2014

Assessing Middle School Students' Perceptions of Social Support Provided by Teachers and Other School Professionals

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BY

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THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in School Psychology

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

<u>2014</u>
YEAR

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PROVIDED BY TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

Despite the expanding body of research pertaining to social support practices within the educational environment, there remain questions regarding which types of social supports and teacher behaviors students perceive as being most meaningful. This mixed-methods study investigated students' perceptions of social supports as offered by teachers and other school professionals through the use of qualitative narrative reports and quantitative rating scales. Participants included 94 regular and special education middle school students. Results revealed three types of positive social support (Informational Support, Instructional Support and Emotional Support, respectively) and one type of negative social support (Lack of/Negative Emotional Support) that emerged most frequently in student reports. Results also indicated several types of teacher behaviors that most frequently emerged in student reports: Conveys Interest in Student Wellness, Improves Student Mood/Emotion, Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion, and Interest in Student Progress. Results of ratings scales indicated that Emotional and Informational Support were observed most frequently and viewed as being most important to students. The implications and limitations of the study and direction for future research are discussed.

Assessing Middle School Students Perceptions of

Social Support Provided by Teachers and Other School Professionals

The relationship between students and teachers is critical for social and academic success and this relationship seems to be partially based on social support provided by teachers (e.g., Baker, 1999; Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, & Patil, 2003; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Demaray, Malecki, Rueger, Brown, Summers, 2009; Lee, Smith, Perry, Smylle, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Suldo & Shaffer, 2008; Suldo, Friedrich, White, Farmer, Minch, & Michalowski, 2009). Social support may present itself in many forms and may be offered and perceived by a variety of individuals such as children and adolescents, parents, teachers/school professionals, peers, acquaintances and the like. However, for the purpose of the present study, social support was viewed through the lens of middle school students, and how those students perceived social support as offered by their teachers and/or other school professionals in the school setting. The purpose of the present study was to identify which types of social support and specific behaviors displayed by teachers and other school professionals were found to provide high and/or low social support to middle school students. In order to assess students' perceptions of teacher and school personnel behaviors, the Critical Incident Technique (CIT; J. C. Flanagan, 1954) (qualitative component) and the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS; Malecki, Demaray, & Elliott, 2000) (quantitative component) were utilized to make up a mixed-methods investigation.

Demaray, Malecki, Davidson, Hodgson, and Rebus (2005) offered the following definition of social support:

An individual's perception that he or she is cared for, esteemed, and valued by

people in his or her social network, that enhances personal functioning, assists in

coping adequately with stressors, and may buffer him or her from adverse

outcomes. (p. 691)

House (1981) suggested that social support presents itself in one of four different

categories: emotional (providing trust, empathy, and care), instrumental (providing help

to a person in need), informational (providing information to help the person cope), and

appraisal (providing evaluative feedback). Although originally structured to study work

stress and general health, House's categories of social support have received strong

recognition through educational literature and are currently utilized in social support

rating scales such as the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS; Malecki et

al., 2000).

The Four Pillars of Social Support

When individuals think of being socially supported, they think mainly of

emotional support (House, 1981). As such, emotional support subsumes the largest

research base pertaining to social support and is typically believed to be the most

important form of social support by both experts and laypersons (House, 1981). Specific

to education, teachers and school professionals who provide individual empathy,

attention, warmth, encouragement, motivation, strong eye contact, and respectful

language illustrate several key characteristics of social support on an emotional level

(Hamre & Pianta, 2005; House, 1981; Merritt, Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Cameron &

Peugh, 2012; Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008; Suldo et al., 2009). Skinner, Zimmer-

Gembeck, & Connell (1998) demonstrated that exposing children to positive classroom

climates where emotional support is emphasized leads to greater self-regulation among elementary and middle school students. Emotional support from teachers has also been shown to foster motivational and learning related processes important for academic functioning (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Additional forms of social support within the education setting are comprised of behaviors including but not limited to teachers helping their students to do their work (instrumental support), providing students with information necessary to help themselves (informational support), and praising signs of improvement and/or mastery that students can then utilize to evaluate themselves (appraisal support) (House, 1981; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Reeve & Hyungshim, 2006). As with emotional support, these supports have been shown to increase the academic achievement of students' in the school setting (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Reeve & Hyungshim, 2006). Furthermore, these types of social supports have been shown to assist young students who have limited exposure to pre-academic experiences at home, to create more productive classroom environments, and to increase students' willingness to learn and remain motivated (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Lee et al., 1999).

House (1981) summarized his depiction of social support by suggesting that it is "a flow of emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, and/or appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation) between people" (pg. 26). Furthermore, House noted that because each type of social support is composed of different antecedents and consequences, they should be investigated both in isolation of one another and as a whole.

Suldo et al. (2009) examined social support through a more specific lens by identifying which types of perceived social support enacted by teachers were most strongly associated with middle school students' subjective well being (SWB) using the CASSS (Malecki et al., 2000). Results indicated that emotional and instrumental social support uniquely predicted SWB. A qualitative component of the study used four open ended questions from the CASSS that focused on the four types of social support identified by House (1981). Students were asked to answer each question verbally and a field note taker recorded their responses. Results yielded twenty-two (12 High Support, 10 Low Support) support-related behaviors. Moore (2012) extended these findings by examining the extent to which *teachers* perceptions of socially supportive behaviors coincided with the socially supportive behaviors identified by the students in Suldo et al. (2009). Results revealed high levels of agreement between teachers and students perceptions of socially supportive behaviors.

The present study examined qualitative student reports of perceived support using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954) and by quantifying the frequency and importance of those types of support using the CASSS (Malecki et al., 2000). Incidents were also analyzed using the specific teacher behavior categories identified by Suldo et al. (2009) and within the four categories of social support suggested by House (1981).

Benefits of Social Support Provided by Teachers

When students are provided social support, be it emotional, instrumental, informational, or appraisal, numerous benefits are experienced. From a broad perspective, Baker et al. (2003) highlighted the notion that healthy school environments are conducive

to positive learning experiences. In short, if students consider their school to be a pleasurable environment where they are supported (both emotionally and academically) by their teachers and other school professionals, the multiple hours they spend at school each day will lead to increased satisfaction, engagement, and participation. Huebner and Diener (2008) concur that healthy schools recognize the importance of supportive teacher and peer relationships. In fact, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is implemented in schools to increase positive behavior in the schools in addition to encouraging and strengthening teacher-student and student-student relationships (Huebner & Diener, 2008).

The relationship between students and teachers is paramount for social and academic success. Suldo et al. (2009) investigated which types of teacher support were most strongly associated with adolescents' subjective well-being (SWB). A regression analysis indicated that perceived teacher support accounted for 16% of the variance in students' SWB. Although multiple themes emerged from focus groups, the types of teacher support that were most related to students' life satisfaction were emotional support and instrumental support. These same types of supports were also shown to predict children's academic engagement and reduce negative outcomes such as school failure during adolescence (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Recent research has shown the quality of teacher-student interactions to be particularly important to children's social and self-regulatory development. Merritt et al., (2012) explored the relations between emotionally supportive teacher-child interactions and children's social behaviors and self-regulatory skills. Data were gathered regarding each student's adjustment to school after the first three weeks of school, and classroom

observations throughout the year. The presence of an emotionally supportive teacher was associated with lower levels of aggressive behaviors, less exclusion from peers, and more pro-social behaviors. High levels of emotional support were found to be equally important for students of high and low levels of sociodemographic risk. These findings provided further support to Wang, Haertel, and Walberg's (1994) finding that social support increased educational resilience in children, which was defined as "the heightened likelihood of success in school despite environmental risks and adversities, brought about by an individual's disposition, conditions, and experiences" (p. 207 as cited in Baker, et al., 2003).

Demaray and Malecki (2003) investigated several sources and types of support, in addition to the frequency and importance of support, as perceived by early adolescents in grades 5 through 8. Students perceived different types of support from different sources and certain categories of supportive behaviors seemed more related to certain outcomes. Emotional and informational support were the most highly reported type of support from parents, informational support was most highly reported from teacher and school sources, and emotional and instrumental support scores were highest from classmates and close friends. Additional findings indicated that students perceived informational support from teachers more than emotional support and valued informational support from teachers more than emotional support (see also Demaray and Malecki, 2002). Based on these findings, Demaray and Malecki (2003) suggested that teachers be aware of the type of support they provide and seek to find a balance between those types of support.

Demaray et al., 2009 examined the relationship between the perceived frequency and perceived importance of social support with youths' self-concept. The authors

gathered data using the CASSS and the Student Social Support Scale (SSSS), both of which measure students' perception of social support from teachers, as well as from parents, classmates, and close friends. The participants of the study were children and adolescents' ranging across grades 3-12. Results indicated a significant relationship between the importance that children and adolescents place on socially supportive behaviors from teachers and global self-concept. Further results indicated that youth who perceived higher levels of teacher social support obtained higher self-concept scores in each domain measured by the SSSS (self-image, academic, and social). These results provided further support for previous studies including research by Suldo and Huebner (2006) that found very high life satisfaction and high social support from teachers to be correlated among middle and high school students.

Social support has also been associated with increased levels of academic achievement and engagement (e.g., Baker, 1999; Baker et al., 2003; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Demaray et al., 2009; Lee et al., 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Suldo & Shaffer, 2008; Suldo et al., 2009). Lee et al. (1999) found that the relationship between students and teachers specifically contributed to academic success and conformity to specific standards of achievement in school. Hamre and Pianta (2005) further investigated the student-teacher relationship with regard to social support and found that positive relationships increased reading and math skills and decreased risk factors for school failure in adolescents. Similar findings by Close and Solberg (2008) were reported for youth from diverse backgrounds, suggesting that the link between teacher support and student success is generalizable across culture and ethnicity.

School-based social support may be especially important for students with increased risk factors (socioeconomic status, premature parenting, youth violence, etc.). Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) argued that young people who face economic and social hardships at home are especially dependent on schools for support and guidance if they cannot find these forms of social support elsewhere in their lives. Social support also provides powerful incentives for at-risk students to attend school even when schoolwork is difficult and expectations are high (Lecompte & Dworkin, 1991).

Given these implications, Croninger and Lee (2001) examined whether access to social support from high school teachers would reduce the likelihood of school dropout for students with multiple risk factors. It was hypothesized that at-risk students have the most to gain from social support from teachers but also the most to lose if they are without it. Among these students were those who had one or more risk factors from both a social-risk category and an academic-risk category. Dropouts were found to characterize their relationships with teachers less positively than graduates, and teachers reported a smaller proportion of dropouts than eventual graduates who received advice outside of class. Other findings indicated that academically at-risk students benefited more from access to social-support than students with no history of difficulty in school. Specific to academically at-risk students, positive relations with teachers reduced the odds of dropping out, as well as the informal interactions with teachers outside of the classroom.

These results provided further support for previous research by DuBois, Felner, Meares, and Krier (1994) which found that support and guidance received from teachers and other school professionals is particularly beneficial for youths who are exposed to

noteworthy levels of disadvantage and stressful circumstances in their lives outside of school (i.e. social-risk).

Negative Effects of Low Teacher Support

There are many negative implications for students' receiving low social support from their teachers and/or other school professionals. Baker (1999) emphasized the importance of the teacher-student relationship and found that children at risk for school failure often do not make meaningful connections to the school culture without the personal and academic support of teachers. In addition, students who receive low support from teachers and other school professionals have been linked with school failure and dropout (Baker, 1999), increased levels of externalizing and/or internalizing behavior problems (Huebner & Diener, 2008), lower levels of self-worth (Malecki & Elliott, 1999), self-control (Merritt et al., 2012), and school engagement and academic success (e.g., Lee et al., 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005) in comparison to their more socially supported peers.

Demaray and Malecki (2002) examined the relationship between adolescents' perceived social support and self-reported maladjustment indicators in a sample of 125 middle school students in grades 6-8. The CASSS (Malecki et al. 2000) and the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Self Report of Personality (BASC SRP; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1998) were used to collect data regarding perceived social support and self-reported maladjustment, respectively. Correlational analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of social support from a variety of sources (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and school) and the students' perceptions of maladjustment. Results indicated moderately significant relationships

between overall social support and maladjustment indicators including school maladjustment, personal maladjustment, and emotional symptoms. Specifically, low teacher support was found to be a significant predictor of school maladjustment on the BASC-SRP. These findings help to illustrate how low teacher support significantly predicts students' inability to adequately adjust in the school environment. In addition, school maladjustment can result in relatively poor academic performance within the classroom, lower standardized test scores, and less participation in extracurricular activities compared to more socially supported peers (Demaray & Malecki, 2002).

Demaray et al., (2005) found that support from people in the students' school was a significant predictor of attitude towards the school and attitudes toward teachers, two components that can have profound effects on overall education.

Using the Critical Incident Technique to Study Social Support

The previous research pertaining to social support within the educational setting has clearly illustrated its positive implications for emotional and academic benefits in children and adolescents. To help identify the behaviors associated with social support in the educational setting, Suldo et al. (2009) examined students' perceptions of teacher behaviors that provide social support. Results indicated that students identified similar socially supportive behaviors provided by teachers that previous research (Demaray et al., 2005) has displayed as providing high or low levels of social support (see Table 1 below). Extending from these findings using the same categories of teaching behaviors identified in Suldo et al. (2009), Moore (2012) investigated which socially supportive behaviors identified by the students in Suldo et al. (2009) coincided with teachers' perceptions of socially supportive behaviors. Teachers and students agreed that ten

categories provided high social support (Behaviors: 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20) and

four categories provided low social support (Behaviors: 2, 4, 8, 22). Teachers and

students disagreed on three categories (Behaviors: 2, 4, and 20).

Table 1: List of Teacher Behaviors (adapted from Suldo et al. 2009)

Positive Support Behaviors
1. Conveys Interest in Student Wellness
2. Coveys Disinterest in Student Wellness
3. Improves Student Mood/Emotion
4. Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion
5. Gives Students What They Want
6. Responsive to Whole Class Understanding of Material
7. Interest in Student Progress
8. Insufficient Interest in Student Progress
9. Uses Diverse Teaching Strategies
10. Reliance on Single Mode of Instruction
11. Gives Evaluative Feedback
12. Helps Improve Student Grades

Negative Support Behaviors
13. Not Helping Students Improve Grades
14. Manageable Workload
15. Overwhelming Workload
16. Treats Students Similarly
17. Punishment in Fair Manner
18. Treats Students in Biased Manner
19. Punishment in Incorrect Manner
20. Welcomes Questions
21. Discourages Questions
22. Sets Firm Rules/Discipline Practices

Although these findings have supplemented the literature of social support within

the educational setting, further research is needed to provide more detailed descriptions

of the identified socially supportive behaviors from the students' perspective.

Specifically, gathering factual narrative reports provided by students regarding their

perceptions of positive and negative social supports as provided by their teachers and

other school professionals would provide qualitatively rich information regarding

students' personal experiences at school and implications for best practice in the field of

social support within the school environment. The current study will use the Critical

Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954) and the CASSS (2000) to gather these reports.

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) has been defined as an effective

exploratory and investigative tool by a number a diverse disciplines including: education

and teaching (e.g., Barnes, 1960; Corbally, 1956; Kain, 2004; Oaklief, 1976; O'Brien,

Mills, Fraser, & Andersson, 2011; Radford, 2006), counseling (e.g., Woolsey, 1986),

communications (e.g., Stano, 1983), and job analysis (e.g., Anderson & Wilson, 1997).

The CIT allows for researchers to gather narrative reports from respondents that describe,

in great detail, positive and negative real life experiences that are, in some way, "critical"

and associated with a particular event or scenario (e.g., a time when a teacher provided

positive or negative social support to a student).

The technique was initially developed for John C. Flanagan's examination of the

effective and ineffective characteristics associated with airplane pilots during World War

II. Flanagan's 1954 depiction of the technique discussed its application in developing

ethical standards for psychologists, measuring task proficiency, selecting and classifying

personnel, designing job procedures and equipment, identifying motivation and

leadership attitudes, and identifying factors in effective counseling.

Flanagan (1954) defined the CIT as "a set of procedures for collecting direct

observations of human behavior" (p. 327). He also emphasized the notion that the

technique should be viewed as a flexible set of principles, which must be modified and

adapted to meet the criteria of specific research. Chell (1998) further defined the

objective of the technique as gaining an understanding of an incident from the

perspective of an individual while taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioral elements.

Implications for the CIT in the Schools

Since Flanagan's (1954) article on the CIT, others have described benefits associated with the technique within education and teaching (Barnes, 1960; Corbally, 1956; Kain, 1997, 2004; Oaklief, 1976; O'Brien, Mills, Fraser, & Andersson, 2011; Radford, 2006). For example, Kain (1997) utilized the CIT to examine the collaborative planning that teachers engaged in while creating interdisciplinary experiences for their students. Specific questions were asked to individual teachers such as, "Think of a time when you and your team members were especially effective (and in a later question, ineffective) in working together to create an integrated or interdisciplinary unit or activity for your students." Using a systematic approach to code and classify the data into categories, Kain (1997) identified multiple "tentative principles" to be utilized by teachers as a framework of effective and ineffective collaborative strategies for structuring interdisciplinary experiences for students.

The CIT has also been used in numerous studies as a means for teachers and school professionals to come to a better understanding of their own practices and beliefs, reflecting on critical incidents that occurred while they were teaching or working, and to increase the capacity of preservice teachers to develop reflective and critical thinking skills (Tripp, 1993; Farrell, 2008; Griffin, 2003). Additional educational studies utilizing the CIT have identified administrative behaviors that might lead to greater accomplishment of the adult-continuing education and community service function (Oaklief, 1976). Oaklief (1976) reported findings that represented general and specific

domains including: administrative task characteristics, administrative practice, and program planning and development over both implementation and importance scales.

Collecting Critical Incidents

Although Flanagan (1954) suggested that the CIT be guided by a flexible set of principles in research, it is pivotal that the researcher be adequately prepared and organized for conducting research with the CIT. The most meaningful aspect of the CIT is its ability to gather large sums of data from an individual, regarding a single incident. As Corbally (1956) explained in his utilization of the critical incident technique in education, while a crisis may be identified in a school, the numerous conditions and triggers associated with that crisis often remain unclear and often unstated. This illustrates a strength and key feature of the CIT, in that, the researcher must select specific questions (in addition to gathering a description of the incident) to tap into the respondents' recollection of the antecedents of the incident (what led up to the incident), the behavior during the incident (what actually happened, and what it looked like), and the consequences of the incident and how it directly affected the respondent (how did you feel after the incident). The researcher's objective is to construct the questions for the interview in positive and negative phrasing so to collect a positive and negative incident report from each respondent. Sub-questions are created to extract further information on the antecedents and consequences of each positive and negative incident. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) suggested that each critical incident (1) include a direct contact between the respondent and the individual/s depicted in the incident, (2) be very satisfying or dissatisfying from the respondent's point of view, (3) be a discrete episode, and (4) have sufficient detail to be fully understood by the interviewer.

Developing a Coding Manual and Assessing Reliability and Validity

Using the four types of social support identified by House (1981; emotional, instructional, informational, appraisal) and the 22 categories of high and low socially supportive teaching behaviors identified by Suldo et al. (2009), a coding manual was developed and used to categorize data from the current study. After developing the coding manual, a series of reliability and validity tests were used as suggested by previous research in order to strengthen category utility (Andersson and Nilsson, 1964; Bitner et al., 1990; Corbally, 1956; Gremler, 2004; Stano, 1983; Stauss, 1993; Woolsey, 1986). Corbally (1956) first emphasized the importance of the team approach in the CIT, and how that approach increases reliability and validity. In utilizing a team approach, Stauss (1993; see also Stano, 1983) suggested conducting the categorization process several times by employing different coders and examining the intercoder reliability (i.e., the extent to which coders agree that critical incidents correspond to types of social support and types of teacher behaviors).

Cohen's (1960) kappa statistic is commonly used to assess interrater reliability in categorical rating tasks. Viera and Garrett (2005) encouraged researchers to utilize the following interpretation table: kappa < 0 = less than chance agreement, kappa 0.01-0.20 = slight agreement, kappa 0.21 – 0.40 = fair agreement, kappa 0.41 – 0.60 = moderate agreement, kappa 0.61 – 0.80 = substantial agreement, kappa 0.81 – 0.99 = almost perfect agreement.

Limitations to the CIT

Similar to other self-report assessments, the CIT has several limitations. One issue is that the critical incidents reported by the respondents can be misinterpreted or

misunderstood by researchers (Gremler 2004). Furthermore, researchers may interpret an incident as critical when, in fact, it is not. However, in previous research, Flanagan, Gosnell, and Fivars (1963) suggested when the purpose or intent of the incident is clear to the researcher and there is little doubt as to the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of the behavior in accomplishing the task at hand, the researcher can deem the incident as "critical". In addition, Corbally (1956) stressed to researchers using the CIT that the technique was not designed to discriminate the severity of criticalness. Rather, it was designed to highlight how individuals perceive different scenarios.

Other criticisms of the CIT focus on the ambiguity associated with the category labels and coding schemes. Although researchers strive to place incidents into categories that purport to be related to those incidents, there is a good deal of subjectivity involved in the coding and classification process. It is for this reason that researchers are encouraged to utilize interrater reliability when coding and classifying the data (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964). Flawed recall bias by the respondent, and memory lapses illustrate other limitations to the CIT (Gremler, 2004). Researchers should also understand that the responses described by participants might include false or distorted information.

Due to the qualitative nature of the CIT, the reliability and validity of the implications derived from it have been questioned (Gremler, 2004; Corbally, 1956; Chell, 1998). Chell (1998) explained that research not based on quantitative samples might be viewed as insufficiently generalizable. However, providing evidence of strong interrater agreement based on the judgment of competent reviewers educated on the CIT helps to increase the reliability and validity of such studies. Furthermore, the CIT was created not

to provide quantitative solutions to problems, but to offer researchers valuable insight to help explain a phenomenon. It is also for this reason that the current study included the use of the CASSS (Malecki et al., 2000). This way, the correspondence between the results of the CASSS and the narrative reports provided by students could be quantified.

Utilizing the CIT in the Present Study

Pedagogical practices can and should always be strengthened and refined. Providing teachers and school professionals with data driven principles can increase their knowledge about effective strategies for providing social support to their students. In order to do so, critical incidents were collected from middle school students regarding their personal experiences receiving effective and/or ineffective forms of social support from their teachers or other school professionals. By analyzing the extent to which student reports of socially supportive teacher behaviors correspond to the socially supportive behaviors identified in previous research (Suldo et al. 2009, Moore, 2012), specific behaviors that should be encouraged or discouraged will be identified and could potentially serve as a framework for teachers and school professionals to better understand what behaviors are viewed by students as effective and ineffective. Utilizing a scale to quantify social support types (i.e., CASSS) will also help to establish such a framework.

Through narrative report analysis, the following questions and predictions based on previous research and literature were addressed:

- *Question 1: When asked to describe times when they received high/low levels of social support at school, what types of social support (i.e., House, 1981's categories) emerged most frequently in student narrative reports? And, did the*

most frequent forms of social support correspond with previous findings (i.e., Suldo et al., 2009)?

- *Prediction: Based on previous research and literature, it was predicted that Emotional and Instrumental support would emerge most frequently. Similarly, when asked to describe times with low levels of support, Lack of/Negative Emotional Support and Lack of/Negative Instrumental Support would emerge most frequently.*

- *Question 2: When asked to describe times when they received high/low levels of social support at school, what types of teacher behaviors (i.e., Suldo et al., 2009's categories) emerged most frequently in student narrative reports?*

  - *Prediction: The most frequent teacher behaviors would be those associated with Emotional and/or Instrumental support (e.g., conveys interest in student wellness, improves student mood/emotion, interest in student progress, welcomes questions). Similarly, the most frequent unsupportive teacher behaviors would be those associated with Lack of/Negative Emotional and/or Lack of/Negative Instructional support (e.g., conveys disinterest in student wellness, causes negative student mood/emotion, insufficient interest in student progress, discourages questions).*

- *Question 3: What types of social support and teacher behaviors corresponded most frequently, and what did those interactions reveal?*

- *Prediction: Types of social support and teacher behaviors that correspond will be similar in nature (i.e., Emotional Support X Improves Student Mood/Emotion).*

Utilizing the CASSS in the Present Study

The CASSS (Malecki et al., 2000) is a 60-item self-report scale that measures child and adolescent perceptions of social support received from five major sources (parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and school personnel). Each source subscale measures the four types of social support proposed by House (1981; emotional, instrumental, appraisal, and informational).

For the purpose of the current study, the *Teacher* and the *School Support* were the only subscales administered. As such, individual students' *Frequency* scores could range from 3 to 18 for each type of social support within each subscale. Likewise, students' *Importance* scores could range from 3 to 9 for each type of social support within subscale. It was hypothesized that the positive social support experiences narrated by students would also be identified as the most frequently observed and most important forms of social support illustrated within the results of the CASSS. It was predicted that, as addressed in *Question 1a*, Emotional and Instrumental support would also emerge as most frequent and important on the CASSS.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 94 regular and special education students from grades 6-8 recruited from two middle schools in Orland Park, Illinois (Century Junior High School, Orland Junior High School). All students voluntarily participated in the study.

The 94 participants consisted of 35 males (37%) and 59 females (63%). Of these participants there were 52 6th graders (55%), 23 7th graders (24%) and 19 8th graders (20%). When asked to estimate their current grade point average (GPA), 34 participants reported a GPA of 4.0 or higher (36%), 53 students reported a GPA between 3.0 – 4.0 (56%), 6 students reported a GPA between 2.0 – 3.0 (6%), and 1 student reported a GPA between 1.0 – 2.0. Of the 94 participants, a total of 81 (86%) reported being involved in some type of extracurricular activities.

Of the 94 student participants, 66 students completed the survey in its entirety (one positive critical incident, one negative critical incident and completion of the CASSS). An additional 28 participants completed the survey in some capacity by reporting at least one critical incident without completing the CASSS; those reports were included in the study. One hundred and six useable critical incidents (66 positive reports, 30 negative reports, 10 other/uncodable reports) were reported. Sixty-six completed CASSS surveys were available for analysis.

Materials

Students were asked to report a positive critical incident and a negative critical incident. They then completed the CASSS. All materials were presented online.

Critical Incident Technique

The positive incident asked the participant to "Think about a time when one of your teacher s or another person who works at your school provided you with social support. Specifically, think about a time when someone did something that you found to be helpful in some way." Subsequent questions were then presented to the student in order to facilitate more elaborative responses: how long ago did the experience occur,

where did the experience take place, who made the participant feel that way (teacher, classroom helper, principal/assistant principal, or someone else), what lead up to the experience (describe the situation you were in), what actually happened and how the did the school employee act (what they did), how did the experience affect the participant, and how the participant felt after the experience and whether the experience had additional effects on the participant or other students. Finally, participants were asked to report how truthful they were in their reports (1 = very truthful, 2 = somewhat truthful, 3 = untruthful).

The negative incident asked the participant to "Think about a time when one of your teachers or another person working in your school provided negative social support. Specifically, think about a time when someone did something that you found to be not helpful in some way." The same follow-up questions were presented following this item to assist in report elaboration.

Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale

In addition to the positive and negative critical incident questions, the *Teacher* and the *School Support* subscales of the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS, 2000) were also included on the Qualtrics survey. Each subscale contained three items related to each type of social support (12 total items) and required students to make responses based on a 6-point Likert scale (Frequency of social support) and a 3-point Likert scale (Importance of social support). Students are asked to read each statement and rate (1) how often they perceive that support (frequency) and (2) how important it is to them that they perceive that support (importance). The frequency ratings are on a 6-point scale ranging from 1-never to 6-always. The importance ratings are on a

3-point scale from 1-not important to 3-very important. In order to score the CASSS, the frequency ratings for each subscale are added to create a frequency total. Similarly, the importance ratings for each subscale are added to create an importance total score.

Procedure

Following methodology review and approval by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB), contact letters were sent to prospective participating schools asking principals to allow research to be conducted with their students (see Appendix A). Of the four schools contacted, two schools agreed to allow their students to participate in the study. Principals who accepted and returned contact letters were re-contacted to schedule a date for the researcher to come into the school to explain the study, describe the potential incentives associated with participation (four $25 gift cards), and allow the students to ask questions concerning the study.

Students who wished to participate in the study were asked to sign and return assent forms (see Appendix B) with a home phone number and parent/guardian email (if applicable) that day. Assenting students were also given consent forms (see Appendix C) for their parents/guardians to sign and return to the researcher. After collecting signed consent, the primary researcher contacted the parents/guardians of the students by e-mail in order to describe the study and provide the login information to the survey website (see Appendix D). All informed consent/assent documents were collected by the primary researcher prior to data collection and were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Once logged into the survey website, participants were automatically directed to the online survey (see Appendix E) and provided responses to questions about their gender, grade level, grade point average, involvement in extracurricular activities, and the

school in which they attended. After reporting an experience for each critical incident (i.e., positive social support, negative social support), participants were asked if they wished to describe additional experiences. Those who wished to submit additional reports were asked which type of incident they wished to identify (positive social support and/or negative social support) and were redirected to the appropriate start point and were able to report as many experiences as they wished for each type of social support. Only three participants chose to identify more than one incident for a negative or positive incident. Participants who wished to move on to the next portion of the survey were redirected to the appropriate start point for the CASSS subscales.

To ensure confidentiality, participant's names were not recorded in association with their responses. Rather, after completing the survey, participants were redirected to an additional survey (see Appendix F) where they were asked to provide identifying information (name, school, contact information), were able to enter a drawing for one of the four available incentives, and were thanked for their participation. In order to ensure teacher/school personnel confidentiality, participants were asked to conceal the name, sex, and specific subject matter associated with the teacher or school professional described in their reports (i.e., math teacher). However, prior to each critical incident report, students were asked to identify the title of the school professional they described from a list of personnel (principal, assistant principal, teacher, substitute teacher, classroom helper, someone else).

The duration of participation varied based on the how long it took each participant to report their experiences, how elaborately they described their experiences, how many experiences they reported, and how quickly they read and responded to the questions on

the CASSS items. The average duration of survey completion across participants was 22-minutes.

Coding Manual and Coding Document Creation

In order to facilitate the sorting process of critical incidents reported by participants, a coding manual was developed (see Appendix G). The manual was created based on the online survey administered to participants and corresponded with a coding document that was created for coders to log their codes (see Appendix H). The manual included three lists/categories. Although the students were asked to list incidents only carried out by teachers or school employees, a number of students instead provided incidents carried out by others. Therefore, the first list/category in the coding sheet was used to identify the actor illustrated in the critical incident (i.e., Teacher/School Employee, Peer, Family Member, Other, Not Specified). The second list/category was used to identify the type of social support as defined by House (1981; emotional, instrumental, informational, appraisal) in addition to the negative counterpart of each type of social support (e.g., Lack/Negative Use of Emotional Support). Categories of "Other" and "Uncodable" were also included if the incident did not fit into a specific category or if the incident was lacking at least minimal information. Each type of social support was defined using the definitions developed by House (1981). The definitions for the negative counterparts of each type of social support were defined reflecting the opposite of each type of social support defined by House (1981). The third list/category was used to identify the 22 teacher behaviors illustrated by Suldo et al. (2009). Definitions for each teacher behavior were adopted from the definitions from Suldo et al., (2009).

The coding manual also included specific directions for coders to follow that corresponded to the coding document. Specifically, coders were instructed to place one code for each list/category (i.e., Actor, Type of Social Support Identified by House [1981], Behaviors Identified by Suldo et al. [2009]). When applicable, coders were also instructed to include secondary codes in the notes section of each list/category. Finally, coders were instructed to utilize codes of "Other" if an incident/s did not fit any of the given categories within each list/category, or "Uncodable" if insufficient information was provided. Using the coding document, coders were required to identify the incident number, coder initials, actor type, social support type (House, 1981), and teacher behavior type (Suldo et al., 2009).

Results

The data from the present study were analyzed using several methods. First, all 106 critical incidents were individually coded by the primary investigator and a graduate student enrolled in the School Psychology Program at Eastern Illinois University. The purpose of this categorization scheme was to assign codes within each category identified in the coding manual (i.e., Actor Type, House Social Support, Suldo Teacher Behavior). Interrater reliability procedures were first conducted using the primary codes, then the secondary codes. Following the assessment of interrater reliability, the categories displaying no agreement between raters were re-coded by a third coder with experience in the middle school educational setting. After coding, each critical incident had one code for each category. Next, researchers were able to identify the percentage of positive and negative student reports that corresponded to the types of social support identified by House (1981) and the types of teacher behaviors identified by Suldo et al. (2009). Finally,

the correspondence between House (1981) social supports and Suldo et al. (2009) teacher behaviors was interpreted for positive and negative narrative reports.

The results of the CASSS were examined to see whether the levels of support indicated corresponded to the type of incidents reported in the critical incident task.

Interrater Reliability

Cohen's kappa statistic was computed using two methods to determine interrater reliability between raters. First, interrater reliability was computed using the primary codes assigned by raters for each category illustrated in the coding manual (i.e., Actor type, House social support, Suldo teacher behavior). For actor type, inter-rater coding procedures resulted in a 92% agreement between the two coders. The obtained Cohen's kappa value was .80 indicating substantial inter-rater agreement, $p < .001$. For House (1981) social support type, inter-rater coding procedures resulted in a 53% agreement between the two coders. The obtained Cohen's kappa value was .45 indicating moderate inter-rater agreement, $p < .001$. For Suldo et al. (2009) teacher behaviors, inter-rater coding procedures resulted in a 53% agreement between the two coders. The obtained Cohen's kappa value was .45 indicating moderate inter-rater agreement, $p < .001$.

Next, interrater reliability was computed using the secondary codes assigned by raters for each category illustrated in the coding manual (i.e., Actor type, House social support, Suldo teacher behavior). Specifically, when the two raters disagreed, secondary codes were examined. Where one rater's secondary code agreed with the other rater's primary code, this code was applied to the incident.

Using these recoded ratings, the inter-rater reliability obviously increased. For actor type, inter-rater coding procedures resulted in a 92% agreement between the two

coders. The obtained Cohen's kappa value was .80 indicating substantial inter-rater agreement, *p < .001*. For House (1981) social support type, inter-rater coding procedures resulted in a 72% agreement between the two coders. The obtained Cohen's kappa value was .66 indicating substantial inter-rater agreement, *p < .001*. For Suldo et al. (2009) teacher behaviors, inter-rater coding procedures resulted in a 78% agreement between the two coders. The obtained Cohen's kappa value was .74 indicating substantial inter-rater agreement, *p < .001*.

Percentage of Social Support and Teacher Behavior Categories

Following inter-rater reliability testing, descriptive analyses were conducted to determine the frequency of Actor Type, Social Support (House, 1981), and Teacher Behaviors (Suldo et al., 2009) based on the 63 positive narrative reports and 43 negative narrative reports submitted by participants. Results are reported in Tables 2 and 3.

Correspondence Between Social Support and Teacher Behaviors

Tables 4 and 5 show the cross-tabulation between coding of the Social Support types and the Teacher Behaviors. As expected, certain behaviors from Suldo et al.'s (2009) teacher behaviors are represented in each of the four House (1981) categories.

CASSS Social Support Types

Using the *Teacher* and *School Personnel* subscales of the CASSS, totals were computed for the *Frequency* of types of social support and the *Importance* of that social support for each participant. For each type of social support, individual students could have scored as high as 18 (all 6-point ratings) and as low as 3 (all 1-point ratings) in the *Frequency* domain, and as high as 9 (all 3-point ratings) and as low as 3 (all 1-point

ratings) in the *Importance* domain. Results, including reliability estimates, are included

in Table 6.

Table 2: Coding Results – Positive Critical Incident Reports

Actor Type	Total Codes (63 Reports)	%
1. Teacher/School Employee	47	75%
2. Peer	12	19%
3. Family Member	2	3%
4. Not Specified	2	3%

Social Support (House, 1981)	Total Codes (63 Reports)	%
1. Informational Support	25	40%
2. Instrumental Support	18	29%
3. Emotional Support	12	19%
4. Lack of/Negative Emotional Support	4	6%
5. Uncodable	3	4%
6. Appraisal Support	1	2%

Teacher Behaviors (Suldo, 2009)	Total Codes (63 Reports)	%
1. Interest in Student Progress	25	40%
2. Improves Student Mood/Emotion	15	21%
3. Conveys Interest in Student Wellness	10	16%
4. Uncodable	4	6%
5. Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion	3	5%
6. Treats Students in Biased Manner	1	2%
7. Gives Students What They Want	1	2%
8. Responsive to Whole Class Understanding	1	2%
9. Gives Evaluative Feedback	1	2%
10. Manageable Workload	1	2%
11. Other	1	2%

Table 3: Coding Results – Negative Critical Incident Reports

Actor Type	Total Codes (43 Reports)	%
1. Teacher/School Employee	30	70%
2. Peer	9	21%
3. Family Member	2	5%
4. Other	1	2%
4. Not Specified	1	2%

Social Support Reports (House, 1981)	Total Codes (43 Reports)	%
1. Lack of/Negative Emotional Support	13	30%
2. Lack of/Negative Informational Support	7	16%
3. Lack of/Negative Instrumental Support	5	12%
4. Emotional Support	4	9%
5. Informational Support	4	9%
6. Other	4	9%
7. Uncodable	3	7%
8. Instrumental Support	2	6%
9. Lack of/Negative Appraisal Support	1	2%

Teacher Behaviors (Suldo, 2009)	Total Codes (43 Reports)	%
1. Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion	17	40%
2. Punishment in Incorrect Manner	6	14%
3. Conveys Interest in Student Wellness	4	8%
4. Interest in Student Progress	3	7%
5. Other	3	7%
6. Insufficient Interest in Student Progress	2	5%
7. Conveys Disinterest in Student Wellness	2	5%
8. Uncodable	2	5%
9. Welcomes Questions	2	5%
10. Treats Students in Biased Manner	1	2%
11. Improves Student Moods/Emotion	1	2%

Table 4: Cross-tabulation Results – Positive Narrative Reports by Teacher Behaviors

	Suldo et al. (2009) Teacher Behaviors											
	1	3	4	5	6	7	11	14	18	23	24	Total
House (1981) Social Support												
Emotional	7	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	12
Lack/Emotional	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Instrumental	3	7	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	1	1	18
Informational	0	5	0	0	1	19	0	0	0	0	0	25
Appraisal	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Uncodable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Total	10	15	3	1	1	25	1	1	1	1	4	63

Note: See *Table 1* for Suldo et al. (2009) teacher behaviors on page 18

Table 5: Cross-tabulation Results – Negative Narrative Reports by Teacher Behaviors

	Suldo et al. (2009) Teacher Behaviors											
	1	2	3	4	7	8	18	19	20	23	24	Total
House (1981) Social Support												
Emotional	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Lack/Emotional	0	1	0	8	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	13
Instrumental	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Lack/Instrumental	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Informational	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Lack/Informational	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	7
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	4
Uncodable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Total	4	2	1	17	3	2	1	6	2	3	2	43

Note: See *Table 1* for Suldo et al. (2009) teacher behaviors on page 18

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics – Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale

Teacher (Frequency)	α	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Emotional Support	.70	15.33	2.30
2. Informational Support	.80	15.24	2.77
3. Appraisal Support	.77	13.73	3.44
4. Instrumental Support	.73	13.91	3.03
Teacher (Importance)			
1. Emotional Support	.69	7.73	1.17
2. Informational Support	.56	8.03	1.15
3. Appraisal Support	.51	7.41	1.34
4. Instrumental Support	.63	7.20	1.28
School Personnel (Frequency)			
1. Emotional Support	.88	13.82	3.24
2. Informational Support	.91	13.32	3.81
3. Appraisal Support	.87	12.74	4.31
4. Instrumental Support	.86	12.59	3.88
School Personnel (Importance)			
1. Emotional Support	.74	7.67	1.32
2. Informational Support	.79	7.50	1.45
3. Appraisal Support	.72	7.20	1.42
4. Instrumental Support	.73	6.92	1.42

NOTE: Frequency Scales Range from 3 to 18; Importance Scales Range from 3 to 9

Correspondence Between Narrative Social Support Types and CASSS

The CASSS measures social support in each of the four categories suggested by House (1981). We explored whether participant's scores on the CASSS would correspond in some way with which type of support they chose to write about in their critical incidents. Tables 7a-7d present the results. Although the sample sizes were too small and unbalanced to perform ANOVAs on these data, no patterns were apparent.

Table 7a: Descriptive Statistics – Correspondence Between Narrative Reports and CASSS (Emotional Sub-items)

House (1981) Category	N	Teacher Frequency Mean (sd.)	Teacher Importance Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Frequency Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Importance Mean (sd.)
Emotional (Positive Reports)	7	14.43 (2.15)	7.43 (1.13)	14.29 (3.86)	7.43 (1.13)
Emotional (Negative Reports)	4	16.75 (1.26)	8.25 (.50)	14.25 (3.77)	8.25 (.50)
Lack/Emotional (Positive Reports)	4	14.50 (1.29)	7.00 (1.15)	11.50 (2.89)	7.25 (1.50)
Lack/Emotional (Negative Reports)	10	13.20 (2.35)	6.90 (.88)	13.10 (2.85)	7.00 (1.15)
Instrumental (Positive Reports)	17	14.88 (2.71)	7.47 (1.12)	12.94 (2.46)	7.29 (1.36)
Instrumental (Negative Reports)	2	12.50 (2.12)	8.50 (.71)	12.00 (1.41)	8.50 (.71)
Lack/Instrumental (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Instrumental (Negative Reports)	5	13.60 (2.30)	7.40 (1.52)	12.20 (3.56)	6.60 (1.52)
Informational (Positive Reports)	20	16.65 (1.42)	8.20 (1.05)	15.30 (3.49)	8.25 (1.16)
Informational (Negative Reports)	4	16.25 (1.50)	7.50 (1.29)	16.50 (1.29)	7.00 (1.83)
Lack/Informational (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Informational (Negative Reports)	7	17.14 (1.21)	7.28 (1.11)	15.86 (2.79)	8.00 (1.00)
Appraisal (Positive Reports)	1	18.00 (N/A)	9.00 (N/A)	14.00 (N/A)	8.00 (N/A)
Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Negative Reports)	4	16.00 (2.45)	8.50 (1.00)	14.50 (2.45)	8.50 (1.00)
Uncodable (Positive Reports)	3	11.66 (1.53)	7.33 (1.53)	12.67 (3.21)	8.33 (1.15)
Uncodable (Negative Reports)	2	16.50 (2.12)	8.50 (1.00)	12.50 (2.12)	8.50 (1.00)

Table 7b: Descriptive Statistics – Correspondence Between Narrative Reports and CASSS (Instrumental Sub-items)

House (1981) Category	N	Teacher Frequency Mean (sd.)	Teacher Importance Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Frequency Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Importance Mean (sd.)
Emotional (Positive Reports)	7	12.71 (4.15)	6.86 (1.86)	12.71 (4.68)	6.86 (1.77)
Emotional (Negative Reports)	4	16.00 (2.16)	6.75 (2.22)	14.75 (5.85)	6.75 (2.06)
Lack/Emotional (Positive Reports)	4	11.25 (3.86)	5.50 (.58)	13.00 (2.45)	6.25 (.50)
Lack/Emotional (Negative Reports)	10	12.00 (3.46)	6.50 (1.27)	11.10 (3.63)	6.80 (1.03)
Instrumental (Positive Reports)	17	13.53 (3.39)	7.35 (1.32)	11.06 (4.04)	6.82 (1.67)
Instrumental (Negative Reports)	2	10.50 (2.12)	8.00 (1.41)	13.50 (4.94)	7.00 (1.41)
Lack/Instrumental (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Instrumental (Negative Reports)	5	10.60 (3.21)	7.20 (1.30)	10.40 (4.82)	7.80 (1.64)
Informational (Positive Reports)	20	14.75 (3.14)	7.85 (1.04)	14.05 (4.21)	7.50 (1.14)
Informational (Negative Reports)	4	14.75 (1.89)	6.75 (1.71)	13.75 (3.95)	5.75 (.50)
Lack/Informational (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Informational (Negative Reports)	7	16.14 (2.91)	7.71 (1.38)	13.42 (4.89)	6.85 (2.12)
Appraisal (Positive Reports)	1	16.00 (N/A)	8.00 (N/A)	17.00 (N/A)	9.00 (N/A)
Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Negative Reports)	4	14.25 (4.92)	8.00 (.82)	15.25 (3.59)	7.75 (.96)
Uncodable (Positive Reports)	3	10.67 (4.93)	7.00 (1.00)	10.00 (6.25)	6.67 (.58)
Uncodable (Negative Reports)	2	15.00 (2.83)	7.75 (1.41)	9.50 (.3.53)	8.00 (.82)

Table 7c: Descriptive Statistics – Correspondence Between Narrative Reports and CASSS (Appraisal Sub-items)

House (1981) Category	N	Teacher Frequency Mean (sd.)	Teacher Importance Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Frequency Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Importance Mean (sd.)
Emotional (Positive Reports)	7	12.29 (4.57)	6.71 (.49)	11.86 (4.14)	6.42 (1.27)
Emotional (Negative Reports)	4	16.25 (1.50)	7.00 (.00)	13.50 (4.51)	6.50 (1.73)
Lack/Emotional (Positive Reports)	4	12.75 (1.50)	6.00 (.00)	11.25 (3.30)	6.25 (.50)
Lack/Emotional (Negative Reports)	10	12.50 (2.67)	6.40 (.52)	11.90 (2.33)	6.20 (.63)
Instructional (Positive Reports)	17	14.18 (2.94)	7.47 (1.33)	11.76 (3.44)	6.94 (1.25)
Instructional (Negative Reports)	2	12.00 (1.41)	7.00 (2.82)	13.50 (.71)	7.50 (.71)
Lack/Instructional (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Instructional (Negative Reports)	5	10.40 (4.34)	7.60 (1.34)	9.60 (3.36)	7.00 (1.22)
Informational (Positive Reports)	20	13.75 (2.80)	7.20 (1.36)	13.90 (3.64)	7.30 (1.53)
Informational (Negative Reports)	4	13.00 (2.16)	7.50 (1.73)	13.00 (2.16)	6.50 (1.00)
Lack/Informational (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Informational (Negative Reports)	7	13.85 (3.24)	6.86 (1.68)	14.28 (3.55)	7.00 (2.00)
Appraisal (Positive Reports)	1	18.00 (N/A)	9.00 (N/A)	16.00 (N/A)	8.00 (N/A)
Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Negative Reports)	4	15.00 (3.46)	8.25 (.50)	15.00 (3.46)	8.50 (1.00)
Uncodable (Positive Reports)	3	12.00 (3.61)	7.67 (1.53)	9.33 (3.21)	6.00 (.00)
Uncodable (Negative Reports)	2	13.00 (2.83)	8.50 (1.00)	9.50 (.71)	7.25 (1.41)

Table 7d: Descriptive Statistics – Correspondence Between Narrative Reports and CASSS (Informational Sub-items)

House (1981) Category	N	Teacher Frequency Mean (sd.)	Teacher Importance Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Frequency Mean (sd.)	School Pers. Importance Mean (sd.)
Emotional (Positive Reports)	7	14.43 (3.95)	7.43 (1.27)	13.43 (3.95)	6.57 (1.81)
Emotional (Negative Reports)	4	17.25 (.98)	8.00 (1.15)	14.75 (3.40)	6.50 (1.73)
Lack/Emotional (Positive Reports)	4	14.50 (3.10)	7.00 (1.41)	12.75 (1.71)	6.75 (1.50)
Lack/Emotional (Negative Reports)	10	14.40 (3.24)	7.20 (1.23)	12.50 (2.88)	6.60 (1.26)
Instructional (Positive Reports)	17	14.82 (2.92)	7.59 (1.28)	12.53 (3.24)	7.65 (1.41)
Instructional (Negative Reports)	2	14.50 (3.54)	7.50 (2.12)	11.50 (.71)	8.00 (1.41)
Lack/Instructional (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Instructional (Negative Reports)	5	12.00 (3.81)	8.00 (3.09)	8.60 (3.29)	8.60 (3.29)
Informational (Positive Reports)	20	16.40 (1.42)	8.60 (.82)	14.45 (3.93)	7.65 (1.31)
Informational (Negative Reports)	4	16.75 (.96)	7.60 (1.67)	16.25 (2.87)	8.40 (.89)
Lack/Informational (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Informational (Negative Reports)	7	16.00 (2.65)	7.25 (1.50)	15.00 (3.74)	6.75 (1.50)
Appraisal (Positive Reports)	1	17.00 (N/A)	8.00 (N/A)	18.00 (N/A)	9.00 (N/A)
Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack/Appraisal (Negative Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Positive Reports)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (Negative Reports)	4	13.75 (4.35)	9.00 (.00)	14.75 (3.77)	8.50 (.58)
Uncodable (Positive Reports)	3	12.67 (4.93)	8.33 (.57)	10.00 (5.29)	7.66 (1.15)
Uncodable (Negative Reports)	2	15.00 (1.41)	8.25 (.60)	13.50 (2.12)	7.50 (1.11)

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was to identify which types of social support and specific behaviors displayed by teachers and other school professionals were found to provide high and/or low social support to middle school students. In order to investigate this research question, qualitative narrative reports (CIT) and quantitative rating scales (CASSS) measuring social support were completed by participants. The qualitative portion of the study focused on several research questions, whereas the quantitative portion of the study was examined by addressing a hypothesis.

- *Question 1: When asked to describe times when they received high/low levels of social support at school, what types of social support emerged most frequently in student narrative reports? And, did the most frequently reported forms of social support correspond with those found in Suldo et al. (2009)?*

Based on previous research (Suldo et al., 2009), it was predicted that Emotional and Instrumental support would emerge most frequently. Similarly, when asked to describe times with low levels of support, it was predicted Lack of/Negative Emotional Support and Lack of/Negative Instrumental Support would emerge most frequently. Results indicated that when prompted to describe experiences where high social support was displayed, "Informational Support" (40%), "Instrumental Support" (29%), and "Emotional Support" (19%) emerged most frequently. These results helped to clarify that, with only a prompt to describe a positive experience, students tended to describe experiences where Informational, Instrumental, and/or Emotional support were offered. These results provided support to previous research (Suldo et al., 2009) showing that middle school students find emotional and instrumental support to be most meaningful.

Within the middle school setting, these results are not far-fetched, as the demands and difficulty level of academics and the demand for abstract thinking become increasingly expected – students may require more informational, instrumental, and emotional support from their teachers, and may feel unsupported if they do not receive those types of supports.

Results further indicated that when prompted to describe experiences where low social support was displayed, "Lack of/Negative Emotional Support" (30%) emerged most frequently in student reports. These results indicated that students find it most problematic when teachers fail to establish sufficient trust and fail to express empathy or care. These results may provide support to previous research (House, 1981) stating that when individuals are asked about social support, they primarily think of emotional support. As such, when asked to "think about a time when one of your teachers or another person working in your school provided negative social support", it seems logical that students would gravitate towards describing an experience where a lack of emotional support was provided.

Further investigation of the positive and negative narrative reports revealed that, when asked to describe a positive form of social support, 4 students (6%) described experiences that were coded as negative forms of social support by raters. Similarly, when asked to describe a negative form of social support, 10 students (23%) described experiences that were coded as positive forms of social support by raters. Further investigation of this discrepancy revealed that these students reported incorrect experiences despite being prompted to describe a positive or negative experience. Within the positive narrative reports, this discrepancy (6%) is not very meaningful; however,

within the negative narrative reports, such a discrepancy (23%) may indicate that students find it easier to think about and describe positive experiences related to social support. These findings, in addition to the previously mentioned, provide additional support to previous research (House, 1981) explaining that when individuals think of being socially supported, they think mainly of emotional support.

- *Question 2: When asked to describe times when they received high/low levels of social support at school, what types of teacher behaviors emerged most frequently in student narrative reports?*

It was predicted that the most frequent teacher behaviors would be those associated with Emotional and/or Instrumental support (e.g., conveys interest in student wellness, improves student mood/emotion, interest in student progress, welcomes questions). Similarly, the most frequent unsupportive teacher behaviors would be those naturally associated with Lack of/Negative Emotional and/or Lack of/Negative Instructional support (e.g., conveys disinterest in student wellness, causes negative student mood/emotion, insufficient interest in student progress, discourages questions).

Results indicated that when prompted to describe experiences where high social support was displayed, "Interest in Student Progress" (40%), "Improves Student Mood/Emotion" (21%), and "Conveys Interest In Student Wellness" (10%) emerged most frequently in student reports. These reports provided partial support to the emerged teacher behaviors reported by students in Suldo et al. (2009). Based on these reports, students are encouraged when their teachers check for individual understanding, provide assistance/help, communicate care about students' emotional well-being and personal interests, and create a positive emotional environment. These results were also consistent

with and appeared to be naturally related to the most frequently reported forms of positive social support (i.e., Informational, Instrumental, Emotional support) by students.

Results further indicated that when prompted to describe experiences where low social support was displayed, "Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion" (40%) and "Punishment in Incorrect Manner" (14%) emerged most frequently in student reports. Based on these results, students perceived the lowest amount of social support when their teachers create a negative emotional environment, display insufficient attempts to alleviate personal or academic concerns, punish automatically, or punish the incorrect student/s for an incident. These results were consistent with student narrative reports indicating that "Lack of/Negative Emotional Support" emerged as a frequent type of social support.

- *Question 3: What types of social support and teacher behaviors corresponded most frequently, and what did those interactions reveal?*

It was predicted that corresponding types of social support and teacher behaviors would be similar in nature (i.e., Emotional Support X Improves Student Mood/Emotion). In reviewing the correspondence between positive types of social support and teacher behaviors, several interactions were identified ("Informational Support" and "Interest in Student Progress" (19 reports), "Emotional Support" and "Conveys Interest in Student Wellness" (7 reports), "Instrumental Support" and "Improves Student Moods/Emotion" (7 reports), "Instrumental Support" and "Interest in Student Progress" (7 reports). Similarly, with regards to negative types of social support and corresponding teacher behaviors, one interaction was identified ("Lack of/Negative Emotional Support" and "Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion" (8 reports).

These interactions revealed logical positive and negative interactions between the type of social support described and the type of teacher behavior that produced that social support. For example, by providing a student with Informational support (i.e., providing advice or information to a student so that he/she may use that advice or information to help himself/herself academically), the teacher oftentimes displays behaviors that show they have interest in the student's progress. Similarly, when a teacher provides a student with Emotional support (i.e., providing the student with trust, empathy, and care) the teacher oftentimes displays behaviors that convey interest in the student's wellness.

Negative interactions, such as "Lack of/Negative Emotional Support" and "Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion" revealed that when teachers fail to provide trust, empathy and care, students perceive a negative environment where insufficient attempts to alleviate personal or academic concern is displayed. In turn, and as previous research has confirmed, students who receive low emotional support from teachers and other school professionals have been linked with school failure and dropout (Baker, 1999), increased levels of externalizing and/or internalizing behavior problems (Huebner & Diener, 2008), lower levels of self-worth (Malecki & Elliott, 1999), self-control (Merritt et al., 2012), and school engagement and academic success (e.g., Lee et al., 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005) in comparison to their more socially supported peers.

Although other interactions were identified through cross-tabulation, their frequencies were too low to be interpreted as meaningful when looking at the data as a whole. However, that is not to say that those interactions are not important to students, as the importance of social support is based on subjective perceptions.

- *Hypothesis: The positive social support experiences narrated by students would also be identified as the most frequently and important forms of social support illustrated within the results of the CASSS.*

It was predicted that, as addressed in *Question 1*, Emotional and Instrumental support would emerge as most frequent and important on the CASSS and be consistent with previous findings (Suldo et al., 2009). In order to address this hypothesis, a comparison was made between the results of the CASSS and the types of social supports that emerged most frequently in student narrative reports of positive social support experiences (i.e., Informational, Instrumental, and Emotional support). Results of this comparison indicated that Emotional support and Informational support were consistently reported as being observed most frequently across qualitative (i.e., CIT) and quantitative (i.e., CASSS) measures. Similarly, Emotional support and Informational support were consistently reported as being perceived most importantly on the Teacher and School Personnel subscales of the CASSS. Instrumental support, although likely not significantly discrepant from other forms of social support on the CASSS, was not reported as frequent or as important as Emotional or Informational support.

As previously discussed, these results may indicate that students observe these types of support most frequently and view them most importantly because their level of schooling. Within the middle school environment, peer relationships, social emotional functioning, and academic work becomes more complex. As such, students may require their teachers to provide both emotional and informational support on a constant basis.

In comparing the Teacher and School Personnel scales to one another, it was apparent that students observe socially supportive behaviors more frequently from their

teachers than from other school professionals (i.e., speech pathologists, social workers, administrators, etc.); however, these differences may not be statistically significant. This discrepancy is likely due to the fact that students spend the majority of their time at school within the classroom setting under the supervision of a classroom teacher, not another type of school professional. In reviewing the Importance outcomes of each subscale, students reported very similar ratings between teachers and other school professionals. This indicates that regardless of position (i.e., teacher or other school professional), students' value each type of social support and endorse each type of social support as being important to them.

Study Limitations, Implications for School Psychologists, and Future Research

Due to the qualitative nature of the present study, certain limitations were expected and noted regarding the coding scheme and its reliability. Although moderate to substantial inter-rater reliability was observed, codes were subjectively assigned to narrative reports using the coding manual created for this study. Moreover, oftentimes one code could not sufficiently measure the type of social support or teacher behavior, as many types of social support or teacher behaviors may have been illustrated within one narrative report.

Another limitation was noted in the assignment of teacher behavior codes to narrative reports. Specifically, the teacher behavior categories adopted from Suldo et al. (2009) were created to measure the social support provided by *teachers*, and in the present study, a total of 29 narrative reports reflected an actor type of someone other than a teacher/school personnel (i.e., Peer, Family Member, Other, Unspecified). However, these reports were still coded using the categories of teacher behaviors adopted from

Suldo et al. (2009), as regardless of actor type, the incidents reflected in these reports appeared to be capable of being categorized using those codes. Regardless, the use of teacher behavior categories to code behaviors displayed non-teachers/school personnel may have impacted the validity of those results.

As previously discussed, the research and literature pertaining to social support within the educational environment is expansive; however, much research is needed to advance our understanding of how students perceive social support from their teachers and other school professionals. It is important for school professionals to understand the similarities and differences between the four types of social support and understand how and when to utilize those supports to advocate for student success.

With their extensive background in data and research interpretation, effective communication of best practices, and understanding of child/adolescent development and response to positive social and behavioral supports, school psychologists are in a great position to serve as change agents within the educational setting. Moreover, school psychologists can work in collaboration with school professionals, parents and community members to help ensure that social support be provided to all students across settings, and that social support practices be held to the same standard as those in academics.

Schools can use this type of research to guide practice regarding social support implementation and can independently measure what types of social support their students perceive as being most meaningful. Additional research should be conducted to confirm as well as expand on the present results. Expanding on these results will increase the specificity of types of social supports and teacher behaviors that students perceive as

being meaningful within the school environment. Additional research should also examine the level of training teachers receive through their training programs and through professional development regarding social support.

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Appendix A – Principal Contact Letter

Dear Principal:

My name is Dean Pappas, and I am currently a third year graduate student at Eastern Illinois University in the Specialist in School Psychology graduate program. This school year I am completing my required internship under the supervision of Saloan Goulet, school psychologist at Century Junior High in Orland Park, IL. I hope this letter finds you well!

I am writing in regards to a research project that I am completing for my specialist degree thesis under the supervision of Dr. Steven Scher, professor of psychology at EIU, with the hopes of having students from your school serve as participants. The topic of my study is middle school students' perceptions of social support in the school setting. Social support has been defined as an individual's perception that he or she is cared for, esteemed, and valued by people in his or her social network, that enhances personal functioning, assists in coping adequately with stressors, and may buffer him or her from adverse outcomes. Specifically, students will be asked to describe some of their social experiences at school in addition to filling out a survey pertaining to social support in the school environment.

With your permission, I would like come into (SCHOOL NAME) to recruit students between 6th and 8th grade to participate in my research. Students will be asked to login to a website from home, and complete a survey. I anticipate for participation to take less than 1-hour. To participate in the study students would need to bring home a parent consent form (which will explain the study in detail). Once students give assent and parents return the signed consent forms, each student's parents will be contacted with the necessary login information to the website where their children will complete the survey. Once again, the survey will be completed at home, not at school.

The Eastern Illinois University ethics committee (IRB) has reviewed and accepted the purpose and methodology of this study. The IRB committee requires written permission from each participating school vouching for the appropriateness of the study at the school.

I appreciate your time and consideration and I hope for the opportunity to work with your school in the near future. Please feel free to email or call me with any questions or concerns (djpappas@eiu.edu; 708-548-7856). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Steven Scher, with any additional questions (sjscher@eiu.edu; 217-581-7269). I will call to follow-up with you within a week to answer any questions. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Dean Pappas, School Psychology Graduate Student
Below is an outline, for your convenience

Title of Research
- "Assessing Middle School Students' Perceptions of Social Support Provided by Teachers and Other School Professionals"

Purpose
- To gain a better understanding of the social supports used by teachers and other school professionals

Study Components
- Self-report – completed at home by the student (approximately 30 min)
- Social support questionnaire (approximately 10 min)

Participants
- Middle school students (6th, 7th, 8th)
  - Written assent from each student participating in the study
- Parents of the student
  - Written consent

Need from School/Organization
- Letter on school/organization letter head stationary stating:
  - Agreement for the study to be conducted
  - Contact person at the school/organization who can provide information about the appropriateness of the research at the school/organization

Dean Pappas, B.A., S.S.P. Candidate
School Psychology Intern
Eastern Illinois University
djpappas@eiu.edu
708-548-7856

Appendix B – Letter of Assent (Student Copy)

Dear Student:

My name is Mr. Pappas, and I am studying at Eastern Illinois University to become a School Psychologist. This school year I am working at Century Junior High to complete my internship.

As part of my schoolwork, I have to do a research project. My project focuses on learning more about social support in the schools and is supervised by my professor, Dr. Steven Scher. We are asking middle school students to fill out a survey about the types of social support they receive at school.

The survey will ask you to describe how teachers and other school staff provide you with social support. We will also ask you to answer some questions about school. It will probably take you about 30-minutes to finish. When you fill out the survey, your responses will be completely anonymous. That is, your name will not be connected with any of your responses. Also, if you participate in the study you might win one of two $25 gift cards to your choice of stores and/or websites (iTunes, Amazon.com, Wal-Mart, Best Buy, etc.).

If you are interested in participating please fill out the bottom section of this letter and turn it back in to me. I will give you a form to take home to get your parents' permission.

Thank you very much for your consideration!

_____

_____ Yes, I would like to participate   _____ No, I would not like to participate

Your Name: _____

School: _____

Grade: _____

Appendix C – Letter of Consent

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Dean Pappas, and I am working at Orland School District 135 as a School Psychologist Intern. As part of my training, I am required to complete a thesis project regarding a specific area of research. My supervisor, Dr. Steven Scher, and I are seeking your help in this by asking if you would be willing to allow your child to complete an online survey about how teachers and other school personnel offer social support. We would be very grateful if you would allow your son or daughter to participate.

The study will be looking at how your son or daughter views social support at school by filling out a survey. We are interested in learning more about the types of social support offered by teachers and other school personnel and assessing which types of support students view as being important for success.

With your permission, the survey will be made available for your child to access on a secure survey webpage online. We expect the survey to take approximately 30-minutes to complete and your child's responses will be completely anonymous.

By allowing your child to participate, you are providing them with an opportunity to take part in research aimed at improving school environments and overall education. Additionally, following participation your child can choose to enter a drawing to win one of two $25 gift cards to various locations (e.g., iTunes, Amazom.com, Wal-Mart, Best Buy, etc.).

If you would be willing to consider helping us by allowing your child to participate, please have your child return the bottom section of this letter to the main office at school. I will contact you to answer any questions you might have and provide your child with all the necessary login information needed for the survey webpage.

The survey will not be done at your child's school or without your written permission. Thank you very much for your consideration! Your assistance will make a very important contribution to improving the school environment for your children and future students.

Respectfully,

Dean Pappas
School Psychology Intern
Century Junior High
dpappas@orland135.org

_____ **Yes, I give my consent**   _____ **No, I do not give my consent**

Parent Signature: _____

Parent Email: _____

Name of Child: _____

Appendix D – Email to Parents

Dear Parents:

Thank you for having your child return their signed permission form to participate in the Social Support Survey. Your child's participation in this process will be extremely useful in expanding the research on social support and increasing how these types of support are offered at school.

It is important that this type of research be completed so we can continue to understand how to most effectively educate your children.

The next step is for your child to login to the survey webpage and complete the survey. The link posted below is a secured webpage through Eastern Illinois University.

Please have your child click the link below on a computer and proceed with completing the survey. Before beginning the survey, your child will need to type in a password (indicated below). **Please have your child complete the survey as soon as possible.**

Again, thank you so much for your support in this process. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by responding to this email, or by calling me at 708-548-7856.

If you have any difficulties with the link, try to copy and paste into a different browser (internet explorer seems to work well). If you continue to have difficulties with accessing the survey, please contact me.

<Webpage Link>
<password>

Respectfully,
Dean Pappas

Dean Pappas
School Psychology Intern
Century Junior High
dpappas@orland135.org

Appendix E – Social Support Survey

Welcome to the social support survey! Please answer the following questions in order before moving on. When you complete the survey you will be redirected to a page where you can enter to win a $25 gift card!

Please take your time filling out the survey and answer all the questions honestly. Your name and personal information will not be included with your answers.

Click the arrow below to move on to the next section.

Are you male or female?
⬚Male⬚
⬚Female⬚

What grade are you in?
⬚6th⬚
⬚7th⬚
⬚8th⬚

Estimate your current grade point average (GPA).
⬚4.0 or higher⬚
⬚3.0 - 4.0⬚
⬚2.0 - 3.0⬚
⬚1.0 - 2.0⬚

Are you involved in any sports, clubs or groups outside of school?
⬚Yes⬚
⬚No⬚

Think about a time when one of your teachers or another person who works at your school provided you with **social support**. Specifically, think about a time **when someone did something that you found to be helpful in some way**.

Try to remember what happened in as much detail as possible. When you clearly remember the event, start answering the following questions. Please do not name any people involved in your reports.

How long ago was this experience?
    ☐Today☐
    ☐Within 2 weeks☐
    ☐Other ☐☐

Where did this experience take place?
    ☐Classroom☐
    ☐Teacher/Principal office☐
    ☐Other ☐☐

Who made you feel this way?
    ☐Teacher☐
    ☐Classroom helper☐
    ☐Principal/Assistant Principal☐
    ☐Someone else ☐☐

What was happening that led up to this experience? Describe the situation you were in.

Describe in detail what actually happened. How did the school employee act? What did they do?

How did this experience affect you?

How did this make you feel? Did this have any other effects on you or anyone else?

How truthful were you when describing this experience?
    ☐Very Truthful☐
    ☐Somewhat Truthful☐
    ☐Untruthful☐

Think about a time when one of your teachers or another person working in your school provided **negative social support**. Specifically, think about a time **when someone did something that you found to be not helpful in some way**.

Try to remember what happened in as much detail as possible. When you clearly remember the event, start answering the following questions. Please do not name any people involved in your reports.

How long ago was this experience?
- ☐ Today☐
- ☐ Within 2 weeks☐
- ☐ Other ☐ ☐

Where did this experience take place?
- ☐ Classroom☐
- ☐ Teacher/Principal office☐
- ☐ Other ☐ ☐

Who made you feel this way?
- ☐ Teacher☐
- ☐ Classroom helper☐
- ☐ Principal/Assistant Principal☐
- ☐ Someone else ☐ ☐

What was happening that led up to this experience? Describe the situation you were in.

Describe in detail what actually happened. How did the school employee act? What did they do?

How did this experience affect you?

How did this make you feel? Did this have any other effects on you or anyone else?

How truthful were you when describing this experience?
- ☐ Very Truthful☐
- ☐ Somewhat Truthful☐
- ☐ Untruthful☐

Thank you very much for describing these events for us.
If you have other examples of events that you would like to tell us about, choose which type you want to write about, and it will take you to another form to do it.
Thanks!

☐Describe another positive incident☐
☐Describe another negative incident☐
☐I'm Done☐

For each sentence you are asked to provide **two** responses. First rate **how often** you receive the support described and then rate **how important** the support is to you. Make sure you select **two** answers for each item.

My Teacher(s)…

How Often	How Important
(N) (AN) (S) (MT) (AA) (A)	(N) (AN) (S) (MT) (AA) (A)

…cares about me.

…treats me fairly.

…makes it ok to ask questions.

…explains things that I don't understand.

…shows me how to do things.

…helps me solve problems by giving me information.

…tells me I did a good job when I've done something well.

…nicely tells me when I make mistakes.

…tells me how well I do on tasks.

…makes sure I have what I need for school.

…takes time to help me learn to do something.

…spends time with me when I need help.

For each sentence you are asked to provide **two** responses. First rate **how often** you receive the support described and then rate **how important** the support is to you. Make sure you select **two** answers for each item.

People in My School…

How Often	How Important
(N) (AN) (S) (MT) (AA) (A)	(N) (AN) (S) (MT) (AA) (A)

…care about me.

…treat me fairly.

…make it ok to ask questions.

…explain things that I don't understand.

…show me how to do things.

…help me solve problems by giving me information.

…tell me I did a good job when I've done something well.

…nicely tell me when I make mistakes.

…tell me how well I do on tasks.

…make sure I have what I need for school.

…take time to help me learn to do something.

…spend time with me when I need help.

Appendix F – Survey for Identifying Information

Thank you for participating in the social support survey. Please fill out the following information if you choose to enter to win a $25 gift card.

What is your first and last name?

What school do you attend?

What grade are you in?

Please provide a phone number and/or email so that we may contact you.

If you win the drawing, which store would you like a gift card to?
  ☐Best Buy☐
  ☐Target☐
  ☐Dick's Sporting Goods☐
  ☐Marcus Theatres☐
  ☐Starbucks☐
  ☐McDonalds☐
  ☐iTunes☐
  ☐Game Stop☐
  ☐Amazon☐

Again, Thank You for your time spent taking this survey. Your responses have been recorded!

Appendix G – Coding Manual

Coding Manual: Definitions of Social Support & Teaching Behaviors:

For each incident, place one Code for each List/Category. Choose the code that most applies.

If you feel that there are secondary codes that should also apply, explain in the notes section. This includes categories that are not on the list.

You are encouraged to code incidents in the 'other' category if they don't seem to fit any of the given categories on the list. Please indicate your interpretation of the type of support behavior.

Some incidents may be uncodable: either because they don't have enough information, or because they aren't really social support-related behaviors. Indicate that on the coding sheet, and provide information as to the reason it is uncodable.

List 1: Actor Type - Code who the person doing the socially supportive behavior is:

- Teacher/School Professional
- Peer
- Family Member

List 2: Social Support Type Identified by House (1981) with negative counterpart:

These categories are general types of social support that a teacher (or other) can provide to a student. Please code the primary type of support/lack of support reported in the incident. Indicate any secondary codes in the notes section.

1. **Emotional Support**: Providing the student with trust, empathy, and care. Emotional support can focus on both educational and/or personal experiences (e.g., a student walks into her teacher's office crying and asks to talk. The teacher stops everything she is doing, listens to the student, and offers suggestions how to appropriately work through the problem).

2. **Lack/Negative Use of Emotional Support**: Failure to establish sufficient trust between the school professional and the student. Teacher/School professional (or other person) does not express empathy or care towards students. A lack of emotional support can focus on both educational and/or personal experiences.

3. **Instrumental Support**: Offering one's time and/or skills to help students. Includes behaviors that directly help students in need of academic help (e.g., a teacher offers to supervise a group of students working on a project during lunch) or personal support (e.g., after a student missed his bus, the classroom teacher waited with him at school until his parents picked him up).

4. **Lack/Negative Use of Instrumental Support:** Failure to offer sufficient time or skills to help students in need of academic help (e.g., a teacher expects her students to understand new and difficult concepts the first time without reviewing the material) or personal support (e.g., a teacher is unwilling to meet with a student to talk about a missing assignment).

5. **Informational Support**: Providing advice or information to a student so that he/she may use that advice or information to help *himself/herself* academically (e.g., a teacher demonstrates how to solve long-division problems to her students in a way that is easy to understand and apply to real world problems) or personally (e.g., a teacher discusses basic organizational skills with a student who frequently loses his homework).

6. **Lack/Negative Use of Informational Support:** Failure to provide sufficient advice or information to a student so that student may utilize that advice or information to help himself/herself academically (e.g., a teacher rushes through new and difficult mathematical concepts without providing her students with necessary adequate information or advice to solve the problems using different methods) or personally (e.g., a teacher notices that a student has trouble making friends in class, but does nothing to help the student strengthen his friend-making skills).

7. **Appraisal Support**: Providing evaluative feedback that is directly related to the student's educational performance or personal traits to encourage the continuation of that performance or behavior (e.g., a teacher approaches a student after class to express how happy they are with the student's recent progress).

8. **Lack/Negative Use of Appraisal Support:** Failure to provide sufficient evaluative feedback related to the student's educational performance or personal traits to encourage the continuation of that performance or behavior (e.g., after struggling with new concepts for months, a student finally understands the concepts and earns his first A on a math exam. The classroom teacher approached the student at the end of class and said, "you should have figured it out the first time.").

List 3: Teacher Behavior Type Identified by Suldo (2009) and Moore (2012):

These are more specific types of supportive behaviors. These may or may not be applicable to incidents where the actor is not a teacher or school employee. Please report one code for each incident. Indicate any secondary codes in the notes section.

1. **Conveys Interest in Student Wellness**: Communicates care about students' emotional well-being (e.g., students' moods, relationships, and health). Communicates investment in students' personal interests, such as sports and weekend plans.

2. **Conveys Disinterest in Student Wellness**: Communicates lack of interest in students' names, personal interests, and/or emotional concerns or well-being. Verbal praise appears insincere (e.g., compliments seem perfunctory).

3. **Improves Student Moods/Emotion**: Creates positive emotional environment via a pleasant or humorous teacher disposition. Attempts to alleviate students' personal or academic concerns (e.g., reduces students' academic stress, helps students problem solve personal situations). Shows

respect for students by maintaining their privacy and being honest with them.

4. **Causes Negative Student Mood/Emotion**: Creates a negative emotional environment (e.g., uses aversive voice tone, calls students names, behaves hypocritically). Displays insufficient attempts to alleviate students' personal or academic concerns and respect.

5. **Gives Students What They Want**: Provides fun activities (e.g., free time, sports, field trips). Gives tangible objects/rewards (e.g., candy, food).

6. **Responsive to Whole Class Understanding of Material**: Checks for entire class' understanding and arranges mastery experiences during class (e.g., explains and clarifies concepts, provides enrichment activities, is flexible with class agenda/schedule). Provides additional academic assistance (e.g., more review of difficult concepts during or after class). Elicits student feedback about class and teaching style.

7. **Interest in Student Progress**: In class, checks for individual student's understanding and provides assistance/help. Outside of classroom, checks for individual student's understanding and provides assistance/help.

8. **Insufficient Interest In Student Progress:** Students required to learn concepts independently, such as seatwork without teacher assistance. No concerns conveyed with student level of understanding or expressed difficulty with mastering material. Teacher assigns classwork irrelevant to learning objectives (e.g., assigns busywork, mismatch between classwork and tests).

9. **Uses Diverse Teaching Strategies**: Uses creative teaching strategies (e.g., collaborative and/or active learning, word searches, crosswords). Uses directive instruction (e.g., provides advance organizers, concrete examples, mnemonic devices). Attends to individual student's preferences for learning. Augments content in textbook with additional information via movies, internet, field trips, and personal anecdotes.

10. **Reliance on Single Mode of Instruction:** Does not attend to individual student's preferences for learning style. Uses a lecture style of teaching only (e.g., no creative activities or opportunities for active learning).

11. **Gives Evaluative Feedback**: Provides rewards contingent on performance (e.g., rewards individual student or entire class with party or treat for good performance). Communicates student achievement to students and/or parents (e.g., provides compliments/praise). Provides constructive feedback and encouragement.

12. **Helps Improve Student Grades**: Leniency in grading policies (e.g., provides extra or partial credit, helpful hints; lets students make up or redo work). Increases students' ability to prepare well for exams. Directs students how to self-improve (e.g., explains students' errors, redirects them to task).

13. **Not Helping Students Improve Grades**: Strict approach to grading (e.g., low grades given on new material, tests count for high percentage of grades, difficult tests).

14. **Manageable Workload**: Assigns reasonable amount of homework. Provides sufficient time for students to complete assignments and/or prepare for tests.

15. **Overwhelming Workload**: Assigns too much classwork or homework. Provides insufficient time for projects to get done and/or creates a schedule that yields an uneven workload.

16. **Treating Students Similarly**: Allows students equal chances to participate in class and assignments. Creates the appearance of not discriminating against specific students due to race, ability level, etc. Equally distributes positive reinforcement, such as teacher attention and treats.

17. **Punishment in Fair Manner**: Punishes the correct student for each incident. Attempts to solve problems in favor of automatically punishing.

18. **Treats Students In Biased Manner**: Favors certain students on apparent basis of achievement level, gender, race, or peer group. Student treated worse than peers for an unknown or unique reason (e.g., student is shy, thin, or once was a troublemaker). Allows some students more chances to participate in class and assignments. Gives positive reinforcement (e.g., teacher attention), treats, or privileges to only some students.

19. **Punishment in Incorrect Manner**: Punishes the incorrect student for an incident. Punishes automatically (e.g., makes inaccurate assumptions). Extreme position on discipline continuum (e.g., doesn't intervene when should or gives punishment too harsh for offense).

20. **Welcomes Questions**: Provides explicit permission for student to ask questions aloud during class as needed. Provides positive response to student questions (e.g., answers all questions thoroughly, leads students to current answers). Provides methods for students to pose questions privately and/or anonymously. Dedicates time in class or after class to address questions. Allows students' to pose their questions to peers. Provides a physical environment that encourages questions (e.g., posters on class walls remind students to ask questions).

21. **Discourages Questions**: Ignores students' questions. Provides a negative response to questions (e.g., appears angry after students' questions, punishes bad questions). Limits time to address questions.

22. **Sets Firm Rules/Discipline Practices**: Students are disciplined for breaking a rule (e.g., teacher reduces student conduct grade, notifies parents). Students perceive overly strict or senseless classroom rules. Repeated reminders of school classroom rules and schedule.

Appendix H – Coding Document

List One: Actor Type:

1.)   Teacher/School Employee   4.)   Other (Specify):

2.)   Peer   5.)   Not Specified

3.)   Family Member

List Two: Social Support Type – House (1981):

1.)   Emotional Support   6.)   Lack of/Negative Informational
                                                                      Support
2.)   Lack of/Negative Emotional
         Support   7.)   Appraisal Support

3.)   Instrumental Support   8.)   Lack of/Negative Appraisal Support

4.)   Lack of/Negative Instrumental   9.)   Other (Specify Reason):
         Support

5.)   Informational Support   10.)   Uncodable (Specify Reason):

Section Three: Teacher Behavior Type – Suldo et al. (2009), Moore (2012):

1.)   Conveys Interest in Student   13.)   Not Helping Students Improve
         Wellness   Grades

2.)   Conveys Disinterest in Student   14.)   Manageable Workload
         Wellness
                                                                15.)   Overwhelming Workload
3.)   Improves Student Moods/Emotion
                                                                16.)   Treating Students Similarly
4.)   Causes Negative Student
         Mood/Emotion   17.)   Punishment in Fair Manner

5.)   Gives Students What They Want   18.)   Treats Students in Biased Manner

6.)   Responsive to Whole Class   19.)   Punishment in Incorrect Manner
         Understanding of Material
                                                                20.)   Welcomes Questions
7.)   Interest in Student Progress
                                                                21.)   Discourages Questions
8.)   Insufficient Interest In Student
         Progress   22.)   Sets Firm Rules/Discipline Practices

9.)   Uses Diverse Teaching Strategies   23.)   Other (Specify):

10.)   Reliance on Single Mode of
         Instruction   24.). Uncodable (Specify)

11.)   Gives Evaluative Feedback

12.)   Helps Improve Students Grades