

Gifted Second-Graders' Perceptions
of Teachers' Expectations

by

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that teachers hold different expectations for different students and these varying expectations influence students' academic performance (Good & Brophy, 1997; Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998; Rubie-Davies, 2007; Rubie-Davies, Hattie, Townsend, & Hamilton, 2007). Teachers form expectations of students based on personal beliefs about individuals' capabilities (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Teachers' differential expectations for students can have positive and negative influences on student learning opportunities and their future potential (Weinstein, 2002). The purpose of this action research study was to better understand if gifted second-graders perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior. The research focused on observing and interpreting ideas from the perspectives and experiences of the six gifted second-graders. The innovation focused on the voice of the students in making change in their classroom environment. It focuses on classroom observations and reflections of the six participants to discuss their thoughts and feelings about their perceptions about their teachers' expectations. The greater purpose behind the design of the innovation was to provide a space where students could share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas, without fear of punishment from their teachers. Participants shared their ideas through online selfie videos in order to inform teachers' practice. Data were available from several sources including the Teacher Treatment Inventory questionnaires, transcriptions from interviews, and videotaped lessons. The study aimed to determine: (1) How do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success? and, (2) How do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted

second-graders? Findings suggest teachers with low expectations for their students establish a climate of failure, but teachers that value their students' abilities create a climate of success. Students achieve more when their teachers have purposeful and clear expectations. As indicated by the literature, when teachers listen to student voice in classrooms, it improves students' morale. Creating an inclusive social learning environment in a gifted classroom requires teachers to build their classrooms around student voice to enhance the supportive and caring environment (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2012).

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Edwin Semmerling. He was my inspiration to persevere through the dissertation process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Our requirement as a society is to educate all students. Students with special needs, English Language Learners, and gifted students all deserve to receive an appropriate and fair education. In order for students to receive an appropriate and fair education, the teachers must be effective. There is a large amount of research of the effectiveness of teachers on student achievement (Cooper, 1979; Rist, 1973; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). The research has shown that students' appearance, race, ethnicity, and educational history may influence teachers' expectations, leading to an affect in student learning. When teachers hold high expectations for students, there tends to be high student achievement and when teachers have low expectations for students, student achievement is low (Brophy, 1974; Brophy & Good, 1970). Educators have the responsibility to provide opportunities to develop a learning environment that encourages students' potential. The expectations that teachers have for their students impact the learning environment.

Creswell (1998, 2007) suggests relating the present study with the literature to provide a framework for understanding the context. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a history of gifted education in order to frame the background of gifted education and the importance of specialized education for this population of students. In order to understand gifted students in a self-contained gifted classroom, it is necessary to appreciate the historical context. Teachers' expectations for their students' abilities have been shown to be related to students' self-perceptions of ability in a variety of academics (Trouilloud, Sarrazin, Bressoux, & Bois, 2006). When teachers have high expectations,

students report being more confident and engaged in the classroom (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). When teachers have low expectations, the students' self-perceptions of their ability decreases (Rubie-Davies, 2006). There is less research on whether or not students perceive their teachers' expectations and, if they do hold this perception, whether these perceptions affect their learning. This study seeks to better understand if gifted second-grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior.

Historical Context of Giftedness

The study of giftedness is filled with controversy. Studies into gifted students began with Galton's (1869) *Hereditary Genius*, which was the first scientific study of high ability and achievement. Galton's work used statistical methods to study high ability levels and the components influencing success provide a basis for later methods of research (Jolly, 2005). Galton noticed in his study with more than 400 British men that the trait of mental ability appeared to perpetuate itself in families (Galton, 1869, p.v). He was interested in figuring out if the men rose to higher places due to hard work or due to intellectual ability. Galton concluded that men will rise to the level of natural ability and no amount of hard work will alter natural ability. Galton ultimately confirmed his theory that genius was hereditary (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Galton, 1869).

The controversial nature of giftedness may be attributed to the original intent of the ideas behind IQ testing. According to Selden (1999) IQ tests were used to track students into separate and unequal educational tracks. Based on IQ testing, children of inferior intelligence were segregated into special classrooms. This led to seminal studies

with high IQ students or gifted students led by Lewis Terman (1926) and Leta Stetter Hollingworth (1926).

Lewis Terman, acknowledged as the father of the gifted education movement, influenced gifted education in practice and in understanding of gifted students (Jolly, 2005). Terman published the Stanford-Binet intelligence test, based on the original work of Binet and Simon in France. Terman started with the original test items, translated them from French, and added additional items he had previously developed and tested (Becker, 2003). Lewis Terman introduced the intelligence quotient, abbreviated as IQ, which was used in the measurement of intelligence. When Terman published the Stanford-Binet IQ test in 1916, he paved the way for standardized testing to be used in identifying gifted learners (NAGC, 2017). He began his research to find out more about students that performed unusually high on the Stanford-Binet Scale of Intelligence. Terman hoped that his body of research would become the “foundation of establish truth” (Terman, 1925, p. 424). “True believers in IQ tests thought they should be given to all American school children, so that the high scorers could be plucked out and given the best schooling and the average and low scorers consigned to a briefer, more limited education” (Lemann, 2000, p. 23). In one study, Terman (1925) conducted a longitudinal study of 1,528 gifted children over the course of their lives. This study led Terman to conclude that intelligence was inherited and the strongest predictor of future success (Terman, 1925, 1926). He believed society needed to identify academically gifted children and to provide those students with an appropriate education (Minton, 1985). These results perpetuated the idea of gifted students being well adjusted and happy. While Terman displayed a bias

towards certain ethnicities, certain social classes, and female subjects, he remains as one of the most important figures in gifted education.

Just as Terman conducted studies with students, Leta Stetter Hollingworth conducted case studies of twelve students that tested above 180 IQ on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. She studied these students from 1922 to 1925 in New York City. Students were segregated into two classes. One class was filled with 25 gifted students with median IQ's of 146 and the other class was filled with 25 gifted students with median IQ's of 165 (Klein, 2002). The focus of the study was the effects of enrichment programs for gifted children on their academic achievement. During the study, the same teachers taught the students during the three year time frame. The students were taught using prescribed district curriculum with enrichment activities to enhance the students' learning (Klein, 2002).

Hollingworth concluded there was remarkable achievement in the students (Klein, 2002). She also found that these students demonstrated adjustment problems including failure to develop desirable work habits at school, difficulty finding appropriate companions, and emotional vulnerability (Morelock & Feldman, 1997). Hollingworth came to believe, "To have the intelligence of an adult and the emotions of a child combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulties" (Hollingworth, 1942, p. 282). She recommended emotional education for gifted students (Davis & Rimm, 2004, p. 8; Hollingworth, 1939, p. 585). She noted some emotional education concerns relating to adjusting to classmates, learning how to play with others, developing leadership, and learning to conform to rules and expectations. Hollingworth continued her studies and separated students at a school according to IQs clustering at 145 and 165. Clustering the

IQs allowed the researchers the ability to compare achievement and academic performance between the two groups. Both groups of students were given a series of tests that included speed reading, vocabulary, spelling, composition, mathematics, and history. After analysis of the data, Hollingworth concluded that equal educational opportunity did not result in equal achievement and tests of intelligence could be used to predict achievement under conditions of equal opportunity (Hollingworth, 1928).

Hollingworth was one of the first researchers in the field of gifted education to acknowledge the difference between gifted and highly gifted children. She also recognized that regular classroom curriculum was insufficient for gifted students (Klein, 2002). Her work continues to be a guiding force for development and procedures for educating gifted children.

Terman and Hollingworth argue that evidence of mental capacity was demonstrated through performance on standardized measures, the IQ test being the main measure. Researchers in gifted education now accept the effects of environment and change upon achievement. Tannenbaum (2003) refers to the “social context” that enables giftedness to mature, and the “influence of the unexpected and unpredictable on human development” (p.55). Terman and Hollingworth’s work focused on identification, differentiation, research interests, and the social and emotional needs of gifted students; which remain relevant and at the center of gifted education (Jolly, 2005). These ideas still influence policies for gifted education. Additionally, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act influenced the changing perception of gifted and talented. Intelligence identification was no longer limited to gender, class, or ethnicity. Research continued to make positive strides for educational policies for gifted education.

Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958, strengthening education in the United States. Federal funding became available for developing talent, specifically in the fields of science and mathematics (Roberts, 1999). NDEA provided financial assistance for college students, which also included foreign language and engineering students. This act encouraged excellence and equity, which encouraged an interest in gifted education (Jolly, 2009).

The National Defense Education Act inspired the *Marland Report*. In 1972, the *Marland Report* was issued and provided the first definition of gifted and talented children. Gifted and talented children are capable of high performance. Children capable of high performance demonstrate achievement or potential ability in any of the following areas: general intellectual ability, specific academic ability, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability. The findings from this report also influenced the creation of the Office of Gifted and Talented Education (Roberts, 1999).

Reports by the federal government illustrated the need for future development in the field of education. In 1983, President Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education created a report titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. According to the report, educational foundations are "being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (U.S. Department of Education, 1983, p. 5). The authors of the report cautioned that the country was in danger and change needed to occur. *A Nation at Risk* sought to "change the conversation about acceleration in America's schools. The research from this report indicates that many teachers and administrators want to provide high-ability students with

the flexibility to move at the pace of their talents (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, p.1). This provided insight for a need for educating gifted students in a different manner.

A Nation at Risk officially defined gifted learners as:

Children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor (U.S. Department of Education, 1983, p. 5).

A Nation at Risk emphasized missed opportunities of gifted education and made several recommendations in favor of gifted education. Recommendations for funds for textbooks and materials were suggested for the outlying populations of gifted and talented. While gifted was not explicitly added, suggestions were made that grade progression should not be limited by ability or chronological age. Finally, collaboration was encouraged between federal, state, and local governments to help meet the needs of all students, including minority students, special education, and the gifted and talented population.

A Nation at Risk initiated policies and funding for the gifted and talented population. In 1988, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act was passed by the United States Congress. The Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act is the only federal program devoted to the needs of gifted learners. It provides funding for

research, projects, and activities for gifted students. Most of the resources are concentrated on underrepresented populations of gifted students; English Language Learners, disabled students, and economically disadvantaged students, in order to reduce the achievement gap and encourage equal opportunities (NAGC, 2017). The Javits Act laid the foundation for funding associated with gifted programs and the research that followed.

National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent was released by the U.S. Department of Education in 1993 examining the state of gifted education in our schools. The report found students were not being challenged in their school work and consequently underachieving (U. S. Department of Education, 1993). The report provided a similar definition of gifted learners as *A Nation at Risk*. The report stated that, “Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor” (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p.5). Following this report, more students were identified as gifted and offered services.

An additional report, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* was released in 2004. The report focused on misconceptions that led to the resistance of the acceleration as a way to meet the needs of gifted students. It stated how schools avoid academic acceleration, which is an effective way to assist gifted students (T. L. Cross, 2011). The report reviewed acceleration practices of early-entrance, grade skipping, and the Advanced Placement Program.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was passed as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001. Under the *No Child Left Behind*

legislation, the focus had been on closing the achievement gap and providing the same grade-level expectations to students, whether they are ready to learn it or whether they already know the standards. This does not take into account environment, aptitude, and individual differences for students (Barton, 2003; Ohanian, 1999; Popham, 2001).

Although this legislation intended to improve education for all students, it focused on proficiency and accountability. In order to meet proficiency and accountability standards, *No Child Left Behind* requires public schools receiving federal funding to administer a standardized test to all students annually. Emphasis was placed on annual yearly progress, which caused schools to focus on the lower band of students in order to pass the state mandated tests. Gifted students also take the state mandated test, but since there is no incentive to boost top performance under NCLB, many of the students hit the ceiling on their state tests (Viadero, 2010). Hitting the ceiling of a test means the questions on the test were insufficiently difficult to measure true knowledge or ability. The emphasis on annual yearly progress lands mostly on the shoulders of the teachers. Many took the position that NCLB was intended for teachers to be solely responsible for student learning (Gardner, 2012). The expectation was if a student failed, it was the fault of the teacher. NCLB legislation included a section about gifted and talented students, but it did not clearly state how to meet the needs of this population.

Funds that were once earmarked for gifted programs were reallocated to proficiency programs (Piiro, 2007). NCLB has not been properly funded and in turn, there have been unintended consequences. The marginalization of specialized content curriculum and the overemphasis of standardized testing are two unintended consequences (Booher-Jennings & Beveridge, 2008; Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005).

Since funding is dependent on the test scores, the curriculum of the school focuses on reading and mathematics, which are tested subjects. Hlebowitsh (2007) claimed when high-stakes testing occurs, schools reduce covered subjects in schools. “The effect is that art, music, and such skills sets as critical thinking, creativity, cooperative behavior, and many others get short shrift in the classroom, primarily because such matters typically have little or no place on the exams” (Hlebowitsh, 2007, p. 28).

We are currently in a transition process with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed by former President Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA replaced *No Child Left Behind* with claims of ensuring opportunity for all of America’s students. Approximately \$21 billion in federal funds are distributed to states and school districts using student population, economic status, and grant programs. Instead of relying on test scores to measure school performance previously done under NCLB, states now need to include test scores, graduation rates, and a way of measuring school quality or student success (Klein, 2017). Under ESSA, states must include student achievement data at each achievement level that is disaggregated by student subgroups (i.e. low-income, English Language Learners, gender, disability). Previously, states were required to provide detailed information for students performing at the proficient level or below and now must include students achieving at the advanced level. For the first time ever, Title I funds can be used to identify and serve gifted and talented students. School districts that receive Title II professional development funds must also use the money to address the learning needs of all students, including gifted and talented students. As stated earlier, our educational system is experiencing a transition and hopefully changes implemented will provide positive change for all students, included gifted students.

The changes in education in the United States have increased high-stakes testing in our schools. In a high-stakes testing environment, teachers often narrow their curriculum to focus on test preparation instead of focusing on furthering educational goals. Teachers do not teach content if it is unlikely to be on the test and they are less likely to encourage students to explore concepts and ideas that interest them (Moon, 2001). Some gifted students might already demonstrate mastery to the concepts before they are taught and become bored with learning instead of promoting growth (Moon & Callahan, 2001). When gifted students become bored with learning, they often perform below their potential.

The Marland Report (1972) noted that “research has confirmed that many talented children perform far below their intellectual potential. We are increasingly being stripped of the comfortable notion that a bright mind will make its own way.” Likewise, The United States Department of Education (1993) established that students were not being challenged in their schools and therefore underachieving. One of the most significant problems facing gifted children is underachievement. Underachieving gifted students are defined as those with exceptionally high intellectual ability and academic performance that is lower than expected (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Even though there is no consensus on the meaning of underachievement, most of the definitions state a discrepancy between potential ability and actual achievement (Gallagher, 1975; Whitmore, 1980).

Seeley (1993) calculated that 15-40% of gifted students are at-risk for serious academic underachievement or school failure. Underachievement may be caused by a lack of rigorous curriculum, inappropriate teaching styles, and the climate of the classroom. Often inflexible teacher and curriculum that does not meet the needs of

students causes underachievement in gifted students (Rimm & Lovelace, 1992). Underachievers are often seen by their teachers as lazy, disruptive, anxious, and insecure. Underachievement has been recognized as one of the major concerns of educators of gifted students (Renzulli, Reid, & Gubbins, 1992). Intellectually gifted students are not automatically successful, but they should have the skills required to achieve at the appropriate level. Schultz (2002) believed that researchers should focus on the experience and expectations from the perspective of the underachieving gifted student.

Problem of Practice

In the past five years, Bella Vista Gifted Academy has changed the overall structure of the school. Bella Vista Gifted Academy, formally known as Bella Vista Elementary was a neighborhood elementary school. The school's location in an aging part of the district lacked growth. The school board decided to create a school within a school model. The elementary school provided a comprehensive program including a self-contained gifted classroom at each grade level. Throughout the district, there were also some self-contained gifted classrooms. It was possible for a student to move schools for several years in a row, just to stay in a self-contained gifted classroom. The school board wanted to increase the number of students in the district. Bella Vista Elementary had low enrollment numbers, making it an ideal location for a specialized gifted school.

After two years of following the school within a school model, the neighborhood section of the school was reallocated to nearby schools and the school was renamed Bella Vista Gifted Academy. In the fall of 2014, the school began as a completely self-contained gifted school. Some of the teachers stayed, many new teachers were hired, and a new principal was named. Having previous experience with gifted students, I sought a

position at this campus to continue my work with gifted students. I joined two other teachers to create our second-grade team. While all three of us were new to the school, we were not new to teaching. We were instructed to teach third-grade mathematics and language standards, but given no further direction, guidelines, or expectations. We were expected to implement a team teaching model, but we were not given an explanation of team teaching, or a way to implement team teaching. Our team of three teachers created our own version of team teaching as the year progressed. Team teaching consisted of mixing the students for mathematics instruction based on a pre-assessment, bringing all three classes together for project directions and brief explanations, and rotating groups of second-graders around for project-based learning. As the years progressed, we have developed our model of team teaching. Table 1 below shows the current schedule and the organization of the second-grade team approach.

Table 1. *Current Second-Grade Schedule and Team Approach*

9:00-9:30	Morning Work	Homeroom			
9:30-10:20	Math	Teacher A/Teacher B		Teacher C/Teacher D	
10:20-11:00	Specials	P.E./Music/Performing Arts/Technology/Global Studies			
11:00-11:25	Math	Teacher A/Teacher B		Teacher C/Teacher D	
11:25-11:55	English Language Arts	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
11:55-12:35	Lunch	All Together			
12:35-1:00	Read Aloud	Teacher A/Teacher C		Teacher B/Teacher D	
1:00-2:40	Integrated Studies	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
2:40-3:00	Recess	All Together			
3:00-3:40	Homeroom	Homeroom			

Table 1 displays the current daily schedule of the second-grade team and how the students are shared among the teachers. Students are assigned a homeroom teacher, but the students are shared amongst the grade level. For mathematics, students are given a pre-assessment before each mathematical concept to help the teachers make placement and instructional decisions. The team of teachers are flexible in their grouping when changes need to be made based on the performance of the students in the class. During Integrated Studies, students are grouped based on the DIBELS assessment given at the beginning of the year. At the end of the first semester, the team decided to change the groupings based on the behavior of the students.

Second grade has changed and modified the team teaching methods and groupings of students throughout the past four years. Other grade levels approached the team teaching model in a variety of ways and none of the grade levels were identical. At the same time, the school did not provide a consistent behavior plan or consistent expectations for the students. There are no common set of rules or guidelines for the students at Bella Vista Gifted Academy. Students and their parents were required to sign a behavior contract, but the contracts were inconsistently reinforced and during the 2017-2018 school year, the contracts were no longer required.

Expectations are formed through different experiences with students. Teacher expectations are communicated through verbal and non-verbal cues, through feedback from the teacher, and the climate of the classroom (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Consistent expectations between classrooms and teachers allow for stability for students. Expectations are best when they are appropriate, accurate, and flexible (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Consistent expectations allow students to feel more confident and

engaged in the classroom without the need to focus on different expectations from place to place. In my current grade-level environment, academic expectations and expectations of behavior and norms continue to be unclear and inconsistent. Academically, one teacher expects students to focus on second grade standards, while the other teachers focus on third grade standards. Behaviorally, students are allowed to shout out answers with some teachers and other teachers expect students to raise their hands. Further, expectations of turning in work are different among the teachers. One teacher requires classwork to be turned in on time, while another teacher does not. Differences in expectations cause problems with students and parents. With inconsistent expectations of behavior and lack of common norms in the school setting, disruption occurs. Disruptive behavior encourages low expectations for students, a negative classroom environment for learning, and promotes negative peer interactions (Bradshaw, Buckley, & Ialongo, 2008).

Expectations and norms are overlooked at Bella Vista Gifted Academy because assumptions are made by the teachers that gifted students already know how to behave in a classroom. When assumptions are made that gifted students are well-behaved and understand and follow rules, the rules are not enforced or reviewed. Inconsistencies occur when expectations are different or unknown.

Context of the Study

Bella Vista Gifted Academy is part of a public school district located in a suburban southwestern city. Bella Vista Gifted Academy is an entirely gifted campus serving kindergarten through sixth grade. Students in this self-contained gifted program work at least one year beyond grade level. Emphasis is placed on science, technology,

engineering, mathematics, and art integration through an interdisciplinary approach. For the 2017-2018, 664 students enrolled at Bella Vista Gifted Academy.

According to registration data at Bella Vista Gifted Academy, 11.3% of students identify as Hispanic/Latino, 46.6% are White, 2.6% are African-American, 35.7% Asian, 0.8% are American Indian, and 0.2% are Pacific Islander. 2.8% of the respondents noted multiple races for identification purposes. According to registration data at the school district, 27.01% of students identify as Hispanic/Latino, 53.80% are White, 5.35% are African-American, 8.59% Asian, 1.36% are American Indian, and 0.27% are Pacific Islander. 3.62% of the respondents noted multiple races for identification purposes. The percentage of students approved for free or reduced-price lunches for the 2017-2018 school year at Bella Vista Academy was 7%, while the percentage was 29.8% at the district level.

Bella Vista Academy does lack a diverse population, which is common in gifted education programs. There continues to be inadequate representation of minority students in gifted programs (Daniels, 1998; Ford, Baytops, & Harmon, 1997). Historically, African American children have been underrepresented in gifted programs across the United States (Ford, 2011; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). African American and other children of color, with the exception of Asian American children, are less likely to be placed in gifted programs than Caucasians (Ford, 2011). Similar to the research, Bella Vista Gifted Academy has a low percentage of African American and other children of color in the gifted program. Poor and minority students remain underserved in gifted programs proportional to their representation in the overall student population (Moon & Brighton, 2008). While underrepresentation of minorities in gifted education has created

gaps in gifted programming among various student populations (VanTassel-Baska, Johnson, & Avery, 2002), this is not the key focus of this study.

The campus consists of 37 certified teachers, one special education teacher, and five specialty teachers (physical education, music, performing arts, technology, or global studies). The majority of the classroom teachers are grade-level specific teachers. At each grade level, the structure of the classroom varies. All of the grade levels practice a form of team teaching. For the purpose of this study, I focused on the second grade classroom teachers.

The classroom environment in a self-contained gifted classroom can be louder than what you might expect in a more traditional model of education. One factor influencing the level of noise is the open classroom concept used at the school. The classroom walls remain open between the rooms. The walls are similar to what you might see in a conference center that fold open and move to create a larger space. The open walls allow for more interaction between the grade level and provides easier integration of students. Another factor contributing to the noise of the classroom has been the continuous use of groups. The students work on projects throughout the day for every subject, due to the integration of subjects. Direct instruction is not the main source of instruction. Students may experience a short ten-minute discussion and instruction period before working with peers to solve the assigned problem or begin a project. Teachers take on more of a facilitator role, managing behaviors, and answering questions as the students work. Many of the lessons are modeled after project based learning and students are constantly trying to solve real-world problems. The ability to sit quietly in class and to speak a limited amount has been shown to be difficult tasks for gifted students

(Fonseca, 2001). Therefore, the teachers at Bella Vista Gifted Academy implement a collaborative model of learning. Students are encouraged to share their knowledge through different mediums; posters, dioramas, Prezi, stories, and interactive storytelling.

I am a second-grade gifted teacher at Bella Vista Gifted Academy. The second-grade team shares the responsibility of 93 second-graders. We are assigned a homeroom class, but students are shared amongst the team. For mathematics, we pre-assess the students based on third-grade standards for the quarter. The team of second-grade teachers analyzes the results from the pre-assessment and create developmentally appropriate math groups based on the needs of the students. This means that students are mixed between homerooms and may not have their homeroom teacher for math that quarter. Each quarter, the pre-assessment occurs and teachers create new groups based on need. Students also move through the different classrooms for most of the afternoon for integrated studies. Integrated studies is where science and social studies drives our writing, reading, and language standards. Integrated studies groups are created based on a reading assessment from the beginning of the year. Based on the needs of this group of second graders, the integrated studies groups were changed at the end of the first semester. Groups for the second semester were based on behavior of the students and mixing in a variety of reading levels. Grouping the students in this way allows teachers to differentiate instruction for each group of second-graders. We use our integrated studies time to focus on problem based learning projects. Students also spend time in their homeroom classrooms with their assigned homeroom classmates for about forty-five minutes at the beginning and end of each day.

Leadership Context and Researcher Positionality

I currently work as a self-contained gifted second-grade teacher in a public elementary school. In my role, I am responsible for teaching 24 gifted second-graders in all subject areas, using third-grade standards. Further, I am a part of a four person team of teachers and we share the responsibility of all 93 second-graders. In the past four years, we have experienced new teachers joining the team every year, causing change and disruption to the roles and organization of the team. In every aspect of my role as a teacher working within a team environment, I have to constantly think of how I can present high-quality instruction while maintaining high expectations for all students. Through my work at this campus, I have observed students being held to varying levels of expectations. While reflecting on classroom practice, the realization occurred that varying expectations may have an impact on the academic performance and classroom behavior of gifted second-graders.

This context impacts my role as a researcher, acknowledging my role as an insider in collaboration with other insiders (Herr & Anderson, 2015). In other words, I am a member of the second-grade team, but I need the assistance of my team members in order to improve practice. Being a member of a team of teachers offers the ability to engage in inquiry in order to move from individuals toward a more collaborative environment. Additionally, I need to collaborate with my second-grade participants in order to gain a better understanding of the culture and context. Collaborating with the participants will allow me to provide voice to the gifted second-graders and offer change in the various classroom environments.

Research Questions

It appears the staff and students at Bella Vista Gifted Academy are missing consistent expectations and norms in order to support the needs of their gifted students. Despite the fact there have been problems associated with the lack of consistent expectations, there has not been any formal training nor have any general guidelines been established at the school. It would be helpful to have consistent procedures and expectations instituted throughout the elementary school. Taken together, the evidence on expectations suggests it is imperative to develop a set of clear and coherent expectations that brings together students, administrators, teachers, and parents. The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success?
2. How do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted second-graders?

Thus, the purpose of this action research study is to better understand if gifted second-grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior. For the purpose of this action research, I have defined the following terms as key components of this study.

Expectations- Inferences that teachers make about future academic achievement of students (Brophy & Good, 1970).

Gifted- Gifted young children are those who have the capacity to learn at a pace and level of complexity that is significantly advanced of their age peers in any domain or domains that are valued in and promoted by their sociocultural group (Porter, 1999, p. 33).

Perceptual bias- When the perceiver's beliefs influence their assessment of the objective (Smith, Jussim, Eccles, VanNoy, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998).

Self-fulfilling prophecy- Occurs when previously held beliefs lead to a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true (Merton, 1948).

Sustaining expectation effects- When teachers expect students to continue to act according to previous behaviors and the teachers may ignore any contradictory behaviors (Cooper & Good, 1983).

Innovation

My innovation examined the perceptions of gifted second-graders and the varying expectations that they experience. In order for teachers to better understand their students, they need to be aware of their students' thoughts and feelings about the varying expectations. As teachers, we want students to be active members in our communities, but in order to attain that goal, we need to help them learn how to participate in a community that that can influence in a positive way. This innovation focused on the voice of the students in making change in their classroom environment. Empowering gifted students to have a voice about the expectations of their teachers provides a platform to share their thoughts on teacher expectations. These ideas shared through the lived experiences of the gifted second-graders were shared with the gifted second-grade teachers as an open conversation towards change and improving instruction for the students.

My innovation included working with six gifted second-graders in my school. I used questionnaires filled out by the participants to establish a baseline for their perceptions of their second-grade teachers. Then each participant was interviewed individually and observations were scheduled for each participant. Throughout the study, informal conversations were held with the participants to ask clarifying questions and to continue to understand their perceptions and experiences. Over the course of the innovation, the perceptions the students held of their teachers' expectations were examined. This was done through the analysis of the questionnaires, participant observations, and researcher reflections.

Gathering and analyzing was an important step to the innovation, but further steps were needed to bring about student voice in order to implement change in the classroom. The innovation continued as the participants chose to share their voice with the teachers through Flipgrid. Flipgrid is an online video discussion platform where students upload video selfie responses to prompts. The online video discussion platform allowed the students to share their perceptions with teachers and receive responses from their peers and teachers. The responses were kept password protected and only the second-grade students and teachers were able to view the content. The inclusion of multiple voices was important to capture the knowledge and wisdom provided through the lens of a gifted second-grader. Student voice has the "transformative potential" to enhance students' own learning and school improvement with real world experiences and stories from the students (Flutter & Ruddock, 2004).

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE STUDY

Chapter 1 began with an introduction, which included a discussion of the historical context of gifted education to guide in understanding the specific context of gifted education. I also described the purpose of this project, the larger context, local context, and defined my problem of practice and research questions.

The purpose of a literature review is to situate the study in scholarly content. Creswell (2007) suggests relating the present study with literature to provide a framework for comparing the results to other studies. The literature review will discuss seminal research, describe studies that support this research study, and describe the theoretical framework. In order to better understand teacher expectations for gifted second-grade students, I reviewed the literature for several key concepts. In the first section, I focus on defining gifted education and explaining common gifted programming models. Following that section, the literature focuses on teacher expectations, expectation effects, and issues with varying expectations. Rotter's Social Learning Theory frames the theory behind this study. Finally, I will synthesize the literature in a brief summary.

Gifted Definition

In order to understand gifted students, it is imperative to understand how gifted students are defined in the literature. Giftedness is a concept that lacks unity and identity in meaning (Dai, 2009). Researchers in the gifted education field do not agree on one definition of gifted education (Coleman, 2004; Gagné, 2004; Stoeger, 2009). The definition of the term provides guidance for gifted programs and services, making a definition of gifted an important influence. "All of the definitions note that gifted children

need educational programs and/or services beyond the ordinary school curriculum” (Karnes & Marquardt, 2000, p. 4). Many of the definitions focus on specializing services for those that qualify. Through the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, the federal government defines gifted students as those high achieving pupils who require services not normally provided by the school. Although the definition of giftedness and measurement of giftedness is still highly debated, most definitions still focus on the cognitive ability as the main indicator (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). The differing definitions contribute to the varying practices and programs for gifted students (Gagné, 2003; Renzulli, 2011).

According to Renzulli (1986), “gifted behavior is essentially a composite of the interaction among three kinds of human traits: above average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity” (p.54). Students that possess these traits should be considered gifted. Renzulli (1978) created a graphic definition of giftedness involving three interconnecting rings. The rings represent above average ability, creativity, and task commitment. These three traits exist in everyone to a certain degree. According to Renzulli, giftedness occurs when there is a combination of all three traits (Renzulli, 1978). Renzulli operationalized giftedness with his own definition:

Giftedness consisted of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits: above- average general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Talented and gifted children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to a potentially valuable area of human performance. Children who manifest or are capable of developing

an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs. (p. 261)

Francoys Gagné (2000) refers to giftedness as “the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed superior natural abilities” (p. 1). He suggested that talents should be in the same definition as giftedness and claims talent “designates the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities and knowledge” (p. 1). Gagné believed that talent development in children incorporates both genetics and environmental factors. He developed the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent which connects talents, gifts, environment, and intrapersonal tendencies.

Sternberg developed a cognitive approach to giftedness with his Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (2005). According to his theory, there are components of intelligence that are the same for everyone. The model comprises of three components; analytical intelligence, creative intelligence, and practical intelligence. Analytical intelligence refers to making judgements that are more abstract while creative intelligence is more domain-specific. Creative intelligence might occur in art, but perhaps not in science or music. Practical intelligence are those abilities that allows a person to make everyday decisions. Within this model of giftedness, exceptional abilities may be noticeable in any of the three domains. The individuals seen as the most gifted are strong in all three domains and know how to use each component in order to be the most effective (Sternberg, 1997).

The most widely known definition of giftedness comes from the U. S. Office of Education, also known as the Marland definition. According to this definition, gifted and

talented children are those who demonstrate achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas:

1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative or productive thinking
4. Leadership ability
5. Visual and performing arts
6. Psychomotor ability. (Marland, 1972, p. 10)

This definition was revised in 1993 and the categories remained essentially the same. Gifted and talented students are defined as:

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not normally provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p. 26).

Giftedness is a societal norm that is viewed, interpreted, and applied in different ways by a given culture in order to determine an individual's gifts or talents (Foreman & Gubbins, 2015). As stated, gifted education consists of many differing definitions. Every state and school district also has their own unique definition of gifted education. In gifted

education, parents and teachers are responsible for interpreting the meaning of giftedness and how it is measured (Foreman & Gubbins, 2015). Some definitions are based on a comparison of the students' abilities with same age peers and other definitions focus on the needs of gifted students beyond the regular curriculum. Varying definitions cause different expectations for different students.

The federal government defines gifted and talented as:

The term gifted and talented, when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. (No Child Left Behind Act, P. L. 107-110 (Title IX, Part A, Definition 22).

Meaning that gifted students can be identified in a variety of categories and require services outside of the standard curriculum provided by the school. Research shows that gifted students are often cognitively more advanced than their age peers and usually possess unusually high levels of learning and reasoning ability (Winsler, Karkhanis, Kim, & Levitt, 2013; VanTassel-Baska, 1998). More specifically, gifted students require substantially differentiated learning environments with curriculum at an appropriate pace (Adams & Pierce, 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

In order to understand gifted students, it is imperative to understand how gifted students are defined in the literature and some of the common characteristics of gifted students. According to Gagné (2009), a gifted student is someone that possesses and uses outstanding natural abilities in at least one domain (intellectual, physical, creative, social,

perceptual, and socio-affective). The term giftedness often refers to individuals who achieve high IQ scores in academic areas but has expanded to non-academic areas as well (Besjes-de Bock & de Ruyter, 2011). Gifted students display many characteristics and each gifted individual will display differing characteristics. Certain characteristic such as intensities, sensitivities, and asynchronous development are common with gifted students (Bailey, 2011; Peterson, 2009). Often times gifted students learn faster, understand more deeply, are more engaged in learning specific content in which they have an interest, and often exhibit uneven development (Coleman, 2011; Coleman & Cross, 2005).

Common characteristics of gifted students include strong verbal skills, creativity, leadership qualities, and high academic achievement and performance on standardized tests (Clark, 2008). However, gifted students differ in skill, intellect, and motivation and require specialized curriculum at a pace suitable for the gifted learner (Renzulli, 1999). Students display different characteristics of giftedness, but they are usually displayed in a culture specific context. Characteristics of giftedness may be displayed differently depending on the student's culture (Silverman, 1993). Due to the diversity within the gifted population, there are a number of characteristics that are generally accepted when determining giftedness. A broad list of characteristics are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *Common Characteristics of Gifted Students*

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unusual alertness, even in infancy• Rapid learner; puts thoughts together quickly• Excellent memory• Unusually large vocabulary and complex sentence structure for age |
|---|

- Advanced comprehension of word nuances, metaphors and abstract ideas
- Enjoys solving problems, especially with numbers and puzzles
- Often self-taught reading and writing skills as preschooler
- Deep, intense feelings and reactions
- Highly sensitive
- Thinking is abstract, complex, logical, and insightful
- Idealism and sense of justice at early age
- Concern with social and political issues and injustices
- Longer attention span and intense concentration
- Preoccupied with own thoughts—daydreamer
- Learn basic skills quickly and with little practice
- Asking probing questions
- Wide range of interests (or extreme focus in one area)
- Highly developed curiosity
- Interest in experimenting and doing things differently
- Puts ideas or things together that are not typical
- Keen and/or unusual sense of humor
- Desire to organize people/things through games or complex schemas

Note. Adapted from “Common Characteristics of Gifted Individuals” by the U.S. Department of Education, (www.nagc.org). [Reproduced by NAGC with permission from: Webb, J., Gore, J., Amend, E., DeVries, A. (2007). A parent’s guide to gifted children. Tucson, AZ: Great Potential Press.

In general, gifted children may differ in (a) cognitive and language abilities; (b) interests; (c) learning styles, motivation, and energy levels; (d) habits and behaviors; and (e) a variety of other mental, physical, and experiential characteristics (Davis and Rimm, 2004). Plucker and Callahan (2008) added that gifted children, when compared to their same-age peers, might exhibit significantly advanced abilities and skills in any domain. While every gifted child is different, Plucker and Callahan believe when appropriate instruction and environment is available to gifted students, a gifted child's development "constitutes the promise of developing excellence" (p. 180).

In spite of these documented similarities, gifted students may differ in their characteristics and their abilities. Frasier and Passow (1994) identified common attributes of giftedness in their research of gifted students from diverse backgrounds. These traits, aptitudes, and behaviors are consistent with the identification of gifted students. Students often have high motivation, intensive interests, highly expressive communication skills, strong reasoning, and an imaginative and creative mind (Frasier & Passow, 1994). The characteristics are similar across cultures, but every student would not necessarily display each one. Frasier and Passow (1994) caution educators when identifying gifted students from diverse backgrounds because the characteristics may manifest themselves differently in diverse students. Specific behavioral differences should be observed, recognized, and addressed in each specific context.

Cognitive characteristics of gifted students differentiate them from high ability students. Janice Szabos published an article in *Challenge Magazine* (1989) in which she displays the differences between bright and gifted. This comparison is often found throughout gifted literature. According to Szabos (1989), a high achiever knows the

answer, while the gifted student asks the question. A high achiever is attentive and a good memorizer, while a gifted student is intellectually engaged and makes connections with ease. Gifted learners are distinguished from high ability students because gifted students exhibit an ability to generalize, ability to work with abstract ideas, and to synthesize relationships (Clark, 2009). Gifted students retain an extraordinary quantity of information, high language skills, ability to work at an accelerated pace, and an early development of high level abilities are some of these characteristics. In order to meet the needs of cognitively advance students, programs should provide a variety of experiences to encourage understanding, analyzing, and integrating curriculum (Clark, 2009).

Many of the seemingly positive characteristics of gifted students can cause potential problems for the gifted student. There are some common strengths along with the associated difficulties that are likely to occur. Table 3 below outlines the strengths and possible problems with the related strengths.

Table 3. *Strengths and Possible Problems Related to Giftedness*

Strengths	Possible Problem Associated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquires information quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impatient with slowness of others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the abstract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resists routine practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes truth and fairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worries about humanity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations of self and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intolerant and perfectionistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks systems and strives for order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as bossy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High energy and eagerness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration with inactivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative and inventive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not follow directions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse interests • Keen observer • Inquisitive, searches for significance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as scattered • Overly intense focus • Excessive interests, asks many questions
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Adapted from Clark (2009) and Seago (1974).

The previously mentioned characteristics are seldom a problem on their own. For example, while acquiring and retaining information quickly is a positive skill, it can cause impatience with other learners and may cause the gifted student to make concepts unduly complex (Clark, 2009). When these characteristics combine in different situations, problematic behavior patterns can emerge.

The Ministry of Education handbook (2000) suggests a range of definitions and strategies appropriate for gifted education, but states that “each school must develop a set of characteristics that reflect its own definitions of, and approach to, the concept of giftedness and talent” (p. 17). Each state sets its own policies and requirements for gifted education. Requirements vary based on identification, services, and allocation of state funds for gifted services. Funding also varies within states and local school districts, which does not always promote equity (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004). The National Association for Gifted Children publishes *State of the States in Gifted Education* report every few years. As of the 2014-2015 report, 37 of the 40 reporting states had defined giftedness in either regulations or state statues, but only 30 of these states required local districts to follow the state definition.

Arizona's definition focuses more on courses offered to students. Arizona defines gifted education as appropriate academic course offerings and services that are required to provide an educational program that is an integral part of the regular school day and this is commensurate with the academic abilities and potential of a gifted pupil (Title 15 Education Act, 2007). Course offerings and services are decided upon by individual school districts and remain inconsistent.

Definitions of giftedness differ and determine how students are identified. No matter the definition, giftedness is linked to the context in which the individual exists and the purpose of identification (Freeman, 2006). Since the definition depends on the context of the environment, I will use the definition created by Porter (1999). Porter proposed the following definition of gifted:

Gifted young children are those who have the capacity to learn at a pace and level of complexity that is significantly advanced of their age peers in any domain or domains that are valued in and promoted by their sociocultural group. (p. 33)

My current school district lacks a definition of gifted education; rather the district focuses on a mission statement. This mission statement for gifted education emphasizes appropriate curriculum and committed staff to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted students. Even though there is no definition of gifted education, students are labeled as gifted through a variety of measures. Typically, students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) which focuses on quantitative, verbal abilities, and nonverbal abilities. Students need to only qualify in one area in order to qualify as gifted at my school. Students can also take an IQ test or be labeled as gifted in another district or charter school. When a student is labeled as gifted elsewhere, this district still qualifies

them as gifted. Allowing students to qualify into the gifted program under differing expectations causes inequities in the gifted programming.

Research shows what a teacher believes impacts how they perceive a student's potential and decisions about inclusion for gifted programs (Milner & Ford, 2007). Gifted programs help to acknowledge individual differences and ability levels of gifted students. Participating in advanced programs also gives students a means for expressing themselves in a personal and creative manner (Ramos, 2010). Gifted students should be taught using accelerated methods and pedagogy (Page, 2010) and require programs that challenge their thinking (VanTassel-Baska, 1997).

Gifted Models

While definitions differ, identification, services, and programming models for gifted education vary based on state, school district, and individual classrooms. Gifted programs are designed to provide opportunities to develop critical thinking, expand the students' ability to problem solve, encourage interaction with their peers, and to increase higher level thinking skills (Flint, 2014; McBee, 2007). Services offered through gifted programs comprise a variety of forms, ranging from cluster models in a regular education classroom to separate schools for gifted students (van der Meulen, cander Bruggen, Split, Verouden, Berkhout, & Bögels, 2014). The various services and programming can lead to different levels of quality and effectiveness (McBee, Shaunessy, & Matthews, 2012). States can initiate programming model decisions for gifted students; however, decisions are typically made by the individual school districts (Shaughnessy & Waggonner, 2015). School districts have been required to provide identification and education for gifted

students. As required in Arizona's Title 15 Education Act (2007), the governing board of each school district shall provide special education for gifted pupils.

As a result of varying definitions and programming models, various states, school districts, and classrooms implement different program models. According to Smutny (2003), gifted programs "have the potential to change lives. When developed with care and nurtured at each step, gifted programs bring hope and the promise of new possibility to talented children who need this kind of intervention" (p. 1). In *Developing Gifted Programs*, Moon and Rosselli define a program as: "an educational experience that is planned and implemented in a specific location or region for the purpose of enhancing the development of identified gifted and talented students" (p. 499). A program model for gifted learners is:

A deliberately planned system that facilitates interaction of gifted youth with curriculum to produce learning. Programs for high ability students should be designed with the purpose to deliver content: more quickly, more extensively, or more complexly to fit the learner's precocity and interests. (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007, p. 215)

The gifted program model should contain best practices that extend learning in all academic areas. Some models focus on grouping strategies (VanTassel-Baska & Brown, 2007) and others focus on curriculum development and instructional modifications (Kaplan, 2005). Some of the most common program models are pull-out programs, cluster model, self-contained gifted classrooms, and self-contained gifted schools.

Pull-out programs. Pull-out programs typically consist of gifted students being pulled out of the regular heterogeneous classroom for a specific period of time during the

week to receive differentiated instruction in a homogenous setting (Moon, Feldhusen, & Dillon, 1994). Students spend the majority of their time in the general education classroom while still having the opportunity to interact with gifted students (Gubbels, Segers, Verhoeven, 2014). Borland (2003) defined gifted pull-out programs as a part-time service delivered by a separate teacher, in a different setting, with other gifted students, typically focusing on enrichment activities. The *State of the States in Gifted Education 2014-2015* report states that pull-out programs are the second most frequently used program in early elementary and upper elementary settings, following cluster classrooms. Pull-out programs are popular models for gifted education because they are easily implemented with a small number of students working with a teacher on a very limited basis.

In a pull-out program, a specialized teacher most often teaches students for a short amount of time. These programs typically teach critical thinking skills, problem solving, creativity, and provide opportunities for projects and presentations (Winner, 1997). Curriculum and activities in the pull-out programs vary based on the school and may or may not match to the required curriculum of the state or district. One benefit of the pull-out model is the opportunity for students to interact with like-minded peers during instruction. Students also focus on comprehensive content learning (VanTassel-Baska & Reis, 2004). Students in pull-out programs display greater perceptions of academic competence, sense of acceptance by peers, and positive attitudes towards learning (Delcourt, Cornell, & Goldberg, 2007). The results of meta-analyses and survey research demonstrate that gifted pull-out programs can have small or medium positive effects in the areas of academic achievement (Vaughn, Feldhusen, & Asher, 1991). Conversely,

Kanevsky (1996) pointed out “in schools with part-time programs [e.g. pull-out, resource room], the needs of the gifted students often are neglected when they return to the regular classroom” (p. 182).

Cluster. Cluster grouping is a widely used strategy for meeting the needs of gifted students in the regular elementary classroom. In this model, students are purposefully placed in classrooms to create a balance of ability levels in all classes (Brulles, Peters, & Saunders, 2012). The range of abilities should be lessened, with no cluster classroom having extremes of the academic range. Cluster grouping is often used in schools because it can meet the needs of gifted students in the general education classroom (Gentry & MacDougall, 2009) and studies have shown positive impacts for gifted students in cluster groups (Gentry & Owen, 1999; Kulik, 2003). Students participating in the cluster model have the opportunity to interact with age and intellectual peers (Gentry & Owen, 1999). There are several benefits for cluster grouping:

Gifted students regularly interact with their intellectual peers; full-time services for gifted students without additional cost is provided; curricular differentiation is more efficient and likely to occur; and removing the highest achievers from most classrooms allows other achievers to emerge. (Gentry & Owen, 1999, p. 225)

Schools benefit from the cluster model by having appropriate teachers to provide the instruction along with funding to support the needs of gifted students. Cluster models provide a structure that allows schools to focus on learning needs of gifted students and gains for struggling learners without forgetting the needs of any particular group of students (Brulles et al., 2012). Further, Gentry and Owen (1999) claim, “cluster grouping, when combined with high teacher expectations, the use of strategies to challenge and

meet individual needs, and positive classroom environment, may have a positive impact on all students in a school” (p. 238).

Self-contained. Students in a self-contained classroom have met the district requirements for gifted education and are placed in a classroom filled with other identified gifted students. These programs cluster gifted students together across a school district into a specialized classroom and provide services specifically formulated for students with the ability for higher level thinking skills. Gifted students that participate in self-contained classrooms and self-contained school often have the opportunity to participate in accelerated content and enrichment specific to gifted students. Often the curriculum is accelerated and taught at a greater depth, offering students the ability to select areas of interest and the ability to work in cooperative learning groups (Zeidner & Shani-Zinovich, 2013). Elementary school students in self-contained gifted classroom experience an increased sense of academic satisfaction and challenge (Cohen & Hertzog, 2007).

Kulik and Kulik’s (1987) meta-analysis of 90 grouping studies included 25 studies that placed gifted students in special classes. In 19 of the 25 studies, talented students in special classes achieved substantially more when they were taught in homogenous classes. Kulik and Kulik (1987) concluded that gifted students learned more in homogenous classes than they would have in heterogeneous classes. VanTassel-Baska, Willis, and Meyer (1989) studied a gifted program using a control group, pre-post measurement, and multiple outcome measures. Participants in the gifted program exhibited higher gains than the control groups. The participants in the gifted program also rated their quality of school life higher, which provides evidence in support of self-

contained gifted programs. Evidence shows that gifted students show remarkable academic gains when they are grouped together for the majority of the day because they are surrounded by like-minded peers that want to be in school and learn (Borland, Horton, Subotnik, Shiang-Jiun, Freeman, Goldberg, & Yu, 2002; Matthews & Kitchen, 2007).

There are differences within the gifted population and one program model cannot meet the needs of all gifted students. Brulles and Winebrenner (2011) do not believe that one program model can effectively meet the needs all gifted students. Program models for gifted students have been shown to be effective when consistency and rigor is applied to the program in order for the gifted student to reach optimal learning (VanTassel-Baska & Brown, 2007). Effective gifted program models need to include peer interaction, flexible grouping, differentiation, and support services for teachers with specialized training in gifted education (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2011). Gifted program models provide choice among a variety of services and should provide an assessment of the students' needs in order to be effective.

According to the most recent Digest of Education Statistics (2006), there were 3,202,760 (6.7%) gifted and talented students in the United States. In Arizona, the total number of gifted and talented students was 57,570 (5.9%). While the numbers are not large, the educational system needs to reach all learners. In order to reach all learners, it is necessary to have a positive and productive learning environment that allows teachers the flexibility to establish expectations, learn and address the emotional needs of students, and create a safe and inviting environment. Positive learning environments encourage a

safe environment, where risk-taking is encouraged, open and honest conversations are invigorated, and positive interactions are the norm (T. L. Cross, 2011).

Teacher Expectations

Research shows that teachers hold different expectations for different students and these varying expectations influence students' academic performance (Good & Brophy, 1997; Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998; Rubie-Davies, 2007; Rubie-Davies, Hattie, Townsend, & Hamilton, 2007). Rosenthal and Jacobson's *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968) led a number of studies of the impact of teacher expectations with inconsistent results (Weinstein, 2002). Teacher expectations are the assumptions made by teachers about a student's ability and potential for academic achievement (Clark, 1963, 2009). Rist (1973) suggests that teacher expectations affect the way teachers interact with students and influences the way students perceive their own expectations. Students begin each school year with expectations for their learning experience. Students look for affirmation, accomplishment, and autonomy (Tomlinson, 2003). Students expect competent and caring teachers that value and guide them (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that students' expectations mimic the expectations of their teachers and Merton (1948) posited that students began to act in a manner consistent with the teachers' expectations. If teachers maintain positive expectations for a student, the student tends to lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The reverse is true as well, when a teacher holds low expectations for a student, it may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy for that student.

Expectations Defined

Brophy and Good (1974) define teacher expectations as “the inferences that teachers make about the present and future academic achievement and general classroom behavior of the students” (p. 32). Good and Nichols (2001) simplify teacher expectations to “inferences about the level of student performance that is likely to occur in the future” (p. 113). Expectations depend on what the teacher knows about the student at any given moment (Brophy & Good, 1974, p. 129). Usually, teacher expectations are based upon past grades of the student, achievement data, comments from previous teachers, and knowledge of the student (Brophy & Good, 1974). When the teacher considers these ideas, that teacher may develop expectations of that student before even meeting the student. Based on the perceptions and expectations, teachers make predictions, often inaccurate, about student performance (Missett, Azano, Callahan, & Landrum, 2016). However, these expectations can be changed by the student’s performance in the classroom, their motivation, and their willingness to comply with classroom rules. These inferences made by teachers can eventually cause students to achieve or behave in ways that confirm those same expectations. These inferences made by teachers are often referred to as self-fulfilling prophecy. Robert Merton (1948) developed the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy, a phenomenon that occurs when incorrect information is shared and often leads to the incorrect information becoming true. Teachers’ expectations tend to be self-sustaining because expectations may affect perception (Good & Nichols, 2001).

In an effort to clarify expectations, Cooper (1985) suggests that teacher expectations fit into four categories. The first category is ability or achievement measures, which usually involves ratings of a student’s current ability. Expected

improvement is the second category which refers to how much progress is expected over a given period of time. The next category is manipulated expectations, which are created by false information. Finally, Cooper named discrepancy measures as the final category, how much a teacher underestimates or overestimates a student's performance (Cooper, 1985; Cooper and Tom, 1985).

Research demonstrates that teachers hold different expectations for different students (Brophy & Good, 1972; Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998; Missett, Azano, Callahan, & Landrum, 2016). It is nearly impossible for a teacher to not form expectations of their students. Many factors influence the teachers' expectations, such as family background, race or ethnicity, or even teachers' prejudices. Teachers' expectations can also be based on previous knowledge of a student, such as interactions with the student, grades or previous performance (Good, 1987; Reyna, 2008). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1966) suggest that a teacher's expectations can form as an estimation of the student's probable academic performance. Many researchers have found that students' expectations of themselves often are the same as the expectation the teacher has of them (Good & Nichols, 2001; Merton, 1948; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Weinstein, 2002). If the expectations are negative, lower self-expectations occur and lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. This can influence other students in the environment and affect the interactions in the classroom (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1966; Weinstein, 2002). This poses a problem because the students will behave according to the held expectation. Learning takes place due to the continuous interaction of individuals, behavior, and the environment, which is why expectations play an important role in education.

Expectation Effects

Teacher expectations of students have a direct effect on the classroom experience (Cooper, 1979). If a student is expected to perform poorly, based on a previous assumption held by the teacher, the student will perform based on those assumptions. The opposite is true as well. Rosenthal stated in an interview “When teachers have been led to expect better intellectual performance from their students, they tend to get it” (Begley, 2003). Brophy and Good (1970) reported observations that showed different patterns of teacher behavior towards students based on high or low expectations. As an example, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) researched the relationships between teacher expectations and student achievement.

Rosenthal and Jacobson’s *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, published in 1968, led to more research on teacher expectations. In this study, students were given a nonverbal intelligence test, the Test of General Ability (TOGA). Teachers were told that the test measured intellectual growth and the students were placed into different classrooms. Teachers were notified of the “intellectual bloomer” according to the results of TOGA, which were actually students placed at random. Teachers were led to believe the “intellectual bloomers” would show dramatic academic improvements over the coming school year.

At the end of the study, the same nonverbal intelligence test was administered and the “intellectual bloomers” showed greater gains and did bloom intellectually by the end of the school year. This self-fulfilling prophecy is referred to as the Pygmalion effect. Rosenthal and Jacobson state that the expectations enacted on the teachers seemed to influence the teachers’ behaviors toward the students. The impact of teachers’

expectations persisted over time. Rosenthal and Jacobsen continued to administer the nonverbal intelligence test for the next two years with the same students. At the follow up assessments, students that were originally labeled as an “intellectual bloomer” displayed higher IQ scores than the control group (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

The methodology of Rosenthal and Jacobson was criticized due to its small sample size and experimental design (Good & Nichols, 2001). Cooper (1985) argued that Rosenthal and Jacobson did not explain how teacher expectations were communicated, which perhaps was the key component between teacher expectations and student achievement. In 1978, Rosenthal responded with further research exploring the effects of teacher expectations. Rosenthal, along with Rubin, published a meta-analysis that supported teacher expectancy effects on student performance.

There is nonexperimental research that shows significant effects of teachers’ expectations on students’ academic achievement (Brophy, 1983; Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Jussim & Eccles, 1995). Jussim and Eccles (1992) examined the effect of math teachers’ expectations on sixth-grade students’ academic achievement. Teachers’ expectations predicted changes in student achievement even when effects of previous achievement was controlled, following the self-fulfilling prophecy. Bohlmann and Weinstein (2013) conducted a study that explored how young children’s self-perceptions of abilities in mathematics were related to their teachers’ expectations for them. The sample consisted of 193 children and their teachers from 15 first-grade classrooms. The results showed in high ability differentiating classrooms, children’s self-ratings were more consistent with teachers’ expectations of students’ mathematics ability. Students that were with a teacher with low expectations reported significantly lower ratings for themselves than students

that had a teacher with high expectations. Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal (1982) examined the effects of how expectations were operationalized with students. The researchers identified teachers as high bias or low bias. High bias teachers were easily influenced by false information about student achievement. Due to the false information, the teachers acted in ways that confirmed the expectations. Low bias teachers were not easily influenced by false information and interacted with students in ways that confirmed the actual achievement.

Teachers treat students differently, based on whether the perception of the student is high or low (Brophy & Good, 1974; Moon & Brighton, 2008). This causes a direct effect on a students' opportunity to learn material. For example, if a teacher attempts to teach more material to a high expectation student, spends more time with them, calls on them frequently, and is more encouraging, these students are more likely to learn more than a low expectation student that does not receive the same treatment (Brophy & Good, 1974). Rosenthal (1974) claimed teachers praised high expectation students more and provided more positively reinforcing behaviors creating a warmer atmospheres for high expectation students. Chaikin, Siglar, and Derlega (1974) videotaped tutoring sessions in order to study teachers interacting with high expectation students. They found that the teachers nodded their heads more often, smiled at their students, and looked these students in the eye more frequently than teachers working with low expectation students. Thus, many positive nonverbal behaviors tend to be associated with high expectation students.

Teacher expectation effects can be categorized into sustaining expectation effects, self-fulfilling prophecy effects, or perceptual bias (Copper, 1985; Cooper & Good, 1983).

Sustaining expectation effects are when teachers expect students to continue to act according to previous behaviors and the teachers may ignore any contradictory behaviors (Cooper and Good, 1983). Self-fulfilling prophecy effects occur when previously held beliefs lead to the completion of the same belief (Cooper, 1985). Thus, sustaining expectation effects prevent the potential for any change, whereas self-fulfilling prophecies can create change in a student's performance (Good, 1987). Perceptual bias occurs when perceivers' beliefs influence their evaluation of the target behavior (Smith, Jussim, Eccles, VanNoy, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998).

It is necessary to continue to study context specific expectations and the effects to better understand the condition in which the social phenomenon is operationalized (Rubie-Davies, Weinstein, Huang, Gregory, Cowan, & Cowan, 2014; Weinstein 2002). While there is a large body of evidence on teacher expectation effects, many of the studies have been conducted in a short period of time and with a single teacher. There is less research on the effects of multiple teachers.

Self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy effect occurs when previously held beliefs lead to a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true (Merton, 1948). The idea of self-fulfilling prophecy suggests that when an expectation is set, teachers tend to act in ways consistent with the expectation and inadvertently become part of the cause of student outcomes (Ladd & Linderholm, 2008, p. 232). The two main self-fulfilling prophecy effects are known as Golem effects and Galatea effects. Golem effects are undesirable and negative effects, named after a mythical being created to be a servant that became a monster instead (Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1982). Golem effects are the result of low teacher expectations that hinder

student academic achievement. Golem effects occur in primary-grade gifted classrooms when low expectations lead to remediation instead of enrichment and acceleration (Moon & Brighton, 2008). On the other hand, Galatea effects are positive effects resulting from high teacher expectations that enhance student academic achievement (Babad et al., 1982).

Brophy (1983) claimed self-fulfilling prophecy involves following steps. First, the teacher forms expectations based on a certain characteristics such as background information or previous school performance. Students are treated based on certain characteristics and in some way communicates those expectations to the students. Finally, the student lives up to the expectations. For example, a self-fulfilling prophecy could occur if a teacher falsely believes a student is incompetent and causes the students to demonstrate incompetence. Teachers form different expectations for their students, communicate these expectations to the students, which in turn, impacts the students' behaviors (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 2000). Teacher expectations may lead to achievement differences in early grades and reinforce the differences in later grades, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004).

In a well-known study, Rist (1973) completed a three year qualitative study of African American youth in a St. Louis public school. The approach was completely field based and told the story of students beginning in their kindergarten year through second grade. The main goal of the study was to see which teachers' assumptions occur within the classroom. Unfortunately, the teachers ended up basing assumptions on the students' social class. Students that came to school neat and clean were expected to learn by their teachers, while dirty children held a different set of expectations. The students labeled as

middle-class received more attention from the teachers. As the study progressed, the middle-class students viewed themselves as smarter while the lower-class children felt disinterested and uninvolved in the classroom. Going forward, the teachers held different academic and behavioral expectations for different sets of students and the students readily lived up to the different expectations.

In a similar study, students were randomly labeled gifted or non-gifted (Rubovits & Maehr, 1973). When teacher expectations are manipulated, in this case in the random labeling of gifted and non-gifted, self-fulfilling prophecies occur. The researchers found that the teachers did not differentiate in the amount of attention given to students, rather; the students labeled as gifted were called on and praised more than the non-gifted students. Students that were labeled as gifted were encouraged by their teacher's behavior while the non-gifted students were discouraged by their teachers. The expectations held by the teachers for the two groups of students resulted in the confirmation of the expectations, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Smith, Jussim, Eccles, VanNoy, Madon, and Palumbo (1998) also studied ability grouping from 1,701 students and 97 teachers from sixth-grade math classes. They found that teacher perceptions predicted student achievement because the perceptions were accurate. The researchers also found that self-fulfilling prophecies were the strongest when students were grouped into different academic levels within the same classroom. However, Brophy (1983) found that teacher expectations do not always serve as self-fulfilling prophecies. He suggests that socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, and motivation influence biased teacher expectations (Brophy, 1983; Good, 1987). Thus, some students might experience a greater expectation bias effect.

Recently, Rubie-Davies, Weinstein, Huang, Gregory, Cowan, & Cowan (2014) conducted a longitudinal study beginning in pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade to examine the interrelations between the expectations of single and multiple teachers and achievement for students. Within-year effects of single teachers, cross-year effects of single teachers, mediated effects of single and multiple teachers, and compounded effects of multiple teachers were four areas of focus for this study. The sample of 110 students were followed throughout the study and provided evidence for some of the long-term effects of teacher expectations on student achievement. Teacher expectations were found to significantly predict students' year-end achievement at kindergarten, first grade, and fourth grade. However, the authors did not find a direct predictive effect of single teachers across a number of years.

Self-fulfilling prophecy effect does exist in classrooms (Jussim & Harber, 2005; McKnown, Gregory, & Weinstein, 2010). Teacher expectations, or the beliefs that teachers hold about the potential academic performance of their students, can become reality. Different learning opportunities occur when a teacher has high or low expectations or when the teacher communicates these differences with students (Rubie-Davies, Weinstein, Huang, Gregory, Cowan, & Cowan, 2014). Differences in learning for students can change the students' performance in the classroom. Student motivation and learning can be impacted by the low or high expectations of the teacher (Weinstein, 2002).

Sustaining expectation effects. Sustaining expectation effects occur when teachers respond to a student based on previously held conceptions of a student instead of changes in the student's performance (Cooper & Good, 1983). For example, a teacher

may have preconceived assumptions about a student based on an older sibling and not base any conception of the child on their actual classroom performance. Thus, teachers expect students to act consistently with previous behaviors and continue to expect the same behavior even with behavioral changes. Cooper (1979) postulates that sustaining effects are more likely to be observed, as inaccurate teacher expectations are uncommon.

Researchers have found that sustaining expectation effects can occur and can limit students' learning and development (Good, 1987). "For sustaining expectations to occur, teachers engage in behaviors that maintain previously formed expectations" (Good, 1987, p. 34). Some teachers have low expectations for the academic ability of diverse students (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). Callahan (2005) found that minority children were underrepresented in gifted education because teachers often held the expectation that diverse ethnic students or low-income students lacked the basic skills to benefit from being a part of a gifted program.

Sustaining expectation effects occur in classrooms. Seaver (1973) examined expectations that originated from teachers' experiences instructing their current students' older siblings. A teacher who previously taught a student's high achieving older sibling was assumed to hold high expectations for that student, while a teacher who had taught a student's low achieving older sibling was assumed to expect less from that student. The performance of the high and low expectation students was compared with the performance of students whose teachers had no prior experience with their older siblings. Results showed that children with high achieving older siblings received better standardized test scores when their sibling had been taught by the same teacher than when the sibling was taught by another teacher. Likewise, children with low achieving

older siblings performed worse when their teacher had prior experience instructing their older sibling.

Perceptual bias. Perceptual bias occurs when the perceiver's beliefs influence their assessment of the objective (Smith et al., 1998). As an example, a teacher may believe a student is especially bright academically. If the teacher evaluates this student more favorably than the teacher evaluates another student of comparable academic ability, perceptual bias has occurred. Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo (1998) claimed teachers may interpret and explain the behavior of students in a manner that is consistent with their expectations. Teachers often notice what they expect to see, which causes teachers to be more alert to certain behaviors from a students while ignoring others.

Missett, Azano, Callahan, and Landrum (2016) used a case study of a third-grade teacher to better understand how the teacher's expectations about a gifted student with an emotional disability influenced instructional choices. Teachers of students with emotional disabilities often have low expectations for students in regards to self-control and cooperation (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). During the case study, the teacher mentioned removing the student from several group activities because of her beliefs and expectations of the student (Missett, et al., 2016). The case study revealed that the teacher consistently articulated beliefs and expectations focused on social and academic weaknesses than on the strengths of the student. The teachers' perceptual bias influenced their belief in the student's ability to successfully work in a group. The student was held to lower expectations due to their emotional disability.

Gifted students sometimes benefit from perceptual bias. Babad (1980) assigned higher grades to a student that completed a worksheet than to a student that was non-

gifted on the same worksheet. Teachers tend to assign higher grades to students they believe work harder (Jussim & Eccles, 1992). Grades given to students reflect teachers' perceptions, which make the grades susceptible to bias. On the other hand, standardized tests are independent of teachers' perceptions. Because grades reflect teachers' perceptions, evaluations, and judgments, they are susceptible to bias. Scores on most standardized tests are independent of teachers' subjective evaluations. If teachers develop inappropriate low expectations for some gifted students, and if those expectations bias teachers' evaluations, the result may display discrepancies between students' standardized test scores and classroom grades (Kolb & Jussim, 1994). Williams (1976) indicated that teachers' beliefs of their students influenced their grades earned in class but not on standardized test scores.

Many variables influence teacher expectations and the effect on students. There is evidence that some students receive more opportunities than others (Good & Brophy, 1997; Jones & Gerig, 1994). Research findings vary on the impact of gender on teacher expectations (Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007). Baudson and Preckel (2013) found no effect on students' gender on teacher ratings, while other students have indicated gender differences in teachers' judgements of gifted students. In a study of American and German teachers, teachers in both countries judged gifted boys as more self-centered and neurotic than gifted girls (Busse, Dahme, Wagner, & Wiczerkowski, 1986). Brophy and Good (1970) stated that boys receive more criticism than girls in the classroom. Jussim and Eccles (1992) found that females put more effort into mathematics, but that teachers rated males as having more talent in mathematics over females. Winebrenner (2001) noticed subtle differences in gifted boys and girls. Girls need interaction with other gifted

girls in order to maintain a positive attitude and need positive role models. Boys worry about being labeled as smart and often hide their abilities in order to meet the expectations that others have for them (Winebrenner, 2001, p. 205).

Research shows that teachers' evaluations of students depend on gender. Teachers tend to evaluate female students better than male students in terms of behavior (Bennett, Gottesman, Rock, & Cerullo, 1993). However, when evaluating student ability, teachers tend to believe males achieve at a higher rate than females (Berekashivili, 2012). Teachers have a tendency to nominate more male than females for gifted programs and a 2:1 ratio of males to females has been shown in gifted classrooms (Feldhusen & Jarvan, 2000; Peterson, 2013). Overall, findings on the impact on students' gender seem inconsistent.

Differential Teacher-Student Interactions

Differential treatment occurs when teachers develop differential expectations for students (Brophy & Good, 1970; Good & Brophy, 1997). Worse yet, researchers have found that students perceive the differential treatment (Babad, 1990). Teacher expectations are often expressed through differential treatment and nonverbal communication (Harris, Rosenthal, & Snodgrass, 2001). Differential treatment can affect a student's achievement in the classroom.

The work of Rosenthal and Jacobson influenced many researchers to focus on understanding the influences of teacher expectations on student achievement (Jussim, Madon, & Chatman, 1994; McGrew & Evans, 2003; Weinstein & McKnown, 1998). The findings from these studies support that students' academic success is influenced by the expectations of teachers. Gut, Reimann, and Grob (2013) found that teacher expectations of a child's competence between the ages of five and seven predicted academic

performance three years later. Teacher expectations may predict students' achievement because the expectations are accurate (Kolb & Jussim, 1994). Expectations are often accurate when they are based on valid predictions such as previous academic achievement (Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Trouilloud, Sarrazin, Martinek, & Guillet, 2002). Teachers are generally accurate in their expectations. Accuracy in this sense refers to teacher expectations predicting but not causing student achievement (Jussim & Harber, 2005).

Differing expectations confuses students and affects the overall classroom environment. According to Cooper (1979) four areas of classroom effectiveness are dictated by classroom expectations. The socioemotional climate of the classroom and the quality of innovative instruction are two elements affected by teacher expectations. The persistence of interactions between teachers and students and the use of praise or criticism are also impacted by teacher expectations.

It is important to maintain high expectations for students in order to instill a positive and safe environment for students. "One key strategy in creating a positive psychological environment is the teacher's capacity to insist that the students meet established academic and behavioral standards." (Ross, Bondy, & Hambacher, 2008, p. 142). The teachers in Rist's study established academic and behavior standards, however the established academic and behavioral standards varied based on their previous assumptions. Clear and high expectations in a classroom help to maximize academic instruction, student engagement, and student achievement (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Gifted students in my context are held to higher academic standards, but have no expectations

for behavioral norms. The inconsistency of expectations causes an interruption in the classroom and does not maximize instructional time.

Rosenthal (1994) formulated a theory to account for variables mediating the effects of teacher expectancy. The factors include climate, input, output, and feedback. When teachers believe the students will display strong performance, the teacher creates a warmer socio-emotional climate and provides more challenging behavior to these students. Teachers also provide more opportunities for feedback and response. When teachers have high expectations for students, the teachers tend to provide more opportunities for participation and assistance when answering questions. Rosenthal (1974) believes these students participate in a warmer socio-emotional climate with positive reinforcing behaviors. Cooper (1979) created his own model of expectation that focused on the conditions surrounding student and teacher interactions. Teachers form differing expectations of their students, which changes their interactions with students. Similar to Rosenthal, Cooper believed teachers create a more negative environment with less praise for low expectation students. Brophy and Good (1970; 1974) indicated teacher behaviors that display low teacher expectations for students. Teachers that have low expectations provide praise that is more general to students, provide less detailed feedback, and offer fewer opportunities to participate in class. These teachers also call on these students less, reduce the wait time for a response, and seat the student in a location farther from the teachers. They also found that teachers interact with low expectation students in private settings rather than in a public setting.

Teacher-student expectancy literature demonstrates common patterns of expectancies (Brophy, 1983; Brophy & Good, 1974; Good & Brophy, 1997; Rosenthal,

1994). These patterns of expectancies are linked to low expectation students and high expectation students. Table 4 below illustrates observable differences in expectations for students.

Table 4. *Teacher expectations for high expectation and low expectation students*

Observations of teacher expectations of high expectation students	Observations of teacher expectations of low expectation students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging material is taught • Warm socio-emotional climate • Opportunities to respond • More wait time • Informative feedback on work • Positive reinforcement • Praise • Demands more effort • Located closer to teacher • Calls on student more • Interacts frequently • Frequent nonverbal communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less challenging material • Less smiles • Fewer opportunities to respond • Less wait time • General feedback is given • Inappropriate reinforcement • Insincere praise • Demands less effort • Located further from teacher • When called on, often given the answer • Interacts less frequently • Less eye contact and nonverbal communication

Adapted from Brophy, J. E. (1983). Research on the self-fulfilling prophecy and teacher expectations. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(5), 631-661.

According to Table 4, teacher expectations for high expectation students and low expectation students mirror positive and negative responses. When teachers have high expectations for students, students experience a positive learning environment. However, when teachers have low expectations for students, they experience a negative learning environment. When teachers have varying expectations for students, the students experience the classroom differently.

Rubie-Davies (2010) compared how teachers with either very high or low expectations for all their students would rate their students' personal attributes. Six high expectation teachers, six low expectation teachers were asked to rate their 220 students on attitudes to schoolwork, relationships with others, and home support for school. Results showed that teachers had high expectations for their students and rated them highly on all personal attributes. Just over half the means for low expectation teachers' ratings of student attributes were below the students' achievement means but they were all above the teachers' class expectation levels. Rubie-Davies (2010) concluded that teacher moderators appear to relate to differing teacher beliefs and attributes and lead to various instructional climates in the classroom.

Researchers have shown teachers' expectations have greater effects on students (Rubie-Davies, 2007; Weinstein, 2002). Students' expectations of teachers can influence student attitudes about school. Muller, Katz, and Dance (1999) found when students perceived their teachers as caring, the students' expectations, achievement, and behavior improved. When students perceived their teacher to be caring, the students invested more in their own academic efforts. The students also placed more significance on their relationship with the teacher. One way to promote equity and support for all students is

through the model of the warm demander. Teachers who are warm demanders model and insist on a culture of achievement, equity, and mutual respect. The teachers insist on being treated with respect by the students and treat each other with respect. Having a culture of mutual respect allows everyone the same opportunity to learn and thrive in the classroom. A warm demander stresses effort and encouragement. “Most important, they work tirelessly and consistently to ensure that children’s efforts are successful” (Ross D., Bondy E., & Hambacher E., 2008, p. 143).

Supporting the idea of the warm demander, Hess and Copeland (2001) completed a longitudinal study focusing on stressful life changing events and coping strategies and the high school completion rates of students. They claim that a strong relationship with a caring teacher with high expectations can decrease negative peer influences. Students live either up or down to the expectations around them (Pratt, 2009). A student that connects with a teacher with high expectations will be less likely to be influenced by outside negative influences. A caring teacher that maintains consistent expectations creates an inclusive and supportive environment. Students in an inclusive and supportive environment feel inspired, experience realistic expectations, and receive more attention from the teachers (Persson, 2010).

The classroom environment varies between a high expectation teacher and a low expectation teacher. According to Rubie-Davies (2011), teacher expectations and beliefs influence the environment in the classroom. Table 5 describes the differences between high expectation and low expectation classrooms.

Table 5. *Classroom Environments*

High Expectation Classroom	Low Expectation Classroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible ability groupings • Worked with a variety of peers • Choices in learning experiences • Answering open questions that challenged thinking • Extended explanations of new concepts • Intrinsically motivated • Well-defined learning goals • Responsibility for learning • Frequent feedback • Positive social climate • Clearly established routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in ability groupings • Little mixed ability interaction • Teacher determined learning experiences • Answering closed questions requiring limited thinking • Limited explanations of concepts • Extrinsically motivated • Unsure of learning direction • Less ownership of learning • Limited feedback • Negative social climate • Plenty of procedural directions

Adapted from Rubie-Davies, C. M., & Peterson, E. (2011). Teacher expectations and beliefs: Their influence on the socioemotional environment of the classroom. In Rubie-Davies, C. M. (Ed.). *Educational Psychology: Concepts, research and challenges* (pp. 134-149). Routledge: London.

In Table 5 above, the key differences between the type of classroom focuses on the classroom climate, as well as motivation, engagement, and teacher feedback. In *Growing up Gifted*, Clark (2008) refers to the environment students need to meet their cognitive and emotional needs as the responsive learning environment. This environment is student centered while having a physical arrangement that is organized, inviting, and

engaging. According to Clark (2008), the social and emotional environment is motivating and encouraging. In the responsive learning environment, the students' interests and learning styles are thoughtfully considered.

Often times educators have preconceived notions of how well gifted students act and behave. This perception influences the way teachers interact with gifted students (Gates, 2010). Expectations and norms are glossed over because assumptions are made that gifted students already know how to behave in a classroom. When assumptions are made that gifted students are well-behaved and understand and follow rules, the rules are not enforced or reviewed. Inconsistencies occur when expectations are different or unknown.

Redefining Teacher Expectations of Gifted Students

Teachers form expectations of students based on personal beliefs about individuals' capabilities (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Teachers' differential expectations for students can have positive and negative influences on student learning opportunities and their future potential (Weinstein, 2002). Students can internalize their teachers' expectations and achieve according to their teachers' expectations, emphasizing a self-fulfilling prophecy (Weinstein, 2002). There is a significant body of research focused on the field of teacher expectations, but there is limited focus on teacher expectations of gifted students. One study focused on teacher expectations of gifted students was completed by Moon and Brighton (2008). In their study of 434 teachers, findings indicated that many primary-grade teachers held traditional expectations of gifted students. These teachers named advanced vocabulary, early reading skills, and intrinsically motivated as characteristics of gifted students. At the same time, these same

teachers could not conceive of a gifted student not demonstrating these characteristics. In another study, Baudson & Preckel (2013) used a sample of general education teachers that showcased the expectations teachers have for gifted students. They revealed that gifted students were expected to have a higher intellect, be introverted, and less emotionally stable than average-ability students. These expectations affect the students' educational goals and classroom behavior (Pajares, 1992). When teachers' expectations are based on inaccurate beliefs, it affects students' outcomes. A self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when the inaccurate held expectations lead to the student reinforcing the expectations (Jussim & Harber, 2005).

Teacher expectancy theory refers to a teacher's perceptions or expectations about current levels of student ability and normative behaviors (Missett, Azano, Callahan, & Landrum, 2016). Based on the perceptions and expectations, teacher expectancy theory asserts that teachers make predictions about student behavior that are often inaccurate. Some teachers assume gifted students are a homogenous group and that they are gifted across the board, which results in misidentification, inadequate curriculum provisions, and inappropriate grade placement (Gross, 2000). Further, gifted students' needs are often ignored because of the students' quick mastery of basic skills and new information (Tomlinson, 1999). Teachers hold the expectation that gifted students master information faster than other students, which often can be achieved with little effort (Coleman & Gallagher, 1995). Instead, gifted students should be held to the expectation of providing evidence of their knowledge and understanding (Smutny, 2003). Often the brightest children are the ones that learning the least and making the smallest gains in achievement. Instruction needs to be motivating, taught at an appropriate and challenging

level, so gifted students do not become angry, depressed or engage in disruptive classroom behaviors (Caraisco, 2007; Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). Students need to be challenged in order to grow to their full potential (Callahan, Tomlinson, Reis, & Kaplan, 2000).

Negative beliefs and low expectations influence teachers' instructional methods for gifted students, even making the teachers reluctant to implement strategies that are effective for gifted learners (Azano, Missett, Callahan, Brunner, Oh, Foster, & Moon, 2011; Missett, Azano, Callahan, & Landrum, 2016). In primary-grade gifted classrooms, low expectations for student ability can guide teachers into remediation instead of enrichment and acceleration (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Low expectations of students can influence curriculum and instructional decisions of teachers. As an example, Missett, Azano, Callahan, & Landrum (2016) completed a case-study of a third grade teacher in order to better understand how the expectations of a gifted student with an emotional disability influenced instructional choices. Using the lens of teacher expectancy research, they found that the expectations held by the teacher played an important role in her decision making of instructional practices. The teacher consistently looked for evidence of limited capacity of academic ability while ignoring any positive behaviors and actions from the student.

All educational programs should provide a quality education and meet the individual needs of all students (Borland, 1989). Gifted programs should also meet the needs of their students, including the social and emotional needs. Gifted students benefit from the curriculum, services, and programs and can result in higher achievement (Gentry & Owen, 1999; Kulik, 1992). Meeting the needs of academically talented

learners in meaningful and relevant ways is a challenging task (Brighton & Hertbert, 1999; Davies, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999). Challenging curriculum is needed in order to meet the needs of gifted students. Emphasis is placed on differentiation for advanced learners' academic growth that includes depth and complexity, authentic tasks, a choice in learning, and thinking that requires application of concepts (Coleman & Gallagher, 1995; Gallagher & Gallagher, 1994; VanTassel-Baska, 1996).

Theoretical Framework

Rotter's (1954) social learning theory (SLT) drives the theory behind this research. SLT strives to explain human behavior in social situations and focuses on the interactions between people and their environment. According to SLT, behavior is goal-oriented and learned through interactions with others. According to Rotter (1966), an individual's expectancies influence behavioral outcomes. Julian B. Rotter developed a theory of human behavior using the expectancy construct. Rotter believed two types of expectancy determined a crucial factor in social learning. The first type of expectancy is the expected outcome of a behavior and the second type is the value placed on that outcome (Rotter, 1954). According to Rotter (1954) expectancy was defined as "the probability held by the individual that a particular reinforcement will occur as a function of a specific behavior on his part in a specific situation" (p. 107). Rotter viewed behavior as ever changing. He believed that a person's thinking or a change in the environment can impact behavior. Rotter concluded that in order to understand behavior, it is necessary to look at the individual and their experiences and the surrounding environment.

Three concepts comprise Rotter's social learning model for predicting behavior potential (BP). These components are expectancy (E), reinforcement value (RV), and the

psychological situation. Rotter (1954) followed this basic formula: $BP = f(E \ \& \ RV)$

The formula is read as: behavior potential is a function of expectancy and reinforcement value. Meaning, the probability of observing a behavior in a situation is a function of the value the individual holds for a particular reinforcement associated with the behavior and the expectancy of receiving the reinforcement. Behavior occurs as a response to stimulus and the potential of a certain action is the result of it occurring in relation to reinforcements. Individuals have different interpretations of reinforcing situations (Rotter, 1966). If expectancy and reinforcement value are both high, then behavior potential will be high. However, if either expectancy or reinforcement value is low, then behavior potential will be lower.

Behavior potential is the likelihood of engaging in a certain behavior in a specific situation (Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972). Behavior potential is not an absolute. In any situation, there a number of behaviors one can engage in and the individual will display whichever behavior has the highest potential. The measurement of behavior potential can be completed by directly measuring the frequency of that behavior over a series of situations (Rotter, 1954; Rotter et al., 1972). The environment in which they occur controls behaviors. The outcome of a behavior can reinforce or inhibit the behavior (Rotter, 1966).

Expectancy is the probability that a given behavior will lead to a specific outcome or reinforcement (Rotter et. al., 1972). If an individual has high or strong expectancies, the individual is confident the behavior will result in a specific outcome. Having low expectancies means the individual believes their behavior will unlikely result in reinforcement. Expectancies are based on previous experiences in the same or similar

situation. In a new situation, any generalized expectancies will weigh heavily due to the lack of experiences with that particular situation. In familiar situations, the expectancy for reinforcement will rely on previous expectancies. Rotter (1954) also believed that observations of outcomes of others' behaviors affect our own expectancies. If we see someone receiving punishment for their behavior, we do not have to experience the punishment to form an expectancy that this behavior will be punished.

Reinforcement value is “the degree of the person’s preference for that reinforcement to occur if the possibilities of occurrence of all alternatives were equal” (Rotter et al., 1972, p. 13). Simply stated, reinforcement value is another name for behavior outcomes. Things we want to happen or that which we are attracted to have a high reinforcement value. Things we do not want to happen or things we wish to avoid have a low reinforcement value. Reinforcement values can stabilize over time and situations and may increase with successive reinforcements. The social environment is important in shaping our behavior. Social outcomes such as approval and love are powerful influences on behavior (Rotter, 1954). As with expectancy, reinforcement value is subjective and can differ in desirability for individuals.

The psychological situation is defined as the unique and interactive combination of internal and external stimuli experiences (Rotter et al., 1972). The psychological system is not stated in Rotter’s basic formula, but is considered to be implicit. Behavior is specific to different environments and will likely result in different behaviors depending on the situation (Rotter, 1954; Rotter et al., 1972). As an example, the behavior of a child is often different in a school situation than in their home environment. The environment and stimuli are different in these atmospheres and the needs and expectancies are also

different. Also, each individual's experience of the environment is unique and different individuals interpret the same situation differently. Different people will have different expectancies and reinforcement values in the same situation.

Locus of control (LOC) is an additional construct to reinforcement and social context. LOC refers to individual's generalized beliefs about what determines whether or not those beliefs get reinforced. LOC is the perception of control that an individual has over an occurring event in their life (Rotter, 1966). It is the perception of the individual of the degree to which behavioral outcomes are due to internal or external control (Rotter et al., 1972). An individual with a strong internal locus of control believes the responsibility of the reinforcement lies within the individual. They believe their own success or failure is dependent on their own efforts. In contrast, individuals with an external locus of control believe that reinforcements are due to luck or chance. These individuals do not see the correlation between their own effort and reinforcements. According to Rotter (1966), the internal and external locus of control construct is critical in understanding the nature of the learning process in various learning situations. Locus of control is also important in determining the degree to which individuals attribute personal control to rewards in a situation. Locus of control represents a continuum and will generally predict individual's behavior across situations (Rotter et al., 1972). At the same time, specific situations might cause for a different behavior based on learning history. Rotter, Liverant, and Crowne (1961) concluded:

Whether or not humans see success in a task as being determined or controlled by chance, random or other factors beyond their control, or see the reinforcement in the situation as an outcome of their own characteristics or skills, appears to have

systematic effects on changes in their expectations for future reinforcement. (p. 161)

Rotter (1954) believed locus of control occurred as a continuum from internal to external control. Internal locus of control has been linked with better academic performance (Chang, Singh, & Mo, 2007; Strayhorn, 2010) while external locus of control has been associated with anxiety (Weems, Silverman, Rapee, & Pina, 2003). Research has also shown that children with an internal locus of control are more engaged in their classrooms (You & Sharkey, 2009). A primary responsibility of educators should be to establish learning environments “in which the child learns to live cooperatively with others, to accept responsibility, and to find gratification in constructivist individual and group activities” (Rotter, 1954, p. 434).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

It is my intention with this research to gain an understanding of a sample of gifted second-graders' perceptions of their experiences of their teachers' varying expectations. The purpose of this ethnographic research study was to explore how expectations influence gifted second-graders. This study did not focus on quantitative outcomes of the intervention, rather the social phenomena of expectations of second-grade gifted students. Rather than focusing on quantitative data, the research focused on observing and interpreting ideas from the perspectives and experiences of the gifted second-graders participating in the study. Specifically, the focus was context specific with rich description (Flick, 2014).

Ethnography goes further than details and descriptions. Ethnography provides an explanation and attempts to understand meaning (Ladner, 2014). The research on the individual gifted student's voice and learning is rare (Gallagher, Harradine, & Coleman, 1997), establishing a need for this research. I immersed myself in the context while observing the phenomenon. An ethnographic study was chosen as a way to understand and illuminate second-grade gifted students' perceptions of teachers' expectations. Ethnography means trying to understand behavior and culture through observation of others in their environment. Teachers derive inferences about students based on what they observe and hear through everyday interactions with students (Brophy & Good, 1974). Although the focus of the study remained on the critical role of the classroom teacher, expectations must be considered in terms of conflicting academic expectations. Thus, the purpose of this action research study was to better understand if gifted second-

grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior.

This research study was based on what Strauss and Corbin (1997) called grounded theory. Instead of focusing the research on an existing theory, conclusions were “derived from data, systematically gather and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1997, p. 12). This was an appropriate means for this study because “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories for the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1).

This study used triangulation to improve the internal validity of the interpretations of the data. Triangulation refers to the combination of different methods and theoretical perspectives when dealing with a phenomenon (Flick, 2014). In this study, open-ended interviews, observations, and videotaping of participants were used to observe the learning experiences in three gifted second-grade classrooms. The gifted second-graders' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and their impact on their learning were drawn from the interviews with the students. Also, videotaped lessons of the participants and my field notes were used as further documentation of the expectations.

This chapter discusses the methods used in this action research study. I used multiple methods to collect and analyze data. In terms of this study, the role of the ethnographic researcher is to observe and discover the experiences of the participants and to represent the students' ideas and perspectives in line with the research questions. Data was gathered to answer the following research questions:

1. How do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success?

2. How do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted second-graders?

Action Research

Action research remained the basis for this study, as the study is on-going and I took on a participatory role. Action research is not done to the participants; rather action research is done with the participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The participants and researcher go through the process of research together and change through the process. Unlike traditional research, I was a participant in the research and did not concern myself with generalizability of the research. Instead, I focused on rich description of the local context (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As an insider of a gifted education second-grade classroom, I was immersed in the context and attempted to better understand the experiences of a second-grade student in a gifted self-contained classroom.

Mixed Methods Research Design

A mixed methods research design was implemented for this action research study. The purpose of using a mixed method approach was to be able to collect, analyze, and mix both qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Combining both qualitative and quantitative methods provided a stronger understanding of the research problem instead of looking at one method in isolation. Using qualitative and quantitative data together provided a deeper understanding of the research problem with alternative perspectives (Creswell, 2015). Specifically, I used a concurrent quantitative and qualitative mixed methods action research design for this study. The purpose of using a concurrent quantitative and qualitative mixed methods action research design was to link quantitative and qualitative

results in order to produce authenticated conclusions (Ivankova, 2015). Using this approach provided more validated conclusions on the innovation.

It is through deliberate dialogue and understanding of the gifted students' experiences that we can begin the journey of change. The experiences and voices of gifted students can drive change in the elementary school experience. The lived experience of gifted students needs more research attention. Researchers need to better understand how the context of the school environment influences the lived experience and perceptions of the gifted child (Coleman, Micko, & Cross, 2015). My goal was to depict the voices of gifted second-graders about their experiences with varying expectations. Voice is the "focus on the design, facilitation and improvement of learning" (Mitra, 2004, p. 4 in Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, and Warne, 2007). The intent was to listen carefully to the perceptions of the participants through interviews and observations in order to bring meaning to the experiences of the second-graders. I included interpretations of the students in the second-grade gifted classrooms. I wanted the participants' voices to be heard by using their words. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) stated, "we need to employ many perspectives, hear many voices, before we can achieve deep understanding of social phenomena and before we can assert that a narrative is complete." (p. 1055). Studying personal experiences requires an examination of research that allows an individual's voice to be heard. Studies that use open-ended questions are more appropriate for learning about the inner life of students (Creswell, 2007). Using this approach and design, the participants' perceptions and experiences were gathered, analyzed, and interpreted in order to bring forth gifted second-graders' voices.

Schultz (2002) conducted a study of underachievement in gifted students. He believed “research is done on the researched, rather than with them” (p. 193). He suggested contributing a voice to the literature base in gifted education (Schultz, 2002, p. 200). Through his study of two high school gifted students, Schultz determined from the perspective of the students that they were not underachieving; rather the school was underserving them. Coleman, Micko, and Cross (2015) synthesized numerous studies focusing on the lived experiences of gifted and talented children in school. The focus was on the meanings that children attribute to life in school. This was reflected in the use of student voice in the various studies. Coleman et al. (2015) wanted to understand the phenomenon of being gifted by acknowledging the themes presented in the lived experiences. Through the lived experiences, the authors concluded that gifted students sense their differentness and are well aware of their ability to learn faster. The context of the school environment influences the child’s perception of feeling accepted. When a school meets their needs, the lived experiences are different. The authors concluded in order to reach a stronger understanding of giftedness, student voices should be used to explain and interpret the gifted world.

Qualitative research. To better understand the perceptions of gifted second-grade students, it is necessary to understand their personal experiences in this specific context. While a known limitation of qualitative research is lack of generalizability, Herr & Anderson (2015) argue qualitative research brings forth a strong description and knowledge of the local context. Qualitative collection included open-ended interviews, observational field notes, and video recordings of classroom lessons.

Quantitative research. One research question focused on how the varying expectations of teachers' impact student learning of gifted second-graders. In order to measure this concept quantitatively, a questionnaire was given to each participant. Specifically, the participant completed the questionnaire three times, one for each second-grade teacher.

Setting

The study occurred at Bella Vista Gifted Academy, a public school filled with self-contained gifted classrooms from Kindergarten through sixth grade. Bella Vista Gifted Academy second-grade consists of four second-grade teachers and 93 second-grade students. While I am a second-grade teacher in this setting, I did not study any of my own homeroom students. The other three second-grade teachers and two students from each of their homeroom classrooms participated in the study.

Participants

A purposive sample of six identified gifted second-graders were selected for this study. The practice of purposeful sampling refers to choosing specific individuals whose experiences enable detailed descriptions related to a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2015). Participants were selected based on the students' score on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). The Cognitive Abilities Test is approved by the State of Arizona Department of Education for identification of gifted students. It is an abilities test measuring a child's ability to reason in three different areas: Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal.

For this study, participants needed to have qualified at the 97th percentile or above in all three areas of the CogAT. The sample was limited to the second-grade students that

meet this criteria because they share the homogenous characteristics of qualifying as gifted in all three areas. In total, ten students met this criteria and these students were placed with the other three homeroom teachers. While there are four second-grade homeroom teachers, participants were selected from three of the homerooms. Due to my involvement in the study, students meeting the specified criteria were not assigned to my homeroom.

After the informational meeting and sharing information about the study, one student declined participation in the study right away. While I still had nine students to choose from for the study, I needed six students in total. The first male and female student from each homeroom to provide a signed consent form and assent form were selected for the study. The final sample was a total of six participants, two from each homeroom classroom. Consent forms, assent forms, participant expectations, and an explanation of the study were provided to each participant prior to the study's start. Participants were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and all unique identifiers were locked for safekeeping.

Students. The participants were asked to help write a statement about themselves that was used for a description of the participants. Ashley, a seven year old girl, enjoys playing with her friends and spending time with her family. She also likes to play musical instruments. Connor, an eight year old boy, enjoys group activities and building things with his hands. He enjoys spending time with Ethan, another eight year old. Ethan is very outgoing and will say what he thinks without worrying about the consequences to his words. He likes to participate in any outdoor activity and likes to be in charge of others when working in a group. Gabriela is a very shy and quiet eight year old girl. She is very

kind to others and often helps others when needed. Henry, a seven year old boy, prefers worksheets over project based learning. He enjoys working with his best friend or working on his own, rather than working with others in the grade level. Maya, is another quiet girl. She is seven years old and enjoys school. She likes writing stories and spending time chatting with her friends.

Teachers. Three second-grade teachers participated in this study. The teachers gave consent to participating in the study and having videotaped lessons in their classroom. The second-grade teachers provided a brief statement about their experience and education without giving away their identity. Each teacher was given a pseudonym to protect their identity. All three teachers are responsible for the gifted second-graders at Bella Vista Academy and are established teachers. Mrs. Adams has a master's degree and holds a gifted endorsement. She has been teaching for thirteen years. Mrs. Bennett has a master's degree and has been teaching for fifteen years. Currently, Mrs. Bennett does not have a gifted endorsement. Mrs. Finley also has a master's degree and holds a gifted endorsement. She has been teaching for thirteen years. Both Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley have worked at Bella Vista Gifted Academy for four years, while Mrs. Bennett is completing her first year at the school.

Researcher Role

I assumed the role of the participant researcher and the observer for this action research study. Participation was necessary due to the ethnographic nature of the study (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). As a participant observer, I became immersed in the classrooms of the action research study. In order to gain a better understanding of the culture and context, it was necessary to immerse myself into the culture, rather than being

a distant observer. Participant observation combines interviewing of participants, direct participation and observation, and introspection (Flick, 2014). Participant observation is a process that focuses on gaining access to the participants and a focus on the aspects of the research. Spradley (1980, p. 34) outlines three phases of participant observation: descriptive observation, focused observation, and selective observation. Descriptive observation is used at the beginning of an observation to provide orientation to the setting while focused observation narrows the perspective, and selective observation focuses on finding further evidence and examples in the setting. Descriptive observation should not focus on heavily structured protocol sheets in order to prevent the observer's attention from being restricted and limited (Flick, 2014). At the same time, during the selective observation phase, protocol sheets are helpful to fully grasp the relevant concepts.

Being a participant observer allowed several advantages. I was able to better understand the context of the culture that a casual observer may miss. This occurred on several occasions in the classrooms as the students were comfortable with saying and doing things in front of me that went unnoticed by the teachers. Participants are more likely to be open with participant observers because they are seen as members of the context. During the casual conversations at recess time, I was able to encourage reflection and introspection with the participants in a timely manner. I would ask, "What do you think about...?" or "Tell me more about what happened..." and the participants would willingly share more information. This added access would not have been available to an observer that was not also a participant in the context.

While I am a member of the second-grade team, I am not a participant in the study. This remains an action research project, but I am the leader of the project. As the

leader, I created the study, designed a plan, and implemented the study. I am an insider as a gifted self-contained classroom teacher and have been immersed in a gifted self-contained classroom for four years. Creswell (1998) states there is a necessity for observations to occur over a period of time. I have already invested a considerable amount of time in the gifted classrooms and am familiar with the culture. Due to my experience with the context, I believe I am in a “better position to interpret the meanings and possible consequences of their behaviors in a cultural context.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 392). I am aware that my presence in the classrooms was noticed, but it was my goal to be more of an observer in order to write down notes right after making an observation. However, I assumed that my homeroom students may not be able to be honest with me as their teacher and a researcher. In order to achieve the most authentic results, it is necessary to only include students from the other three homeroom classrooms. While I am aware that my role as a teacher in this school has some implications, it is my belief that my experience in the context was an advantage in the interpretations of the gifted second-graders’ perceptions.

Research Methods

In order to answer the two research questions guiding this action research study, I used one quantitative data collection tool and three qualitative data collection tools. The following section provides a description of each collection tool, how the tool supports this action research study, and a timeline.

Bella Vista Gifted Academy begins classes in late July and I began the study after curriculum night. Curriculum night provided the opportunity to discuss the study with parents and students at the same time. The purpose of curriculum night was to provide

information about expectations, guidelines, and curriculum for the school year. All parents are invited to attend this event. After the regularly scheduled curriculum night, I met with the parents of ten students. The parents invited to this session had children that were potential participants for the study. The students selected for this study qualified in the 97th percentile or higher on the Cognitive Abilities Test in all three areas and were not members of my homeroom class.

During this meeting, I outlined the purpose and vision of my study. I was able to answer questions in person and handed out parental consent forms. All the parents were able to discuss the decision at home and sent their signed consent form to school with their child. One parent declined to have her child participant in the study right away, as her child was not interested in being observed or interviewed. After receiving consent from the first six parents, I met with the six students and had a conversation about the study. I let the student know that while their parents gave permission, the student also had the right to accept or decline the invitation. All six students agreed to participant in the study.

The student questionnaires were given in September, after receiving parent consent and student assent. Each of the six participants completed three separate questionnaires, one for each gifted second-grade teacher. After completing the questionnaires on each gifted second-grade teacher, each gifted second-grade student was interviewed. Students were interviewed individually in a quiet classroom, away from their peers.

The observations and the videotaping of the lessons did not begin until after the first round of interviews were completed. However, previous experience demonstrated

that students and teachers perform differently when a camera is introduced into the classroom. In order to ensure a more authentic experience of the classroom, the video camera was set up and running in the classroom, as a way for the students to become comfortable with the cameras. The camera was only a prop at this time, as the recording was not used for research purposes. The intervention protocol needed to be established within the classroom environment before attempting to videotape the classroom environment. Based on the interview information, the videotaped lessons were scheduled with the homeroom teacher. Table 6 outlines the procedures and timeline for this study.

Table 6. *Timeline and Procedures of the Study*

Time frame	Actions	Procedures
Late July 2017	Recruit participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer the opportunity to participate in study • Distribute consent forms and assent forms
August 2017	IRB accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected participant consent form and assent form
Early September 2017	Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants complete four- one for each teacher
Mid September 2017	Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews • Audio record interviews • Schedule observations • Set up video camera for students to be familiar with process

October 2017	Observe participants during lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take jotted notes • Revise to field note format • Videotape lessons- total of 12 sessions- 2 per participant
November 2017	Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews • Audio record interviews
November- December 2017	Analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe audio recordings • Conduct qualitative analysis • Conduct quantitative analysis

The study used various tools to answer the research questions. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and videotaped lessons all contributed to the results of the study. The chosen instruments are described in the following section.

Questionnaire. A questionnaire is a survey instrument used to gather information. In this research study, the purpose was to gather information on student perceptions of the varying expectations. The questionnaire used the Teacher Treatment Inventory (TTI). The TTI (Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979) was developed based on 60 different teacher behaviors from literature reviews and student observations. Weinstein and Middlestadt (1979) conducted interviews with students regarding their perceptions of the classroom environment for high and low achievers.

The TTI consists of four scales: Supportive Help, Negative Feedback, Work and Rule Orientation, and High Expectations, Opportunity, and Choice. For the purpose of this study, I only used the High Expectations, Opportunity, and Choice scale because it reflects the trust the teacher has in the student, feedback, and opportunities for

autonomous work (Weinstein, Marshall, Brattesani, & Middlestadt, 1982). This subscale consists of 10-items. Students responded to statements such as “The teacher calls on me to answer questions” and “The teacher trusts me.” Responses are aligned to a number 4-1 on a Likert scale. The four levels of responses are: (4) *Always*, (3) *Often*, (2) *Sometimes*, and (1) *Never*. For the complete questionnaire, please refer to Appendix A. The TTI measures teacher expectations from the students’ perspectives, making it an appropriate tool for this study. The questionnaire is the only quantitative data tool in this study. I began this action research study with a questionnaire to help guide the construction of the intervention.

Semi-structured interviews. According to Creswell (2015), open-ended questions are used in order to allow participants to voice their own experiences and perspectives (p. 216). Open-ended questions were used in the semi-structured interview process as a means of collecting data on the students’ perceptions of teacher expectations. The first interviews aided in the collection of baseline data of the perceptions of the gifted second-graders. Students were asked questions such as “What is your favorite/least favorite subject?” and “Which teacher is your favorite/least favorite?” Since the classroom environment is different in this context, questions also focused on the classroom space. Studying personal experience requires examination of individual’s voice to be heard (Coleman, Micko, & Cross, 2015). In order to encourage the use of voice, the participants needed to be interviewed and asked about their experiences in the different classroom environments.

Students were observed in the classroom setting before being interviewed for a second time. Students were asked to reflect on the questions from the first interview and

their experiences in the classroom. I hoped to have the participants validate their previous answers and share information not shared during the first interview. The purpose of having a second interview was to look for complementarity in responses and elicit further discussion with the participants. Appendix C provides the interview protocol.

The second round of interviews served as a follow-up interview with each of the participants. They were conducted individually in a quiet classroom away from their peers. The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription. Transcriptions of the interviews were provided to the participants for clarification and verification of the provided information. For complete follow-up interview questions, refer to Appendix C.

Observational field notes. An observation is the process of “gathering open-ended firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site” (Creswell, 2015, p. 211). While making observations in a qualitative study, it is common for the researcher to include information about the setting, participants, and the behaviors of the participants. In qualitative approaches, observers do not concentrate on assigning classroom events, instead the focus is on collecting detailed descriptions about the events (Good & Brophy, 1997). These detailed descriptions were analyzed to look at the experiences of the teacher and students.

An attempt was made to not record everything that occurred during the observations; rather the importance was placed on the behaviors and actions which may be significant to the research questions. Meaning was constructed by the participants and requires careful and targeted observations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). If the researcher is writing everything down during the observations, more time is focused on taking notes rather than observing the participants in the setting. To avoid recording

everything by hand, I videotaped the lessons for later review and relied upon daily reflection of the research questions as a guideline for recording field notes. Through careful reflection, I was able to focus on actions and behaviors that were key to answering the research questions. An effort was also made to not observe too narrowly. There is balance to recording enough but not too much as to compromise the participation and observation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

I took observational field notes throughout this action research study. Field notes are words recorded by the researcher during an observation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2015). I observed each of my six student participants on two separate occasions. In total, I had twelve classroom observations. While being an active member of the action research study, the notes were brief and were added onto at the end of the teaching day. Observational field notes included descriptive field notes and reflective field notes. According to Creswell (2015), descriptive field notes include the description of the activities and the people and reflective field notes include personal thoughts of the researcher and themes that emerge during the process. An observational organizational tool was used to aid in the observation process. Appendix D contains the observational tool. While I took observational field notes during the process, I might miss something while taking notes, this was the reason for using audiovisual materials to aid in the observations.

Audiovisual materials. Audiovisual materials are “images or sounds that researchers collect to help understand the central phenomenon under study” (Creswell, 2015, p. 223). These images and sounds can be videos, audio recordings, photographs, and drawings. For the purpose of this study, I used videotapes of twelve lessons and

audio recordings of the twelve semi-structured interviews. While being observed in the classroom setting, each participant was videotaped at the same time. Video and audio recordings allowed future viewing of the observations and provided further observational data. Table 7 provides an organizational tool for the data collection tools that were in this study.

Table 7. *Data collection tools*

Instrument	Description and/or Purpose
Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Treatment Inventory (TTI) • Completed by each participant for each of the three teachers • Total of 18 questionnaires
Semi-structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one interviews with six participants • Explores students' thoughts on favorite/least favorite teachers, favorite/least favorite subject, favorite/least favorite classroom space • Each participant interviewed twice
Observational Field Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwritten in shorthand • Written during observations of lessons and/or during review of videotaped materials • Added to at the end of the instructional day
Audiovisual Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videotape two class sessions for each of the 6 participants • Total of 12 videotaped observations • Can be watched numerous times for observation purposes • Audio record semi-structured interviews • Total of 12 audio recorded semi-structured interviews

Innovation

“I am not a teacher, but an awakener.” –Robert Frost

It has been our responsibility as educators and leaders to ensure change was implemented in an effective and useful manner. According to Hall & Hord (2011) change was based on learning. Problems need to be identified and solutions needed to be offered that promote student learning. When students have a genuine say in their learning and experiences, it can be a catalyst for change in schools (Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, & Warne, 2007). Teachers need to listen to their students in order to meet the needs of their students. Educators need to implement change in their own classrooms (Hall & Hord, 2011). Educators learn new best practices, but they have not always taken that knowledge and applied it to their own practice. Good leaders of change have known when to apply pressure to the change agents and have realized when to give the change agent freedom to apply the innovation. “Experts, we propose, tackle problems that increase their expertise, whereas nonexperts tend to tackle problems for which they do not have to extend themselves.” (Bereiter & Scardemalia, 1993, p. 78). Change efforts have required various amounts of support and effort (Hall & Hord). With respect to change, problems exist when there is an unknown path to a goal and solving that problem can either be creative or mundane (Bereiter & Scardemalia, 1993). Problem solving has led to change and innovation if one views it through the lens of creativity.

Innovation and change. Teachers should “give students a voice in their learning process (Kavensky & Keighley, 2003). One way to implement change within the classroom is through the voice of the students. This study will focus on the perceptions of gifted second-graders and the varying expectations that they experience. I wanted to create a space for students to use their voice in an articulate manner in a setting where typically the teacher voice has more power. Student voice in this study refers to

opportunities and experiences where students can communicate their own ideas and perceptions. In order for teachers to better understand their students, they need to be aware of their students' thoughts and feelings about the varying expectations. Few researchers have asked students about their educational experiences or examined the educational experiences of primary age gifted children (Gallagher, Harradine, & Coleman, 1997; Gross, 1992; Harrison, 2003). This study adds to the limited research of the educational experiences of gifted second-grade students. This study allows students to voice their opinions on varying teacher expectations. These ideas shared through the lived experiences of the gifted second-graders were shared with the gifted second-grade teachers as an open conversation towards change and improving instruction for the students.

Using the concept of student voice, Beisser, Gillespie, and Thacker (2013) explored the concept of play through the eyes of talented and gifted fifth and sixth grade students. The study was designed to gather data directly from the students with open-ended discussions with focus groups and a follow-up online survey. Through the voice of the gifted students, analysis displayed three components of play: "fun," "friends," and "freedom." The use of student voices aided in the acknowledgement of the importance and benefits of multiple experiences of play.

Likewise, Cross, Stewart, and Coleman (2003) conducted a study of the lived experiences of gifted students in grade first through sixth. The goal of the research was to gather lived experiences from the participants instead of what the participants thought of the experiences. Four themes formed through the interview process: others, role, personal development, and time. Others refers to an awareness of others including students,

parents, and teachers. The second theme of role refers to gifted child's role, more specifically, an awareness of being gifted and what expectations that brings to the gifted child. Personal development emerged as the third theme. Students were aware of their abilities, set goals, and seemed to express concern about the level of expectations required of them. Time was the fourth theme emerging from the idea of time flying by or for preparation of future goals. Cross et al. (2003) determined that the experience of others was the most important aspect of attending a gifted school. This study used student voice in order to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of the gifted students.

In additional studies, Coleman (2011) claimed gifted children's lived experience in typical schools are "advanced academic development clashing with uninteresting, undemanding, and slow-moving curriculum" (p. 382). Gifted students wait for others and remain unchallenged (Coleman, Micko, & Cross, 2015). However, the lived experience changes when gifted students attend schools designed for gifted students. In a gifted school, students tend to be in a more accepting environment. Coleman, Peine, Olthouse, & Romanoff (2009) completed a study in a specialized gifted school and asked the students to respond to the prompt, "This school is like..." In the primary grades, students described the school as fun and filled with games (Coleman, et al., 2009, n.p.). Students in gifted settings expressed interest in a demanding and rigorous curriculum (Coleman, 2005). The experiences of the students provide the information needed in order to promote change in the educational environment.

Data Analysis

The study included classroom observations, two semi-structured interviews with each participant, and a questionnaire for each of the teachers. From the first round of interviews and the observations in the classrooms, second interview guides and questions were formulated for the study. Due to the ethnographic nature of the study, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate interview method (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Interviews were conducted on an individual basis with the participants in a separate classroom. Participants were given materials to fidget with (putty, fidget spinners, playdough, glitter dough, etc.) at their leisure during the interviews. Questions were open ended and focused on the experiences within the second grade gifted classrooms at Bella Vista Academy. Follow-up questions were dependent upon the answers given, while keeping the research questions as a focal point. Results from the first round of interviews were not as informative as was hoped. Six individual interviews with each of the participants were conducted for the first round. The students answered the questions that were asked of them, but overall seemed hesitant and cautious with their answers. During the follow-up interviews, the participants were more willing to share their stories and experiences without hesitation. These interviews were conducted after some observations in the classroom and provided rich data, with more stories and expansion of the participants' ideas.

Informal conversations were conducted with the participants daily. These informal conversations clarified and explained observations and experiences in the classroom. These opportunities allowed for the participants to share their perceptions and

clarify any of my questions. These informal conversations were conducted during the afternoon recess time with the participants and audio-recorded for later review.

In consideration of the research questions, I collected data for the study through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, videotapes of the classroom observations, and field notes. I began the data analysis process by analyzing the questionnaire information. This step needed to be first because the results guide classroom observation decisions for the intervention. Due to the small sample of participants, I took the questionnaire results and used Excel to organize and analyze the data.

One-on-one interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for emerging themes based on similar concepts. After the transcription process, I read through the transcripts to familiarize myself with the information. Transcripts were sent to the participants for their verification and clarification, if needed. After the initial reading, the coding process began using a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding is the “process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (Creswell, 2015, p. 242). Grouping and regrouping thematic categories help to ascertain patterns and connections to help focus my thinking and analysis. In vivo codes, or the students’ own words, were used for the coding process (Saldana, 2013). After coding through the transcripts once, I coded the material again a second time. However, I did not complete the second coding right after the first coding. In order for me to fully grasp what the data is telling me, I provided time in between codings. Coding the material a second time was necessary in order to allow various themes to truly emerge. I used HyperRESEARCH to organize and analyze the

data. The purpose of grounded theory methodology is “not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3).

After making classroom observation decisions based on the semi-structured interviews, I videotaped each participant in two different class settings. I videotaped two different lessons of each participant in the classroom, which produced a total of twelve videotaped lessons. While videotaping, I still took observational notes. I tried to be in the classroom as unobtrusively as possible in order to record the social environment and happenings in the classroom. I used a notepad on a clipboard, which is a common occurrence in these classrooms. I reread my observational notes while watching the recording of the lessons. Rereading observational notes aids in coding, as the preliminary jottings taken while observing can be used for the coding process (Saldana, 2013, p. 20). The initial preview of the video provided familiarity with the material and helped organize the lesson into chunks. The second viewing of the lesson focused on the anecdotal notes, which aided in coding the material into emergent themes. Some of the emergent themes were choices in learning, experiences, relationships, organizations, decision making, opportunities, and behaviors. I did not look for specific themes when coding, rather I looked to code the material in order to have themes emerge from the created codes (Saldana, 2013). A third viewing of the videotapes was often necessary in order to ensure that all concepts emerged. Specifically, I used descriptive coding for my observational notes and In Vivo coding for the videotaped lessons.

Informal data analysis occurred during the data collection phase as a daily transcription in the evenings with a review of field notes, video recording, and any audio

recordings. The regular and informal review of the data provided the opportunity to constantly compare previously collected data and the new data. The data were constantly being reviewed to ascertain if patterns were emerging, to look for new questions, and to see if multiple data either supported or contradicted each other. This constant comparative method allowed me to continually refer back to the research questions and data in order to begin assertions while still collecting data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

Validity

In research, the goal is to reduce any differing hypotheses that might account for the outcome of the data. Internal and external validity is important to research. However, in action research, external validity is not a key component. External validity refers to generalizability and action research does not claim to be generalizable. Internal validity, on the other hand, is important to action research. Internal validity refers to the extent in which differences in the dependent variable are due to the intervention and not to some outside factor. The greater the internal validity of a study, the more likely the casual claim remains (Smith & Glass, 1987).

This project depends on a classroom of students and contains some threats to internal validity. History, maturation, and instrumentation are threats to the internal validity of this research (Persson, 2012).

History is one threat to internal validity. There is a possibility of an unforeseen or unknown event influencing students and their behavior. History accounts for the events that occur during the same time as the time of measurement for the research. In my research, it would be impossible to separate the students from their experiences. However, this does not mean the results are false. Rather, the cause cannot be determined

due to history. In order to maximize validity, I will include the issues with history in my discussion.

Maturation threatens validity because students mature and the change may be due to normal development. Maturation refers to the passage of time while a study is proceeding. In my context, second graders mature and develop throughout the year. Every year in January, there appears to be a natural maturity that occurs with the students. This can have an effect on the research of second graders and the internal validity of the study.

Another threat to the validity of this research is instrumentation. Change to the instrumentation, including survey questions, changes the outcome of the research. Instrumentation threats can occur when the method of measurement changes from subject to subject or during different cycles. Instrumentation refers to the instrument itself and if any changes occur in the process of the intervention. These changes in the instrumentation can affect the results of a study. In order to mitigate the difference in results, I tried not to change the instrumentation through the process. There were no unforeseen circumstances, and I was able to keep the original instrumentation intact.

I focused on process validity which refers to the extent to which problems frame ongoing learning (Ivankova, 2015). The goal included using appropriate research methodology and providing no harm for the participants. The research was conducted in a dependable and competent manner. Protocols were followed to ensure process validity.

My role as the researcher and practitioner could have adverse effects on the validity of this project. Participants may have chosen to be a part of the research because I am one of their second-grade teachers and they may have felt obligated to participate. I

assured the participants that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential.

Ethical Considerations

In an effort to protect the research participants, several ethical considerations were made. For purposes of this study, the names of the school district, school, and participants were changed to maintain confidentiality. All the participants were given pseudonyms and the identifiers will remain confidential. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained. Parents of the students completed a consent form and the students signed an assent form prior to beginning the study. Second-grade teachers also signed a consent form. Students' grades were not affected by participation in this study.

Summary

This action research study was designed to gain an understanding of a sample of gifted second-graders' perceptions of their experiences of their teachers' varying expectations. The purpose of this ethnographic research study was to explore how expectations influence gifted second-graders. An ethnographic approach provided an opportunity to obtain rich and detailed accounts of the gifted second-graders' perceptions and experiences in various classrooms. By using transcriptions from the interviews, notes from the observations, and videotapes of the observations, there was a plethora of data to work with. In conclusion, I hope this descriptive action research study will provide a narrative of the gifted second-graders' classroom experience and allows the voices to be an influential piece of the educational experience.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to use an ethnographic approach to explore if gifted second-grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior. I hoped to uncover the perception of student voice in order to develop a deeper understanding of how student voice exists in the classroom and how it might impact instructional practices. Scholars recognize the importance of capturing, understanding, and sharing the lived experiences of students in order to improve the educational experience for students (Coleman, Micko, & Cross, 2015; Mitra, 2008; Mitra & Serriere, 2012). Increasing student voice in school encourages students to share their opinions on problems and potential solutions in their school. Delisle (2012) states that we must engage and listen to students if we are going to improve education. Student voice has "transformative potential" to enhance students' own learning and school improvement with real world experiences and voices from the students (Flutter and Ruddock, 2004).

In this chapter, I present findings from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data available from this action research study. Data were available from several sources including the Teacher Treatment Inventory questionnaires, transcriptions from interviews, and videotaped lessons. Overall, the analysis and results are organized by two research questions: The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success?

2. How do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted second-graders?

The findings in each section are described in this chapter and organized into sections following the research questions. Each section begins with a short description of the findings in that section so the reader may garner the overall impression of each finding. Detailed data to support the findings follow in each section to support the overall impression. The following findings include excerpts from six participants in an effort to answer the above questions as well as allow the participants to contribute a voice that is missing from the body of knowledge in gifted education. These results consisted of thick descriptions representing the participants' voices using interviews and videotaped observations.

Research Question #1 Findings

Research Question 1 asked, how do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success? To examine the first research question of this action research study, data from the questionnaire, transcripts from the first and second semi-structured interviews with each of the six participants, and the observations were analyzed. The data were analyzed, categorized, and presented through the social learning theory which served as the theoretical framework for this study. Rotter's (1954) social learning theory (SLT) strives to explain human behavior in social situations and focused on interactions between people and their environment. According to SLT, behavior is goal-oriented and learned through interactions with others. Rotter viewed behavior as ever changing. He believed that a person's thinking or a change in the environment can impact behavior. Rotter

concluded that in order to understand behavior, it is necessary to look at the individual and their experiences and the surrounding environment. In this work, I am using Rotter's Social Learning Theory to look at student's behaviors associated with the expectations for learning that their teachers have for them.

Results from the first research question indicate that gifted second-graders academic success were enhanced by a positive and structured classroom along with a caring relationship with the teacher. I identified these into three categories: the social classroom environment, goal-oriented rules, and interactive relationships. The social classroom environment refers to the physical set up of the classroom and the interactions with others (e.g. peers, teachers). Goal-oriented rules refers to the focus on a student reaching a specific objective and norms defined by the behavioral expectations that each teacher established with the students. In this study, interactive relationships are defined as the communication and collaboration between teachers and students, the environment, and individuals. The analysis of the data suggest two assertions. First, this study asserts that gifted second-graders confirm the expectations for academic success established through the classroom environment, rules, and relationships with that teacher. Assertion two acknowledges the teacher's influence of the learning in the different classrooms. In this study, the successful classroom learning of the students was determined by a student-centered classroom that provided a positive learning environment for the students.

Social Classroom Environment. The classroom is the main context in which students and teachers interact and form relationships, while providing an environment that is responsive to the needs of the students. The social classroom environment refers to the physical set up of the classroom and the social interactions between peers and

teachers. The classroom environment plays an important role in the overall learning of students. Teachers make decisions about the instructional methods, materials, and resources used in the classroom. They also make decisions about how the learning environment will be arranged and how the students should be seated in the classroom. The social classroom environment is shaped by the classroom climate and the interactions among the students and teachers.

Finding 1 shows that the organization of the classroom influences the interactions between peers and teachers. The organization of the classroom is dependent on the shared responsibility between the students and the teachers, the established classroom procedures, and the encouragement of community learning. Shared responsibility refers to the partnership between the students and teachers. Shared responsibility requires the students and the teachers to share the responsibility to keep the classroom running smoothly, to help others when needed, and to accept responsibility for the community. The findings for this study suggest that differing levels of expectations are based on the social classroom environment created by the teacher.

Classroom Procedure. In order for the classrooms to run smoothly, the teachers encourage the students to share the responsibility for the classroom. In Mrs. Adam's classroom, she establishes classroom jobs and responsibilities with the help of her students. The class brainstorms job titles and responsibilities. Examples of jobs include librarians, line leaders, teacher assistant, and message runner. Students understand that the jobs are important to the good of the community and take their jobs seriously. Gabriela stated, "Students are fired from their jobs when they don't complete the job correctly." Students remarked that the jobs were necessary to keep the community

running smoothly. According to Maya, knowing your job helps to prevent problems in the classroom. “If I should be handing out papers, I do it when asked” and “I go to the office to drop off money and notes.” The students know what is expected of each job and there is no arguing with others about the expectations. If a student argues or fails to complete their job, they are fired from their position and another student takes their place. The classroom assignment of jobs in Mrs. Adams’ homeroom provides the students ownership and responsibility of their community.

Mrs. Finley’s students have the opportunity for classroom jobs; however, most of the jobs are performed inconsistently. The students with Mrs. Finley do share some responsibility for the classroom procedures, but in a less structured manner than Mrs. Adams. A list of jobs is on display on the board at the front of the room and are assigned by Mrs. Finley. Often, students do not want to complete their assigned task and will refuse to complete their job. In turn, other students will volunteer to complete the job. Frequently, the same students will volunteer to help the community. Unlike the students in Mrs. Adams’ classroom, they do not view classroom jobs as an important part of the shared responsibility of the community. Connor was observed refusing to complete his job of lunch bucket carrier. When asked about his refusal to complete his assigned task, he perceived the job as unimportant and stated that “the bucket is always overflowing and I do not want to pick up everybody’s stuff.” Students in this homeroom do not share the responsibility of the classroom in the same manner as Mrs. Adams’ classroom.

Mrs. Bennett’s students have the opportunity to have classroom jobs; however, there are only two jobs. On the board at the front of the room, “helpers” is listed with two names. The helper jobs are assigned weekly by the teacher and not discussed with the

students. The students are unsure of the purpose of the jobs and do not seem invested in helping their community. Ethan, a member of Mrs. Bennett's homeroom, was never assigned a job. He shared that he did not want a job. "Well, I did not want to complete any jobs. I can focus on me and not worry about having to do something extra." Instead of encouraging shared responsibility for the good of the community, the students in Mrs. Bennett's homeroom did not perceive classroom jobs as beneficial to the community.

Shared responsibility and classroom responsibility can be related to the concept of freedom of movement with respect to reinforcements. In terms of Social Learning Theory, gifted students might have low freedom of movement (given a need which is important to the individual) and may result in avoidance of the situation or they may engage in alternative behaviors. Some of the students view classroom procedures and responsibilities as unimportant and will engage in other behaviors. In summary, the three teachers have a different perspective on classroom procedure and shared responsibility. All three teachers implement classroom jobs as a way for students to share responsibility in the classroom. However, the structure and implementation of classroom jobs as a procedure varies among the teachers. Mrs. Adams encourages shared responsibility in a structured manner, while Mrs. Finley encourages the students with a less structured manner. Mrs. Bennett does not encourage shared responsibility for the community in her classroom as demonstrated by the students' lack of commitment to the assigned jobs in the classroom. The gifted second-graders respond to their teachers' expectations for shared responsibility based on the structure of classroom procedures.

Finding 2 shows the interaction between peers and teachers create an atmosphere of community. In classrooms where students are encouraged to take responsibility for

their learning and the learning around them, the performance level increased. The teachers acknowledge the importance of community in the classroom in different manners. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley demonstrate an overall goal of community learning and encourage students to help each other, regardless of the assigned homeroom. Mrs. Bennett resists the idea of a second-grade community and instead focuses her time on students that are assigned to her homeroom roster.

Helping Everyone Learn. Second-graders were encouraged to share responsibility for helping themselves and their community learn. The teachers encourage the students to check and monitor their own behavior. Mrs. Adams does this by asking the students to reflect on their own performance after completing a project or task. Students are required to answer questions on a worksheet about their own ability to work with a team and encourage others in the process. The students are also asked to describe the experience with their teammates and share their thoughts in a written reflection. Mrs. Adams also reviews the written reflections and discusses her students with the other teachers. After reading student reflections, Mrs. Adams asks the other teachers for guidance on how to address a problem that arose with one of her teams. The teachers discussed options for moving one of the students out of the group in order to have a more productive team for the students. The modeling of reflection and sharing about students influenced Mrs. Finley to complete the same assignment with her students. Following the reflection assignment given by Mrs. Finley, another discussion occurred about the students and how to help all the students learn.

Students are encouraged to accept responsibility for their learning in some of the classroom settings. While completing science fair projects, Mrs. Adams had each science

fair group color in a box on a chart for each small section that they completed. Students were motivated to complete each task and stayed on track to finish on time. Mrs. Adams shared her idea with Mrs. Finley and Mrs. Bennett after she implemented the procedure in her classroom. Mrs. Finley implemented the same procedure with the students and they quickly got on track to finish their work. Mrs. Bennett decided against implementing the chart for the students to mark their progress and the students in her homeroom took two extra weeks to complete their science fair projects. When students were asked to take responsibility for their learning, they completed their tasks in a driven manner, but when they were not encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, the learning was stalled.

Community Responsibility. Community responsibility is encouraged by some teachers, while others encourage a quiet and individualized classroom. Community responsibility is encouraged when the teacher promotes social interactions within the classroom. Teacher promotion of social interactions refers to the extent that students perceive teachers as encouraging students to interact with one another during academic tasks (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Social interaction may include classmates sharing their ideas during a classroom discussion, working in small groups to complete a task, or students helping explain the learning in a different way. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley regularly encourage all the students in the grade level to take responsibility for the community.

All three teachers often ask their students to help others or assist another student. When teaching an opinion paper, Mrs. Bennett encouraged the students to work together to form their sentences. Instead of providing instruction to the students, Mrs. Bennett had

them “ask a neighbor.” Mrs. Bennett was encouraging students to help others and explain the lesson to each other. The intent appeared genuine and focused on the community responsibility of the classroom. However, students Connor and Henry both stated they both wrote the same exact opinion paper about dogs being the best pet. When prompted for further information, the same students stated they were talking about the assignment and they were told to stop talking by their teacher. There was an appearance of community responsibility but the follow through was inconsistent.

Social interactions in the classroom also occur between the teacher and the students. Mrs. Adams made mistakes in front of the students and acknowledged the mistakes. She mentioned, “The students need to understand that no one is perfect. I do not know everything and I should not pretend to know everything.” During classroom observations, Mrs. Adams is observed making mistakes and students do not seem phased by it. They understand that they are all learners and help each other in the community. In an interview with Gabriela and Maya, they both mentioned that Mrs. Adams is “still a learner” and “trying to become a better teacher.” Mrs. Adams is working through the National Board Certification process, which she shared with the students. Mrs. Finley also shared with the students the different classes and workshops she attends to better herself. The second-graders related to the teachers when they perceived them to be learners. Connor shared that his teacher “spends weekends in classes about STEM, which we already do, but that is pretty cool.” Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley regularly share information about a book they read, a class they attended, or work they are completing to expand their expertise with the second-graders. The teachers and students understand that learning is a responsibility of the entire community.

Community responsibility includes the homeroom classroom as well as the entire second-grade community. Both Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley include and encourage all second-graders in their planning and presentation of knowledge. Mrs. Bennett did not appear to encourage the good of the entire community; rather she focused on her assigned homeroom students. Mrs. Finley told the students working in her classroom to be considerate of the classrooms around them on numerous occasions. “Our classroom is being too loud and all the other classrooms are working quietly. We need to tone it down” and “notice the level of noise around you” were heard frequently from Mrs. Finley. One example of grade-level responsibility occurred when Mrs. Finley was not feeling well and Mrs. Adams took over two classes while Mrs. Finley assisted when needed. Another time, Mrs. Adams needed to leave early to attend to her sick child and Mrs. Finley willingly took her students for the rest of the day. Mrs. Finley gathered all the students together and read them a story. Mrs. Finley and Mrs. Adams view the students as a shared responsibility and help out whenever it is needed. The students have observed these behaviors in the classrooms. Ashley, a student in Mrs. Bennett’s homeroom, commented that she “loves when the teachers joke around and try to figure out what to do.” Students observe that changes occur in the classroom and teachers share the responsibility for all second-graders.

In summary, creating a sense of community is important to shared responsibility. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley are trying to build a second-grade community of learners that encourage each other through the learning process. From the lens of Social Learning Theory, it is predictive of how behaviors and reinforcement can be changed through social modeling (Mearns, 2009). Social Learning Theory posits that an individual’s

beliefs about certain outcomes of specific behaviors can influence how that individual acts. Students are encouraged to be responsible for themselves, their homeroom, and their second-grade community. This is supported through the reinforcement of community responsibility and their encouragement of helping others in their second-grade community. Researchers (Juvonen & Weiner, 1993) acknowledge that school success does not only involve academics, it involves the social environment and working with peers. In order to better understand the students' success, it is necessary to look at the relationships with others and the way the environment promotes different social interactions and relationships. In this study, the social classroom environment is comprised of students' perceptions about how they are encouraged to interact and relate to others.

Goal-oriented rules. Goal-oriented rules encompass the focus on a student reaching a specific objective and norms defined by the behavioral expectations that each teacher established with their students. Teachers make decisions on objectives, assigned tasks, the instructional methods, and norms used in the classroom. They also make decisions about how to communicate these expectations to the students.

Finding 3 illustrates that when students are given a choice in their learning, they focus on their learning in the classroom and persevere through their work. Allowing for opportunities for student choice is evident with two of the three teachers. Opportunities for students to make choices about their learning occur often in a variety of ways. Student choice is usually offered to students either deliberately or unintentionally. Mrs. Adams is deliberate with her opportunities for student choice, Mrs. Finley unintentionally offers student choice, while Mrs. Bennett does not encourage student choice.

Deliberate student choice. Opportunities for deliberate choice include teachers offering choices to students for their learning or when the teacher’s words/actions present a choice to a student. In order to gather student perceptions of the varying expectations of their teachers the Teacher Treatment Inventory (Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979) was used with each of the participants. Three of the statements focused on student choice including “The teacher lets me do as I like as long as I finish the work” and I am given special privileges. I get to do special things in class.” The four levels of responses were (4) *Always*, (3) *Often*, (2) *Sometimes*, and (1) *Never*. Each of the participants completed a questionnaire on each of the second-grade teachers. Table 8 shows the response frequencies of responses for each of the three items related to the construct of student choice.

Table 8. *Frequencies (Student Choice)*

	Bennett				Adams				Finley			
	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>A</i>
Allows students to make up own projects.	5	1	0	0	2	3	1	0	1	3	2	0
Allows students to do what they want when they finish work.	3	2	1	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	3	0
Special privileges to students.	2	4	0	0	2	3	1	0	2	3	1	0

The survey data indicate that students perceive Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley as more likely to provide student choice. Table 8 shows that students perceive Mrs. Bennett as less willing to provide student choice. According to the data, Mrs. Bennett never allowed students to make up their own projects with five responses as never and one response as sometimes. Overall, the participants perceived Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley as sometimes or often allowing them to do what they like as long as they finish the work.

Examples of student choice include Mrs. Finley's preference to allow students to choose where they would like to sit in the classroom. She discusses with the students how to select a seat that would promote their own learning. She mentions that "sitting by your best friend might distract you" and "this student encourages me to do my best work" when discussing how to select a seat. Mrs. Finley encourages the students to think carefully about their seat selection in order to be successful in the classroom. Similarly, Mrs. Adams is deliberate with her selection of small groups. When appropriate to the activity, she allows the students to form their own small groups when working on a project. The students are told to "pick others that have a different strength than you" and to "think about why you might not want to work with someone that distracts you from the task." Mrs. Adams always has the final approval for group pairings. When she needs to change a group based on her understanding and knowledge of the students, she respectfully discusses with the students the reasons that the group might not be the best fit and helps them find a more suitable group.

More often than the examples described above, choice is offered on the way the students demonstrate their knowledge of their learning. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley offer the students a choice of class work and projects. Mrs. Bennett will accommodate student choice when the other two teachers demand that she follow the expectation of student choice. Student choice includes offering different ways of displaying their learning. Students can showcase their knowledge of a topic through dioramas, verbal presentations, written reports, poetry, or any other option that the student displays interest in. One example of student choice includes researching a famous American and presenting their knowledge on a lift the flap type paper doll. Some students in Mrs.

Adams classroom finished their work and wanted to learn more. She allowed these students to create a fictitious Facebook page for another famous American or write a response to why a famous American was important. Students completed the first assignment and expanded on their understanding from the other students' presentations to expand their own knowledge. Student choice in the gifted second-grade classroom tends to be structured. "It is developmentally appropriate to provide choices to students. But, they do not have a lot of experiences with choice. They need to be explicitly taught in order for them to be aware of what they can do." Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley allow students to choose to complete other tasks when completed with their assigned tasks. Both teachers allow students to complete unfinished work, work on personal learning projects, code on the computer, or play math games. In other words, doing nothing is not a choice with Mrs. Finley and Mrs. Adams. Students are expected to expand their learning and be an active member of their community.

Unintentional Student Choice. At times, students are given less structured opportunities and consist of verbal communication with students. After completing an assignment, students in Mrs. Bennett's classroom are given the option of silent reading. The students are not encouraged to expand on their learning. When Ashley asked Mrs. Bennett if they could work on another assignment after their project, she was told to sit and read quietly. Some of the students in that classroom started drawing pictures in their writing journals. Mrs. Bennett never addressed the drawing with the students. Instead, from that point on the students were unintentionally given the option to read quietly or write in their journals when they were finished with their work. All three teachers, often when giving parameters on assignments give unintentional student choice. Students are

told “do whatever you think will work best for you” and “you decide how long your paragraph should be.” Students do not recognize these as choices, instead they view the directions as unclear. Ethan stated that he was “unclear of what to do on my writing” and “I just want to know how many sentences to write.” Students mention opportunities to work on their personal learning project as a choice, but do not consider the unintentional options as a choice.

To summarize, students with Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley are given the opportunity to make choices in their learning. They are given the opportunity to make decisions that influence their learning in the classroom. When students make poor seating choices, they might not finish their work. If a student makes a decision to not work with their best friend, they might learn more and have a better final product. Framed in Social Learning Theory, as students learn about their choices in school their goals and expectancies are aligned. Through time, their social history includes personal experiences and observed experiences of limited reinforcement. Gifted second-graders that have the opportunity to make choices throughout their school experience have the chance to learn from their decisions.

Finding 4 demonstrates the importance of shared decisions in the classroom community. Shared decision making refers to establishing classroom norms and expectations and creating the opportunity for student input. Shared decision making was observed less frequently than other concepts, but is still important to the findings of this study.

Establishing classroom norms and expectations. In the first few weeks of the school year, Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Bennett, and Mrs. Finley spent time establishing the rules

for the second-grade classroom community. All the second-graders spent time together with all the teachers to demonstrate the community and collaboration established by the team of teachers. The teachers acknowledged the ideas for rules and expectations from the students and created a combined list of four rules for the community. The second-grade community agreed to attentive listening, appreciation of others, the right to pass, and mutual respect. The teachers asked students to demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for each of the rules. Throughout the first quarter of the school year, all teachers reviewed the rules and appeared consistent in the follow through of the rules. In the beginning of the study, the students agreed that all teachers wanted them to try their best and maintain a growth mindset. However, as observations began and further discussions were held with the participants, the students recognized Mrs. Adams as having the highest expectations for all students' academic success. Students mentioned inconsistencies in Mrs. Finley's expectations for academic success and revealed a low level of expectations for academic success with Mrs. Bennett. Classroom observational data support the finding that Mrs. Adams created a student-centered classroom that provided a positive learning environment for the students.

When the second quarter began, some changes occurred with the structure and organization of the grade level. Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley began teaching math together while Mrs. Adams and I taught the other math class. All of the participants in the study were with Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley. The team of math teachers, Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley, began their second day with the math students with a list of expectations and norms for the math class. The discussion was teacher centered and there was no interaction between the teachers and the students. A PowerPoint slide showcased the

rules on the projector during the discussion. Students were told how to raise their hand (when answering questions), how to talk while in different classroom spaces (quietly), and how to hand in papers in the classroom after an assigned task (in piles according to homeroom teacher). Since the students were several months into the school year, a quick reminder might have been more appropriate rather than an entire forty minute lesson on how to behave in math class. During recess, Maya and Henry shared their perceptions about their first day of math class. “We played games and picked our own partners” Maya shared while Henry mentioned the class getting noisy and messy. “We were late to our spelling class because we had to clean up the classroom.” The teachers stated the need for a review of rules because the first day of math class was difficult because the students were loud and hard to control. “They already know a lot of the material. What are we supposed to do with them? They seem to like playing games.” Observations showed that rules were shared with the students, but were not consistently reinforced.

While the expectation was for students to raise their hand when answering a question, this was not reinforced. The students often shouted out answers quickly, without allowing the opportunity for their peers to process the question. Students disengage with the lesson and participate in nonproductive behaviors when the louder students take over the discussion. It was common to see students crawling on the floor and under the tables during math lessons with Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley. Ethan and Connor would often be a part of the crawling around. Ethan, Connor, Henry, and Ashley also participated in many side conversations during the math lessons. When asked about these events after class, Ethan shared how he was tired of being ignored by the teachers.

I tried to participate and answer their questions, but they [teachers] did not call on me. I knew the answers and was usually the first one with my hand up. Still, I wasn't called on. I moved closer to them, but I was still not called on. Since I wasn't asked for any answers, I decided to talk to my friends. To get to my friends, I had to crawl under that table.

Ethan was observed on numerous occasions trying to participate in the math classroom. According to the classroom rules established on the second day of math class, Ethan was following the rule. He would raise his hand almost immediately after a question was asked and the teachers would look right over him. Ethan attempted to be noticed by moving himself closer to the teachers placed at the front of the classroom, yet he still went unnoticed. Throughout the lesson, his shoulders began to slump forward and he appeared less and less engaged. He was following the rules set in the classroom and was not getting any attention. At a certain point, he did crawl under the table and talk with his friends instead of listening. When he went to a table to complete the work, he was able to complete the task easily and quickly. After finishing the task, he continued his earlier conversation with his friends and drew some pictures in his notebook. These actions went unnoticed by his teachers.

During the same quarter, Mrs. Adams taught a literature study, rotating through four different groups of students. In the literature study with Mrs. Adams, the students appear at ease and ready to learn. She promoted the use of cooperation with the expectation that students support and help each other. This expectation was established on the first day of the literature study. Mrs. Adams explained the need for students to know and understand what was expected of them and encouraged the students to be

responsible for their own behavior. She explained to the students the overarching goal of having the students share their reading experiences with others during the literature study project. When students did not act accordingly in the classroom, Mrs. Adams would remind the student of the appropriate behavior and give them the opportunity to change their behavior. Mrs. Adams takes time during the students' work time to check in with each group and make sure they are on task and on track to complete the project by the next work time. During the literature study, Ethan sat quietly during the directions, raised his hand, and was called on to answer a question. He smiled after answering the question correctly and even sat a little taller, with his shoulders back. When it was time to work, he quickly got to work with his partners and worked excitedly on his project. When it was time to clean up, he was upset and displayed his disappointment with an audible, "I wasn't done!" However, he did help clean up and told Mrs. Adams that he could not wait to present his project.

Ethan was asked about his experiences in the classroom. He wanted to share all the details about his literature project and was clearly interested in the book topic about the Revolutionary War. Ethan had worked with his team to create a puppet show to explain and highlight the path that his group took during his choose your own adventure story of the Revolutionary War. After discussing the project, he was asked about his thoughts about math class and the literature study. Ethan mentioned having more fun reading a book and creating a project to explain his chosen path in the text. "Learning is more fun when I can do something. I like making projects." When discussing the raising of the hand in math class, he mentioned that this happens most of the time and that he keeps trying to answer questions. "I am good at math and I know the answer. I don't

think they [the math teachers] like me very much.” Students spend more time engaged and on task when expectations for behavior are clear and consistent.

In contrast, when expectations for behavior are unclear or inconsistent, students spend less time engaged and on task. When classroom expectations for behavior vary day to day, teachers struggle to teach and students often learn less than they should.

Instructional time is stolen by disruptive or off-task behaviors. The team of math teachers spent much of their time redirecting students to act appropriately, which meant less time to focus on academic success. In a disorderly and inconsistent environment, students were less likely to engage in classroom discussions or ask questions when they needed help.

The way the students acted in the classroom often depended on the expectations set forth by the individual or pair of teachers. Statements the teacher made in relation to behavior created two codes; preventive response or reactive response. Preventive responses refer to statements that prevent behavior from occurring, while reactive responses occur in the moment in response to a behavior. All three teachers demonstrated both preventive and reactive responses. Mrs. Adams used preventive statements more frequently than the other two teachers. Examples of preventive statements include: “I like how Joey is sitting so nicely” and “This group is working together with synergy!” On the other hand, Mrs. Finley often responded with reactive responses while displaying frustration with the class. Examples of reactive responses are “Stop talking or we will be late to recess” and “Enough! I have had enough!” when referring to the level of noise in the classroom. During math class, Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley were constantly reminding the students of the expected procedures, even though the students were months

into the school year at the time. “Make sure to write your name, number, and homeroom teacher on your paper” and “No shouting out. Raise your hand if you want to answer” were often heard during the lessons.

Student input. Another aspect of shared decision making is student input. Student input refers to the appropriate content and lessons for the varying levels of students. While students at Bella Vista Academy are identified as gifted, they have differing points for entering and moving through the curriculum. In order for students to take intellectual risks, teachers need to provide multiple ways for students to show what they know, which allows students to display their understanding. When students fall behind, misunderstand material, or surpass the expectations set in the assignment, teachers should be able to tweak their lessons for the students. In order to inform shared decision making, teachers utilize formative assessments. Formative assessment provides data for teachers to personalize the learning in the classroom without lowering the expectations for the students.

Formative assessment provides the teacher with the tools to guide their future instruction. The ability to understand and interpret the information from the assessment depends on whether the teacher maintained high expectations or low expectations for their students. When a teacher held the students accountable to high expectations, the students performed better on tasks. At the same time, when a teacher held low expectations for students, the students did not perform as well. Differences in expectations were apparent in the math class, the writing class, and the literature study. The math class taught by Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley was filled with the students that performed at a high level on their multiplication and division pre-assessment. The

students should have been able to attain a high level of understanding of the content.

However, the teachers did not focus on appropriate input, or content, for the students. Instead, the teachers focused on procedural statements. Literature argues that effective teachers clearly establish routines and procedures early in the school year to provide student ownership without the need for teacher intervention (Berliner, 2004; Topping & Ferguson, 2005). The teachers attempted to establish routines in the classroom but were unable to maintain the expectations. Mrs. Bennett did not establish expectations with her students during writing and focused on procedural statements instead of content related statements during instruction. On the other hand, Mrs. Adams was clear and consistent with her expectations of the students during the literature study and was able to focus on the content instead of procedural statements.

Appropriate content and lessons for the varying levels are students were evident when students were able to participate in authentic learning experiences. All participants enjoyed being surrounded with gifted students like themselves. Henry asserted that he “liked the choice. I get to share with others. I can teach others about Scratch.” Shaunessy, McHatton, Hughes, Brice, & Ratliff (2007) found gifted students reported being pleased with their gifted education courses when they were surrounded by other gifted students, given challenging tasks, and when teachers placed high expectations on them. Maya shared that “Mrs. Finley lets us do what we want. I can come up with my own project idea and I can work on whatever. It is a passion project.” Gabriela is also working on a passion project with Mrs. Adams. In her classroom, it is called a personal learning project. “She [Mrs. Adams] has us working in google on our project. We have a slide for each deadline and she even writes notes and questions to us in google.” When working on

these projects, Mrs. Adams communicated online with the students in order to “talk” with each student. This allowed her to assist students in the classroom as they were working, since she had checked their google accounts the prior evening. Mrs. Finley and Mrs. Adams provided their students with authentic learning experiences, with varying expectations for the end product. In the end, Maya did not complete her project, while Gabriela did.

Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley both provided the opportunity for students to work on a project that interested them. However, the implementation of the project was addressed differently in the two classrooms. Mrs. Adams built a generic google slide template for all the students with questions and statements to guide and organize their thinking. On the other hand, Mrs. Finley did not provide a template for the students and the directions were relatively vague. Providing a framework for learning helped guide the students to complete tasks with purpose. In a study completed by Rubie-Davies (2007), she observed participants twice in an academic year during reading. Rubie-Davies (2007) indicated that high-expectation teachers constructed a framework for student learning by providing the students with clear explanations and linking new concepts to prior learning. Similarly, Mrs. Adams engaged the students with asking about their prior knowledge of the topics and outlined the lesson with a framework to guide the students. She also provided regular verbal feedback and responded through comments on their google slide presentation. Mrs. Finley engaged the students with the opportunity to work on an interest based project, but did not provide a framework or organizational tool to guide the students.

In summary, observations and conversations with students demonstrated the importance of shared decision making in the classroom community. From the lens of Social Learning Theory, the locus of control is sensitive to past experience as well as to the present social context (Daniels & Guppy, 1992). Locus of control is defined as one's perception, in a given social context of the degree to which behavioral outcomes are due to internal or external forces outside of one's control. In this case, when students are given the opportunity to collaborate and contribute to the classroom expectations and norm setting in the classroom, they experience a more positive classroom environment. The findings demonstrate the importance of shared decision making and the opportunity for students to share in the decision making for content and lessons implemented in the classroom.

Interactive relationships. The social classroom environment is shaped by the classroom climate and the interactions among the teachers and students. In this study, interactive relationships is defined as the social interaction between teachers and students, the environment, and individuals. The quality and quantity of these relationships affect the expectations for academic success in the classroom.

Finding 5 demonstrates that interactive relationships are dependent on the level of teacher support and promotion of social interaction among the classroom community. Teacher support refers to the students' perceptions that their teachers care about them, and value and establish personal relationships with them (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Goodenow, 1993). From the lens of Social Learning Theory, teacher support plays a role in how social influences impact the beliefs and actions of individual members of society. These influences include how the views of a person's social peers may impact an

individual's beliefs and actions. Rotter (1954) focused on behavior potential and stated that behaviors are based on two things: the desirability of outcomes of the behavior and the supposed probability that the behavior will result in a desirable outcome. Different behaviors will be observed in different situations, depending on the perceived values of others in that situation and the assumed desired outcomes. This demonstrates why the same person may act differently in two different situations given the context.

Teacher support. The data suggest it was important to teachers to create a positive classroom environment. A positive classroom environment thrived on support from the classroom teachers. Classroom environment is a reflection of the warm and caring relationships that the students have with their teacher and peers. The more positive the relationships, the more emotionally supportive the classroom appeared. The classroom climate partly depends on the expectations that the teachers communicate with the students. Weinstein and McKnown (1998) suggested that when teachers create a climate that promotes challenging learning experiences and clear learning goals, students respond with high intrinsic motivation and determination to be successful in their learning. Ethan demonstrated more motivation to complete a task when he was challenged and engaged in the classroom. He seemed more invested in the class when the teacher demonstrated engagement and fostered a caring environment.

Interactions between students and relationships with students varied based on the teacher. Mrs. Adams frequently encouraged the efforts made by the students and appeared engaged with the students and their learning. She gave compliments to the class as whole and more personalized comments to individual students. The students perceived her compliments and engagement as genuine and honest. Gabriela enjoyed spending time

with Mrs. Adams because she could be herself and not worry about how others were acting around her. Mrs. Adams “made kids follow the rules. I do not have the ‘ick’ feeling in my stomach because she knows that I get upset when others are not following the rules.” Similarly, Maya said,

We had talked about the rules in class. She had modeled what we were supposed to do during group work. She said that we needed to assign jobs to all the members of the team. There is a list of jobs on the board over there. One team member wasn’t doing their job. She helped us talk to him. I wasn’t worried about him not following the rules. Mrs. Adams helped us with it. I wasn’t worried about not getting our work done.

The participants above attributed their comfort level to the established relationship with Mrs. Adams. The students were encouraged to work together and help each other when needed. Mistakes occurred in the classroom, but neither the teacher nor the students viewed the mistakes as negative. The teacher would rephrase or explain the concept in a different manner when a student or group of students did not understand a concept. Many times Mrs. Adams would be monitoring the large group and she would notice students struggling with the concept. She would bring them to the front of the room and sit on the floor and try to teach them in a different way. She can often be heard saying, “We are working out this problem together here on the carpet. If you are struggling with this problem too, feel free to join us!” The students did not perceive this as a punishment; instead, they willingly went for more help and joined in. The students did not appear embarrassed when they made a mistake; they viewed mistakes as part of

the learning process. Mrs. Adams established relationships with her students that promoted learning and provided support for the students.

Mrs. Finley interacted with the students in a different manner. The atmosphere would begin as positive and turn into a more negative atmosphere as the lesson and day went on. Most of her lessons began with a long explanation of what was going to be taught that day. The students appeared disinterested and did not seem to listen. Many of the students played with pencils or other tools in the classroom while she taught or explained an assignment. Students required directions and explanations to be repeated several times before getting to work on an assignment. Maya, a student that usually follows all directions and tries her hardest, even began acting in a different manner. In her first interview, Maya stated, “They [my teachers] expect me to try my best and not give up and have a growth mindset.” Even though Maya understood that her teachers wanted her to try her best, she was observed on different occasions not completing her work to the best of her ability and giving up when a task was difficult when she was working under the direction of Mrs. Finley. This teacher did not take opportunities to work with students that were struggling or confused. She would often check their work and tell them it was incorrect, but did not offer support or any feedback that was helpful to the student. The teacher appeared to have high expectations of the students, but had not supported the students to meet those expectations. The teacher used a very loud voice and often yelled at the students when they were doing something she did not like. Three of the participants recalled scenarios when the teacher’s yelling was upsetting to them. While none of them mentioned the teacher being upset with them personally, they all revealed that it made them uncomfortable and caused them to feel stressed. Ashley did

not like when Mrs. Finley yelled and preferred when she “got our attention first then gave the direction, instead of yelling the directions at us.”

Mrs. Bennett focused more on the classroom appearance rather than supporting the needs of the students. Mrs. Bennett’s classroom was extremely neat and tidy. This classroom had nine tables that were evenly spaced around the room. Each table had a basket for materials and another color coordinated basket for books. The teacher spent a fair amount of time tidying the classroom and making sure all materials were put away correctly. Less of her time was spent interacting with the students. During math lessons, which were taught in Mrs. Finley’s classroom space, Mrs. Bennett would stand at the front of the room while Mrs. Finley taught. Often, Mrs. Bennett would leave the classroom for a few minutes to complete an unnecessary task (getting her cell phone, making a copy, checking her email at her desk in her classroom). When Mrs. Bennett taught in her space, she also appeared disengaged with the students and did not make an effort to get to know the students. When opportunities arose to connect with the students, she would talk about herself. Once, after reading a story about a boy winning the science fair, she asked the students what awards or trophies they had received. Before giving them the opportunity to share, she listed a number of trophies she earned when she was younger. Students eagerly raised their hands wanting to share their ideas. When one student mentioned his trophies from chess, she stopped him and told him that was not a sport. Quickly, the raised hands dropped in the classroom because many of the gifted second-graders participate in chess. Mrs. Finley was not invested in establishing an interactive relationship with the students. She did not ask the students very many questions and taught in an authoritative manner rather than in a facilitator role. “When I

ask you to be quiet, you should be quiet” and having the students work in silence were common with this teacher.

When asked about establishing and building relationships with second-graders, Mrs. Adams said,

It is my goal by the end of the first day to know every student’s name in my homeroom. By the end of the first week, really, the first three days, I want to know all the names of the students in the grade level. I think it builds that level of trust and caring with the students right away. I need to get them to trust me because they are going to be a part of our classroom for the entire year. I want to set them up to be successful.

The supportive relationships were not limited to the interactions between teacher and student. Teacher support also occurred among the teachers. Mrs. Bennett was struggling to keep her grades updated in the online gradebook. Mrs. Finley and Mrs. Adams took all her students for half the day, allowing Mrs. Bennett the opportunity to enter more grades. Mrs. Finley and Mrs. Adams also made sure to plan, prepare, and model lessons that Mrs. Bennett was able to replicate in her own classroom. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley would both ask for assistance when dealing with an upset parent or situation they were unable to solve on their own. One example of this sharing was when Mrs. Adams asked Mrs. Finley for advice with a student she was struggling with during the literature study. This student was shouting out, making inappropriate jokes, and not completing his work. The discussion between the two teachers built a stronger level of trust between the two teachers and with the student. While students were not always

aware of the support the teachers provided for each other, the students benefited from the interactive relationships between the teachers.

Finding 6 claims that individual teachers promote mutual respect and contribute to students' feelings of safety and comfort in the classroom. Students feel less anxiety and are willing to make mistakes when they perceive that the teacher respects and values them.

Mutual respect. A focus on mutual respect in the classroom involves the perception that teachers expect all students to value each other and contribute to the class as a whole. Students are expected to treat each other respectfully and help others when needed. Classroom environments that are perceived to be respectful are likely to be classrooms that are accepting of mistakes and focus on challenging the students.

Teacher modeling positive behaviors and expectations are a key component of building a positive environment. Mrs. Adams has an easy-going attitude and it appears to encourage the students to act in the same manner. She demands they treat her and each other with respect. Connor misbehaves and is rude to another student in the classroom. Instead of addressing Connor's behavior in front of the entire classroom, Mrs. Adams pulls him aside and speaks with him individually. Connor apologizes to the student and they get back to work easily. Teachers need to be conscious of the words they share with students and the way their non-verbal behaviors are perceived by students. During a conversation with Connor, he was asked about his perceptions of his experiences in class. He appreciated that he was not embarrassed with "discipline in front of all his friends" and "it was easy to apologize and move on." Her calm demeanor with the students

provides a calm and engaging atmosphere in the classroom. Connor perceived Mrs. Adams as having a good “sense of humor” and “works harder for teachers like that.”

All three teachers communicated their behavioral expectations to the students. The classrooms all have posters outlining the basic behavior expectations, which are communicated to the students at the beginning of the school year. These expectations are posted in the classrooms, on the grade level website, and displayed in the school handbook. These are the general guidelines and expectations for the classroom. While the words may be the same, they are interpreted by the teachers differently. One expectation for behavior is attentive listening. However, attentive listening for one teacher is sitting straight and looking at the speaker. Another teacher may interpret attentive listening to be asking or answering questions. Inconsistency in definition and application of the expectations causes uncertainty with the students.

One of the best ways to help students meet the rigorous academic expectations set forth in a gifted education classroom is to set high expectations for behavior. Rotter (1954) suggested that the outcome of the behavior influences the motivation to engage in the behavior. When clear and consistent behavior expectations occur, the students understand what is expected of them and engage appropriately, which gives them confidence. The behavior is reinforced with positive outcomes, which encourages the students to repeat the behavior. When mutual respect is fostered in the classrooms, students monitor themselves and take ownership of their behavior and their learning.

Social-emotional climate. Mutual respect is fostered through a positive social-emotional climate in the classroom. Social-emotional climate is defined as a warm atmosphere that fosters mutual respect and choice (Mitzel, Rabinowitz, & Conrad, 1953).

The socioemotional mood created by the person holding the expectation is referred to as the climate. Frequently, teachers communicate the climate to students nonverbally.

Climate for high expectation students offers a warmer environment with more eye contact, smiling, and recognition than a climate for a low expectation student. A low expectation student receives less eye contact and less positive non-verbal reinforcement.

Several teacher expectation researchers (Rosenthal, 1991; Rubie-Davies, 2006; Weinstein, 2002) cite the socioemotional climate of the classroom as being important to promoting learning.

The socioemotional mood of the classroom begins with the held expectation of the teacher. Ethan, a very active and loud student, demonstrates excitement when learning. He has a tendency to shout out answers, does not wait to be called on, and is often moving around the classroom. He moves quickly and is reminded to walk through the classrooms by the teachers. Ethan admitted to “getting a lot of warnings from the teachers, [other students] do not get as many warnings.” He does receive different feedback from different teachers. Mrs. Bennett has a habit of ignoring Ethan’s questions and overlooks his impulsivity. If a question is asked of the group, Ethan is one of the very first students to raise his hand. He often jumps out of his seat, stands up, and shakes his arm in the air, while loudly stating, “I know! I know!” Mrs. Finley will reprimand Ethan and tell him to “Sit down! Raise your hand!” and “Enough!” Ethan then disengages with the lesson, his behavior escalates, and he moves closer to the teacher to raise his hand in her face. This confirms his teachers expectations and endorses a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ethan repeats this same behavior with Mrs. Adams. She takes a different approach and responds differently. “I would love to hear what you think when you can sit quietly and

raise your hand appropriately” and “I see you are very excited!” These words do not disengage Ethan and he continues with the lesson.

Teacher expectations are communicated to students through the learning experiences, but also through the verbal and non-verbal behaviors of teachers as they interact with the group of students (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Mrs. Adams smiles often at students and looks directly at the student she is talking with, showing a genuine interest in that student. She understands the individual needs of the students and changes assignments or level of support when necessary. She displays empathy when a student is having a hard day and asks the child if “she needs a snack or do you need a break” and she offers to solve problems collaboratively with the students. While she has rules and norms in her classroom, she is flexible in her thinking and allows the students to relax in order to create the best social-emotional climate in her classroom. Participants that display anxious behaviors prefer to be in the learning environment with Mrs. Adams. Henry mentioned, “I like teachers with a calm tone. It is easier for me to work.” Mrs. Adams has a calm tone the majority of the time with the students and the students working in her space often display that same calmness and focus on their work. Her calm demeanor and her sense of humor make the students feel comfortable around her. Mrs. Adams fosters a warm social-emotional climate while creating strong relationships with her students.

Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and tone of voice. Mrs. Bennett’s facial expression, posture, and tone of voice are often strained and disinterested. Mrs. Bennett has rules and norms in her classroom and seems unwilling to change the rule when needed. When students are struggling with

a concept or assignment, she either does not notice or ignores the lack of understanding. The flexibility to change a lesson or assignment when needed does not occur with Mrs. Bennett. She wants to keep going in the lesson because that “was written down and on the plan for the day.” Mrs. Bennett does wander around the periphery of the classroom, but does not engage with the students. Instead, she straightens the classroom, stacks papers, and cleans up bookshelves as she walks around. The students will be working on an assignment and she will mention to the class how “they do not put the books back correctly” and “need to pick up after themselves.” When participants work in the classroom with this teacher, they spend less time on their assignments and more time silent reading. Mrs. Bennett prefers for the classroom to be silent, with very little interaction between the students. The quiet classroom and individualized work model conflicts with the students’ concept of what the classroom should be like. “I know I should pay attention. Not play with my friends, not talk. But, I can talk when I am in a group.” Students enjoy collaboration and working together in the classroom. “I like that we get to build and do engineering a lot. The builds relate to what we are learning. That stuff is hard, but the teachers just help us keep trying.” The social-emotional climate in Mrs. Bennett’s classroom did not foster communication, collaboration, or relationships.

Overall, Mrs. Bennett appeared disinterested in the students in the grade level. When Mrs. Bennett was co-teaching with Mrs. Finley, she would often look at the students with an unexpressive expression and appear disinterested. At the same time, Mrs. Finley was animated in her facial expression and showed interest in the lesson and the students. Mrs. Finley genuinely seemed excited about the lesson and sharing it with the students. Mrs. Finley would joke around with students while Mrs. Bennett would

engage with her cell phone and walk around the outside of the classroom. Ethan's perception was that "my teacher doesn't like me because I sometimes mess around in class. But, mostly I am good." Mrs. Bennett does not smile at Ethan or offer words of praise towards him. When pressed for further clarification he discussed his perceptions. "Mrs. Adams likes me", "she listens to me" and "she thinks I am kind." Ethan enjoyed class more when he was with Mrs. Adams and appeared to have a more positive relationship with her. The students perceived Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Finley as having a warm social-emotional climate, while they believed Mrs. Bennett was disinterested in creating this type of climate.

The teachers all communicate expectations nonverbally through their body placement in the classroom. Mrs. Adams spends time walking around the classroom, sitting next to students at a table or even the floor, and constantly monitoring the students. Mrs. Bennett spends a lot of her time sitting in a chair at the front of the classroom or standing in the front of the classroom. She makes her way around the classroom, but usually only helps certain students. Mrs. Finley spends a lot of class time at the front of the classroom when teaching and when students are working she is on her computer with her back to the students. She would answer emails and grade assignments while the students worked. As the noise level got louder and louder, Mrs. Finley would react with yelling and the students would quiet down for a short period of time. The room would get noisy and the students would get yelled at again. Henry stated that "I don't like it when she yells, but the class does get really noisy." Staying in one spot in the classroom or ignoring some students displayed a disinterest in the students. When working on projects, students would seek out teachers that were actively engaged in the

classroom. While working on an American Symbol project in his homeroom class, Ethan would constantly seek out Mrs. Adams two classrooms away. “I knew she would help me. I needed something cut with the box cutter.” Students perceived the lack of interest from the teacher as unwillingness to help. Near the end of the study, the students shared their perceptions of being ignored with the team of teachers. Mrs. Finley changed the location of her desk, allowing her to interact with the students easily. The simple change in the classroom improved the climate of that specific classroom.

In summary, the social classroom environment involves teacher support and mutual respect. Classrooms with a positive social classroom environment foster the students’ sense of enjoyment, enthusiasm, and respect towards others (Wentzel, 2010). Teacher support refers to the students’ perception that their teacher cares about them and wants to help them learn. When the students perceive their teachers as highly supportive and have positive relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to be engaged in school (McNeely & Falci, 2004). Rotter (1954) explained that goals are inferred from the directional aspect of behavior which is also inferred from the impact of reinforcing conditions on that behavior. Students that receive reinforcements from their experience or perception that an event has occurred provides value to the student. “That is, an event that has occurred that is pleasant or unpleasant or that the subject expects will lead to a pleasant or unpleasant future event” (p. 112). The promotion of mutual respect, which is a pleasant event, within the classroom is beneficial to the gifted second-graders social, emotional, and cognitive functioning in the classroom.

Research Question #2 Findings

The first research question findings center on the students' responses to varying teacher expectations and the perceptions the students had about their teachers' expectations. The second question focuses more on how expectations impact learning. The question is, *how do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted second-graders?* Teachers' expectations of the students influence these decisions and may result in differing opportunities for students to learn. Depending on the teachers' beliefs about students, they form expectations of the students, and these expectations influence beliefs and instructional practices for their students. The expectations that the teacher forms leads them to plan differing learning opportunities for their students. These learning opportunities depend on what the teacher believes to be important for those students. For example, teachers plan group projects for students that are high-achieving and more direct instruction and repetitive work for students that are believed to be lower achievers. Based on what the teachers have planned for student learning, they will implement these experiences based on their expectations of the students. Teacher expectation researchers argue that when teachers underestimate students' current achievement level; they are likely to plan lower level learning opportunities for those students (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). This directly effects how much the students learn, because these differential learning opportunities accrue over time (Rubie-Davies, 2014).

Finding 7 claims that learning opportunities vary based on the expectations the teachers have for the student or group of students. When teachers had lower expectations for a group of students, the instructional methods were more teacher driven. When

teachers had high expectations for students, the instructional methods were student-centered.

Learning opportunities. Learning opportunities were different, based on the group of students and the teachers working with group. The math groups were built based on ability which resulted in two classes: one high and one low. Integrated Studies groups were also built based on ability, placed into four groups: low, medium low, medium high, and high. Grouping students by ability can affect learning because often teachers perceive all members of a group as equivalent, even when there are variations in that group. Teachers' expectations are influenced by group placement. For example, teachers working with high achieving students often do not monitor the students and adjust the instruction when applicable to the students.

The math class with all six of the participants was heavily teacher driven instead of student directed. During all the observations, the majority of the time was spent with the teachers talking. Either they were going over directions, reviewing directions, or answering questions. The expectation at this school is for limited amounts of direct instruction, with an emphasis on project-based learning. Instead, the students were given worksheets to complete, some games to play, and completed one project at the end of the unit. The other math class with none of the study's participants was student directed with frequent use of manipulatives, hands-on activities, projects, and small pull-out groups for extra guidance. During informal conversations with Ashley and Gabriela, they were asked about what they thought about their math class. "I thought, at the beginning of the quarter that I was in the high group. But now, I am not sure that it is." When prodded for more information, "I saw that you guys [the other math class] were doing harder math

problems. I think that means that is the harder math class.” The students perceived their math class to be easier than the other math class, which was incorrect. The students were placed in this math class based on their score from the pre-assessment for multiplication and division. Based on the scores, this group was the top half of the students in the grade level. Ashley believed she was “not good at math, and sometimes I might get stressed with my math homework at home. I don’t know what I am doing and my dad has to help me.” The pair of teachers had made the instructional decision to incorporate more direct instruction lessons instead of project based learning. This decision was based on the need to appease one teacher, instead of meeting the needs of the students. During a conversation with Mrs. Finley, she shared how Mrs. Bennett was struggling with the math class.

She is struggling with this large group of students. She struggles when the group is too noisy and she prefers direct instruction. Mrs. Bennett is having a hard time with our model and I am trying to help model it for her. But, she is so uncomfortable and I am trying to make it easier on her and on myself. To make it easier on her, I found these lessons online that provide more guidance and we are using them in a more direct way.

The learning opportunity was being affected by the decisions made by the teachers. Instead of focusing on what the students needed for their math instruction, the decision was made to make a teacher more comfortable in the setting. In turn, the students were not expected to perform to the highest of their ability.

When Connor was asked about math class, he stated, “I already know a lot of what they are teaching me. I could be doing something else. Something I do not know

already.” Connor was also refusing to complete his work in class and many assignments went unfinished. He was not turning in his assignments, yet; the gradebook showed differently. During the same quarter, he took a quiz and earned a 57% and took a post assessment and earned a 72%. His grade in the gradebook was a 95% at the end of the quarter. Connor did not demonstrate growth or learning during the quarter in math. He frequently complained about math, refused to complete his work, and performed poorly on assessments. He appeared disengaged during observed lessons and was not being held to a high expectation for learning. The learning opportunity provided to Connor and the other students in that math group were limited due to the instructional decisions made by the team of teachers.

Mrs. Adams taught the literature study with four different groups of students. The literature study was taught during the Integrated Studies time and the groups were separated into four levels: low, medium low, medium high, and high. Depending on the level of the students, the lessons were tailored to meet the needs of the students in that specific group. All the students were reading *The Revolutionary War: An Interactive History Adventure* but they were interacting differently with the text and their lessons were scaffolding based on what she knew the students needed. Throughout the text, the reader is required to make a choice on what to do. Depending on that choice, the reader will move to a different place in the book. The students worked in small groups to choose their path. The students would read the appropriate section and create a project to share with their peers about their journey. The lowest group needed more assistance and the text proved to be too difficult. Mrs. Adams tweaked the assignment in order to focus on the reading together as a group and they all had to choose the Patriot Path. She believed

that all students should receive a challenging and appropriate education at their level. At the same time, she saw too many students in that group struggling with the decoding and encoding of the words and she knew the students could not comprehend what was being read. Mrs. Adams still provided the same activity for that group of students, but used more a more direct instruction approach with them. The purpose of the assignment was not forgotten, but the path to get there looked a little different, yet; the instruction was not at a lower academic level. All four groups working with Mrs. Adams during their literature study time were given the same overall goal and learning opportunity. The lessons were scaffolded based on the needs of the students, while still being held to a high expectation.

Students do not have to consent to their teachers' expectations, but when they do, a self-fulfilling prophecy effect has occurred. When students accept their teachers' expectations and the learning opportunities are at a specific level, the students will achieve at the expected level (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Teacher perceptions of students have proven perceptual bias and self-fulfilling prophecy influencing the academic performance of students (Jussim and Eccles, 1992; Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998). These authors reported that teachers were often inaccurate in their perceptions of the students who displayed more effort on their homework. This perceived effort had effect on the students' grades. Teachers assumed the high-achieving students worked harder and gave them higher grades than they deserved. These students were given standardized tests and the students did not score as highly on the standardized test as their in class grades indicated they should.

As mentioned previously, all the participants in the study were placed with Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley for math based on a pre-assessment in multiplication and division. The participants already had a baseline knowledge of multiplication and division and were ready to be pushed to the next level. Adding to the problem was the fact that the teachers were not giving grades based on achievement in the classroom, rather assigning grades without evidence to support their claims. Students in the math class were performing well according to the grade book, almost every student in the class had a 95% or higher in the gradebook. Two students were below 95%, one with a 93% and the other at a 90%. All students were earning A's, according to the gradebook. Interestingly, about a month into the class, the teachers gave their math students a standardized math assessment. Of that math class, 20 of the students failed the assessment (20/49 students). Of the participants in this study, two out of the six failed. Similar to research (Jussim and Eccles, 1992; Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998) the teachers gave higher grades than the students deserved. Mrs. Finley wanted to reteach and test them again. "I just don't understand why they did not perform. They must have made silly mistakes." The solution for this team of teachers was to reteach the material and give the test again. For the following two days after that assessment, the math group was split into two groups: the group that failed the test and the group that passed. The group that passed played math games in one classroom with Mrs. Bennett, with four of the six participants in this group. The group that failed was placed in the other classroom and were retaught by Mrs. Finley. Two of the six participants were a part of this classroom. For two math lessons, the students went over the exact questions that were on the test. Mrs. Finley read the question and asked the students to solve the problem in their

notebook. Then the teacher modeled the thinking with the answer on the board for all the students to copy. On the third day with this group of students, the students retook the test again. The questions were the same ones from the first test, which were also the same questions that were practiced in class. Twenty students retook the assessment and this time twelve students passed. Of the two participants that failed the first time, one failed the test again and the other earned a perfect score. The teachers believed these students were high achievers and they earned grades on classwork that was higher than what they should have earned. The same students did not perform as would be expected on a standardized assessment. The teachers demonstrated perceptual bias when working with this group of math students.

In summary, the learning opportunities for the students vary based on the expectations held by the teachers. In this study, when teachers have high expectations for the students, the opportunities are more student centered. Conversely, when teachers have lower expectations for the students, the learning opportunities are more teacher driven, rather than student centered. In accordance with Rotter's Social Learning Theory (Rotter, 1954; Rotter et al., 1972), there was one psychological situation for the gifted students which included having their needs and expectancies more likely to be met within the school environment. Students whose needs were met within the classroom are more likely to achieve at a higher and more productive level.

Finding 8 demonstrates that classroom learning is influenced by the academic self-concept of the student. The interactions that students have with their teachers and peers are highly influential in students forming personal beliefs about their academic capabilities (Rubie-Davies, 2015). McInerney, Cheng, Mok, & Lam, (2012) stated there

was a relationship between self-concept and achievement. When students believe they do well in mathematics, they do well in mathematics, and when the student performs well, their mathematics self-concept tends to be high.

Interestingly, all of the participants were placed in the highest math class based on a pre-assessment given at the beginning of the multiplication and division unit. Three of the six participants liked math and three mentioned they did not like math. The participants that enjoyed math found math “easy” and mentioned “getting the work done quickly.” Although, Henry stated that, “I already know a lot of what we are doing in math. I could be spending my time learning something new.” The three participants that stated a dislike of math also mentioned being “bad” at math and maintained a poor academic self-concept. Connor stated,

I’m not that good at math. It is hard for me. Other people can solve the problem right away. Like the teacher wrote $1,467 + 89$ on the board and asked what the answer was. Some people can adjust their brain to think in like the hardest ways and get the answer correct.

Connor mistakenly believed he was bad at math because he associated high speed with being good at math. He was one of the students that performed poorly on the standardized assessment while receiving high grades in the gradebook. When asked about why students felt they were bad at math, Gabriela and Ashley both shared their lack of confidence and speed when given a mathematical task. Gabriela mentioned not wanting to ask the teacher questions, “Because I am gifted, I shouldn’t have to ask questions. I should just get it, you know?” While Ashley stated, “Other kids are answering questions really fast and I haven’t even figured out the answer yet.” Even though these students

were placed in a high math group, they perceived themselves as not being at the highest level. Their own mathematical self-concept was causing them to perform at a lower level in class.

At the same time, students maintained a high academic self-confidence during their literature study. While all the groups were learning the same concepts, the lessons were tailored for each group. The participants in this study were scattered throughout the four groups, based on their DIBELS assessment from the beginning of the year. The participants did not perceive the groups to be different from each other. Gabriela mentioned that all groups were reading the same book and “projects were decided by the kids”. While having a discussion on the playground with several participants, Henry shared his perceptions about the literature study:

I really like this book. I really do not like reading that much, especially when it is not my usual books. Mrs. Adams has made the book really exciting. She started with reading some of it aloud to us and I really wanted to read more. I have chosen a Patriot Path, but I also went and read the other paths because I wanted to know the different ways the story could end. I am a good reader and found a different book that I like.

Ashley described her reading self-concept in the following way,

I do like reading and it is easy for me. I like all kinds of books. Mrs. Adams is making us read the same book, but it is exciting because there are many different paths for us to take and they are not the same. I like seeing what the other groups are doing. It helps me think of different ways to share my reading with the group.

These statements showcase how the students maintain a high reading self-concept. The interactions the students had with their teachers and their peers influenced their own personal beliefs about their academic capabilities.

In summary, expectations are a normal part of a classroom and they result in the teacher forming normative expectations of achievement for the class. The above quotations demonstrated that classroom learning was influenced by the academic self-concept of the student. Similarly, Rotter's (1954) social learning approach equates expectancy with self-concept. For example, "everytime we mention the word 'expectancy' since expectancy always deals with a person's expectancy of the outcome of his own behavior, we might put into parentheses 'self-concept'" (p. 240). The normative expectations formed by the teacher may influence the activities and learning opportunities for the students (Rubie-Davies, 2015). The type of activity that occurred within the classrooms varied. When the teacher took on a more authoritative teaching style, the activities were more teacher driven and uninteresting in nature. These activities were led by the teacher at the front of the classroom with space separating the teacher from the student. When the teacher was more of a facilitator in the classroom and integrated herself into the classroom, the activities were more student driven and innovative. Mrs. Bennett spent most of her teaching time with direct instruction, worksheets, and little interaction between herself and the students. Mrs. Finley directed more of her lessons and began incorporating more hands-on and group activities. Mrs. Adams would use direct instruction when necessary, but more of her teaching reflected cooperative learning and active learning. Teachers should be flexible in their lessons, while maintaining the appropriate level of rigor to the learning objectives.

Finding 9 claims that student behavior changes based on the expectations set by the teacher. The teachers established their own expectations for the students and demonstrated either high or low class-level expectations. Rubie-Davies (2006) completed a study that tracked the self-perception outcome of students that had high or low class-level expectations. She found by the end of the school year, statistically significant differences were found in academics due to a decline in the self-perceptions of students with low-expectation teachers.

At the conclusion of the study, I asked the participants for their feedback on the varying expectations of their teachers. I asked them to explain how the expectations impacted their learning, directly addressing the second research question in this study. Maya described her experience in the following way,

I thought the rules were the same with all the teachers. But they really aren't. I knew that I had to try my best all the time when I was with Mrs. Adams. Mrs. Finley might make me try by best in class, but not all the time. In math, I wasn't trying my best because I didn't think it mattered. Mrs. Bennett would just give me the answers, so I was like, why try my best?

Connor shared that he “better understands that I need to do my best during reading but not during math.” He is able to “play with my friends during math class but not in reading.” While reviewing the lessons, Connor demonstrated varying behavior based on the teacher. When he was with Mrs. Adams, he behaved appropriately and during math with Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Finley, he demonstrated off-task behaviors. Connor shared that he “behaved when he had to and goofed around when he wouldn't get in trouble.”

All six participants shared experiences of their differing behavior with different teachers. Rotter (1954) viewed behavior as ever changing. He believed that a person's thinking or a change in the environment can impact behavior. Rotter concluded that in order to understand behavior, it is necessary to look at the individual and their experiences and the surrounding environment. Similar to the research, participants changed behaviors based on the environment. For example, Gabriela, shared that, "I was able to talk to my friends during math class some of the time." She also shared that talking was allowed in math class as "long as I whispered quietly and didn't distract others." While in her literature study, she did talk to her team when working on their summary, but "didn't dare talk during the presentations because I didn't want to get in trouble." Henry discussed his behavior with the teachers as well,

I was goofing around during reading one day. Mrs. Adams asked me to stop talking. I did only because I did not want her to email my mom. I stopped messing around and got my work done. This one time in math, Mrs. Finley told me to stop goofing around with the deck of cards. I kept playing with the cards. I knew she wouldn't email my mom.

The statements from the participants demonstrate their perceptions of their teachers' expectations. The students adjust their behavior based on the teacher and the teacher's expectations.

In summary, students thrive in an environment that encourages high expectations. The high expectations of students work best when there is a shared vision amongst the teachers. When students experience classroom environments where expectations differ, the students are confused and unsure of what to expect. According to Social Learning

Theory (Rotter, 1954), behavior is a function of learning that occurs in social interactions and stems from the learned expectancies for attaining what is valued. In this situation, students thrive when they are in a situation of high expectations and shared vision.

Without the shared vision the students might meet the minimum expectations held at that setting. However, students do not perform consistent to the expectations unless the same expectations are reinforced in varied settings.

Summary

Teachers with low expectations for their students establish a climate of failure, but teachers that value their students' abilities create a climate of success. Teachers need to establish high expectations with all their students. Students achieve more when their teachers have purposeful and clear expectations. When an assignment is difficult for a student, tell them, "This might be hard, but I know you can do this!" If the teacher genuinely believes that the students cannot perform at an appropriate level, postpone the assignment or assessment and re-teach the material.

High expectations does not mean the same expectations for all students. Expectations are relative to each individual student. High expectations are beliefs that students will progress past where they previously were (Rubie-Davies, 2015). At the same time, teachers need to be careful to not lower the expectations when students do not meet the set expectation. Teachers might infer from the students' behaviors that the student lacks motivation. When teachers allow students to meet a minimum expectation and praise the minimal level, the teacher underestimates the student. Instead, teachers need to demand high expectations through their verbal and nonverbal communication,

provide valuable and meaningful feedback, and allow students to thrive in the learning environment.

Teachers form expectations for student performance and treat students differently based on those expectations. These expectations can cause teachers to differentiate their behavior towards individual students. Teachers may set lower expectations for some of the students, provide limited feedback, and allow less wait time for answering. When these behaviors occur repeatedly can negatively impact students' performance in the classroom. While teachers rarely intend to set lower expectations, teachers do need to be aware of the consequences for their students. In order to establish a student-centered learning environment, teachers need to change their expectations and practice.

In order to change beliefs, it is necessary to change behaviors. Student voice can help implement change and improve the expectations that teachers have for their students. Voice is an expression of opinions and views on what matters most to an individual or a group of people; it is more than spoken words (Mitra, 2003). Student voice refers to how students play a role in their education as a result of their teachers becoming focused on what the students are saying about their experiences in the classroom. In order to change practice within classrooms, students need to voice their thoughts and opinions with their teachers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was to use an ethnographic approach to explore if gifted second-grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior. I hoped to uncover the perception of student voice in order to develop a deeper understanding of how student voice exists in the classroom and how it might impact instructional practices. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success?
2. How do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted second-graders?

In this chapter, I present a culminating discussion on this action research study, followed by a discussion of the findings of the study as they relate to relevant literature. Also included is a discussion of the potential implications for practice and research, suggestions for further research, and limitations of the study. Additionally, recommendations for teachers from the participants are included and the chapter closes with lessons learned and final summative comments.

Discussion

The underlying goal of the innovation was to provide a space where students could share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas, without fear of punishment from their teachers. Gabriela shared her feelings about the study in a final discussion in this way:

I like that I was able to tell you about my day. I could tell you the big things and the little things. It didn't matter if it was about something silly, like losing my eraser. When I shared with you how math class was going, I felt like you were listening. The other teachers listened too. Other kids were behaving in math class after we talked and I knew things were changing in our community.

Connor shared how differing teacher expectations influenced his learning and overall happiness in the classroom:

I liked talking about what the teachers expect of me. I didn't realize that I was acting differently in different classrooms with different teachers. I figured that I could do whatever I wanted when I was with Mrs. Bennett, sometimes I could do what I wanted with Mrs. Finley, and I always did what Mrs. Adams told me to do. You would think that I would be the happiest in a classroom where I could do what I wanted. The more we talked, I figured that I like knowing exactly what I should be doing. I am happier when the project is laid out for me and I don't have to guess at what I should be doing.

These quotes are important to understanding how students perceive the differing expectations of their teachers. This action research study demonstrates how gifted second-graders define and operationalize differing expectations in the classroom. The following section is organized by research question.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, *How do gifted second-graders perceive to understand and respond to the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success?*

Comments from the semi-structured interviews and observations completed throughout

the study indicate that gifted second-graders academic success was enhanced by a positive and structured classroom along with a caring relationship with the teacher. The discussions and observations demonstrated that the participants are engaged in the classroom when the teacher maintains a positive classroom environment. Consider this statement from a personal communication with Henry:

Mrs. Adams gets me. She knows that I am a quiet kid. I like worksheets. She even told my parents that I like worksheets at conferences! She is funny and tells funny stories about her family and kids. When I am with her, I know that I am supposed to sit and listen to directions and then I can talk during the build. She trusts me. I can get materials in the pod without her because she knows I put things back.

Or Ethan's statements during a personal conversation:

I know that her [Mrs. Bennett] birthday is on July 4th. She has told us a bunch of times that the fireworks are all for her. She doesn't know when my birthday is. She really doesn't know anything about me. Do you know how to do stop motion? Mrs. Finley does! She has asked to see my work and showed it to some other teachers. I am working on another project right now.

Gabriela added to the conversation:

I know that I have to try my best with Mrs. Adams. She makes me. If I don't try my best, she makes me fix it and we end up talking about the work. She makes suggestions on how to fix it or gives me extra time. Mrs. Bennett doesn't make me do my best. She will approve anything and not tell you anything about your work. Why bother? If she doesn't care, I don't either.

These quotes showcase how students respond differently to different teachers, due to the differing expectations. Researchers have shown teachers' expectations have greater effects on students (Rubie-Davies, 2007; Weinstein, 2002). Students' expectations of teachers can influence student attitudes about school. In this study, the participants' own academic self-concept was influenced by the differing expectations of the teachers. The participants in this study also felt a stronger connection with teachers when they were perceived as caring about them. The students also placed more significance on their relationship with the teacher. Similar to research by Muller, Katz, and Dance (1999), when the students perceived their teacher as caring, the students' expectations, achievement, and behavior improved. When students perceived their teacher to be caring, the students invested more in their own academic efforts.

At the beginning of the study, students were unaware of the differing expectations surrounding their learning. In spite of the varying expectations of their teachers for their academic success, the participants in this study continued to navigate through the differing expectations in the second-grade community. In agreement with the literature, the participants met the set expectations provided by the teacher. When the teacher held high expectations, the students met those expectations. Conversely, when a teacher held low expectations, the students met those expectations.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked, *How do the varying expectations of teachers' impact the classroom learning of gifted second-graders?* The findings of this study establish that learning opportunities vary based on the expectations of the teacher. Through the

classroom observations, interviews, and personal conversations, the participants communicated their preferences for learning. During an early interview, Maya shared:

I like being in my homeroom classroom. I like how she organizes the morning work and stuff. I act differently with my homeroom teacher because she taught me all the rules. She expects me try my best all the time. When I am with a team, I have to follow the rules and make sure that everyone is being heard. Sometimes with the other teachers, I don't always follow the rules, not on purpose. I just don't know what to do all the time with all the teachers. I think I am trying my best and doing my best with my homeroom teacher.

Connor discussed how different opportunities in the classroom motivated him,

I really like doing activities and talking with my team during shared inquiry. I like hearing other people's ideas and seeing if it is the same or different from mine. I know during shared inquiry that there is no right or wrong answer. I just have to prove my ideas with evidence. I want school to be over when I don't like what is going on in the classroom. Like during math, I just want it to be over because I am bored.

These reflections support the theoretical framework of Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory strives to explain human behavior occurring in complex situations. The second-grade environment is a complex situation due to the nature of team teaching and differing expectations from the teachers. Social Learning Theory focuses on the interaction of people and the environment. A key component is that behavior is goal-directed and learned through interactions with others. As individuals develop and change, they tend to choose new views of behavior and create their own social learning. It is

possible to predict behavior based on the values and expectancies of the participant (Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972). The six participants in this study all demonstrated differing behaviors and levels of learning based on their interactions with the different teachers. And lastly, classroom learning is influenced by the student's academic self-concept. The majority of the participants referred to themselves as "strong readers" and "good at writing stories" but shared a different academic self-concept relating to mathematics. The influence of academic self-concept was described in the following quote from Gabriela,

I think I am just okay in math. My parents expect me to always do really well on my assignments and tests. If I get anything below a 95%, they ask me fix the work. I mean, what does it matter about the grade? I don't care about the grade. I just want to be good at math and understand it. Like fractions, they are confusing to me. Are we going to learn fractions? I hope we do because I know I am not good at them and will probably have to fix my work.

The thoughts expressed by Gabriela showcase her negative self-concept in mathematics, while the majority of the students thought of themselves as strong in reading and writing. These participants all respond differently to their teachers' expectations depending on the interactions between students and teachers and the different environment provided by the teachers. Similarly, the students in the study adjusted their behavior based on the expectations of a specific teacher. The classroom environment and the teacher actively contributed to maintain the expectations set forth in the classroom.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to explore if gifted second-grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference in their academic performance or classroom behavior. This study strived to bring into perspective students' understanding of their teachers' expectations, how it shapes the teacher-student relationship, and how findings can be used to inform a framework for learning and behavior in a gifted classroom. While researchers (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002; Mitra, 2004) have explored student voice from the perspective of the students, the gifted student perspective needs further research. Listening to student voice in the classroom can create a partnership between the teachers and students and promote change in the classroom (Fielding, 2004).

One implication for practice is the recognition of the importance of student voice in creating change in the classroom. Research in student voice initiatives illustrates that allowing students to share their voice can improve teachers' classroom practice (Cushman, 2000; Daniels, Kalman, & McCombs, 2001; Kincheloe, 2007). In this study, the participants named specific recommendations for the second grade teachers at Bella Vista Academy. The recommendations were shared with me during our final interviews and are listed here:

- 1) Keep the teachers the same and continue to build relationships with the other teachers.
- 2) Maintain the community space within the grade level and have the students continue to meet together in the specified space.
- 3) Allow students to learn above the expected grade level of third grade standards.

These recommendations display that the participants in this study recognize that there is a need for consistency amongst the grade level, a student-centered classroom

environment, and high expectations. Maya shared that “is better to work together than separately” and “four minds are better than one.” While Gabriela shared her preference for several teachers in her second-grade community,

Sometimes you don't want to the same thing every day. Nothing will be new.

Nothing will be exciting. It's like having a new spice in a recipe. It's true, we get a new spice with change. We get to expose our boundaries. Sometimes it is fun to add a new spice because some things are better when it is different and we get more ideas to work with.

The participants were able to express their thoughts about the grade level and appeared excited about changes made in the second-grade community throughout the study. As indicated by the literature, when teachers listen to student voice in classrooms, it improves students' morale. Creating an inclusive social learning environment in a gifted classroom requires teachers to build their classrooms around student voice to enhance the supportive and caring environment (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2012). For students to be an essential part of the social learning environment, they must actively engage in dialogue with their teachers and school administration.

A caring and social learning environment creates space for students to voice their thoughts and opinions that supports their learning. When the thoughts and opinions of the students are shared with teachers, it provides an opportunity for partnership between the students and teachers. This partnership leads to active participation in the classroom (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2012). When student voice is taken into consideration, students feel validated and valuable to their classroom community (Fielding, 2007). Student voice

empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Implications for Research

Research learned from this action research study points to additional areas of study. While this study helps to fill the need for an ethnographic approach to explore if gifted second-grade students perceive their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference on their classroom behavior and learning, other action research studies are certainly needed to support or refute the findings of this study. Further studies are also needed in other grade levels to provide a comprehensive body of literature.

Student perceptions of their classroom environment have strong influences for their adjustment in the classroom (Sakiz, Pape, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2012; Wang, 2012). Further, teachers are not always fully aware of how they impact students' perceptions of the classroom environment (Butler, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to examine both teacher and student perceptions in order to create a classroom environment that enhances the learning for the students.

Coleman (2011) claimed gifted children's lived experience in typical schools are "advanced academic development clashing with uninteresting, undemanding and slow-moving curriculum" (p. 382). Gifted students wait for others and remain unchallenged (Coleman, Micko, & Cross, 2015). However, the lived experience changes when gifted students attend schools designed for gifted students. In a gifted school, students tend to be in a more accepting environment. Coleman, Peine, Olthouse, & Romanoff (2009) completed a study in a school specialized in gifted and asked the students to respond to the prompt, "This school is like..." In the primary grades, students described the school

as fun and filled with games. Students in intermediate grades described “a wonderful chance to soar to new heights” (Coleman, et al., 2009, n.p.). Students in gifted settings expressed interest in a demanding and rigorous curriculum (Coleman, 2005). Similarly, students in this action research study described their school as fun and filled with design builds and projects. Students in the gifted second-grade community enjoyed being able to work with their peers on projects. Further research should be completed on the benefits of a gifted community of learners to support the need for a community of learners.

Without realizing it, teachers reveal expectations in learning opportunities provided. Teachers can perceive behaviors differently or set different expectations for different students. These differences in teacher behavior convey expectations to students, which can affect their own behavior that might hinder academic success. Teacher preparation is key and in order to combat the 5-10% of teachers whose perceptions of student ability keep them from providing an equitable and highly demanding education for all (Brophy, 1983). Teachers need to be aware of the potential impact of teacher expectations on student achievement and recognize inflexible perceptions among teachers.

Next Steps

Expanding teachers’ expectations for all students’ academic success is an essential aspect of creating a student-centered learning environment. Teachers need to understand how each student approaches learning and create an environment that responds to the needs of each student in the classroom. Through the conversations with students and observations of students working, teachers develop an understanding of the students and their preferred method of learning and personal interests. This provides

knowledge to the teacher to be able to select instructional approaches that meet the needs of each student in the classroom. It is important to examine other areas of the classroom that promotes the overall welfare of the students. Specifically, future research should focus on both academic and social classroom factors. This research should not be limited to gifted second-graders and should include all grade levels. In my setting, I would like to continue my research with my participants as they enter third grade. The teachers and the classroom environment in third grade is different from the second-grade environment and I want to examine how the students perceive their third-grade teachers' expectations. Ultimately, I would like to expand the research into all grade levels in the gifted setting.

To advance this research and provide a structure for future research studies, the next cycle of action research involves creating online discussions specifically for the gifted students at Bella Vista Gifted Academy. These online groups can utilize the Flipgrid format to share their thoughts and ideas with their peers and their teachers. The purpose of using Flipgrid is to allow the students the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and communicate with each other. The Flipgrid group will be set up by me but can be self-managed. The group can be shared with others of similar interests and continues the process of sharing information and improving the classroom environment. Currently, there are no structures in place on my campus for students to share their voice with others. Creating this online forum will allow students to create change in their learning environment.

Additionally, more information and research needs to be completed in order to make recommendations to teachers and staff from the students' perspective. At this time, few programs exist that emphasize strengthening student and teacher relationships while

raising teacher awareness of their own biases in order to develop higher expectations and change negative behaviors. Student-teacher relationships are necessary in order to create a classroom environment that enhances learning for all students. I would like to develop a program that utilizes student voice in order to foster teacher and student relationships. Teachers may have an understanding of their students, but this understanding and knowledge of the student would be strengthened by the addition of student voice. Using student voice, I would like to present their thoughts and ideas in an effort to improve the classroom environment.

Finally, gifted education faces critical challenges as the nation becomes increasingly more diverse. Increased diversity requires the need to change school practices, especially at our local level. We need to encourage and recruit more students of underrepresented populations into gifted programs. To combat this problem, an examination of the procedures for qualifying into gifted programs needs to occur. Much research attention has been given to testing instruments and studies have concluded minority underrepresentation may be due to low-test scores (Whiting, Ford, Grantham, & Moore, 2008). Gifted programs have often been tied to high IQ and scoring well on standardized tests (Montoya, Matias, Nishi, & Sarcedo, 2016). Currently, the school district uses the CoGAT as the main way of qualification into the gifted program. One of the unintended consequences of the decision is the lack of diversity at Bella Vista Gifted Academy.

In order to grow as an educator and a researcher, I need to make recommendations for change. I can implement change at the school level and district level and continue into the larger context of gifted education. First, in order to avoid the

cultural and linguistic bias of assessments with verbal and quantitative components, many researchers recommend the use of nonverbal assessments such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). A study completed by Naglieri and Ford (2003) found that a sample of White, African American, and Hispanic students scored similarly on the NNAT. The same study also found that the proportion of students who scored in the 98th percentile was commensurate across White, African American, and Hispanic subgroups. I recommend the consideration of using the NNAT as a way to identify gifted students in the district. Adopting a new paradigm for identifying and selecting students would help low socioeconomic and minority students gain access to gifted programs (Herr, Castro, & Canty, 2013). I also recommend that the school district develop and implement appropriate training to help all teachers understand equity, diversity, culturally relevant teaching, and ways to identify gifted students. If professional development was provided in these areas, the problem of underrepresentation of minorities would begin to lessen.

Limitations to this Study

As with any research, there were limitations associated with this study that deserves consideration. One of the limitations of this study was my role as a participant observer. As a gifted second-grade teacher at the same location of my participants, I work with my participants closely. An attempt to minimize my influence on the participants was done through my sampling and recruitment approach. While all of the participants are members of the second grade community, I intentionally recruited participants that were not in my homeroom classroom. Students in my homeroom may have felt a sense of obligation to give responses that they felt I wanted to hear. In an attempt to maximize the validity of the study, I captured as much as I could through my observational notes and

conducted member checks with my participants. I checked participants statements from the two semi-structured interviews, statements made during personal communications, and observations made in the classroom. The findings that emerged from this study were from all six of the participants.

Another limitation to this study was the small sample size. While a sample size of six is appropriate for action research, it does not allow for generalizability. This study focused on the students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and if there is a difference on their learning. In order to provide a rich description for this study, it was necessary to keep the sample size small. In future studies, efforts will be made to increase the number of participants.

The final limitation of this study was the focus on gifted students. All participants were second-grade students and qualified as gifted in three areas (verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative). This study focused on six participants that met the criteria, overlooking other students that may exist outside the specified criteria. The study focuses on these students in a self-contained gifted school in a public setting. Academic success could vary for these students due to unknown factors.

Lessons Learned

This research study and the process of the dissertation has taught me a lot about the importance of voice from the students. When I began this doctoral program, I knew I wanted to focus on the gifted population but struggled with narrowing down my ideas to a manageable study. I am passionate about supporting gifted students and found that the students are a wealth of information and knowledge, even as second graders. At the culmination of this research study and through the analysis and writing of the findings, I

realize I still have much to learn about gifted second graders and their perceptions of their teachers' expectations. The most important lesson I learned through this process is that I need to listen to the students and take their feedback to make change in my own setting.

Through this process, I learned how to receive feedback and take correction as a way to improve my research and practice. I learned that feedback can be difficult, but the intention behind the feedback and correction is well intentioned. My recent experiences as a researcher have influenced my practice within the classroom. When giving feedback to my second graders, I am purposeful and descriptive with the intent of improving the students' work and projects. As a student, I have a better understanding of the feelings and thoughts the students have when they are on the receiving end of feedback. I am able to relate to the students and empathize with them as they receive teacher feedback.

Completing cycles of action research and the dissertation process has been an intense and rigorous process. Action research strives to enact change in a localized setting and I became invested in making change in my setting. I have become an advocate for my students, my grade level, and for primary aged students. While my students might only be eight and nine years old, they still have a voice that needs to be heard in order to enact change in our school.

Concluding Thoughts

It is important for teachers to develop a framework and practical approach to using student voice in their classrooms. Teachers should consider student voice as a best practice in order to provide meaningful classroom experiences for gifted students. When this is accomplished, listening to student voice will enable teachers to partner with students to generate strategies to address any issues in a gifted classroom. Our gifted

students deserve an appropriate and enriching environment that meets all their needs. In order to meet the needs of our younger students, teachers need to become their advocates.

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APPENDIX A
TEACHER TREATMENT INVENTORY

Please do NOT write your name on this form. Please use a secret code. Your secret code is created using [Birthday Month, Favorite Color, First Initial]. If I filled this out, my secret code name would be DecemberRedT.

Secret Code Name: _____

Read each statement and circle one answer for each statement about your teacher.
Please answer these statements all about (Insert teacher identification).

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
The teacher calls on me to answer questions.	4	3	2	1
The teacher asks me to lead activities.	4	3	2	1
The teacher makes me feel good about how hard I try.	4	3	2	1
The teacher calls on me to explain things to the class.	4	3	2	1
The teacher trusts me.	4	3	2	1
The teacher lets me make up my own projects.	4	3	2	1
The teacher is interested in me.	4	3	2	1
The teacher lets me do as I like as long as I finish the work.	4	3	2	1
The teacher makes me feel I did very well when I read or give the right answer.	4	3	2	1
I am given special privileges. I get to do special things in class.	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #1 PROTOCOL

Introductory Script: Thank you for being willing to help me with your ideas about different teacher expectations. I am going to ask you a couple of questions about your different classroom teachers. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in learning about your thoughts and experiences in second grade. Your answers will remain anonymous, which means, I will not share your answers with your parents, teachers, or classmates. The permission form that you signed means that I will audio record our conversation to listen to later. After our discussion, I will listen to the recording and write a report. I will not use your name in the report, so it is okay to tell me what you really think. This is a voluntary process, you may stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Student code

Date

Homerom Teacher Pseudonym

Preliminaries- icebreaker

When interviewing a second-grader, it can be uncomfortable for the participant. In order to make the participant more comfortable, I will offer a distraction for the student. Participants will be offered the use of coloring pages, a silly putty/goop, and/or a glitter bottle.

Before we begin, I want to learn a little about you. Can you tell me about yourself? What do you like to do for fun? What does being gifted mean to you? (Write answers on large paper for the participant to see).

Describe a typical day at school.

What do you like about school? What do you dislike about school?

Are you satisfied with how you do in school? Why or why not?

What subject is your favorite? Why?

What subject is your least favorite? Why?

How do you feel about coming to school?

Can you tell me about your experiences being in a gifted second grade classroom?

Which second grade classroom is your favorite space? Why?

Which second grade classroom is your least space? Why?

Do the different classroom environments make a difference in your learning?

Do you know what expectations your teacher(s) have for you academically? Socially? Behaviorally?

Are these expectations easy or hard to reach?

Which second grade teacher is your favorite? Why?

What do you think about this teacher?

What do you think this teacher thinks about you?

How do you feel when you think about this teacher?

What do you think your teacher wants you to do while in her class?

Which second grade teacher is your least favorite? Why?

What do you think about this teacher?

What do you think this teacher thinks about you?

How do you feel when you think about this teacher?

What do you think your teacher wants you to do while in her class?

Do you think your teacher treats you the same as the other students?

How do your experiences in one classroom compare with the experiences in another classroom? Are they similar or different? Why?

Tell me some of your favorite stories about school.

Do you have any stories you would like to share about school?

Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #2 PROTOCOL

Introductory Script: Thank you for being willing to help me with your ideas about different teacher expectations. I am going to ask you a couple of questions about your different classroom teachers. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in learning about your thoughts and experiences in second grade. Your answers will remain anonymous, which means, I will not share your answers with your parents, teachers, or classmates. The permission form that you signed means that I will audio record our conversation to listen to later. After our discussion, I will listen to the recording and write a report. I will not use your name in the report, so it is okay to tell me what you really think. This is a voluntary process; you may stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Student code	
Date	
Homeroom Teacher Pseudonym	

First, I want to thank you for your willingness to help with my study. I am learning a lot from you and the other students and hope to influence gifted teachers with your voice.

Follow up questions from previous interviews:

Insert questions here.

Follow up questions from classroom observations:

Insert questions here.

Next, I have some thoughts about the observations that I made. When I read them to you, please let me know if you have any changes or explanations that need to be changed.

Insert summary here.

Finally, if you were to choose one word to represent your gifted classroom experience, what would it be? Tell me why you chose that word.

APPENDIX D
OBSERVATIONAL TOOL

Student code	
Date	
Homeroom Teacher Pseudonym	

Lesson:

What is the lesson/subject area?

Type of instruction? (direct instruction, group work, etc.)

Where is the student in relation to the teacher?

Teacher-student interactions:

How does the teacher interact with the student?

How does the teacher respond to the student verbally?

How does the teacher respond to the student nonverbally?

How are expectations for the lesson communicated to the student?

How does the student respond to the expectations for the lesson?

How are expectations for behavior in the classroom communicated?

How does the student respond to the expectations of behavior?

What feedback is provided to the student from the teacher?

How does the teacher assess the student?

The table below can be used for notetaking purposes. Tally marks can be used to track frequency and notes can be added.

Observations of teacher expectations of high expectation students	Observations of teacher expectations of low expectation students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging material is taught • Warm socio-emotional climate • Opportunities to respond • More wait time • Informative feedback on work • Positive reinforcement • Praise • Demands more effort • Located closer to teacher • Calls on student more • Interacts frequently • Frequent nonverbal communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less challenging material • Less smiles • Fewer opportunities to respond • Less wait time • General feedback is given • Inappropriate reinforcement • Insincere praise • Demands less effort • Located further from teacher • When called on, often given the answer • Interacts less frequently • Less eye contact and nonverbal communication

Adapted from Brophy, J. E. (1983). Research on the self-fulfilling prophecy and teacher expectations. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(5), 631-661.