure this continuity, some schools have chosen to practice a multi-year teaching method known as looping. While the practice has been utilized intermittently with some education systems since the 1800's, little
research exists on its impact on students' academic success. Therefore, the need to add to the existing literature is in high demand. To contribute to this literature, the researcher collected and analyzed teacher and parent perspectives on the impact of looping on success of elementary students. Researching both the teacher's and parent's perspective of learning and teaching was rewarding and insightful. Teaching does not consist of one unified form or method, but frameworks of experience and practical knowledge. Educators may even believe that effective teaching is like a patchwork quilt, made up of several different pieces, but when used correctly can create a beautiful final product. Different strategies are needed to effectively research various types of learners. Educators typically refer to this as differentiation. While teachers must adhere to state-mandated policies and standards, they are often left to find other methods to achieve optimal student success along with meeting the physiological needs of their students. Additionally, parents are expected to be active participants in their student's learning. But, how often are their experiences considered during the decision-making process? Analyzing the perspectives of teachers and parents in regard to the enriched academic impact of looping offered more insight on the teaching design.

The looping practice has provided some of the following opportunities: the ability to develop stronger relationships between all those involved, decrease back-to-school anxiety, allow teachers the time to accommodate varying student needs, improve communication, and avoid the loss of instructional time at the beginning of the second year. Klem (2004) detailed that student engagement and improved relationships were easier to achieve with looping. According to Krogmann (2000), multi-year teaching was beneficial to all of those involved—students, teachers, and parents. Long-term relationships and their effectiveness were also studied by Brown University (1997), and this qualitative research noted several advantages for both
students and teachers.

Being able to provide stakeholders with adequate research on the looping design and how it impacts academic success in elementary students could influence the decision-making process of current educational stakeholders in regard to teaching designs. Because both teachers and parents are fundamental figures in a child's education, this investigation centered on those figures. Education stakeholders believe the implementation of the looping practice would provide teachers with the opportunity to better familiarize themselves with the family of the student, thus creating a stronger sense of community and trust between the school and families. Because the parents would have been discussing their child's improvement and needs with the teacher throughout the year, they would have become comfortable in talking with the teacher and in working alongside with him/her for their child's benefit. Not having to adjust to different teacher's methods each year could be of great benefit for all involved. Hara (1996) discussed that looping created positive, improved and more structured parental involvement, which ultimately benefited the student.

**Significance to Researcher**

Teacher-student relationships are important. However, student success should always be the primary objective for any educator. Student success could include strong retention and high-quality learning. For students to be successful, they must prepare in their civic, personal, and academic lives. To readily prepare students, the teacher should instill values and behaviors that contribute to the students' personal development. As an elementary math teacher, the researcher had first-hand experience with the problem of not being able to establish long-term relationships with neither students nor parents due to those students being promoted and moving on to the next teacher the following year. After formulating and maintaining relationships over the course of
the academic year, the bonds and relationships abruptly ended with each school calendar year. Students and parents progressed and the teacher received a new incoming group of students at the beginning of each school year. Thus, the researcher had frequently experienced the loss of instructional time at the beginning of each academic year in hopes of formulating a more positive and deeper relationship with the elementary students enrolled in her class. Weeks were spent instructing students on policies, procedures, and expectations. With teacher accountability being at an all-time high, the protection of this instructional time was viable. Because instructional time was so important, the researcher often emphasized testing and curriculum development rather than focusing on the development of relationships with students. Additionally, as an elementary math teacher with classrooms containing students of varying ability levels, the researcher often observed students performing at a lower academic level than expected due to the absence of a consistent environment. Each year an increasing number of students come to school seeking attachment, positive relationships, and to simply be loved. Educators are frequently relied on to play the role of mom, dad, counselor, and teacher.

At the beginning of the 2015 school year, the researcher commenced her 6th year as a teacher. As always, the researcher was excited to meet a new group of students; however, she was likely just as nervous and anxious as the students. Back-to-school anxiety often flooded the campus those first few weeks of returning to school. During the first week of school, it was not unusual to see the familiar faces which made up the classes from the year before, but this year was different. The researcher questioned, "Did I get to know those kids?" "What could I do differently to improve teacher-student relationships in my class?" "Could having a better relationship with them improved their overall success?" "Would contacting the parents more frequently had more of an influence on them to be more involved in their child's learning thus
improving student achievement?" Prior to this time, the majority of students enrolled in the researcher's class had always been proficient or advanced, but for some reason those not reaching grade-level proficiency levels that year resonated within. Determined to get to know these students better, the researcher spent an entire week on "Getting to Know You" activities, contributed more time to parent conferences, and yet the researcher did not believe, at the conclusion of the year, that meaningful relationships had been developed with students and their families. The researcher believed relationships were severed when specific learning needs were finally discovered and targeted. Subsequently, the researcher decided to dedicate her study to looping. The researcher sought to examine the perspectives of those with looping experience to provide a research-based analysis on the impact the classroom design on the academic success of elementary students.

**Definition of Terms**

To understand the key terms used in the study, the following are defined:

1. **Looping** - "Looping" is an essentially simple concept: a teacher moves with his or her students to the next grade level, rather than sending them to another teacher at the end of the school year (Grant et al., 1996).

2. **Multi-year teaching** - Multi-year teaching or multi-year placement occurs when a teacher is promoted with her students to the next grade level and stays with the same group of children for two or three years (Rasmussen, 1998).

3. **Academic Self-Efficacy** - Academic self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief (conviction) that he/she can successfully achieve at a designated level on an academic task or attain a specific academic goal (Bandura, 1997; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).
Summary

Looping can be dated all the way back to the one-room schoolhouse. Over time, the practice has been introduced in various forms, such as consistent groups, multi-year teaching, team-small-group-plans, and the historical one-room school. However, the research on looping and its effects are minimal, and therefore this study was beneficial for the addition of literature on the topic. In this chapter, a description of looping and its many benefits have been presented. Historical connections were made linking the looping practice to its predecessors.

This study was concerned with relationships formed during the looping process and its impact on academic success in elementary students, according to the perspectives of teachers and parents with experience with the looping practice. According to existing literature, results of looping were generally positive, and most participants reported a good experience with looping. However not all participants encounter a good experience with multi-year teaching. While the various advantages that can be gained from looping have been highlighted, unfortunately, looping is still a rather uncommon practice in most schools in the United States. Despite the overwhelming number of factors that are positively associated with the looping practice, further research is needed to study the effects of the looping design in elementary public education. The qualitative research conducted herein has continued to explore these effects, thus adding to the existing literature.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

Advocates of education reforms are continuously seeking ways to restructure the academic system to meet educational needs of students. Studies contend that most elementary students fail academically due to lack of motivation. Thus, most reforms are focused on elementary schools (Gregory, 2009). The elementary school offers a critical environment for children to be motivated and nurtured through encouragements, support, and promotion of stable relationships. Doing so requires the formation of looping environments among the teachers, parents, and students to enhance the overall student success. Investigations regarding the establishment of a looping system in every American school should be heightened. Looping was a strategic initiative used by educators to enhance students’ performance by promoting a teacher with his/her students to the next grade and allowing that teacher to remain with these students for at least four years. While looping has gained popularity in the education sector, varying opinions have continued to exist. Such opinions necessitated exploration of the available research and established the benefits accrued to looping compared to the traditional one-year classrooms. This chapter will explore studies and perspectives on looping about student achievement, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the looping practice.

History of Looping

Not all educators are familiar with the looping strategy, though it has been in practice for years. The traditional one-room classrooms are representative of the looping design (Bunce, 2009). Moreover, the U.S. Department of Education endorsed teacher rotation, which is a form of looping. However, looping only started getting widespread attention in 1919 when a German educator, Rudolf Steiner instituted the Waldorf School Model that involved having a homeroom
teacher remain with students through grades 1-8. The looping concept was later revised by Deborah Meier in 1974 when she launched the Central Park Elementary School, which allowed a teacher to remain with the students for two years (Krogmann and Van Sant, 2000). Although looping has been widely practiced in elementary schools, it is often observed in the primary grades, and it is yet to be integrated into the national curriculum.

**Relationship Between Looping and Student Performance**

American educators have intensified their interest in looping after the introduction of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which mandates academic accountability and design of high learning standards. The Ministry of Education feared that adequate measures were not put in place, thus students were not prepared for the workforce (Riley, 2014). NCLB stipulates that schools should exceed their standards in the reading area, essentially mathematics, by instituting statewide testing and learning standards that align with the global education guidelines. Through Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), schools can improve the learning environment by focusing on performance, testing, and a second indicator such as growth targets or annual measurable objectives. Attaining such an environment, however, requires more than a 95% participation rate. It is through looping that many academicians in America believe the NCLB can become a reality at a national level.

A high participation level can be attained by increasing the physical and mental attendance rate of students. Although the traditional system is commendable for improving physical attendance rate, it is questionable with regard to emotional concentration (Tucker, 2006). Therefore, looping becomes instrumental. When students and teachers can spend a considerable amount of time together both in the classroom and participating in outdoor activities, emotional participation by all the stakeholders is high (Hamre & Pianta, 2006;
Gaustad, 1998). Students become familiar with the teaching practices and ideologies of the specific teacher, thus making it possible to increase the concentration level of improving overall results.

Hullman (2005) asserted that although there is credible evidence suggesting that performance and self-efficacy are enhanced by long-term connections between students and teachers; the traditional system does not allow a class to have the same instructor for more than a year. It is essential for human beings to have consistent, meaningful relationships during their developmental stages. In elementary school, students undergo enormous physical and emotional growth that if not adequately monitored and managed, can lead to adverse effects in their lifetimes. Schools present an opportunity for these students to learn their inner potentials with relation to talent and academic prowess, and if the connections are short-term, it is quite difficult to effectively achieve such objectives.

Char Forsten, a writer of several instructional materials and a teacher who has practiced multiple loops, claimed that it is not possible to make a student learn without creating a connection (Riley, 2014). Teachers need to familiarize themselves with how students learn, as well as their ability of students to retain information and student motivation. Looping helps develop rich relationships between teachers and students, which leads to a classroom environment that enables students to overcome developmental and academic challenges. People are hard-wired for long-term, permanent and supportive connections that are only made possible by investing in the looping structure. With looping, students do not have to spend a lot of time trying to learn a new teacher's personality, expectations, or teaching styles after completing one grade, as opposed to the traditional classroom designs.
Through looping, students are presented with adults and peers that become part of their lives, leading to the formation of stable relationships. The growth of such a bond fulfills the social needs of students who then subconsciously focus their minds on learning rather than seeking social belonging (Salvetti 1996, p. 8). Looping creates a new family for the students (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2006). Living in the same room and interacting with the same people on a daily basis develops a sense of familial atmosphere. Such relationships are built on trust, and as such, students and teachers act as a team during moments of success or failure, leading to motivation and an endearing environment. Education theorists, including Scott and Dewey asserted that a learning environment that promotes social connections assists in building knowledge and lifelong experiences, which may not be available in setting where learners and teachers do not have the opportunity of developing a strong relationship (Klem & Connell, 2004; Ford, 2010). A looping classroom creates a learning community that offers real-life issues to enable students to face societal challenges amicably. As the community grows, the students can adapt and positively compete with each other and thereby improve the reading culture.

To develop a healthy communication relationship in the classroom, which is critical for improvement in reading and overall learning, teachers and students must be completely acquainted with each other (Bergin, 2009, p. 143). Specifically, students in elementary school require a healthy relationship with the peers and adults because these students are extremely hypersensitive. When surrounded by understanding and competent adults, these students are involved in in-depth engagements with their peers, which prompts development in both verbal and oral communication, cognitive processes, and proper management of emotional and social relationships. It is quite difficult for a student to communicate with the teacher when their time together is limited. Additionally, time constraints limit teachers in understanding specific needs
of each student and make it difficult to assist these students in an individual capacity (Bonura, 2009; Burke, 1996). In the traditional structure, most teachers start to understand the learning ability of a student near the end of the school year making it difficult to follow up and devise individual instructional materials when the relationship is cut short.

An extended relationship provides the teacher with time and ideas to design teaching methods that can reach students on an individual basis, regardless their special needs. In addition, looping leads to the formation of a close-knit classroom atmosphere that triggers children to assist each other in the studies since they perceive themselves as a family. Even the shy students become comfortable and start participating in classroom discussions, thereby enhancing their reading and conceptualization capacity (Hullman, 2005). Former teacher, Erin Burleigh, reported that students approached her for counseling and guidance in dealing with peers and other teachers since a bond of trust had been formed.

In the traditional structure, students tend to misbehave at the end of the school year because the teacher-student relationship will soon be discontinued. Moreover, findings determined that students concentrated on testing the limits of new teachers each fall. However, in spring, separation anxiety triggered behavioral issues. Together the anxiety and behavior limited concentration capacity, leading to low performance (Burke, 1997).

From the perspective of children, the beginning of a new class year is significant because these children have to deal with a new set of peers and to develop new connections with an adult. Looping, however, allows students to focus solely on learning. When students know that their parents are in synch with the teacher, their self-efficacies propel leading to high concentration and better results.
Students experience varying social issues and given that most parents are busy with other family chores, a continuous barrage of instabilities is common among most elementary students. Family structures, economic problems, peer pressure, and availability of diverse information from the traditional and online media plague these students, making it difficult to have a balance between their social and academic lives (Gregory, 2009). This lack of social and academic connections suggests a need to have permanent relationships in schools that can assist the stakeholders in formulating learning strategies that promote the needs of each student.

Proponents of the looping structure affirm its effectiveness. Thus, it is odd that the government is yet to fully support its implementation. However, NCLB and high-stakes testing make it difficult for teachers to willingly take on the extra work of familiarizing that is associated with a second or third year of learning (Riley, 2014). Additionally, most traditional administrators are reluctant to shift from the conventional teaching model, which may hinder learning progress. Although Barbara Schaefer conducted a qualitative study about looping and established that the practice creates no difference in academic achievement and attendance, some institutions that have already configured looping report more advantages in comparison to the cons of the teaching structure based on the perspectives of teachers, parents, and students (Kenny, 2007; Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

**John Bowlby’s attachment model.** Teacher-student relationships can have an enormous effect on student growth and achievement. Teachers play an important role in the trajectory of students throughout the formal schooling experience (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008). Long-term relationships and attachment can impact student success and even decrease a high school's dropout rate. The attachment theory was first proposed by John Bowlby in the 1960s and has
since become an established feature of work with children in areas such as education. While this theory emphasizes the importance of children making secure attachments with their main caregiver during the first years of life, it can also align with long-term relationships formed at school. Attachment behavior in adults toward a child includes responding sensitively and appropriately to the child’s needs. Unfortunately, students of various ages are left to find comfort and consolation elsewhere, often at school. Research indicates that teachers have a unique opportunity to support students’ academic and social development at various ages and grade levels (Gallagher, 2017). Attachment and the need to feel wanted as a child surpasses most levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Attachment is a deep and enduring affectionate bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth 1973; Bowlby, 1969).

Aligned with the attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1969), positive teacher-student relationships enable students to feel safe and secure in their learning environments and provide scaffolding for important social and academic skills (Baker et al., 2008; O’Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). Attachment has at least two functions pertinent to the classroom. It provides feelings of security so children can explore freely. While all children seek to feel secure, attachment helps them balance this need with their innate motivation to explore their environment. Attachment also forms the basis for children to socialize. As children and adults are drawn together and interact harmoniously, children adopt the adults’ behavior and values (Bergin, 2009).

For many children, the teacher is the most stable adult in their lives because they are with their teachers for the majority of their waking hours. The teacher-student bond can be a very strong and important relationship in the development of a young child. When the relationship
between students, teacher, and parents abruptly ends at the completion of each school year, a strong relationship built on trust is not allowed to develop to its full potential. Likewise, as teachers receive new groups of students each year, academic time can be compromised. This is because teachers must spend a great deal of time building the foundations of strong relationships with students. In addition, teachers must understand student ability levels, personal interests, and individual learning styles to facilitate more effective instruction (Gaustad, 1998).

Psychologist Bowlby describes attachment as an intrinsic long-lasting emotional connection with a special person that brings pleasure and relieves stress-related feelings. The quality of attachment between people, especially children, affects development and well-being. In modern society, most parents are absentees in the sense that they spend the majority of their time in the workplace and in businesses seeking financial prosperity during periods of economic hardships. Therefore, it is difficult for the parents to balance the economic needs of the children and emotional support. As such, children seek to find comfort in school from teachers and their peers. School is constant given that there is a defined attendance and participation structure that offers all the children equal attention.

According to Bowlby, children have an innate desire to create a bond with one caregiver, and when deprived, it can lead to depression, decline in intelligence capacity, dissatisfaction and aggressive behavior (Lab 1997, Krogmann & Van Sant, 2000). Conversely, when children have developed secure attachment towards the caregiver, they are usually happy, curious to explore ideas and other aspects of the learning environment, and do not have trust issues. When creating such a secure attachment, a need for consistency regarding physical and emotional presence exists. Children need to be assured that the teacher will be present at all times (McLeod et al., 2003; Hara, 1996). The traditional one-year structure does not provide enough time for the
development of secure attachment given the limitation of time and space between the stakeholders.

With a looping structure, teachers can interact with the students and parents on a personal basis and become psychologically attached. This results in a heightening of trust that facilitates a proper learning environment through the development of individualized instructional materials. A looping structure also fosters learning progress. Makpuer (2007) and Overby (2011) asserted that a receptive, nurturing learning environment that enables children to develop attachments with a limited number of caregivers allows these children to create neutral pathways that enhance emotional intelligence. Orazi (2012) demonstrated how repeated hugs and praises/corrections by the same person stimulate the brain of a child, leading to the strengthening of the brain and other networks within the body. Evidence shows that a looping structure is critical in support of secure attachment given the attributes to growth and development. Such attributes are essential for comprehension of technical subjects including math.

**Maslow’s Hierarchy Model**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs designates a sense of belonging as one of the basic human desires (Bunce, 2009). Fulfillment of this need leads to greater attendance and participation level of a child, which subsequently prompts an improvement in learning. Studies related to looping claim that it facilitates the creation of permanent and stable relationships, which are essential for the development of belonging. Children that come from emotionally unstable backgrounds consider school as their second home, and therefore, it is proper to ensure that the teacher is consistent in their lives. Teachers serve as role models and mentors for children, thereby providing emotional support that should remain for the majority of the school life. Conversely, separating these teachers and students each year leads to emotional insecurities that adversely
affect academic and social development. Looping provides an opportunity for the teachers to offer a sense of belonging to the student, which contributes to increased academic performance in all areas.

**Advantages of Looping for Teachers**

Students are less anxious and more comfortable at the start of the year. Thus, both the teacher and the student are aware of what to expect during the year (Overby, 2011). Teachers are able to maximize instructional time because they do not have to go over rules and procedures, and students are allowed to become acquainted with one another. Additionally, because the teacher is aware of the students' academic performance level, initial benchmarks are not required to identify the needs of each student given that they take up most of the first month of the school calendar. Teachers are afforded additional instructional time, which is essential for furthering learning progress, because looping minimizes the transitional session. Looping makes it possible to build on previous learning materials and skills, because it allows the teacher to anticipate students' unique wants and needs, behavioral patterns, reading interests, emotional stability. More importantly, it allows teachers to detect when something is wrong with a student and prompts teacher-student conversation that exists due to mutual trust (Klem & Connell, 2004).

**Protection of instructional time.** Since schools operate on time schedules, it is imperative that the systems of teaching adopted by the teachers ensure that more instructional time is saved (Bogart, 2002). Typically, the school schedule is usually activity-packed. Consequently, students’ participation in other non-academic activities might limit the number of days remaining for instructional teaching. Also, teachers are required to outline the scope of every subject, and tutors must meet objectives. Compared to teachers in traditional classrooms,
looping teachers tend to have more time for providing instructions since these teachers have close relations with the students and understand their needs (Bogart, 2002). Furthermore, teachers in looping classrooms can organize the students and prepare them in advance for the next academic year. Thus, more time is being saved when students apply for new courses because the students know what to expect.

Bogart (2002) suggested that contrary to traditional classrooms, teachers in looping classrooms can shift to providing instruction immediately because they do not need transitional time when a new teacher is being introduced to the students. The issue attributed to the fact that in regular classroom settings, behavioral expectations were previously established. Consequently, the transitional time saved could be used for creating and testing the classroom management plan. Additionally, teachers in a looping classroom required occasional assessments of skills. This routine practice developed from the previous year enables the teacher to know in advance what is suitable for the students and what they prefer (Chakey, 2014). In past studies to verify proper time management in teaching instruction, Bogart (2002) suggested that all the teachers who participated in the surveys agreed that there is no time wasted, especially in September when the students return to school. Consequently, as compared to the other months, September tends to be more academically productive. Also, the vacation mode which usually weighs in when schools reopen was minimal in looping classrooms.

The most critical element of early childhood education is the time these children need to comprehend instructions in learning. Students show variation in their level of understanding, thus, necessitating the need for more instructional time. In addition, there are students who are psychologically affected by changes in teachers, venues, and curriculum. Therefore, it was imperative to develop a system of education which ensured minimal disruption of the routine
practice. Multi-year teaching provides a system of teaching with minimal disturbances to the learners. According to Vaden-Kiernan, Borman, Caverly, Bell, Castilla, and Sullivan (2015), multi-year teaching provides teachers with an opportunity to organize the instructions to be taught systematically. This step also ensures that minimal time is lost in terms of switching teachers and allowing time for adjustment. Therefore, more instructional teaching time is saved in the process. Everyday courses as a concept of multi-year learning provides room for incorporating strategies, such as explicit modeling, student-led discussions, and project-based learning which requires a great deal of instructional time.

In a related study, Noelle and Anita (2015) examined the current knowledge which is shaping teacher preparation in early childhood mathematics. Minimal attention is focused on the context of early childhood education as a result of dominating elementary education. The review suggested the need for adopting a multi-year teaching method. This method of teaching ensures that teachers with good instructional skills advance from one level to another with the same group of students. Consequently, the method promotes the child’s academic growth and while meeting the needs of the whole child (Noelle & Anita, 2015). The continued relationship between the child and the teacher reduces the time a child needs to adjust therefore, saving more time for daily instruction.

Looping is also critical in planning instructions. The teacher already knows all the children well, which can facilitate planning individualized lessons and tasks. Consequently, this can be of great help to the students in general, especially those with special needs in education (Bunce, 2009). Also, the teacher’s prolonged experience with the children facilitates instruction planning because it allows teacher to ascertain the knowledge which the students have gained outside the classroom, then highlight this knowledge and share it with the rest of the class. By
using what the students know, teachers take advantage of this knowledge, especially when placing the students into groups (Bunce, 2009). The teachers can base the groups on the strength of a subject, whereby students who are strong in a given area are placed with those that are weaker in this area for more support.

Studies also suggest that looping may be the solution to the problem of overwhelming demands among the teachers to catch up with the students who are falling behind (Bunce, 2009). Looping makes it easy for both the teachers and the students who are returning for the second year of the loop. Previous learned skills and lessons can be referred to, connections can be made, and students already know the teacher's expectations. Therefore, the student does not need to learn the traditional rules, procedures, and the teachers’ style of teaching. This is an important issue, especially for the weakest students who have the opportunity to progress with the rest of the class instead of being left behind for a whole year. Subsequently, these students may be more easily motivated, which can improve their class attendance.

In some cases, teachers do not wait for the first day of school to begin teaching their content. Instead, teacher provide learning packets, which students can utilize the whole summer. In addition, the teachers in a looping system also can enhance what they have done previously (Bunce, 2009). Thus, it becomes easy for the students to look back at past classes or books with the help of the teacher and build on what they are currently learning. Such support contributes to improved self-efficacy, especially when the students are undertaking projects which build on previously developed skills.

**Student awareness.** Looping also shapes student behavior by ensuring that a deep relationship exists between the students and the teachers. Consequently, children are free to share their problems and concerns with the teachers. The increased degree of openness reduces
negative behavior among the children (O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011). Previously collected data regarding early child care was used to examine the implication of quality of teacher-child relationships on behavioral problems. High-quality teacher-child relationships predicted low levels of externalizing behavior. Additionally, high-quality student-teacher relationships were found to act as a factor that prevented children with internalizing behaviors from developing future long-term behavioral problems. Therefore, there is a need to utilize this proximal phenomenon as a measure of interventions to prevent behavioral problems, especially in middle childhood. It is imperative for early childhood educationists to pursue teaching methods which reinforce the relationship between the teachers and the students, such as multi-year teaching. According to Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, and Essex (2005), factors such as negative parenting, the relationship between the child and the teacher, and teacher-child relationships impacted on the externalizing behavior trajectories after the transition from school. Such negative behaviors and relationships have a similar impact when students are transitioning from one class to another. A significant trust-based teacher-student relationship predicted a decreased externalizing behavior (Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005).

The decrease in disciplinary infractions. The use of consistent disciplinary methods is essential, and with looping, behavioral issues are minimized. Once a problem arises, the teacher can better manage the problem because a connection was previously developed. Thus, it is possible to liaison and handle the issue rather than passing it to the next caregiver (LAB, 1997). It is also effective when the teacher meets with parents to devise a solution since a parent-teacher relationship has been established over the years.

A child’s behavior is shaped from a young age. However, to maintain a child’s behavior, it is vital to ensure that it is regularly reinforced. Discipline, an important aspect of a child’s
developmental process, requires reinforcement through rewards or punishment. However, psychologists argue that discipline is a behavior which can be shaped by creating a deeper relationship with a child (House, Henrich, Sarnecka, & Silk, 2013). Attachment plays a critical role in a child’s emotional and behavioral development. Early childhood educationists play a crucial role in a child’s development since they these educators spend a great deal of time with these children. A multi-year method of teaching reinforces the attachment required to condition a child to behave in a given way (Uretsky, Bethany, Greeno, & Barth, 2017). Therefore, children learning from one instructor from one level to another tend to adjust easily and show fewer incidents of indiscipline. On the contrary, multiple teachers mean that a child has to readjust often to fit in a particular class or behave in a manner desirable to the specific instructor. The frequent readjustments cause a lapse in a child’s normal behavior and may result in indiscipline or other forms of undesirable behavior.

LeGray, Dufrene, Mercer, Olmi, and Sterling (2013) explored the effectiveness of a differential reinforcement in decreasing disruptive behavior among children. The study results suggested that differential reinforcement, even without pre-teaching alternative behavior among children, played a key role in promoting greater levels of good behavior while decreasing the levels of problem behavior. Looping, as a system of teaching, was associated with high levels of attachment between the students and the instructors.

**Improved classroom environment.** Coash and Watkins (2005) studied a school in which the administration was supportive of looping in one of the middle schools in Southwest Phoenix, Arizona. In this school, looping was practiced in grades 6-8. Via this looping program, the school developed a friendly classroom environment through Home Courts, team building activities, and Yet Lab. The Home Court referred to a lesson whereby the students undergoing
multi-year teaching with the same teacher learned how to view the classroom as a comfortable place with a support system. The Yet Lab was a program which allowed students to stay after school without being stigmatized. Other benefits of the program included the creation of social policy to promote the underperforming students and reinforcement of good behavior. This case study noted multiple benefits of looping in middle school because teachers can track students through high school, thus creating a stronger connection.

In a bid to examine the teachers’ perception of the looping process, Chakey (2014) undertook a qualitative analysis using research questions to reveal teachers' opinions of the process and how it impacts the classroom environment. All the teachers who participated in the research had over one year experience in looping classroom. The findings suggested that the teachers perceived the looping process as having a positive impact on their overall educational experiences. In addition, the looping process positively impacted both students and the parents. Compared to traditional classes, looping classes also made it much easier for the teacher to manage the students because the teachers have a background knowledge about the needs of every student. Consequently, the teacher-student relationship was not stained, which made it easier to concentrate on learning.

Teachers tend to be pivotal figures in the classroom. Therefore, students tend to admire teachers, especially students in early learning (Ford, 2010). Consequently, withdrawing the teachers whom the students view as a single source of support and replacing these teachers may devastate the students and affect the learning outcomes. In this particular survey, Ford (2010) explored the teachers’ perception of looping. Teachers who taught in looping classrooms perceived various benefits from the process in the areas of instructional climate and academic
excellence. Also, the looping process improved the relationships between the teachers, the students and their families in general.

In schools where looping is the primary mode of teaching, the classroom environment was improved for the creation of a better working relationship between the teacher, students, and parents. According to Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010), looping significantly improved the relationship and the level of interaction between the teachers, parents, and students significantly. In the process, teachers had an opportunity to develop key teaching skills. Conversely, the interaction between the teachers, parents, and students fostered the development of responsive parenting skills. The combination is critical for a child’s overall development and academic success.

**Target students’ learning needs.** It is important to recognize the need for diversity when considering teaching methods. Students tend have various talents and interests despite following a common curriculum. Therefore, a favorable system of teaching considers these differences. Looping is one of the teaching methods that considers the specific needs of the students based on the premise that a long-term teacher-student relationship informs on the individual needs of the student.

Initiatives such as NCLB have been critical regarding the improvement of the academic achievements of students. Nevertheless, NCLB has failed to address the plight of the high-achieving students (Pratt, 2009). Teachers tend to focus their instructions more on the weaker students, hence leaving little time for both the academic and emotional needs of the gifted students. The educational program for the gifted and talented students only involved removing these students out of the regular classrooms for a short time and providing them differentiated instructions. Conversely, looping is focused on creating deeper relationships between the
teachers and the students. Therefore, it is effective for both the academically-weak students as well as the gifted and talented students because close relationships with the teacher informs on students' specific individual needs.

Students with special needs also required close teacher-student relationships. According to Brown (2011), various needs of students with disabilities including the social, the academic and the emotional needs are not adequately met in the traditional classrooms. Thus, a looping process which takes more than one year is recommended since it is designed to meet the disabled students’ needs. Social skills and emotional competencies among students with special needs improved significantly when these students participated in looping.

O'Connell (2012) explored 2nd grade and 3rd grade students' perspectives of looping, as well as the perspectives of teachers and school administration. The results of the survey showed significant improvement in academic performance among students in a looping environment compared to those in a non-looping environment. These students suggested the additional period spent with the same instructor gave them more time to create deeper connections with the teachers. Consequently, this enabled these students to bridge curriculum gaps and improve emotional development. Looping also allowed teachers to create a lesson which meets the learning styles of the students based on student needs. The students believed that by having the same teacher for more than one year, many problems can be quickly solved because the teacher understands the social dynamics of the class. Furthermore, the social and emotional development among the students significantly improved. A concrete student-teacher relationship also acted as a barrier, which prevented the occurrence of social problems within the classroom environment. Looping has a positive impact on the classroom behavior because consistency in the rules and the consequences helped facilitate learning on a daily basis. The behavioral
problems among students in looping classrooms are slightly lower both at recess and in the classroom. Students with special needs also suggested that they were more comfortable in the looping classrooms. The students also reported feeling less anxious, especially at the start of the new school year because they are already aware of the routine practices and expectations of the teacher. Moreover, looping classrooms helped the students with behavioral and learning concerns, as well as those with attention issues to feel more accommodating.

It is easier for a teacher to design and plan individualized instructions, particularly for special needs students (Gaustad, 1998). Moreover, the teacher can become aware of the knowledge gained by students out of the classroom for sharing and in the formation of discussion groups where strong students are placed with a struggling student for additional academic support. Such teaching privileges are only attained by teachers in a loop, making it easier to promote a learning environment that promotes healthy competition among the students, leading to high efficacy levels among the students. The teacher can accurately determine the individual need of every student, having remained with these students for more than one year. Teachers can anticipate the needs and address them amicably. Moreover, the teacher is knowledgeable and aware of the students’ preferred way of learning, their interests, behavioral patterns, social skills as well as emotional stability. Subsequently, the learning environment becomes more conducive for the students to learn. This mutual trust facilitates students to communicate to any problem they may be experiencing, especially domestic issues. Most students that do not have a good relationship with their teachers would rather open up to their friends as opposed to the teacher. With this knowledge, the teacher can take steps that are beneficial to the student, including communicating with both parents and organizing counseling sessions for the student in case of traumatic experiences.
Students

**Improved engagement and attachment.** Research demonstrated that children are more excited and feel more comfortable reporting to school when the looping structure is practiced (Hanson, 1995; Klem & Connell, 2004; Bogart, 2002). A qualitative study conducted by Smith (2010) on looping established that class attendance and participation are high when the teacher-student relationship is prolonged. Similarly, when students are in the same environment often, there is less catching up to do and more time is available for learning and clarification, which results in improved performance. Students asserted that they were in a better position to maintain friendships and form strong social networks that improved their motivation to perform.

According to Gabriela (2016), looping helped students meet other needs apart from academic needs. The current public education system in the United States does not have the responsiveness required to address issues such as the differing maturation rates, as well as the learning cycles among the students. Instead, this system focused on satisfying the established governmental mandate through the common curriculum. However, modern research has shown that when teachers spend more than one year with students, these teachers are capable of recognizing the unique style of learning for individual students. Consequently, these teachers can develop a curriculum which fits all students. Compared to the normal classes, looping classrooms tend to be responsive to the individual differences among the students, which is a key component for cognitive development.

Students in a looping environment were likely to perform much better academically compared to their counterparts in a non-looping environment (Pomykal, Thompson, Fuller, Hare, Miller, & Walker, 2010). In a study to examine how looping has impacted middle school student's mathematical academic achievement, these researchers compared the scores among
students who underwent looping and those that did not on the Mississippi Curriculum Test. The research showed that compared to the non-looping students, the looping students attained statistically significant growth on the MCT. Also, through looping, students became more engaged during the middle school years regardless of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

The key to identifying looping as the most suitable teaching method is evaluating its level of responsiveness to the holistic needs of the student. Melissa (2014) compared the achievement scores among students experiencing looping assignments and students experiencing traditional assignments. A sample of 235 students from the Measures of Academic Progress were utilized in the survey- 111 looped and 124 did not loop. To maintain a balance of gender, and other forms of exceptionalities, the groups were formed heterogeneously. Although the results from the survey did not statistically support the fact that students undertaking looping assignments performed better academically compared to students undertaking traditional assignments, the looping process significantly informed on students' weaknesses since teachers were aware of the specific needs of the students.

**Improved self-efficacy.** In an effective learning environment, students should be free to express themselves and address their concerns to the right authority. In a classroom environment, the teacher is the symbol of authority. Therefore, students should be free with the teacher enough to share their concerns and grievances. Students can only achieve self-efficacy by having an authority figure who relate to them and address these needs in a friendly manner (Bunce, 2009). New teachers may have strained relationships with the students because they might not understand their individual needs. However, students who have spent more time with the same teacher tend to be at ease with the teachers because they are aware of the expectations.
Therefore, these students conduct themselves with ease. Subsequently, less time is wasted while trying to create new student-teacher relationships at the beginning of every school year.

Despite the occasional problems with looping, students in looping classrooms reported positive feedback. In addition, students preferred looping classes over the traditional classrooms (Bunce, 2009). Unlike other systems of teaching, looping prevents students with both peers and an adult in their lives with whom they can build stronger relationships. With time, a student in a looping classroom focused his/her attention on learning instead of concentrating on the basic needs of belonging (Bunce, 2009). Meeting these psychological needs positively impacts students' academic lives in the future.

The growing connection between teachers and students helps the students to feel less nervous. This aspect is especially important for multilingual students because English is not their first language. Instead, they are less distracted and can easily learn with support from the teachers (Bunce, 2009). Such students can easily get help from the other students who are fluent in English. A long-term mutual relationship develops among the students, thus encouraging teamwork and collaboration. Looping provides a solution to the issue of belonging, which is a basic human need, because it provides children with a group where they are valued and invested. Since most stakeholders in education support this learning model, it becomes easy to coordinate school activities among the teachers, the students, and the parents.

Due to advantages associated with looping classrooms regarding overall student achievement, it has now become more popular. Many elementary schools are adopting looping classrooms as the preferred system of teaching. However, like any practice, it is imperative to address the negative experiences associated with this method. For instance, in cases whereby a personality conflict existed between the teacher and the students, alternative options should be
sought, including the exchange of classrooms to accommodate for professional development, as well as supporting the teachers.

According to Bogart (2002), multiyear assignments have been known to enhance the academic achievements. Although very few researchers have conducted official studies to confirm the phenomenon, the few existing studies verified that students attending looping classrooms usually show better achievement scores compared to the students in the traditional grade schools. Other studies conducted to evaluate the differences in academic performance between students in looping classrooms and traditional classrooms compared the academic performance of students currently in the looping system with past students whereby the same teacher use a one-year model. The results illustrated that on average, looping students had significantly higher scores in various subjects and were likely to do much better with the same teacher compared to the traditional classrooms.

In a similar study carried out in Berino Elementary school in California, test scores from students in looping classrooms were compared with those in traditional classrooms. The study was conducted to compare the performance of the 3rd grade students and 5th grade students, and results indicated that the students in traditional classrooms were outperformed by their counterparts in the looping classrooms in every comparison (Bogart, 2002). Students in looping classrooms were challenged regarding the application of math concepts, but this was the only tested area in which they struggled.

Various studies have been conducted to examine the areas in which the students in a looping system displayed significant academic strength. The studies suggested that students in looping classrooms model significant improvement in language arts. These findings have been supported by various outcomes of statewide mastery tests in writing whereby the looping
students performed much better than the students in traditional classrooms. In other studies, in which student academic achievement is not based on test scores, long-term relationships between the teachers and the students were compared to the students' scores. These studies suggested that the long-term experience among the teachers in looping classrooms with the same groups of students enabled them to improve student academic performance. Also, teachers in a looping classroom were able to help the weaker students to match the high-performing students because these teachers were in a much better position to meet their needs.

Students tend to develop stronger ties and attachment with their teachers and fellow students in looping classrooms compared to the traditional classrooms. Looping offers the opportunity for personal connections to develop with time. This fact is critical because the development of the close connections between the student and the teachers, as well as between the students and their peers, offers an opportunity for emotional and intellectual intelligence growth (House, Henrich, Sarnecka, & Silk, 2013). Relations created over a period of two or more years tend to be more natural and less fragmented. Furthermore, in looping classrooms, students have more time to connect with the rest of the classroom and feel as if they are a part of the classroom.

In any environment, the ability to create lasting relationships is a key driver of success (Noelle & Anita, 2015). In addition, stability and persistence are critical to the development of lasting relations. Looping provides an opportunity for teachers and students to develop deeper and meaningful relationships. According to scholars, the current state of American schools is characterized by placement of less value on the long-term interpersonal relationships (Bogart, 2002). The designing attribute of brief co-existence, which characterizes the American schools, has a relatively short span. The design fault is the primary cause of the short-lived relationships
between the teachers and the students. Studies conducted among students suggested that relationships lasting for more than 36 weeks with the teacher were critical in acquiring an effective education because students tend to adapt to the teachers' method of teaching. The classroom environment is significantly improved when students spend as much time with the teacher as they do with their classmates.

According to Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010), parental involvement in a child's academic life has a positive impact on the perceived cognitive competence. This understanding referred to the extent in which children believe they are well informed in various cognitive skills, which are critical to their academic journey. Such skills are useful when the students are doing routine practice academic activities such as writing, arithmetic, and reading. Looping improves child-parent interaction, especially academically. Consequently, children in a looping system were inclined to have an improved cognitive competence in terms verbal persuasions, performance mastery, emotional regulation among others.

A positive student-teacher relationship is vital towards better academic performance. In a looping classroom environment, the teacher develops such a relationship by basing it on closeness and ensuring that conflict and dependency are not present (Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010). Warmth and open communication between the teacher and the student are significant in a looping environment compared to the traditional classroom model. A looping environment creates a close and positive relationship between the teacher and the student. Hence, students can develop social and academic outcomes. Similarly, the level and the nature of the relationship between the parent and the student reciprocate to the student-teacher relationship. Looping methods in teaching require a deeper investment in the development of the child. According to Bogart (2002), with time, the relationship between the teacher and the
student results in the holistic development of the students. Group persistence is critical for the development of a healthy cohesion between the teachers, parents and students. Conversely, the traditional non-looping school designs represent an unsecured environment whereby the already built relationship and trust between the teacher and the students are constantly broken at the end of every school year.

**Reduced school anxiety.** One of the main advantages of looping is to ensure that the students are comfortable. Students are less anxious and more comfortable at the start of the school year; thus, both the teacher and the student are aware of what to expect in the year (Overby, 2011). Time will not be wasted detailing rules and procedures, and students can become familiar with one another. Time saved from going through the transitional session offers teachers essential additional instructional time for furthering learning progress. As a class, it is possible to build on previous learning materials and skills, the teacher can anticipate students' unique wants and needs, behavioral patterns, reading interests, emotional stability, and detect when something is wrong with a student and subsequently be able to talk with this student based on previous established trust (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Even though parents are always excited about their children who are starting a new academic year, they tend to be nervous when taking and leaving their children in schools. Although parents get used to the situation, it may be traumatizing, especially for parents taking their children to school for the first time. It is also common for parents to worry about the conduct of their children in school when parents are not present to offer guidance and protection (Bunce, 2009). Also, parents typically worry about the child leaving the comfort zone of home and family. Therefore, when children go to school, parents lose some form of control and must
rely on the children to communicate. Similarly, parents are dependent upon the teacher for any information regarding their children, such as academic performance and discipline.

Common anxieties among parents with teenagers are drug abuse, alcohol, and bad company when parents are not present. Therefore, parents usually prefer schools with a system that allows for extensive monitoring of the children for academic, behavioral and developmental needs. Compared to other teaching methods, looping addresses this challenge because a long-term relationship between the teacher and the child allows for openness and sharing. Children can communicate to their parents about a problem via the teacher. Consequently, the parents develop a higher level of trust with the teachers in ensuring that all the needs of their children are being met when in school. According to Bunce (2009), a survey conducted among parents on their level of satisfaction with looping classrooms indicated that parents with children attending schools that did not practice looping demonstrated dissatisfaction with the schools and overall academic performance. The survey results noted that parents were confident that their children’s teachers were well-versed with students' weaknesses and strengths, which enabled teachers to assist the children in a holistic way. In addition, the fact that the teachers were informed of their children's difficulties, capabilities, learning styles, social skills and behavioral patterns lowered the parents' level of anxiety.

The level of confidence that exists between parents and teachers is another determining factor in choosing between looping and traditional classrooms. Parents prefer a learning environment where they are aware of the conduct of their children in school. In a looping system of education, teachers and parents are likely to be close confidants because parents have an opportunity to interact with the same teacher over a longer period. Consequently, through their interaction, both parents and teachers work harmoniously and can anticipate students' needs.
According to McLanahan, Currie, Haskins, Rouse, and Sawhil (2014), schools and teachers play roles in helping anxious parents to detach from their children when leaving children in school. According to the study, parents and the home environment are powerful influences on children since the time they are born. In a school environment, children must often adjust to fit in the standardized environment despite background differences. Therefore, parents are usually anxious about how well their children will handle the adjustment. Similarly, children also create a particular home atmosphere due to the existing attachment between them and their parents. Consequently, parents also find it difficult to let go of children when they are either joining or re-joining school. Therefore, the parents require assurance that the teachers involved with their children will also play the role of the parent in the absence of parents. A looping system supports this because as the teacher spends more time with the same class of children, they begin to trust the teacher in the same manner they trust their parents.

**Parents**

**Awareness of teacher’s routine practices/policies.** According to Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010), for a better and more effective teacher-parent relationship, it is imperative that the parents are regularly informed about the general routine practices in class and how their children are responding to them. Compared to parents with children in traditional classrooms, looping classrooms focus on creating long-term and trusting relations with both students and teachers. Therefore, the regular engagement between the teacher and the parent is of utmost importance to the sustenance of this relationship. In the process of inquiring about their children’s academic performance, parents also get an opportunity to understand the regular classroom routine practices and what their children learn about on a daily basis, thus further
enhancing these connections. Moreover, routine practice awareness also enables the parents to better help their children.

A survey conducted by Hedge and Cassidy (2004) on the perspectives of parents on looping established that familiarity and consistency provided to the children in a looping environment built a strong relationship that led to high self-efficacy. Also, children were in a position to build long-term friendships, which are essential in behavioral development. The parents noted that when the caregiver has a good understanding of the child’s strengths and weaknesses, needs, and development ability, such an environment gives the child a sense of security. Looping facilitated transitions and children did not have problems adjusting to new surroundings. Moreover, looping assisted both teachers and parents anticipate student needs and wants, and helps parents network and deliberate on suitable strategies to improve class performance.

Nichols and Nichols (2010) examined the looping classroom environment and its effect on the attitude of the parent. The study was conducted in an educational community to evaluate the parental perceptions on this form of educational environment, and 455 parents participated in the study. Of these parents, 200 had students in a looping classroom environment, and the rest were non-looping students in an urban school. The study results suggested that looping students and their parents were most positive on variables of interest, such as level of student motivation and general attitudes toward the school, compared to the non-looping students. Furthermore, the survey results indicated that the single-parent families and low-income students in looping classes reported more positive perceptions compared to the families of traditional two-parent and high-income families (Nichols & Nichols, 2010; Tipton, 2017).
The sense of community. Studies have shown that the existing anxiety between parents and their children when joining schools can be addressed by creating a sense of community between teachers, parents, and students. Usually, the anxiety which parents experience when the child is leaving home is not based on practical worries but rather the fear that the child will move away emotionally in their absence. Looping classrooms harmonize the three entities within the school environment by creating a form of a community where everyone participates in the process. A long-term relationship between the teacher and the student reciprocates into a relationship between the teacher and the parents due to the various existing school programs supporting this interaction. Creation of such an environment enables the parents to view the teachers as partners in a child’s overall growth and development.

According to Hill and Taylor (2004), a long-standing relationship between the parents and the school facilitated the development of various policies and programs in schools. Also, the relationship was critical in the academic achievement of the students. Among the most effective ways of involving parents in the school program was forging a deeper relationship between the parents the teachers. The relationship drove towards individualized parental involvement in the school programs as parents sought to understand how students were performing in school. Parents who had a direct relationship with their children’s teacher were more likely to participate further in other school programs implemented for the general welfare of the students,

A looping system of teaching encouraged parental participation compared to the traditional teaching methods. Consequently, parental participation completed the community-atmosphere required for children to perform well academically. According to Houtenville and Conway (2008), an increased parental effort in a child’s academic life has a positive effect on academic performance. In addition, parents were at ease to contribute toward the school’s
additional resources to ensure that their children learn in a comfortable environment. Similar outcomes are echoed by Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010). In this study, multiple mediation models noted that the child’s perception of the relationship between the parents and the teacher determined their academic performance. Compared to children whose parents were rarely involved in their academic lives, children whose parents regularly monitored their academic performance were likely to perform much better. This effect has also been noted by policymakers, who have made more educational changes to ensure parents are more involved with the education of their children.

**Open lines of communication.** According to the American Federation of Teachers, positive parent-school communications are beneficial to the parents. The level of communication between the parents and the teacher also determined the level of parental involvement in the academic life of the child (Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010). However, how the teachers communicated with the parent also determined the parent's attitude. For instance, only communicating to the parents about the bad news about the students and failing to recognize any form of excellence demonstrated by the student can be discouraging. However, in a looping system of teaching, there is regular interaction between the parent and the same teacher who has been with the student for more than a year. Therefore, communication tends to be more effective between the teachers and the parents due to the already forged relations.

Looping classrooms facilitate regular communication between the teachers and the parents. Through this communication, parents benefit a great deal because they can acquire ideas on the best possible ways to help their children. Also, parents learn better about the school’s academic programs and how they work through the constant engagement from the
teachers. Thus, parents become more confident with the school values and how they will impact their children in the future. Furthermore, parents appreciate the role teachers play in the lives of their children when their teachers constantly engage them. In a looping classroom environment, the long-term relationship between the teacher and the student is reciprocated to the parents. The teacher updates the parents about the classroom activities, the accomplishment of the child, and the role of the parents in the learning process.

**Common goals and visions.** Similar to teachers, parents are also key stakeholders in their child's academic performance. Students must have defined goals and visions which are consistent with the mission of the school. Looping classrooms ensure communication and direct connection between the teachers and the parents. Consequently, the parents are well-versed with the school’s vision and goals. When parents understand the school’s goals and visions, they feel more empowered. When the teachers and the parents share common goals and visions, students have improved academic achievements, are better motivated, and have improved classroom behavior. Parents in a looping system of teaching are sometimes able to offer a more positive view of the teachers as a result of regular communication. Thus, teachers’ motivation and confidence are boosted and transferred to students.

A survey conducted by Hedge and Cassidy (2004) on the perspectives of parents on looping established that familiarity and consistency provided to the children in a looping environment built a strong relationship that led to high self-efficacy. In like manner, children were in a position to build long-term friendships, which are essential in behavioral development. The parents noted that when the caregiver has a good understanding of the child’s strengths and weaknesses, needs, and development ability, such an environment gives the child a sense of security.
Looping provided familiarity and easy transitions where students experienced continuity with their environment. Moreover, looping assisted both the teachers and parents to anticipate needs and wants of students, and parents can network and deliberate on suitable strategies to improve class performance.

**Disadvantages of Looping for Teachers**

While most studies reported on the advantages of multi-year teaching and persistent groups, there are disadvantages associated with this teaching structure. First, there is a possibility of developing complicated relationships, which may not compliment the learning needs of each student in the looping class (Hanson, 1994). The teacher and student in a complicated relationship will have to tolerate each other for more years, and in such a situation, the objectives of the class are not fulfilled. Encountering such an environment may require the intervention of administrators whereby the student is placed in another classroom. However, another student will be required to fill that gap, and given that a person is not familiar with the existing procedures, the student focus is interfered. Research indicated that sociable students were likely to adapt to a new environment compared to the shy students. At the end of the loop year, students found it difficult to let go of the teacher, thus creating anxiety problems that are transferred to the next class.

Additionally, teachers are required to adapt to a new curriculum, and the process is both costly and time-consuming. Moreover, if the teacher is not thorough on a given subject, then the student’s performance and curriculum preparation are adversely affected. The state is thereby required to inject more resources into training and updating the curriculum, which may not be equally implemented in all states, thus leading to learning discrepancies.
As looping teachers keep shifting from one grade to another at the end of the academic year and pursue instructions in a higher-level grade, they do not have sufficient time to process content from the past grade. Conversely, teachers in a non-looping teaching system tend to have adequate knowledge about the instructions in their specific class due to specialization. Although teachers in a non-looped classroom have not developed strong relationships with children, these teachers have a better mastery of the instructions and know the best ways to present these instructions to the students. Judge and Marian (2006) confirmed this phenomenon whereby the overall academic outcomes were compared between the looping classrooms and conventional classrooms. The study results illustrated that even though the students in looped classrooms scored highly in both personal and social development, their counterparts in non-looped classrooms had much higher scores in mathematical thinking. The most probable explanation for the higher performance in technical subjects among students in non-looped classes was the teacher’s specialization in one grade.

Ovalle (2004) examined the effectiveness of both looped and non-looped classroom regarding teaching skills development. The research suggested that although students in the looped classroom demonstrated significantly better academic performance and a higher level of satisfaction, the results were not always the same for teachers. The most significant disadvantage with looped classrooms was that teachers were inclined to miss out on new curriculum developments over a given cycle and must learn new standards every year (Ovalle, 2004). Consequently, their skills were greatly hampered, especially in their specific area of teaching. For example, teachers undertaking a three-year loop had the disadvantage of learning a new curriculum every year, which affected their methods of teaching. The unfamiliarity with content resulted in poor delivery of instructions to students. Another disadvantage of looping is
that the teacher must have a good knowledge of the students’ level of development in each grade which he/she teaches. Therefore, there is a possibility of being unaware of important issues, especially the specific needs of the students. Unlike in the conventional classrooms, looped classrooms overwhelm the teacher with the burden of monitoring and ensuring overall child development. Teachers in looped classes reported difficulties balancing their instructional teaching time and focusing on the child’s overall development. Hence, an overall decline in teacher’s instructional skills is reported in looped classes, unlike in the traditional classrooms.

Unlike in the looped classrooms, traditional one-year classrooms provide a better and more challenging ground for teachers regarding putting their skills and experience into practice (Elleman, 2017). In the traditional classroom framework, teachers have the opportunity to handle more students within the same grade each year. Interacting with many students in the same grade ensures that the teacher is up to date with the specific needs of the students in the classroom in a particular year. Thus, the teaching environment is not as monotonous as it is in a looped system of teaching. Teachers are also in a better position to improve their experiences by interacting with many students in a non-looped classroom system.

**Disadvantages of Looping for Students**

Every teacher has an unique teaching style and unique method of content delivery within his/her area of specialization (Scruggs & Margo, 2017). Therefore, it is common for a section of the students to prefer a particular teacher over another. Looped classrooms deny students privileges such as interacting with as many teachers as possible. Consequently, students in such systems lack a diverse pool of ideas compared to students in traditional non-looped classrooms who interact with many teachers in the course of their education. Non-looped classrooms provide students with an opportunity to choose learning methods which work for them,
depending on the teacher in charge of the instructions. Also, unlike looped classes, the traditional classes can accommodate additional methods of learning, such as co-teaching. In such a system, two skilled teachers care introduced in a single class, hence, cutting down on the teacher-student ratio (Scruggs & Margo, 2017).

Although looped classrooms are credited for improving the relationships between the students and their teacher, inter-relationships between the students are greatly hampered (Miranda & Bates, 2014). Cultural diversity is critically impacted because students are only familiar with the students in their looping groups. Conversely, traditional classrooms have no limited interaction between students and teachers through the established regular class shifting cycles. A frequent interaction between the students and the teachers, as well as between students themselves, improves on cultural competency and learning from each other.

The looping system requires regular review to identify existing conflicts between the teachers and the students. Although teachers may have a standard method of instructional delivery, it may not be suitable for some of the students. In such cases, students who are unable to identify with the teacher’s methods demonstrate regression in achievement, especially if the looping cycle is prolonged. According to Busler, Kirk, Keeley, and Buskist (2017), there are various characteristics of the instructor which the students may not relate to, which affects their academic performance. For instance, instructors may have unrealistic expectations for student learning, have poor communication skills or have limited knowledge of the course content. Such teacher characteristics can potentially affect student's performance, especially in a looped system where students must remain with teachers for more than one year.

Looped classes have the potential to create a sense of a community whereby the students interact with fellow students in their looped group, teachers, and parents. Despite the improved
interrelationships, student adaptation becomes limited. Since they are used to the same group of students and teacher throughout the looping cycle, students tend to have a limited capacity to adapt to any other classroom environment apart from their looped group. Introducing a new teacher upon completion of the looping cycle can be disastrous to the students and may require more time to adapt to the change, especially the teacher’s mannerisms and mode of teaching.

**Disadvantages of Looping for Parents**

The teacher-student relationship is critical for a student's overall academic performance and personal development. However, this relationship must be positive and genuine. According to Van Santiago, Garbacz, Beattie, and Moore (2016), a strained teacher-parent relationship leads to reduced parental trust, as well as deterioration in student behavior. In the traditional non-looping schools, the teacher remains with a group of students for one year and then begins the next year with the new students. Therefore, in such a system, personality clashes between the teachers and parents have less of an impact on the student compared to a looped system. Unlike the looped classes, the conventional classes allow for diverse interaction between the teachers, students, and parents. Thus, in case of personality clashes between the teacher and the parent, it is possible to have a different teacher for the student the following academic year.

Both students and parents are affected when adjusting to new teachers at the end of a looping cycle. Teachers and parents usually create meaningful relationships over the looping period, and they both understand the student much better. Therefore, changing the teacher can be challenging for the parents because they must create new personal relationships and describe the specific needs of their children. (Lang, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Jeon, 2017). Thus, personality clashes are likely to occur, especially if the new teacher does not seem to understand the parent’s concerns about their children. Conversely, conventional classes do not allow time for
development of deeper relationships between the teachers and the parents because a new teacher has to take over the class after one academic year. In such systems, the parent interacts with multiple teachers in the course of the student's learning, and therefore, there are no attachment issues as the new teacher assumes authority.

**Summary of Studies on Looping**

Research conducted by Bunce (2009) on the perception of students toward their peers and teachers in the extended teacher-student structure and the conventional grade-level established that students in the former system were less likely to dislike their schools and performed better in basic skill tests compared to their counterparts. The researcher studied schools within the same locality, thus the students were affected by similar socioeconomic. However, this study focused on one variable and failed to assess other critical differentiators, including class attendance levels, teacher-student relationships, and performance in technical subjects.

Moorefield, Spreul, and George (1987) studied a three-year looping structure and reported that more than 70% of the teachers asserted that the long relationship enabled them to apply more positive methods to manage the classes (Kenney, 2007). Approximately 95% of the teachers claimed to have a strong bond with the students, thus they were more familiar with students' individual academic and social needs, and 68% of these teachers stated that the students willingly participated in class discussions after the first year. The reactions of the students about learning, sense of pride and belonging, and attachment to the teachers heightened with each successive year. In like manner, 95% of the interviewed parents requested the administrators to place the students with the same teacher in the next grade level. There was a consistent improvement in mathematics scores with the students feeling more comfortable in handling math
classes as they moved from one grade to the next. Although the authors used various questions for the study, the researchers failed to compare the results with students in the one-year structure.

Feighery (2012) interviewed parents and children to determine their perspectives on looping. Though the research failed to present academic indicators of the failures or successes of looping, it offers in-depth insights on looping based on the perceptions of student and parents. The researcher noted that parents were secure knowing that their children have a long-term caregiver, and the close-knit relationships created within the loop heightened student confidence and self-efficacy. Unlike the traditional one-year classrooms, the relationship and friendships were not compromised, and the children ascertained that the teachers were heavily invested in them, leading to higher concentration levels which subsequently stabilized their lives.

Bogart (2002) studied the academic performance of looping schools in East Tennessee by comparing these schools to their peers in the conventional one-year instructional structure. The researcher compared test scores on TerraNova Standardized Achievement Test and program designs using the Two-way Analysis of Covariance. This study established that scores in Total Reading, Total Language, Total Battery, and Total High were consistently higher for students in the looping structure compared to the traditional one-year classroom structure.

This study was limited in scope, however, because the author focused on four schools within East Tennessee, sampling was clustered, and it was assumed that the test scores were accurate and symptomatic of the student’s performance.

Orazi (2012) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of looping on self-contained special needs classrooms through the use of archival data collected from an elementary institution in Southern New Jersey. The analyzed data included scores from a KTEA-11 test that is usually administered on an annual basis, the raw data of scores from mathematics and reading
concepts and the behavioral patterns for two consecutive years for each of the 15 sampled students. The KTEA-11 scores indicated that the students improved in reading and comprehension when they were placed with the same teacher for two full years, though there was no significant change in mathematics scores. However, the group behavioral pattern remained moderately the same.

The researcher analyzed data from one school, and the sample size of 15 was too small to offer any substantial results, essentially since the students were not benchmarked against students in the traditional one-year classroom arrangement.

Unresolved Issues and Problems Prompting the Study

Though the academic and social benefits attributed to looping outweigh the detriments, there is a lack of adequate qualitative research that scrutinizes the effects of looping. Few schools configure looping within their structure, thus limiting the scope of such a study. Moreover, few studies deal with the actual data from analyzing achievement scores between students in a looping structure compared to those in the traditional one-year system. Most researchers have focused on the theoretical aspects of the strategy. The unavailability of adequate qualitative studies on effects of looping prompted the need to conduct this research to provide more information that can be used by parents, teachers, and education policymakers to assess the implications of looping for possible implementation in all states.

The perceptions of various stakeholders toward the looping structure is unclear. The majority of the studies have focused on the psychological outcome of the long-term relationship between teachers and students relative to academic achievement. Thus, the analyses consider the connection of the teacher to the students and its effects on academics. Research stipulates there
is a gap about the various perspectives provided by teachers toward looping in different academic levels.

**Evidence That the Study Will Fill Literature Gaps**

This study analyzed the various perspectives related to the effects of looping, and thus helped fill the gap existing in current literature. This research was designed to strengthen literature supporting the application of looping in promoting learning in elementary schools. This study conducted interviews that incorporated feedback from various teachers, parents, and students who have experienced the looping design at the elementary level to determine their perception toward looping and how it affected student success. The respondents were afforded the opportunity of answering multiple questions that offered a conclusive analysis and recommendations for further research and application.

Lack of detailed research on the perspectives of teachers, parents, and students on looping has prompted this study that focused on the effects of multi-year teaching through the utilization of qualitative techniques. Qualitative research adequately analyzed various effects of looping and helped fill the gaps in current literature. The analysis from this study generated concrete information on looping and its effects on student success. This research aimed to strengthen literature on the continuum of learning through long-term relationships with the application of looping among students in elementary schools.

The researcher also conducted interviews that incorporated feedback from various teachers at an elementary level to determine their perception toward looping and how it affected the success of their students. Teachers were the primary influences of social well-being and learning environment for the students. Teachers' perceptions of looping and how they relate the looping structure to the traditional system forms the basis of understanding achievement and
long-term relationship discrepancies of the sample population. With such an analysis, it was possible to cohesively link the effects of looping on student success based on the perception of teachers, parents, and students toward the academic structure.

**Summary of the Literature Review**

In the traditional one-year classrooms, students are only allowed to grow at a fixed grade-level rate. Conversely, looping offers students the opportunity to grow at their own pace, thus maximizing their full potential. In every classroom, students demonstrate varying levels of learning comprehension. One of the major differences between the traditional and looping classroom structure is that in the latter, a student who is not reading at the required grade level is retained and given an opportunity to remain with the same teacher. In most instances, he/she can attain the expected score at the end of the second year. The long-term relationship developed between the stakeholders allows the teachers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each student and enables these teachers to support students' individual academic needs (Hara, 1996). Comprehension of the reading capacity of individual students is essential in enhancing their test results, as projected by NCLB. Only teachers that have looped with the students can group students in reading groups and adjust instructional programs accordingly without additional diagnostic tests that take up unnecessary time. All stakeholders, including parents, teachers, government, and policymakers should consider the implementation of looping structure to advance social and academic prowess of students.

The studies analyzed, suggested the usefulness of looping as an inclusive tool for all schools in the United States. Currently, the education system in the United States is devoid of programs that foster complete inclusion of all students. In part, this can be attributed to a system that is overloaded with students declining lack of dedication among instructors. Many students
have fallen behind grade level due to failures in teaching methods. Such students need special care, as well as services requiring documentation, dedication, and advocacy. These needs are sometimes more easily met in a looping system of teaching. A working relationship between the teacher and the student extending for more than one year fosters progress in the child’s academic ability. In addition, since the teacher has learned how to best help individual students, evidence exists that can be used to provide students with any necessary service. Research further suggested that unlike the traditional system of teaching, the looping model considered varying student abilities and interests. Since the teacher has enhanced his/her interests, abilities and preferences of the students, personalized programs and teaching methods that address specific student needs can be developed. The relationship and trust built between the teacher and the students are vital for close-monitoring of students when these students progress to higher levels of learning. Thus, with many schools adopting the looping classroom model of teaching, the problem of school dropout will be solved effectively.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research

A qualitative research study consists of collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that is typically based on observations and perspectives which are not quantified (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). Because qualitative research primarily focuses on conceptualizing a more profound understanding of an organization, specific method, or phenomenon, an extremely large sample size is not necessary. Qualitative research aims to provide a clear representation of the structure, order, and broad patterns found in a particular number or group of participants (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). Qualitative research does not alter variables, but instead, examines them as they naturally occur. Experimental conditions are not required as the qualitative data is collected in a natural environment. This type of research is typically more personal and provides evidence to support the needs and desires of those affected by the research findings. Qualitative research cannot be comprehensively conducted in a closed environment with no interaction. In fact, researchers conducting this type of study are compelled to go out into their field of interest and conduct face-to-face interviews, observations, video conferences, telephone calls, etc. Interaction is an important component of a qualitative research study.

When conducting observations, it was important for the researcher to note specific details so that interactions could be studied to fully understand the environment and to support data collected during the interviews. In addition, the observation notes were critical to the study to avoid bias and distortion of the researcher's influence and memory. The researcher may utilize anecdotal notes, video and audio recording of the conducted interviews, observations, participant responses, and behaviors during the data collection process. Interviews can be structured or semi-structured, including open or closed-ended questions. In addition to varying methods of data collection, the analysis process differs significantly from a quantitative study. Instead of
quantifying the results, various types of coding are available to choose from as the researcher should take note of any recurring themes or similarities within the interviews. In addition, as with any research, identities and privacy should always be protected and all participants should be treated with respect. All participants' privacy was protected by coding their names as well as the organization's name. Ethical concerns were considered along with how the study could affect the participants.

Although the merits of both quantitative and qualitative research are frequently debated, both methods are effective and the type of research should be determined based on the researcher's inquiry. The overall purpose of qualitative research is to attain an in-depth understanding of how people make sense of the events nearest to them. Comprehensive data is often gathered by asking open-ended questions (Occupy Therapy, 2014). A qualitative researcher’s ultimate goal is to understand the viewpoints and perspectives of the participants (Hickman, 2017). Qualitative researchers are concerned in investigating and comprehending how people interpret and react to specific experiences, and what meaning they credit to their experiences. With the desire to further investigate into the perceptions of elementary teachers, parents, and students, research methods utilized herein relied primarily on a qualitative approach where the researcher pursued a deeper understanding of the following question:

1. What are the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in elementary grades?

Qualitative research methods were utilized because this study emphasized the collection and analysis of perspectives of the research participants.
Research Approach

To adequately address the research question presented in this study, the researcher focused on a phenomenography design. According to Sherman and Webb (2004), the goal of phenomenography is to describe the behavior and beliefs of a particular phenomenon. Therefore, this study aims to explore emergent themes based on the responses provided by the teachers, parents, and students in the course of the interviews and observations as the primary data collection tools. Furthermore, phenomenography provides an empirical research tool which can help in answering the questions about learning in this form of educational research. This research approach focuses on collecting data about subjects' experiences in specific content.

The key elements of phenomenography consist of the different ways in which people think, conceptualize, and understand various aspects of the world, systems, or methods. For example:

(1) A phenomenographical study focuses on how people experience the phenomenon.
(2) A phenomenographical study is different from other forms of research because the object of the research and subject of the research are neither separate nor independent of one another.
(3) Phenomenography aims at identifying the various perceptions people hold on a particular subject.
(4) Bracketing is a critical component of phenomenography. This allows the researcher to scrutinize ideas based on the views of others without any input. Thus, the researcher approaches both the interviews and data to be analyzed without any personal perspectives.
The purpose of utilizing a phenomenography approach in this study is to discover the elements of relationships that exist during the looping process, which is most pertinent to student success, particularly at an elementary level. The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect and analyze data to understand the concepts regarding the contribution of looping on student success at an elementary level. Phenomenography entails the intensive use of simultaneously data collection and coding.

In this phenomenography approach, the goal was to invoke a think-aloud protocol in problem-solving. During the course of interviews, the researcher provided thought-provoking questions to the participants to describe their views on looping and how it affects various aspects of the learning experience. As part of data analysis, the researcher identified separate categories from the numerous descriptions provided by the interviewees on various dimensions of looping. The interview field notes and transcriptions recorded during data collection were used to develop the concepts during the process of coding. By reading through the transcripts, the researcher familiarized herself with the study and made corrections where needed. The second step of analysis involved compilation of the responses provided by the study participants based on a given question. The researcher then focused on the essential components of the dialogue by condensing the responses provided during interviews and comparing the categories. Once the comparison were made, the researcher named each of the categories depending on the descriptions, themes, and similarities.

The essence of the phenomenographic approach is to desist from focusing on individual approaches. Instead the focus should be placed on relational qualitative perspectives based on collective experience. This study created an outcome space by which to describe the primary aspects of variation of the effects of looping as demonstrated by the views of the respondents.
Another second-order perspective was adopted in this study whereby the quality conceptions as a result of looping were obtained from the interviews. The approach, therefore, represented a standard research method in educational processes and strategies in place by obtaining information based on the experiences of the parties involved in the looping design. Consequently, it is possible to identify the principles and systems which reinforce positive outcomes, especially in academic performance, development, and discipline. Qualitatively distinct categories were developed after transcription of the interview to inform on policies. Additionally, the researcher observed all teacher and student participants, which prompted continuous study on their perspectives regarding looping. Observations assisted the researcher in generating empirical data in the natural occurred setting. Field notes were taken throughout the observations and used to document how the participants experienced the looping design. The observational data was integrated for reflection, analysis, and interpretation of the phenomenon.

**Study Participants and Setting**

Study participants included willing elementary teachers, parents, and permitted students from a small rural school district in East Tennessee. Approximately 40% of the student population is economically-disadvantaged according to the Tennessee State Report Card and all the schools in the research district received Title I funding (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017). The district consisted of seven elementary schools, with an approximate enrollment of 2,300 students. The research school served approximately 394 students in grades Pre-K through 8. The school was extremely cohesive and supportive of each other. The community was small and tight-knit where most residents know, or are familiar with, the majority of people in that area. Grades 2-8 all follow the looping design. Student enrollment at the research school was approximately 395 students, with 95% of the student population identified as Caucasian.
was little diversity throughout the research school. In fact, the minority enrollment at the school was significantly less than that state's average of 35%.

Participants

To obtain a sufficient sample, the researcher sought a total of 12 participants from a willing population of elementary teachers, parents, and students who have been involved in and experienced the effects of a looping classroom design. The researcher limited the selection of four participants to each group; teachers, parents, and students. While their job was of much importance, paraprofessionals such as teaching assistants were not utilized for the data collection in this particular study. Teachers, in this case, were defined as those with a certified Tennessee teaching licensure, held a current teaching position, and had experience with a looping classroom design for a minimum of two consecutive years. All four teacher participants were teaching in a looping classroom in grades 3-4, but also had additional teaching experience with non-looping classrooms. Both grades were departmentalized. The four student participants had been enrolled with the teacher participants for two consecutive years, making this their second and final year with those teachers. The four parent participants each had a child in the 4th grade, which was the second year of their first complete loop. Parent participants were in no way related to the student participants. Thus, parent and student participants were not from the same family. Student participants were all in the 4th grade ranging from ages 9-10 years old and teacher participants had an average of ten years teaching experience. Although the student participants were in the second year of the looping design, they did have prior experience with the traditional one-year classroom setting in grades K-2.
Sampling

Due to the extent of the in-depth information required for this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling when selecting the teacher population. Sampling, or the selection of participants, is crucial in all types of research methods as it essential to attempt to obtain a sample to be the best representative, resulting in valid data most relevant to the research question. Purposeful sampling is indicated when the sample is selected based on specific characteristics of the population, as well as the objective of the study. Because the researcher's primary interest in the continuum of learning through long-term relationships was targeted more specifically toward elementary grades, four departmentalized teachers in 3rd grade and 4th grade were selected for the interview. To collect sufficient data, the researcher chose teachers in a specific school where looping was the primary teaching design. Teachers must have had completed at least one complete loop with a group of students, meaning the teachers had been with those same students for at least two consecutive years. Qualitative researchers often select purposive sampling to be superior in providing maximum insight and knowledge about the specific topic or area being studied.

After the researcher selected the four looping teacher participants, a simple random sampling model was used to choose the parent and student participants for the interviews. When using a simple random sample, participants are randomly selected where any compromising selections which could potentially lead to a biased sample are avoided. According to Ary (2014), the essential attribute of simple random sampling is that all members of the population have an equal and independent opportunity to be included in the sample.

All students in each of the four selected classes were provided a consent form for participation in the study (see Appendix D). On the form, the researcher requested parental
consent for student participation. As noted on this form, the researcher provided explicit details, along with the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher allowed the students one week to turn in the consent forms. A parent letter of interest was also included in the consent form. Parents were able to simply check, "yes" or "no" to specify their interest in participation. Upon the deadline for returning the participation consent forms, the names of the students, separated by class and whose parent(s) allowed them to participate in the interviews, were randomly recorded by lottery. Thus, four lists were created—one for each class. A computerized list organizer generated a random roll of students for each class. The first name on each of the four randomized lists was selected for the interview (n=4). The same process was carried out to select the parent sample. Therefore, one student and one parent from each of the four designated classrooms were selected. The researcher used the same teacher and student samples when observations were conducted.

The inquiry was conducted within the researcher's school district because an outside researcher might have been perceived as having little to no understanding of the culture of the school; this is known as the emic perspective, or the insider view in educational research (Rossman & Rallis, 2013). The choice of the selected schools was an expeditious way to collect data and provided the district with information and interpretation of the multi-year teaching method conducted within the county. Through the exploration of various perspectives within real-life context, the researcher developed an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of elementary teachers, parents, and students regarding the correlation between multi-year teaching and student success. Data was relevant and beneficial to surrounding schools within the district because these schools have been searching for innovative, alternative teaching methods to increase student achievement in the elementary grades. However, before any sampling or data
collection occurred, the researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once this approval was granted, the researcher proceeded with selecting participants, conducting interviews and observations, collecting artifacts, and analyzing data.

**Collection Procedure**

For a study to be reliable, it is necessary for various data sources to be present. In this qualitative study, the researcher utilized elementary teacher, parent, and student perspectives to obtain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and opinions on the continuum of learning through long-term relationships and student achievement. Because the researcher had no affiliation with the participating schools, it is believed that all participants were able to answer truthfully without being coerced or wary of sharing any information that may have obstructed their position or child's learning in the future. Collecting data from direct sources, such as elementary teachers, parents and students, enhanced the study because these participants have experienced the looping design firsthand and contributed more meaningful evidence on the teaching practice. Data collection in qualitative research provides evidence for the experience the study is investigating (Curtis, 2017).

Before generating a sample or conducting any data collection, the researcher first sought the approval from the director of schools in the research district (see Appendix A). Once permission was granted, the researcher emailed the principal of an elementary school within the research district that utilized looping to request permission to conduct research at that school (see Appendix B). This school employed several tenured, veteran teachers with both looping and non-looping experience. After receiving feedback, the researcher emailed the teachers in grades 3-4 who met all the criterion to participate in the study to request their participation in the research (see Appendix C). Upon receiving consent from the participating teachers, the
researcher delivered copies of a parent/student consent form to these teachers to distribute to all of their students (see Appendix D). This form detailed the study as well as how participants' privacy would be protected. The researcher allowed students two weeks to return the consent forms. Once the consent forms were returned, the researcher randomly selected four parents and four students from all the eligible participants to participate in the study. Once the participants were selected, the researcher notified the members and scheduled interviews to take place between January 23, 2018 to January 31, 2018. Interviews were scheduled in increments of 20-35 minutes for each participant. Interviews involved face-to-face conversations with the participants in which the researcher asked open-ended questions regarding participants' experience with looping. To increase validity of the study and obtain a better understanding of the impact of looping, the researcher observed the participants in their natural classroom setting. The observational method was utilized as a supplemental mean for corroborating the research findings. Because the researcher was on site, the observations and artifacts gathered from the participants provided her with a better understanding of the looping classroom.

**Instruments**

The researcher served as the human instrument for data collection. Participant interviews and non-verbal responses were recorded to add to the total context of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to collect data. Based on the scope of the study, which focused on investigating the effects of learning through the continuum of relationships, the researcher utilized interviewing as the primary data source. Using an interview to study the responses of those involved provided a better understanding of the relationship between looping and student success. Open-ended questions were aimed at investigating personal experiences with looping. Questions were direct, unbiased, and unusual
words and phrases were avoided. Student interview questions were rephrased so these participants would have a clearer understanding of exactly what was being asked during the interview. Questions were created from components of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, which support the research question. Themes revolved around gathering perspectives on classroom environments and relationships and how these components contribute to improved student success while students are enrolled in a looping design. The information gathered contributed to a more in-depth understanding of the individual's experience with looping by learning from each individual's perspective. This information also contributed to educators’ understanding of the benefits and possible drawbacks of the looping design. The interviews served as a systematic method for gathering information from the sample to investigate the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success. Because the study is qualitative, the researcher investigated trends and diversity between responses.

The instruments were created to gather data on the effects of looping in the form of semi-structured, face-to-face conversations with all participants. This information contributed to an understanding of participants' experiences with looping from their perspectives. Open-ended questions provided opportunities for both the researcher and participants to discuss the topic in more detail and use probes to clarify and elaborate responses to questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Interview questions were developed around the concepts identified in the literature review. Elementary teachers, students, and parents were all asked the same set of open-ended questions (see Appendix E). All participant groups were asked the same set of questions to validate the responses. This allowed the researcher to compare and contrast varied responses and
experiences among all participant groups. Interviews were scheduled to take place in the time frame of January 23, 2018 to January 31, 2018 immediately after the school day to ensure that no instructional time was lost throughout the process. Meeting outside of school hours made it more convenient for parents as they were already at school to pick up their children. Technology was utilized to aid with the collection, transcription, coding, and the security of data. The researcher audio recorded all interviews in order to analyze responses. Consent was submitted before any recording was conducted. Participants signed that they understood that such interviews and related materials would be kept completely anonymous, and that the results of this study may be published. Upon completion of the interviews, the recordings were used to transcribe the responses and conversations that occurred. These recordings allowed the researcher to listen and concentrate better on the responses and review the material with no distractions, and also provided the researcher with the opportunity to compare field notes with actual interview responses to address any subjectivity. Themes from the semi-structured interviews were identified after recording, transcription, and coding. After all interviews were conducted, the researcher scheduled observations with the teacher participants to study the environment and effects of the looping design. The observations were focused because they were supported by interviews that offered participant insight, which subsequently guided the researcher’s decisions about what to observe. Field notes were the primary way the researcher collected data from the participant observations. These notes provided an accurate description of what was observed and served as the product of the observation process. Artifacts relevant to the study were collected and examined during the analysis phase of the research.
Interviews

All interviews were conducted at the research school in a natural setting where teachers, parents, and students felt most comfortable. The individual interviews served as the primary method for data collection. These interviews were semi-structured and questions were generated prior to the study. Question items were open-ended, which permitted the participants to create responses based on their own experiences. The researcher frequently asked participants to elaborate on various responses. Interviews and field notes were recorded for effective transcription and coding purposes. In addition, other artifacts, such as student work, goal-setting strategies established by the teacher, benchmark assessments, and newsletters were considered when collecting data to support the prior data retrieved from the interviews.

Limitations and Delimitations

Despite the effort to control delimitations of the study, some remained. Parent and student participants were chosen by a simple random sampling method. The researcher selected four teachers, parents, and students for a total of 12 participants. The study was delimited to target a specific 4th grade class. Therefore, data sources relied solely upon information collected from participants with direct experiences with the looping process.

The study was limited to a specific rural school due to the lack of other institutions presently practicing the looping method. The use of other schools within the district was outside the scope of this study because they only used the traditional one-year classroom design. Due to the small sample size, race, gender, and socioeconomic statuses were possible limitations in the study.

Due to the study's reliance on perspectives, the research did not have the ability to control the attitudes of teachers, parents, and students. Varying teaching characteristics, subject-matter
familiarity, and years of experience were also outside of the researcher's control. While some believe teachers are most successful in the first three years of their teaching career, others suspect teachers with more experience sometimes have the potential to be more effective. Some opinions of the looping program may be skewed by a less than ideal class or an above average class while in the looping process, as well as personality clashes or student strengths and weaknesses in specific subjects. Expectations, classroom management, attitude, parental support, and other characteristics can be contributing factors to student success. Because many teachers participating in the looping design have volunteered to experiment with the practice, there is a possibility these teachers entered the program with an optimistic attitude that had a positive influence on the environment. The evaluation of perspectives only addressed factors in the classroom directly affected by the looping process.

While teaching strategies and presentation of content varied among all participants, it was assumed that all teachers in the study provided instruction following the frameworks of the Tennessee State standards. It was also assumed that all teachers fostered a respectful learning environment while forming positive relationships with their students. One may also assume that all participants answered each item honestly and to the best of their ability during the interview process.

**Ethical Considerations**

Participants were advised of the researcher's interests and no bias was evident throughout the research process. Research did not begin until Carson-Newman granted IRB approval and the research district granted permission to collect data from research participants. Consent forms explicitly described the study and how the results would be utilized were signed by all participants. Participants were aware they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any
time. Identities were protected using anonymous names and labels via a coding technique during the analysis phase of the study. Questions were direct but formulated to avoid causing any psychological harm to those who may have suffered from a bad experience with looping.

**Issues of Rigor**

To validate the instrument, a team of four educators were selected to review and critique each question listed for the interviews. These educators were experienced and familiar with the looping practice and traditional one-year classrooms. This team assisted the researcher in clarifying any uncertainties and helped alter any questions that were not written in a manner that was easily understandable by the respondents. To test the reliability of the interview questions, the researcher conducted a pilot study. The purpose of doing a pilot study was to discover any flaws which may have existed in the measuring instrument. Data triangulation occurred to connect statistical findings between the participant groups throughout the interview process. To verify credibility, the researcher restated and summarized responses to support the credibility of participant responses during the interview. The researcher also allowed participants to review the detailed transcriptions to verify accuracy. The researcher randomly selected two teachers and two parent participants to conduct member checks throughout the data analysis phase of the study. The first member check occurred after the transcription of the interview process to ensure the accuracy of the report. The second member check occurred after the participant observations. Teachers were asked to review the researcher's field notes and summary of the classroom observations to ensure that all biases were eliminated and only meaningful conclusions were drawn and recorded. Member checks throughout the study triangulated the data to increase credibility and transferability. Additionally, as an effort to detect misinterpreted data, the researcher chose an impartial individual to the data. The participant selected to
conducted the peer debriefing was an uninterested party who had experience with both looping and the traditional one-year classroom. Peer debriefing throughout the study and included an examination of the transcribed interviews and field notes taken from participant observations. This participant reviewed the data in order to identify any over-emphasized or under-emphasized points, vague descriptions, general errors in the data, and biases or assumptions made by the researcher.

**Analysis Procedure**

This approach goes far beyond simply comparing opinions of the participants. A thematic analysis was performed on the data. Data was analyzed to identify themes and generalizations, and the common themes and generalizations were coded. The researcher made a note of any common, recurring themes that emerged specifically relating to the looping process and connected to the research question. A narrative was written to report the findings of the data analysis. Once the interviews were conducted and the data was collected, transcriptions were detailed and thematic coding was performed to interpret the effects of looping. Similarly, observations were conducted and artifacts were gathered to cross-verify the information provided during the interviews. These methods were used to triangulate the various sources of data to validate the research findings.

**Summary**

Chapter 3 presented the methodology and procedures implemented to determine if the continuum of learning through long-term relationships had a positive effect on student achievement. The purpose of this research was to investigate the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships. Data retrieved and analyzed from the teacher, parent, student interviews provided a better understanding of the effects of looping on student success in
elementary grades. Data collected for the research through interviews was kept confidential per the requirements in ethical research. The research was limited to willing participants. The qualitative research was centered on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data from interview respondents. The information gathered from the interviews on looping provided key information that guides policy and structures in education. Through sampling techniques, the individual experiences which informed the research were used to generate a wider perspective of the issues of looping and its impact on teachers, parents, and students. Pilot studies were effective tools in the data collection and provision of detailed assessment on the interview questions before undertaking the actual research. The literature review helped create identifying themes in the responses of the participants. Results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

In this section, the findings are presented. The intent of this qualitative study was to investigate the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in elementary grades. An intensive literature review was conducted and categories for interview questions were created from recurring themes in the existing literature on looping and its effects. The methods of data collection included: (a) semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, (b) classroom observations during normal school activities, and (c) examination of teacher and student artifacts. Interviews were conducted at the research school with four elementary looping teachers, four parents of students who were enrolled in the looping program, and four 4th grade students who were currently enrolled in the looping program. Students had remained with the research teachers for both 3rd grade and 4th grade. Interviews were audio and video recorded and consisted of nine open-ended items where the researcher occasionally followed up with additionally questions or requested the participant to elaborate on a response. To fully understand the participant's perception and experience to the phenomenon of looping, all participants were asked the same interview questions in the same order so the responses of the varying participants could be compared. Interviews were transcribed verbatim to the recordings. The data collected in this study was coded and organized into the following pre-established categories: (a) general, (b) environment, (c) academic success, and (d) instructional support in a spreadsheet format to identify emergent themes. The researcher analyzed the responses, observations, and artifacts which related to the following research question:

1. What are the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in elementary grades?
Participant Background

All teacher participants had experience with both looping and non-looping classroom settings. Additionally, research teachers had an average of thirteen and a half years teaching experiencing where at least five of those years was assigned in a looping program. All parent and student participants had previously been involved in a two-year loop in 1st and 2nd grade. Student participants portrayed a variety of gender and age. There were no ethnicity differences between any of the research participants. One student and one parent were randomly selected from each of the four research teachers' homerooms.

Student Participant's Definitions of Terms

Before the researcher conducted any student interviews, the research students were asked to explain their understanding of the terms looping, advantages, and disadvantages. All of the student participants were aware and knowledgeable to the term, "looping." Student A and B both defined looping as, "When you have the same teacher for two years. "Student C and D both defined looping as, "When you stay with you teacher for more than one year." Three out of the four student participants were able to define or provide an example of advantages and disadvantages. Student D indicated, "It means like an advantage is like what's good about it and a disadvantage is what's bad about it." Knowing the students were aware of the terms used in the question items allowed the researcher to proceed with the interviews.

Findings

The interview instrument focused on four main pre-established categories found within the literature; (1) general, (2) environment, (3) student success, and (4) instructional support. The four categories were analyzed to identify specific emerging themes. Themes emerged from commonalities between participants' responses. Each category and emergent themes are
described. Classroom observations, artifacts, and document examination were also analyzed to triangulate data collected during the interviews. In addition, the researcher established a reflective journal to further understand the phenomenon under study. The researcher kept notes throughout the study to expand other sources of data collection.

General Perception

Questions 1-3 of the interview were designed to measure the participant's overall perspective of the studied phenomenon, looping. However, general perceptions were recognized and coded in other questions throughout the interviews as well. Three themes emerged from this category which were (1) benefits or advantages, (2) drawbacks or disadvantages, and (3) recommendations-why or why? All twelve participants responded favorably in regards to their experience with the looping program.

Benefits or advantages. Responses to question #1, "Please describe any benefits or advantages of the looping the process," supported that participants found looping to be quite advantageous. Five subcategories emerged from this theme: (1) academics, (2) consistency, (3) expectations, (4) familiarity, and (5) relationships. All research participants cited the five subcategories during the interviews. Parent C supported her academic advantage by stating, "The benefits are that the teachers really know them and know their academic levels so they come in the next grade, and they know where they're at." This response was reinforced by the review and examination of the teacher's data walls and data folders. Teacher participants created a data folder of last year's achievement test scores which guided their planning and instruction. Student A went on to say, "They know what academic level you're at." This claim was supported by the "goal sheet" artifact. All teachers required students to complete a goal sheet at the end of each class to better understand the students' comprehension which was later used to guide instruction. Teachers also used reported scores from their data folders to group students during
their center time. All participants elaborated on how the extended time with teachers and/or students improved either their learning or instruction, in some cases, both were cited. During observations, teachers were targeting student learning through differentiation and ability groups. One teacher even mentioned she can use her second year to improve her teaching in weak areas she identified in the data folders. Student A indicated, "One of the good effects is that you get to stay with the same teacher which means they'll take more time and stuff like that which makes your grades better." Other students went on to say things like, "You get to know how they're going to be, like how they're going to teach you and understand them better" (Student B). Students were fully aware of how staying with the same teacher for two consecutive years had been advantageous to their success. Teacher participants supported the claim that looping benefited students academically by stating, "We're able to go deeper the next year and I feel like I can know them better, and I know what they know and they're more use to us already by being there that second year . . . " (Teacher A), and "I know what I taught them and where they're at and so I know exactly from the get-go where to go" (Teacher C). The researcher observed the majority of teachers reflecting on previous taught lessons. Teachers echoed comments during instruction similarly as, "I know you know this because I know your third-grade teacher."

All twelve participants claimed consistency and familiarity to be some of the many advantages to looping. During the classroom observations, the researcher observed a great deal of consistency between the four classes. Classrooms were organized similarly, all teachers used the same behavioral consequences and incentives, students had journals in all four of the subject-areas, and student grouping was consistent. The researcher also observed all teachers providing immediate feedback to students during instruction and small group learning centers. Students were not off task and seemed to be familiar and experienced with classroom materials as well as
procedures. Several comments were made throughout the interviews discussing consistencies from 3rd grade to 4th grade as well as those among each of the teachers. Parents demonstrated their liking to consistencies by asserting statements such as, "My son was so much more comfortable coming into the classroom knowing that he already knew their rules, he already knew their basic scheduling everything like that" (Parent A) and "As far as a mom's perspective, I feel like it is, for me, more comfortable and I'm able to know, "okay, we need to start studying here because we're going to have a test on this day,," and you learn the teacher more as far as what to expect from them" (Parent D). Student A proclaimed, "You get to have them for two years so you're use to that teacher." All research students discussed specific assignments, tasks, or routines that stayed the same from year to year. During class switch time, the researcher observed students' familiarity. They knew exactly what to do and what task to get started on. Teacher D supported consistency as an advantage by stating, "It's so much more of an advantage because children when they come in at the beginning of the year, one of their biggest stumbling blocks is trying to figure out what the teacher likes and dislikes and how to get along and they already have that learned their second year."

Expectations were also cited by all research participants. All participants echoed how advantageous it was to start the second consecutive year knowing everyone's expectations. Class expectations were consistent among all teacher participants. Expectations were also posted in each classroom. Students and parents were aware of the teacher's expectations and the teachers were accustomed to meeting the expectations of the parents and students. Parents supported expectations as an advantage by making comments such as "she (their student) knows what to expect . . . . " (Parent B). All research teachers indicated looping made teaching much easier since the students were familiar with classroom procedures and instructional practices. Teacher
D indicated, "... students automatically know what they come in and do first thing. They know what's expected of them from beginning to finish." During one classroom observation, when the students entered the room, they all went straight to a specific shelf and retrieved their journals without being asked. Student responses were also 100% on the subcategory of expectations. Students A, B, C, and D all specified they knew what their teacher liked and disliked and was aware of how their teachers would teach.

Relationships were a strong attribute for this looping program. All teacher, parent, and student participants cited positive relationships with the 3rd grade and 4th grade looping program. Students were open to answering and asking questions during observations. Students were also observed working collaboratively and cooperatively in all four classes without any disciplinary infractions. In order to create a sense of community, a certain level of trust would have to be established. According to Teacher B, "they're so comfortable. I mean, it's almost like family." She went on to report, "... a lot of the times in that situation by your second year with them, they slip up and call you mom." Parent participants pointed out that their students were more successful due to parent-teacher and teacher-student bonds, which were established in the first year of the loop. Parent A reported that her son knew his teachers loved him while Parent B reported the teachers knew how to teach to his daughter individually. Individualized learning was observed during center time in all classes. Students were required to complete varied levels of work. Parent C suggested that the teachers really knew the students as well as their academic levels. None of the students reported any negative relationships with their looping teachers. In fact, when asked about the advantages of looping, Student C said, "I love them!"

All parents and students indicated they knew these teachers better by the second year. Additionally, 100% of research teachers indicated they were more familiar with their students.
and families as well. All research participants responded in an optimistic manner and cited factors that made the experience a positive one. Benefits or advantages was coded for 100% of the participants. All subcategories within this theme were supported with either an artifact or classroom observation.

**Disadvantages and drawbacks.** General question #2 asked the participants to describe any disadvantages or drawbacks they had experienced during the looping process. Subcategories which emerged from this theme was (1) relationship issues, (2) no drawbacks or disadvantages, and (3) challenging transition. Six participants reported relationship issues as a disadvantage to the looping process. However, it is important to note that four of those six participants had not personally experienced any relationship issues, but instead spoke about how relationship issues, if arose, could potentially be seen as a disadvantage, theoretically speaking. When asked about disadvantages or drawbacks, Parent B indicated he was not aware of any negatives but, "... the only thing I could see for the teachers if they've got a bad class, they keep them for two years." Another parent echoed they had not experienced any drawbacks but could potentially see how it would be a disadvantage if there was a conflict with a teacher. Two teacher participants spoke of specific experiences regarding personality clashes. Both agreed the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, but relationship issues were a concern and could make for a tiresome two years. However, one those teachers reported, "you have groups that wear you out, but you still get attached to them too" (Teacher B). The researcher did not observe any problematic behavioral issues during the class observations.

Several participants indicated they had not experienced any drawbacks or negative experiences from looping. 75% of student participants reported no disadvantages to staying with the same teachers for more than one year. The remaining one student stated the
disadvantage as not being able to meet new teachers. All research parents reported they had not directly experienced any disadvantages with the looping process. All teachers reported some sort of disadvantage to the phenomenon, some being from personal experiences and others, issues that could potentially arise.

While relationships were reported as one of the strongest and most positive attributes of the looping process, 50% of teacher participants expressed concern with transitioning. Teacher C indicated it was an advantage for her students to be aware of her rules, expectations, and procedures however, "... then they have to go to somebody else and it's different. She later described, "I think it is probably a bigger adjustment... we've gone from two years of this, which was good at the time, but then now we have to adjust to a whole new person."

Another teacher participant implied that since her classroom had attained a family status, it was sometimes more difficult for the students to transition to the next grade. Teachers seemed to foster a trusting and respectful environment during the observations. A sense of community was easily recognized among all four classes. One teacher greets each class with a pat on the back or high five at the beginning of class. Another teacher asked a student about a sick family member. Although no students reported "difficult transitioning" as a disadvantage, one research parent discussed how his student was already questioning, "what will I do next year?" The parent went on to explain how moving on could potentially be a disadvantage to looping because the students get so attached to the teachers.

Overall, most of the participants did not have any direct negative experience with the looping program. Drawbacks included personality clashes and difficult transitioning to the next grade. While disadvantages were reported, participants followed up with the belief that the advantages still outweigh the drawbacks.
**Recommendations.** General question #3 asked participants if they would recommend looping. All twelve participants were favorable and reported, "Yes, they would recommend looping." Nine of the twelve research participants elaborated on why they would recommend the practice. Three major subcategories emerged from the responses within the recommendations theme: (1) relationships, (2) student confidence, and (3) academic growth. 100% of student participants reported they would recommend looping because they liked being with their teachers, were aware of who they were going to be with for the next two years and were able to get to know their teachers better. Students appeared to be content and comfortable in their learning environment during the class visit. Parents also discussed recommending the program based on close relationships that were established in the first year. Additionally, 75% of research teachers recommended looping due to the positive relationships which were established as a result of the extended time together. Teacher A stated, "I know them better and they're more use to us already by that second year." Teacher D followed with, "I look forward to having them again."

When asked about the recommendations of the looping program, self-efficacy or confidence was coded on four interviews. Parents discussed how being with the same teacher for more than one year made their child more comfortable and more likely to ask questions which as a result, contributed to improved student success. During one class observation, the teacher was reviewing for a test. All students participated and raised their hand to answer a question. The researcher did not observe any students withdrawn or disengaged from the lesson. Students appeared to comfortable with answering questions and asking for help. One teacher used a think-pair-share method for classroom discussion. Students shared answers confidently and appeared to be at ease with working with a partner.
Some participants recommended looping based on student growth they had observed when remaining with the same teacher. One parent stated, "... he has grown so much more having the same teachers the two years in a row and he's just loved it!" (Parent A). Another parent responded with, "I feel like they start learning quicker" (Parent D). Teacher participant C confirmed student growth and allowed the researcher to view benchmark assessments from 3rd grade to 4th grade. Gains were made in her content area of math.

It can be concluded that all research participants recommended looping. In total, nine out of the twelve participants elaborated on why they would recommend looping. All participants advocated for the looping program. In this general category, the researcher was able to investigate and analyze the overall perception of looping. All twelve participants reported positive experiences, however some disadvantages were mentioned. Conversely, disadvantages which were mentioned were not reported to impede student success. Many responses were followed up with an observation or artifact.

Environment

In this category, the researcher asked two questions to investigate the relationships established during the looping process as well as the relationship's effects on student success. Question #1 in this category addressed the relationships among teachers, parents and students whereas question #2 was directed toward student-student interactions and relationships. Three main themes emerged from question #1: (1) parent-student relationships, (2) parent-teacher relationships, and (3) student-teacher relationships. Two main recurring themes from question #2 included: (1) friends and (2) cohesiveness.

Parent-student relationships. When asked about the relationships between teachers and parents, 100% of research parent participants reported staying with the same teacher has helped
them be more involved in their child's learning and success. Parent A stated, "I know when
they're going to send home the newsletters, I know what they're going to want him to do and
what they're expectations are." She went on to say,

It's made it so much easier for the kids to be prepared and for me to help to know
when. Okay, we have to study this on this day, we got to study this to help my
kids. It has made it so much easier as family.

Newsletters were collected and examined by the researcher. Newsletters were distributed
weekly and included any school or class events, standards that were taught that week, important
vocabulary, test days, and strategies parents could use at home to provide students with extra
learning opportunities. Newsletters were written in great detail. Parent B indicated that due to
the strong bonds with these teachers, their family had constructed routines at home to reach
expectations at school. He also reported, “…it's like second nature. We've got a routine, we
know what's expected. It's not a problem.” He also discussed how his student's favorite thing to
do was to teach and quiz him on the lessons she had learned that day. Parent D elaborated on
how even if there ever was a conflict, which she did not report any, she would "talk it through"
with her child and say, "okay, this is how this teacher is going to do, it's what they expect of you,
and you're going to need to be prepared next year." None of the research parents reported any
negative relationships with their students. Unsurprisingly, neither student nor teacher
participants commented on relationships between parents and students.

**Parent-teacher relationships.** Strong parent-teacher relationships were cited by all
parent and teacher participants as part of their positive experience of looping which contributed
to student success. Parent A stated, "I feel like I can go talk to these ladies with anything if he's
having an issue or if he's not sure about something because I've been able to know them for so
much longer." The parent also elaborated on how well the teachers worked with her to provide additional help and support when her student was struggling. This response was supported by the newsletter artifact. Teachers supported struggling learners outside the classroom by providing parents with strategies and suggestions which could be practiced at home to increase student performance via the weekly newsletter. Open communication was coded several times within the "parent-teacher relationship" subcategory. Parent B reported, "... the extra time has helped me with relationships with them. They give me feedback, I give them feedback. It goes both ways." Later, the same parent detailed how parent-teacher conferences were more meaningful and said, "This experience has helped me with relationships with them because I've been able to give them feedback (Parent B). Other parents echoed how positive relationships with the looping teachers has helped them play an active role in their child's education. One parent even said, "I have a really good relationship with all four of the teachers that she has and I enjoy it!" (Parent C). The researcher observed parents and teachers conversing between interviews. Friendly greetings were exchanged and some even remained at the school talking to the teacher after the interviews were conducted.

Teachers reported the extended time with their students and parents allowed them to be more aware of parental support or lack of. Three out of four teachers responded with similar statements such as, "I know their abilities, I know their families, and I know who has help at home and who doesn't, and who I can call and say, "can you help them with this?'" (Teacher C). Looping has provided the research teachers with the familiarity and continuity to comfortably call upon parents when a concern arose which could have negatively impacted students' success. 100% of parent and teacher participants reported improved relationships by the second year. When asked if looping had influenced more parents to be involved, one teacher specified that
while relationships between teachers and parents were positive, looping did not have a direct effect on increased parental support. Teacher D suggested, "I wouldn't say that we really gain because they've already decided if they're kind of involved or not." Only one negative comment was coded from this category. Teacher C discussed the hindrance it could bring if a parent was not pleased with the teacher. She did mention, "... for the most part all relationships between our parents are good, but the second year could be somewhat difficult if the parent was not pleased the first year."

Overall, 100% of parents and teachers responded with positive relationships and experiences with one another. Seven out of eight teacher and parent participants elaborated on how these relationships assisted in improving student success. Open lines of communication were established and frequently utilized to ensure students performed at their optimal level. Additionally, all parents reported positive relationships with their student. None of the student participants commented on parent-teacher or parent-student relationships.

**Student-teacher relationships.** All twelve participants cited positive relationships between teachers and students. Parents expressed how much more comfortable their student was beginning school the second year of the loop as result of the relationships established the previous year. Student D reported, "It's better cause at first you're nervous, and then the second year you're just like ‘ah’ cause you get to know them and stuff." Parent A stated,

> My son loves these four ladies and I think that's helped with him having them for both years and he knows they care about him and they want him to succeed. I think that's probably true for all of the kids in this grade. It's very much helped them all.
Parent B followed with, "...the extended time has benefited my daughter because she knows how they teach." During classroom observations, the researcher observed several students hugging their teachers as they entered and exited the classrooms. When switching classes, teachers and students conversed about personal events such as sports, one student's pet, and a sick family member. Additionally, students were engaged in classroom discussions and rarely off task during small group center time. Class discussions were ongoing and active, and students appeared to be comfortable with asking and answering questions. Teachers were continuously praising students and provided them with encouraging feedback. Parent C reported,

They develop a more close relationship with their teachers. If they have a question, they're less likely to drawback, they'll raise their hand and answer the question because they're more comfortable with them. The teacher praises them and they're very comfortable. I think they can learn better because they have a more comfortable atmosphere with each teacher.

When asked about relationships with their teachers, students consistently replied that it was nice to know who they were going to be with for two years and that the teachers knew them better. Student C answered with, "I love my teachers" and when asked to elaborate on his relationships with his teachers, he said, "It's perfect! We don't argue and everybody gets along." Student C later specified, "I have a good relationship with my teachers. Nothing really goes bad. I like having more time with my teachers." All research teachers were also incredibly positive in regards to their relationships with students. All four teacher participants discussed how much more comfortable students were teachers in the second year of the loop. Teacher B said, "...they're so comfortable. I mean it's almost like family and a lot of times in your second year the students slip up and call you Mom.a lot." Teacher C described, "I feel like you really get to know
the kids better because you have them 2 years in a row." Teacher D spoke about the biggest advantage to looping was, "... definitely the relationship with the kids. I feel like I have a better knowledge of them. I think by the second year they trust you."

While all teacher participants reported positive teacher-student relationships, all four of them reported negative teacher-student relationships as well. Two teachers provided a background on a specific instance where a problematic student was retained, making the teachers have him in class for three consecutive years instead of two. Both teachers reported this experience to be negative on his student success because he may have felt belittled or disliked the teachers. Another teacher commented, "Sometimes you have a rough group of students and that really wears you down and after two years, it is very hard, but I feel that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages" (Teacher B). Teacher C noted negative relationships could simply stem from a personality clash but did not speak of any specific negative teacher-student relationships she had experienced. The researcher did not observe any negative interactions between teachers and students during classroom observations.

All research participants positively commented on teacher-student relationships. Teachers reported positive and negative teacher-student relationships. Parents elaborated on how the extended time provided students with familiarity which resulted in positive teacher-student relationships. A sense of community was observed throughout all four classes where the class climate was positive and encouraging. All research students cited they knew their teachers better by the second year of the loop.

**Relationships among students.** When the researcher inquired about relationships involved with the looping process, eight research participants elaborated on student-student relationships. Although teacher participants discussed parent-teacher and student-teacher
relationships, none of them commented on relationships among students. However, 100% of parent and student participants cited positive student-student relationships. Parent A stated, "They're all such good "buds" with each other because they've just been able to kind of form that cohesive unit. It's like a class family." During class observations, students were grouped where they completed tasks as a team. Students worked collaboratively and cooperatively. One teacher assigned a team leader within each of her groups. If students had a question during their group work time, they had to ask their team leader before interrupting the teacher in her small group. Various students asked their team leader for help while working on math tasks. In another class, a teacher conducted a verbal review for a social studies test. Students encouraged each other during this task, especially if a student answered incorrectly. When one student answered aloud incorrectly, another student replied, "That's okay, you'll get it next time." In science class, students worked together on science experiments. When a successful experiment was conducted or a hypothesis proved to be valid, students gave high-fives and thumbs-up to each other. Parent D felt like the strong student-student relationships created a healthy competition between the students. She said her student finds someone in the class with a comparable academic level and challenges himself to study more to see if he can beat that student on a grade. She reported, "I believe the students feel like, "I can rely on this person as a friend, but we can also challenge each other in learning and push each other." Students also informed the researcher of positive relationships between their peers. When asked what is was like when a new student came into the loop, Student C said, "I get along with them, and if they don't know the stuff, I help them get on to it." Other students indicated they were able to get to know the students better because they had spent two years with them. Parent B reported, "I think the relationships between the students are good and they're excited to be back with them."
The researcher did not observe any negative student-student interactions. Students seemed to enjoy working with each other during centers, experiments, and test review. While none of the teacher participants reported neither positive nor negative effects looping has had on student relationships, parents reported students were able to be more engaged and inquisitive because they were comfortable with their peers.

**Student Success**

Student success was the third pre-established category in the interview questions. Interview questions #6 and 7 investigated the participant's perception on how looping has directly affected student success. Two themes emerged from these questions: (1) academic effects related to looping and (2) academic growth and retention. Question #6 focused on the academic effects related to looping and question #7 concentrated on the correlation between looping and academic retention and growth. Commonalities between participant responses generated three subcategories for each theme in this main category of student success. Table 1 provided below demonstrates the frequency count of codes and emerging subcategories for this category.
Table 1

*Student Success Frequency Count*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 3-Student Success (SS)</th>
<th>No. of Docs (12)</th>
<th>% of 12 Docs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSQ1. Academic effects related to looping</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved self-efficacy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced school-anxiety</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student openness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSQ2. Academic retention, growth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional growth - positive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth - positive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention - positive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic effects related to looping.** Three subcategories emerged from this theme: (1) improved self-efficacy, (2) reduced school anxiety, and (3) student openness. 100% of research participants cited the extended time provided by looping contributed to student success due to students feeling more valuable and experiencing less anxiety at school. Self-efficacy can be detrimental to student success. Teacher participants discussed how looping improved student self-efficacy as a result of being familiar with routines and procedures. Teachers implied students were able to be more confident in their work because they were aware of teacher expectations. Teacher B cited, "they tend to be way more responsible because they know the routines and how important they are. They pretty well know how they're going to operate and they just go with it." Teacher C stated that students were able to work through tasks with assurance because the students knew exactly where materials and resources were located and were aware of her expectations. Class expectations were posted in all four 4th grade classrooms along with multiple growth-mindset posters. During class observations, the researcher observed
centers in most of the classes. Students did not have questions regarding what was expected during that time. Teachers also supported positive self-efficacy by differentiating instruction during small groups. Although everyone was not working on the same academic level, all students were able to experience success. Additionally, even when centers were game-like, students were required to turn in evidence, which made them accountable for group work. They were also aware of the time they had to complete a task. In classes where centers were being conducted, teachers displayed a timer at the front of the classroom. Students knew if they had no work to show when the timer alarmed, the teacher would deduct DOJO points. DOJO was the incentive/consequence point system teachers consistently used within the four classes. Points were given when students followed instructions, demonstrated effort, and displayed good behavior. The researcher observed various students receiving DOJO points for their hard work. Students were ecstatic. One student said, "Yes! I'm only 3 points away from getting an ice cream." Another student, who did not receive a DOJO point stated, "Mrs. Sally, I'm going to try harder tomorrow so I can earn my movie lunch." In another class, teachers supported confidence and level of effort through goal sheets. Students were required to write their "I can" statement, and self-score their comprehension before and after the lesson as well their level of effort for that day. Student C referenced the goal sheet when asked about academic effects of looping. He exclaimed, "I only put a 2 when I'm really worried about something, but I never put a 1. It helps me like know what I do know and what I don't know." Teacher D reported,

They kind of settle in 4th grade even if they didn't do as well in 3rd grade. You can kind of see improvements in 4th grade where they've settled and, "I'm comfortable with this, I know the procedures, I know what we're doing.
Parents and students both discussed how staying with the same teacher has assisted students in performing better in the classroom because there was less adjustments and the students knew what to expect. Parent A elaborated on how the extended time with teachers helped her son be more organized which made him be more academically prepared. Parent B stated, "There was no adjustment period, she's continued her learning experience and it gets better all the time." Students reported staying with the same teacher improved their grades because they were more likely to remember lessons from the previous year and were able to better understand their teachers. When asked about academic effects of looping, Student B replied, "I think it would make my grades better because I get to know them better and know what they mean better. Like, each year I know how they're going to teach me."

Reduced school-anxiety and student openness were two other subcategories coded under the academic effects theme. 100% of research participants reported less school-anxiety contributed to student success. 75% of participants noted familiarity allowed students to perform as more active learners and inquire about misconceptions inside the classroom. During class observations, students did not appear to struggle with anxiety or sharing with the class. In science class, students presented experiments. In social studies, students answered questions aloud in regards to a test review. In math class, the teacher supported student openness with a question box. Students were allowed to anonymously leave a question they may have had regarding the lesson and the teacher answered the question the next day so all students could discuss the misconception. Parent D indicated,

I feel like it has boosted his grades because he's able to come in that second year in a more relaxed, calm atmosphere and he's not nervous coming in and he starts learning from day one and starts building up from last year.
Student A also stated, "... it makes it a little more calm." Teacher B indicated students had less anxiety and were able to perform better because students had more of a rapport with teachers by their second year. Additionally, Teacher D reported, "... they know they can come to you if they have problems." One parent even indicated having the same teachers for more than one year helped with her own anxiety and concerns.

All teacher, parent, and student participants reported positive academic effects directly related to looping. Observations or artifacts supported many responses in this category. Participants were favorable in that staying with the same teachers for more than one year facilitated improved student engagement and less anxiety.

**Academic retention and growth.** Question #7 allowed the researcher to investigate participant's perception on any correlation between academic retention or growth and the looping program. 100% of participants reported positive academic and emotional growth as well as positive student retention. Subcategories for this theme were coded as: (1) emotional growth-positive, (2) academic growth-positive, and (3) retention-positive.

When asked if participants thought looping had a direct effect on student successes, academically and emotionally, all participants responded, "Yes." Parent B indicated, "Yes, both. Emotionally, she can handle way more this year than she could last year. She's went from an A-B student to all A's. Parent D stated, "I really feel like that helps a lot emotionally. It helps them to know trust and to gain that trust of what they need from their teachers as well as their friends."

Most students did not elaborate on how looping affected their emotional growth however, one student responded with, "It gives me good memories." Although all teacher participants agreed that looping had a direct positive effect on academic retention and growth, only two of those teachers elaborated. Teacher B and D echoed the belief of consistent behaviors and pre-
established relationships contributed to positive emotions. Students were able to focus more on academics rather than making friends and learning a new environment.

A recurring code for why students were able to demonstrate improved growth and retention was protection of instructional time. Parent A explained, "I think they show more growth because they haven't had to spend that extra time on all the procedures and all the classroom organization stuff." Parent D indicated, "He starts learning from day one and starts building up from last year." All parents and teachers discussed looping as a contributing factor to student growth and retention because teachers were able to pick up right where they left off the previous year. Teacher B elaborated, "I know exactly what I've covered in 3rd grade and I can take that into 4th grade. If there's anything I've missed, I can incorporate that into their 4th grade instruction." All teachers discussed the ability to build on prior knowledge and experiences from the previous year of the loop. Teacher C and D both discussed how they knew where students were at in terms of academic achievement and where they needed to end up. All parents reported they found their students frequently reflecting on lessons taught the first year. Student A explained, "... it helps you remember stuff." Two students referenced specific skills or tasks they learned in 3rd grade, such as multiplication, they were currently building upon in 4th grade. The researcher was able to observe academic growth through the examination of the teacher's data folders and data walls. Additionally, students were able to assess their own retention and comprehension level with the immediate feedback teachers provided during class observations. In one class, the teacher scanned their test and they were able to receive their grade immediately.

None of the research participants reported a regression in student academic growth or retention. All parents cited a significant improvement in regards to their student's growth and retention. Students discussed how staying with the same teacher helped them remember things.
All teachers indicated they were able to spend more time on teaching academic standards rather than using that time to teach policies and procedures in the second year.

**Instructional Support**

The last two interview questions examined participant's perception of looping and instructional support in regards to student success. Two themes emerged from this category: (1) established routines and consistencies, and (2) influence on teaching strategies. Table 2 illustrates subcategories and frequency counts which emerged from question #8 and 9 in regards to instructional support.

Table 2

*Instructional Support Frequency Count*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Instructional Support (IS)</th>
<th>No. of Docs (12)</th>
<th>% of 12 Docs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISQ1. Established routines and consistencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with parents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadlines - tests - quizzes - assignments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and procedures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily activities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly newsletters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISQ2. Influences instruction, assignments, learning needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target students' learning needs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of instructional time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Established routines and consistencies.** When asked about consistencies and routines which remained the same both years, answers varied. 100% of teacher and parent participants
reported uniformity with open lines of communication. One parent discussed communication via weekly newsletters which helped her be a more active participant in her child's learning. The researcher collected newsletter artifacts to support this communication. Parents were able to remain informed of curriculum being covered, assignments, test days, and even provided with teachers' email and planning times for convenient scheduling. Three out of four parents referred to parent-teacher conferences. All responses were positive. Parent A mentioned, "... it's better knowing we can come to all four of them for parent-teacher conferences." When talking about conferences, Parent B said, "I'm more comfortable being open and honest with them than I was in the first year." Two out of four teachers cited conferences as well. Teacher B explained how parents asked more direct instructional questions in order to support their student's success rather than going through the "getting to know you" process. While Teacher C did not specifically mention parent conferences, she did state, "You know who is going to be supportive and who's not, and sometimes you get so comfortable with them, you can just text them from your personal phone. That's a good thing."

75% of research parent participants indicated consistent homework assignments and test days allowed them to help their students be more prepared, thus making them more successful. When discussing consistent testing days, Parent A cited, "... it made it so much easier to help my kids." Parent B talked about how consistency at school facilitated routines at home. "We've got a routine, we know what's expected. It's not a problem" (Parent B). The researcher examined consistent test/quiz days posted on each of the teacher's boards and collected multiplication quizzes which were given each Friday. Two teacher participants talked about journals as a consistent resource in their classroom. The researcher observed students using journals for graphic organizers and writing vocabulary terms. While no parents commented on
centers, one student and all four teachers cited centers staying the same from 3rd grade to 4th grade. Teacher B commented, "I don't really have to train centers again." Teacher C said her centers stayed the same, she just changed the material to 4th grade standards. The researcher observed centers during the class visits. Centers as well as center rotations were displayed on a board. Centers and student groups remained the same each week, the teacher simply changed the skill in that center each week. Student groups were changed every nine weeks.

Consistent rules and procedures were coded on four interviews. Two students cited rules remained the same both years. Parent C explained, "My child knew what to expect into her 4th grade. They're use to their teachers, procedures, rules, expectations." Teacher A explained student behavior should be better in the second year due to using consistent behavioral techniques. The researcher observed all four classrooms using the same behavioral management system, DOJO. Conversely, the researcher was able to support other consistent procedures and rules during the classroom observations. Daily agendas, assignments, and test days were posted in each classroom. Additionally, all usernames and passwords for computer programs were the same for each class so students could remember them easily.

**Influence on teaching strategies.** Question #9 investigated participant's perception on how looping influenced teaching strategies. Among this theme, emerged three main subcategories: (1) target students' learning needs, (2) assignments, and (3) instruction. 100% of all participant groups reported the extended time looping provided enabled teachers to target students' learning needs. Parent A elaborated on teachers' ability to target students' weaknesses and strengths and address them more in depth the second year. Parent B said, "I feel like they've learned how to get to my daughter, how to get the best out of her, how to get her to learn and how to get her to understand." The researcher observed differentiated instruction in all four
classrooms. Students were working on various levels in math centers, received different writing prompts in reading class, and some students were provided with maps to help on social studies test. Parent D discussed how teachers were able to challenge students achieving at a more advanced academic level while providing struggling learners with more direction. When asked how looping affected the teachers' ability to target her specific learning needs, Student A replied, "They take more time.. they know you better that second year so I think they know where you are in an educational stand." Student B echoed her opinion of how teachers were able to meet her needs because they knew her. "They find out new things about me each year" (Student B). Student C reported, "You get to stay with them so like if we're having trouble with something they can help us. They can tell us what we need to do." All teacher participants reiterated looping enabled them to be more aware of what their students needed. Teacher C explained, "I know exactly where they need to be so I can push them." Teacher D stated she handled instruction differently with each group of students. "I may be doing the exact skill with the other group, but I'm using different material and doing it a different way" (Teacher D).

75% of parent participants indicated assignments were impacted by the looping process. All three parents indicated their students were challenged, especially in math. During math class, the researcher observed high-performing students were assigned "brain teasers" if they finished their work early. This task contained higher-order thinking word problems. Struggling learners participated in an enrichment lesson with the teacher in a small group. 75% of teachers detailed how the extended time allowed them to be better prepared for the next year, thus improving instruction. During class observations, Teacher C demonstrated how she utilized state standardized test scores to guide her instruction for the following year. This information was organized in data folders.
Teacher B stated, "... you can make up the instructional time in 4th grade." Another teacher described, "I can just kind of custom make their instruction" (Teacher C). One teacher concentrated on how knowing two grade levels improved her instruction. 75% of parent participants felt as if looping improved student success in the second year because less instructional time was lost. Parent A cited teachers were able to spend less time on procedural instruction and "jump in" to the academic curriculum.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the analysis of data research which was guided by the research question. Qualitative findings illustrated the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in 3rd and 4th grade. Analysis of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and examination of artifacts offered evidence that the looping practice at an elementary level leads to positive effects on student success. Recommendations for further research and implications are discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to research teacher, parent, and student perceptions of the effects of looping on student success in 4th grade. The study investigated if extended time, provided by the looping program, had any effect on student success and if so, was it positive or negative. The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the effects of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships on student success in elementary grades?

Because the theoretical framework revolved around attachment and the need for strong nurturing relationships in younger children, the researcher delimited the study to 4th grade. The research organization was limited to one rural East Tennessee school where parent and student research participants were randomly selected upon consent. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted where all participants were asked the same questions in order to eliminate questions of reliability. To triangulate data collected during the interviews, the researcher conducted classroom observations and collected or examined artifacts from each class. The data were analyzed using open coding and a constant method of comparing responses with a combination of hand-coding and the use of NVIVO data analysis software.

Findings and Interpretations

This study provided valuable findings that can be used when examining related literature regarding looping. According to the theoretical framework, long-term relationships and attachment can impact student success. Therefore, the researcher set out to discover effects directly related to staying with the same teacher for more than one year on student success.

General. The findings in this category suggested that while all participants would recommend looping, there are both advantages and disadvantages to the program. Advantages
and potential disadvantages, such as positive and negative relationships, consistency, and expectations, reported throughout the interviews were addressed in the literature review (Bergin, 2009; Bogart, 2002; Bunce, 2009; Feighery, 2012; Klem & Connell, 2009). The positive effect of stronger relationships on student success can be supported by the attachment theory in that children have an innate desire to create a bond or attachment and deprived, it can lead to a decline in intelligence capacity. When creating such a secure attachment, a need for consistency regarding physical and emotional presence exists. All research participants agreed looping provided extended time to form stronger relationships, which improved student performance. Studies related to looping claim fulfillment of the sense of belonging leads to greater participation level of a child, which subsequently prompts an improvement in learning.

Most teachers and some parents identified personality clashes as a potential disadvantage. There is a possibility of developing complicated relationships, which may not compliment the learning needs of each student in the looping class (Hanson, 1994). Another disadvantage cited was less exposure to different teachers. This was also acknowledged as a drawback to the looping program in existing literature. Looped classrooms deny students privileges such as interacting with as many teachers as possible. Some literature affirmed looping teachers do not have sufficient time to process content from the past grade. Research participants in this study disputed that claim by displaying a high level of content-knowledge. Teacher C reported, "I'm very familiar with 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade standards."

Environment. In conclusion to this study, strong relationships between teachers, parents, and students were cited as a positive effect on student success throughout the looping process. Improved teacher, parent, and student relationships and positive learning environments were two of the primary advantages of looping found in the existing literature. Participants in
this study responded with similar experiences, which were also supported by classroom observations conducted by the researcher. According to the theoretical frameworks of the attachment theory, children are able to explore their learning environment more freely when experiencing feelings of security. Being with the same teacher for two consistent years provided parents and students with a secure, trusting environment, which allowed them to communicate more effectively. Conversely, attachment behavior allows children and adults to respond more sensitively and appropriately to a child's needs. Therefore, based on the data gathered, it can be concluded that the looping program provided the familiarity and continuity teachers, parents, and students needed to establish stronger bonds, which positively impacted student success.

According to research participants, the extended time provided by the program appeared to improve parent-student, parent-teacher, student-teacher, and student-student relationships. This perception was echoed on studies regarding relationships throughout the literature review. This indicates looping participants generally agree that looping improves teacher, parent, and student relationships. According to Hill and Taylor (2004), a long-standing relationship between parent and teachers is critical in the academic achievement of the students. Looping facilitated rich relationships between teachers and students, which lead to a classroom environment that enabled students to overcome developmental and academic challenges. The importance of positive teacher-student relationships is supported by John Bowlby's attachment model. Aligned with the attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1969), positive teacher-student relationships enable students to feel safe and secure in their learning environments and provide scaffolding for important social and academic skills (Baker et al., 2008; O’Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005).
Looping provided teachers, parents, and students with a sense of community and connectedness. Even shy students tend to become more comfortable and begin participating in class discussions, thereby enhancing their conceptualization capacity (Hullman, 2005). The reported frequent engagement between parents and teachers provided these parents with an opportunity to understand the regular classroom routine practices and what their children learn about on a daily basis, thus further enhancing these connections. Parent D indicated, "It's made it so much easier for me to help to know when we need to study to help my kids. It has made it so much easier as a family." It stands to reason looping had a positive effect on school relationships and class climate. Looping provided a solution to the issue of belonging because it presented these students with a group where they were valued and invested.

**Student success.** The true effect of looping on academic success is difficult to ascertain, as little quantitative research has been conducted. However, two studies cited in the literature review was able to report quantitative evidence based on the results from state-mandated standardized tests (Bogart, 2002; Orazi, 2012). According to Bogart (2002), looping students scored significantly higher than those students in a traditional one-year classroom in reading and math. The study ultimately concluded that looping designs can have a positive effect on academic achievement for elementary students. Remaining with the same teacher and classmates for two successive years may have created attitudes among students that they belong to a group that was distinctly different from the traditional program design. Increasing academic performance as a result of "belonging" can be supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model. All participants agreed staying with the same teacher for more than one year had a positive effect on emotional and academic growth as well as retention. Looping provided extended time which
enabled teachers to support struggling learners and build on prior knowledge from the previous year.

All 12 research participants in this study perceived looping as a contributing factor to student success in 4th grade. Emergent academic effects related to looping which directly impacted student success included improved self-efficacy and reduced school anxiety. Psychologist Bowlby, describes attachment as a long-lasting emotional bond that can reduce stress-related feelings. The looping program provided students with the continuity of a trusting environment, which allowed them to be less anxious improving their engagement in class discussions. Hullman (2005) asserted self-efficacy and performance are enhanced when long-term connections between teachers and students are established. There were no reports or observations of negative academic effects in this study.

It is suggested the continuum of learning through long-term relationships allowed students to be more open and relaxed in their learning environment, thus making it easier to concentrate on learning rather than adjusting to a new environment. Students were less distracted and confident in their work. Looping offered students the opportunity to experience their progress from one year to the next with the same teachers and peers, thus making them feel valued, important, and easily motivated. Long-term support provided by looping in this study contributed to improved self-efficacy and reduced school anxiety.

**Instructional Support.** In this study, instructional support was a positive effect of looping. Teachers were able to establish routines and procedures which remained the same during the loop, less instructional time was lost, and extended time influenced teaching strategies. Additional time allowed teachers to design teaching methods to reach students on an individual basis, regardless of their needs. Studies suggested looping may be the solution to the
problem of overwhelming demands among the teachers to catch up with the students who are falling behind (Bunce, 2009). Teachers, parents, and students suggested the additional time spent with each other enabled teachers to better target student needs, thus facilitating students to bridge curriculum gaps. Such teaching privileges are only attained by teachers in a loop. Teachers were able to anticipate student needs and address them amicably. Moreover, the teachers were knowledgeable and aware of the students' preferred way of learning, interests, behavioral patterns, and social skills.

Compared to traditional classrooms, looping teachers tend to have more time for providing instruction since these teachers have already established a close relationship with their students and are aware of the learning needs and abilities (Bogart, 2002). In this study, teachers were able to save instructional time during the second year of the loop. Students were aware of the class procedures, rules, and expectations; therefore, they were ready to immediately start learning. Conversely, teachers saved time on pre-assessments because they were already aware of the student's performance levels. Teacher research participants agreed no time was wasted when the students returned to school the second year.

Additionally, parents were able to be more active in their child's learning as a result of the consistency and familiarity with routines and assignments. A survey conducted by Hedge and Cassidy (2004) on the perspectives of parents on looping established that familiarity and consistency provided to the children in a looping environment built a strong relationship that led to high self-efficacy. According to the data collected, the frequent engagement between teachers and parents, provided an opportunity for these parents to understand the regular classroom routine practices and what their children learn about on a daily basis, thus further enhancing these connections.
In this study, additional instructional support was a positive effect of the continuum of learning through long-term relationships. Teachers were able to save valuable instructional time, use data from the previous year to better target student needs, and provide parents and students with consistent routines and assignments as an effort to improve student success. While some existing studies cite planning and preparation for two grades a disadvantage to looping, none of the research teachers reported this as an issue. In fact, some believed being knowledgeable of two or even three grade levels improved their teaching and planning.

Implications of Findings

This study provided valuable findings that can be used when relating existing literature regarding looping and learning through long-term relationships. The results of this study have implications for a potential positive change on teaching practices, which could improve student success and school relationships. This study examined the perceptions of three different, but equally important, participant groups- teachers, parents, and students. The data collected during this study provided a conceptual view of how teachers, parents, and student perceive looping and its effects on student success. A goal of this study was to gain insights that could be useful to teachers and administrators searching for an alternative, research-based teaching method to strengthen relationships and improve student success. A second goal of this study was to determine teachers, parents, and students' attitudes toward staying with the same teacher for more than one more, and if they thought it had any effect, positive or negative, on student success. This study, aligned with existing literature, revealed the continuum of learning through long-term relationships does positively impact student success. Teachers, parents, and students' perceptions suggested positive experiences with looping. The practice positively influenced relationships among teachers, parents, and students. These relationships were believed to
improve self-efficacy, communication, and influence instructional support such as teaching strategies and targeting students' learning needs.

Moreover, school leaders and teachers should be aware the practice is neither flawless nor proven to be better than the traditional one-year classroom setting. Negative aspects, such as personality clashes and limited exposure to other teachers, were reported and acknowledged. The possibility of students having a weak teacher for more than one more in a targeted subject area could be possible as well. It can be concluded that the adjustment period to new teachers may be more stressful to students who have remained with the same teacher for more than one year. It is also possible, that looping could be less effective when teachers are forced into the practice. Additionally, it can be implied that in some situations, stakeholders could become too comfortable, making the practice less beneficial. Such disadvantages were also supported by existing studies. However, in this study, it appeared the advantages far outweigh the drawbacks.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Due to the extent of the in-depth information required for this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling when selecting the research school and teacher population. One recommendation is to expand the sample size, increasing the number of schools and participants involved in the study. The purpose of the study was to target a group of teachers, parents, and students at one school to gain a more in-depth understanding of individual perceptions of looping and its effects. While their opinions and experiences were meaningful, attitudes may vary in other schools. Conversely, the lack of schools implementing this practice limited the ability to compare perceptions and achievement data. When increasing the overall number of participants, other factors such as school and student demographics and teacher experience could also be compared. While some believe teachers are most successful in the first three years of their
teaching career, others suspect teachers with more experience sometimes have the potential to be more effective.

Furthermore, it might be recommended to extend the research to include the perceptions of school leaders. Although teachers, parents, and students were targeted for this study, managing a teaching practice such as looping is likely to be unsuccessful without the support of others within the school. For future studies, it might be beneficial to include whether or not it was the teacher's choice or if they were forced to loop with their students. It stands to reason how they arrived at implementing the practice could influence their perception.

**Summary**

The research participants in this study had an overall positive perception of looping. All participants recommended staying with the same teacher for more than one year. The majority of the responses were coded as benefits or advantages to looping. Most participants shared personal, positive effects they have observed and experienced from the looping process. The data gathered, established a significant connection with long-term relationships and student success. Additionally, other positive effects of looping such as: a sense of community, improved self-efficacy, reduced school-anxiety, academic and emotional growth, and improved instructional support were also identified as being influential on student success. The statistical analysis found the majority of the effects of learning through long-term relationships to be positive and impactful to student success.
References


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Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Sandilos, L. (2017). Improving students' relationships with teachers to provide essential supports for learning: Positive relationships can also help a student


Appendices
Appendix A

Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Schools
LaToya Combs  
Telephone:xxx.xxx.xxxx  
latoya.combs@xxxxxxxxx.org  
For attention: Dr. xxxx

Dear Dr. xxxx,

My name is LaToya Combs, and I am a doctoral student at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tennessee. The research I wish to conduct for my dissertation involves perspectives on the continuum of learning through long-term relationships and how it can enhance overall student achievement. This project will be conducted under the supervision of my dissertation committee assigned by Carson-Newman University.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct face-to-face interviews with willing teachers, students, and parents within the district. All participants will be required to sign a consent form before participating. Parents will be required to sign their child's form. A total of four teachers, four parents, and four students will be utilized for this study. Individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. No costs will be incurred by either your school/center or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Upon completion of the study, you may request a copy of my data analysis. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution’s letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at your institution.

With kindest and warmest regards, 
LaToya Combs  

Approved by:

_________________________________  ____________________  ____________
Print your name and title here      Signature       Date
Appendix B

Principal Consent Form
Background/ Purpose
I am currently working towards my doctoral degree at Carson-Newman University. I have proposed to conduct a study on how looping effects student success at an elementary level. I would like to conduct interviews with teachers, parents, and students at your school to better understand the perspectives on this practice. As a classroom teacher, I am very interested in how formulating and maintaining relationships for more than one year affect student success. By taking part in these interviews, your students shall give us a perspective on spending more than one year with the same teacher. Participation is completely voluntary. Students and their parents can choose to participate or not. Both consents from parents/guardians and assent from students shall be obtained.

Procedures
I am asking for your permission to conduct face-to-face interviews with your 3rd and 4th-grade looping team, four looping students, and four looping parents within these grades. Consent forms will be distributed to teachers, students, and parents to invite them to participate in my study. When returned, I shall use that list to randomly select student and parent participants.

Risks and Discomforts
The risks of participating in this study are minimal. It is possible that students may feel obligated to participate in the study. I will make sure they understand that their decision to take part or not will not affect their school standing. Participants will be informed they may withdraw from the study at any time.

Benefits
This research is intended to help better understand the effects of looping on student success in elementary grades.

Compensation
The school will not be compensated.

Confidentiality
The privacy of students, parents, and teachers who participate in the study will be protected. There shall be a number rather than their name on copies of their interviews. Computer files will be protected with a password.

None of the information your students give us will be shared with anyone outside the research project. Their names will not be used in any written reports or published articles that result from this project. I shall make every effort to protect you and your school from any risks. Every effort will be made to ensure that descriptions of individuals in reports or articles are done in ways that mask the identities of these individuals.
Rights of Refusal and Withdrawal
You have the right to refuse to allow your students to be recruited for this study. If you change your mind about participating at any time, including during the recruitment period, you have the right to withdraw.

Questions and Contact Numbers
If you have questions or concerns about this research, you may contact me at xxx.xxx.xxxx or my Dissertation Committee at any time. Dr. Davidson, Dissertation Chair, xxx.xxx.xxxx.

Signatures
I have fully explained to the Principal the nature and purpose of the procedures described above and the risks involved in the school’s participation in the study. I have asked if she has any questions and I have answered them to the best of my ability.

___________________________________  ______________
Researcher  Date

I have read/been read the information presented above and understand the purpose of the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my schools’ and students’ participation is voluntary.

I agree to allow the researcher, LaToya Combs to conduct the above study and to talk to my teachers, students, and parents about this study and subsequently take part in this study if the students and their parents/guardians choose to.

___________________________________  ______________
Principal  Date
Appendix C

Teacher Participant Consent Form
Participant’s name:________________________________________

I authorize LaToya Combs to gather information from me on the topic of looping programs in the elementary school. I understand that my participation will involve individual interviews and possible observations in the classroom. Interviews will be tape recorded for the further review of the researcher. I understand that I may decline to discuss any matters that cause discomfort. I further understand that student participants may also be interviewed. I understand I will be consulted by the researcher to determine the most convenient time for the interviews to occur. This study is unlikely to cause me distress. The researcher will maintain confidentiality of research results. My individual results will not be released without my written consent.

_____________________________________________  ____________
Signature                                     Date

There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher with your responses. The other copy you may keep for your records.
Appendix D

Student/Parent Consent Form
Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is LaToya Combs, and I am a student at Carson-Newman University as well as a teacher at Springdale Elementary. I am currently working on a research project about looping/multi-year teaching. To conduct this research study, I am seeking parental and student participation. The study will simply consist of individual interviews with me and you or your child. The interview questions asked will focus on your opinion about staying with the same teacher for more than one year and how you feel it has affected your child's education as well as the relationships formed during the two-year loop. It is my hope that data from these interviews will contribute to a better understanding of how staying with the same teacher for more than year affects students learning, academic success, and the overall learning experience in order to create more effective teaching programs.

All responses and names will be confidential. Therefore, no identifiable information will be released to any parties and all names will be disguised with codes. Your consent and your child’s participation are completely voluntary, and your child may withdraw at any time. There is no reward for participating or consequence for not participating. There should be no risks associated with participation in the study. I will simply just be asking you or your child a series of questions about their experience and opinions with looping. I will also seek verbal consent from your child before the interview to ensure he or she is comfortable with participating in the study.

All consent forms should be turned in by February 2, 2018. After this date, I will collect all the consent that has been returned and randomly select four parents and four students to participate in the study. Interviews will be held after school so that no instructional time will be lost. However, if you are selected to participate in the study, we can work together to schedule a time and day that is most convenient for you to meet at the school. Interviews should last no longer than 30-45 minutes. Therefore, if your child stays in after-school, I could interview them during that time whereby it would not interfere with your pick-up time.

By signing below, I agree to allow my child to participate.

Parent Signature: _________________________________      Date:_________________

Parent Name (please print):  __________________________________________

Student Name:_____________________________________________________

______Yes, I would be happy to be considered a parent participant and partake in your study to allow you to gather information from me on the topic of looping programs in the elementary school. You may contact me via phone or email at

___________________________________________ to schedule our interview.
No, I am sorry, but I do not wish to participate in the study at this time.

Appendix E

Interview Questions
General:

1. Please describe any benefits or advantages of the looping the process?
2. Please describe any drawbacks or disadvantages of the looping process?

Environment:

1. Tell me about the relationships between you and the parent/student/teacher during the second year of the loop.
2. Tell me about the relationships among students during the second year.

Student Success:

1. Please describe any positive or negative academic effects directly related to looping.
2. Describe the effects, if any, looping has had on academic retention and/or growth.

Instructional Support:

1. Tell me about the established routines and consistencies in the looping program.
2. Explain how looping has influenced instruction, assignments, and targeting specific learning needs.