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Teacher, parent, and administrator perceptions of social responsibility at the elementary school level

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER, PARENT, AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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Due to the escalating moral problems in society, parents are asking schools to create an environment to not only teach academics but values and social responsibility as well. This dissertation examines the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators in regard to social responsibility at the elementary-school level. Many programs exist to teach moral and values education to elementary students and are utilized to address acts of school violence, bullying, and drug and alcohol abuse. These programs are widely accepted within schools; however, at what point does a school's obligation for social instruction stop and parents' responsibility begin? If there is a lack of continuation between home and school, how can common values be identified and reinforced? Is it appropriate for schools to only impose its values on students?

This qualitative case-study examination consisted of an open-ended interview format of teachers, parents, and administrators, who represent the three main types of people who influence a child's character in elementary school. Four participants from each type were selected to be interviewed on 1) their views of the role of the classroom teacher in the instruction of social responsibility, 2) their comfort level of teaching social responsibility, and 3) others' role in teaching social responsibility. A focus group interview was conducted with each group to allow them to collaborate with each other and reflect on their answers from the first interview.

Themes were identified by each group, including the importance of teachers balancing social responsibility instruction and academic content along with the importance of teachers serving as role models for students. Parents and teachers both felt they needed additional support from each other in order for students to be successful. All three groups identified comfortable and uncomfortable topics that impacted teaching social responsibility. These included positive ways they impacted students as well as challenges, which included amount of communication, need for increased support, and less apathy toward student issues by parents. Last, each group weighed in on the others' role in teaching social responsibility. This resulted in each group identifying how the others could support them in teaching students social responsibility. Examples included the importance of home/school partnerships, increased communication, and parents not undermining school-based decisions. Due to the daily interactions, evaluating the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents may be an important indicator in students' moral and character development. The study was designed to gain insight on the differences and similarities of these three influential groups of educators regarding how, when, and how much social responsibility should be taught in schools.

These findings highlight several recommendations on how these three groups can improve the social responsibility instruction that schools provide for students as well as suggestions for future research on this topic.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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TEACHER, PARENT, AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

BY

SCOTT BENJAMIN FINK
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Doctoral Director:
Elizabeth Wilkins

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I certainly did not take the straight and narrow path toward completing my doctoral degree and finishing my dissertation. In fact, I think that I would be an excellent example of how it should not be done. By actually writing this page, it is becoming a reality that this journey, struggle, and adventure is nearing completion. I have many people I would like to thank, beginning with my wife, Kelly, and two sons, Cade and Braden. They have always supported me and given me a sense of “when” it would be done rather than “if.” Making them proud is the backbone of my efforts to receive my doctoral degree.

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DEDICATION

For my father, Mason, and my mother, Maureen, who taught social responsibility to her alternative-school students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Anyone watching the nightly news broadcast in Chicago can recall a story announcing that another Chicago Public School student had been killed. During the 2011-2012 school year, 319 children were hit by gunfire, and 24 school-aged children were killed (Ahmed-Ullah, 2012). Violence involving school-age children is becoming more and more widespread, with few answers for parents and communities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2016), during the 2013-2014 school year, there were 1.3 million reported discipline incidents in the United States for reasons related to alcohol, drugs, violence, or weapons possession that resulted in students being suspended from school. In 2013-2014, about 58% of public schools recorded one or more incidents of a physical attack or fight without a weapon, and 13% of public schools recorded one or more serious violent incidents (NCES, 2016). Due to escalating moral problems in society involving violence and drug usage, parents of elementary-aged children are asking elementary teachers and administrators to create an environment for teaching and learning as well as to emphasize values and social responsibilities. They are being asked to take on the role of moral educators for today's children (Likona, 2009). Thomas Likona, one of the leading proponents of teaching moral education, stated in his 1991 book, *Educating for Character*:

There is today a widespread, deeply unsettling sense that children are changing in ways that tell us much about ourselves as a society. And these changes are reflected not just in

the violent extremes of teenage behavior but in the everyday speech and actions of younger children as well. (p. 4)

More than 25 years has passed since Likona's book, and schools continue to struggle with similar issues about the moral education of their students. Daly (2008) stated:

Our educational system faces some of the toughest challenges it has met since America's first public school opened in Boston in 1635. Nearly 40 percent of students entering high school fail to graduate on time. More than 7,000 kids drop out of high school every day. Almost half of all beginning teachers leave the profession within five years. If that isn't exhausting enough, the No Child Left Behind Act has many educators feeling trapped in a test-driven system that stifles the individuality integral to great teaching. (p. 1)

Noddings (2005) suggests that teachers and administrators are responsible: "This state of affairs suggests strongly that there is something radically wrong with the education that produced these citizens. Both wealthy and poor experience morally deficient schooling. Is there an alternative?" (p. 43).

Alternatives are difficult to come by as teachers are faced with a litany of difficult choices regarding what information is passed on to their students (Whitaker & Zoul, 2008). They are guided by curriculum outlines, state standards, and assessment frameworks, all of which help teachers focus academic lesson plans on the core subjects of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017b). These subject areas are formally assessed, and schools are scrutinized, evaluated, ranked, and judged by how well students perform. School report cards not only detail assessment scores, they also detail the number of minutes devoted to instructing these core subjects (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017b). However, they do not include information on a school's climate or culture, which is inarguably an important indicator of school success (Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2011). There are no state standards and no high-stakes tests that measure the character level of students

in a school. Most states report that they “indirectly” educate students in social responsibility and moral education through outcomes and standards that focus on responsibilities of citizenship or particular attributes of civility, but they are not assessed nor are factored into the student’s grade point average (Bohlin & Ryan, 1999; Stock, 2007). Nonetheless, instruction in moral education and social responsibility is part of school life and everyone including politicians, state education departments, parents, and schools, is looking for ways to effectively incorporate its instruction (Manzo, 2008; Rosenfeld, 2006). The question becomes who is responsible for reinforcing social responsibility (Anderson, 2000)?

What Does It Mean to Have Social Responsibility?

Social responsibility is defined as people and organizations behaving ethically and with sensitivity toward social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues, thus helping organizations and individuals have a positive impact on society (American Society for Quality, 2017). Examples of social responsibility in schools do not exclusively represent student discipline incidents and often encompass a variety of situations. These include vignettes as the language arts teacher notes sexist language when correcting a paper, a first-grade teacher explaining to students why they cannot punch each other, a music teacher who is unable to play current popular songs due to themes of violence, the omission of sections of an elementary health curriculum due to references to AIDS and HIV, teachers helping students understand how all forms of cheating and plagiarism take away from their education and that of their peers, a class learning about why 18,000 children die every day from hunger, and teachers helping students examine violence and social justice issues as well as develop critical viewing skills for

discerning the moral messages on TV, music, and the internet (Davidson, 2004; Haynes, 2009; Seif, 2009; Shaver & Strong, 1982). As schools move further into the 21st century, this concept of social responsibility, with the development of ethical decision-making and how one treats others, will become more important (Davidson, 2004).

Social responsibility, moral education, and character education are all closely linked. Moral education and character education are both processes proactively used by teachers, parents, and administrators to help students build individual core character traits such as respect, caring, and trustworthiness. Helping students acquire these moral traits will help them live good lives and at the same time become productive and contributing members of their communities (Character.org, 2017b; Ryan 2010). Moral and character education is used by elementary schools to instill social responsibility in their students. Social responsibility occurs when people and organizations behave ethically and with sensitivity toward the social, cultural, economic, and environmental world (American Society for Quality, 2017). As students build their individual character, they can transfer these values toward a greater sense of social responsibility for society.

McLaurin and Purpel (2004) argue that we must change the current discourse surrounding education and that it lacks a focus on social issues. Therefore, the task for schools will be to create an environment in which students who lack strong role models and healthy lived experiences can find a supplement for this social deficit. The social advancement of students has been one of the most complex problems in urban education, with consequences of a social, emotional, ethical, and academic nature (Cohen, 2006). To understand societal changes and to adapt to the ever-changing school climate, the role of the teacher has been forced to change. In

many instances, 21st-century teachers are being asked to perform a multitude of functions. They are educational instructors, classroom managers, computer technicians, mentors, coaches, social workers, psychologists, friends, and parents (Onderdonk, 1995; StateUniversity.com, 2009).

There is no arguing that teachers need to be cognizant of the social and emotional well-being of their students, but just how far the responsibilities of the classroom teacher reach has been contentious as communities ask whose values will be taught (Kidder, 2000). The point in which the societal education of children stops and parent responsibility begins is a difficult question. This research study examined the social responsibility of teachers, parents, and administrators working at the elementary school level as they address issues related to the education of 21st-century students.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was from a social constructivist point of view. The constructivist approach emphasizes children's active construction of moral meaning and development of a personal commitment to principles of fairness and concern for the welfare of others through processes of social interaction and moral discourse (Battistich, Solomon, & Watson, 2001). The acceptability for schools to address and teach information that was once reserved for parents exhibits that this form of education was gradually constructed into mainstream educational curriculum. The constructivist label was chosen because it reflects the fact that reality is socially constructed and is based on an individual's experiences (Yilmaz, 2008). It explains *how* students learn rather than what they *should* learn (Huang, 2006). Its basic tenets come from phenomenology and hermeneutics, which study the concept of interpretive

understanding (Mertens, 2005). Educators understand this concept to be simply that teaching involves much more than just appropriately selecting, delivering, and assessing a standardized curriculum. Teaching involves preparation, instruction, and assessment with the ongoing adjustment of how to best facilitate effective academic and social student learning (Fore, Riser, & Boon, 2006; Watson, 2001). Morality, social life, and identity are viewed as inevitably cultural and social processes, which are constructed and reconstructed in day-to-day interactions (Atkinson & Housley, 2003). This theoretical framework is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

Problem and Purpose

The difficult decision facing elementary-level educators in the 21st century is where to focus their efforts. If schools are primarily social institutions that must represent present life, then it would stand to reason that a curriculum that teaches social skills would be required in every classroom (Johnson & Reed, 2000). Education historian Diane Ravitch (Education Week, 2006) said:

Education must aim for far more than mastery of the basics, far more than the possession of tools for economic competitiveness. Certainly, it should aim for enough [content] for an examined life, enough for civic virtue, and enough for those mental habits that incline one to think, to read, to listen, to discuss, to feel just a bit uncertain about one's opinions, and to love learning. (p. 1)

On the other hand, opponents of character education believe schools are spending too much time teaching outside the academic curriculum (Parkway & Stanford, 2014). Schools need to maximize the time they spend with students focusing on academic areas that are formally assessed and evaluated. Students are drilled in reading and mathematics without opportunities for

much else to help them gain proficiency in the two subjects that are at the center of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (*Education Week*, 2006, 2009). This issue has been steadily gaining attention, as evidenced by the 200 leaders of influential organizations, educators, and policy analysts who met in Washington, D.C., for a December 2006 symposium to discuss whether the NCLB Act is enough to ensure that students are receiving a 21st century education. Incidentally, this discussion included whether students needed more character lessons in the curriculum (*Education Week*, 2006).

Other major educational programs such as Race to the Top (RttT) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) only indirectly address topics of social responsibility instruction. Race to the Top, a federal grant program, awarded \$42.8 million dollars to the state of Illinois in December of 2011 (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017c). Its purpose is to accelerate key education reforms in states, create educational innovation, and increase student achievement. Standards, assessments, data systems, and the recruitment of highly effective teachers and principals are all worthwhile state and national reforms. The only topic that could be loosely connected with social responsibility instruction is a mention of the surveying of learning conditions.

The ESSA was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and reauthorized the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's education law with commitment to equal opportunity for all students (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017a). The significance of this act regarding social responsibility can be connected with school climate measures such as expulsions, suspensions, and the reporting of violence and suggests the need for schools to

incorporate social responsibility instruction into the curriculum to address these indicators of school success (Character.org, 2017a).

Conversely, programs that incorporate themes of a social nature dilute the curriculum, and many educational professionals disagree as to whether they should accept the role of teacher of social values (Brewer, 2007). Arguments against the implementation of character education programs include that teaching character is a parental responsibility, there is no additional time in the day to teach character, and the uncertainty of who decides which character traits are emphasized.

Research studies have been conducted at the elementary level and have focused on teacher and student perceptions of character education (Ricketts, 2009; Thornberg 2008). These included what content should be taught and how to implement a formal program. Other studies documented work with middle-school and high-school-aged students (Brewer, 2007; Ford, Krumboltz, Nichols, & Wentzel, 1987; Korkmaz, 2007; Onderdonk, 1995). Those studies dealt with the perception and the roles of teachers and parents on the importance of instruction in social responsibility.

However, a major argument that is unclear from the research is whether it is appropriate to “impose one’s values on students” or to help students identify and clarify their own values (Character.org, 2017b). Proponents of teaching social responsibility counter these claims and believe that the classroom environment directly influences student achievement and that without a values curriculum in place, academic excellence is difficult to obtain (Great Expectations, 2009). They believe that teaching social responsibility is a powerful and necessary method of school reform in which educators fulfill their fundamental responsibility of preparing young

people for the future, fostering caring, respectful, achievement-minded school environments (Character.org, 2017b). Given the differing perspectives pertaining to the efforts necessary for elementary schools to fulfill their responsibility, exploring the views of constituents is necessary. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers', parents', and administrators' perceptions of an elementary school's role in addressing social responsibility.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the role of the elementary classroom teacher in the instruction of the social responsibility of their students?
2. How do teachers, parents, and administrators describe their comfort level with teaching social responsibility?
3. What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the others' role in the delivery of social responsibility?

Significance of Study

For research studies to be significant they must have sound procedures and have beneficial aims and results (Hostetler, 2005). Parents and schools would both benefit from knowing the extent of their responsibility to socially educate their children.

Schools are now a part of a new collaborative effort to return adults to what historically has been one of their primary responsibilities, and that is to teach their children right from wrong and to teach them a core set of values that will guide their lives and build a decent society. (Likona, 2009, para. 3)

However, it is difficult to place the sole accountability for teaching social responsibility to their children on parents. Schools teach all students, not only the ones who are reared in an environment where social responsibility is stressed. Some children do not even believe that honesty is really important, which makes it essential that teachers, administrators, and parents work together to provide these missing essentials (Educational Testing Service, 2017).

As schools ratchet up well-intended efforts to improve teaching and learning, the confidence in schools to teach a broader curriculum that includes social responsibility will be paramount (Manzo, 2009). Public scrutiny of teachers and schools and the resulting loss of confidence is a depressing trend that needs reversing (Rosenfeld, 2006; Stewart, 2015). The results of the current study can be used by schools to improve communication and understanding among educational stakeholders regarding their roles and responsibilities in the social education of students. How parents view and accept this role will be vital to schools as teachers and administrators attempt to balance academic and nonacademic curriculum in the 21st century. Schools wishing to build socially responsible attitudes and skills in students can begin by rethinking school culture and design programs that integrate social responsibility themes into the curriculum. This emphasis on developing social responsibility will enable students to make a difference in their schools, families, and communities and will create students with the skills that a conflicted world needs (Seif, 2009).

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative case study research design with an open-ended interview format to examine the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators about the role of

elementary schools in teaching social responsibility to children. These three groups of adults were chosen for this study since many different types of people can influence a child's character. The study also examined the perceptions of at what point this social instruction becomes unacceptable.

Participants were teachers, parents, and elementary administrators from a unit district in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. Due to the size of the district, representatives were chosen from each quadrant of the district to capture thoughts based on existing social factors. This accounted for varying trends and experiences that might exist in one section of the district and not in the others. The participants completed a one-to-one interview and an interview as part of a focus group. This approach to interviewing was utilized due to the ability of the researcher to ask sensitive questions and collect data from a specific group of individuals (Creswell, 2002). After transcriptions were completed, the interview data were coded and analyzed for content, which revealed the values, attitudes, and beliefs of each participant and focus group and how each associated with the study's research questions.

Delimitations and Limitations

By choosing participants from the same school district, it was assumed that they would be familiar with a common academic curriculum and the district's demographics and major initiatives. This limited the exposure to different types of social education programs and the level at which they were utilized. Many of the district's elementary schools use Character Counts as the prevalent character education program. Character Counts is one of the largest character

programs in the nation and works alongside all types of academic and social curricula (Josephson Institute, 2017).

Because teachers, parents, and administrators were the participants of this study, certain limitations were inherent. Participants in the study were not considered to be volunteers since the researcher asked them to participate. Because they were not randomly chosen, it is possible their perceptions do not represent the district's population as a whole.

Qualitative research comes with certain limitations that must be considered. These include biases, overall content knowledge by the researcher, and the degree to which the interviewer affects the participants' ability to genuinely answer the interview questions (Seidman, 2006). Since participants were not randomly selected, individual responses might be different from the population at large (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarity, this study used the following definitions as a basis for discussion surrounding the key elements of social responsibility in schools.

Academic Curriculum: The information that students in public school should know and be able to do in the seven core areas as a result of their schooling. These areas include English language arts, mathematics, science, social science, physical development and health, fine arts, and foreign language (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017b).

Character Counts: An approach to character education in which the framework is based on academic competency, social-emotional growth, character development, and positive school climate (Josephson Institute, 2017).

Character Education: A national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values. It is the intentional proactive effort by parents, schools, districts, and states to instill in their students important core ethical and performance values such as caring, honesty, diligence, fairness, fortitude, responsibility, and respect for self and others (Character.org, 2017b).

Moral Education: The process of helping children acquire moral traits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their communities (Ryan, 2010).

Social Responsibility: People and organizations behaving ethically and with sensitivity toward social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues helping organizations and individuals have a positive impact on the health and welfare of society (American Society for Quality, 2017).

21st-Century School: A school that recognizes the critical need to develop 21st century skills that address the whole child through a curriculum that is interdisciplinary, integrated, and project based. The following individual skills are taught and encouraged: curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, agility, adaptability, initiative, entrepreneurship, effective oral and written communication, and assessing and analyzing information (Dillon, 2017).

Organization of Study

The study is presented in five chapters with Chapter 1 introducing the study. Chapter 2 presents the review of literature related to the aspects that factor into how schools are addressing issues related to the concepts driving social responsibility. These include high-stakes testing, school curriculum and politics, safety concerns, and the communication and trust with stakeholders. Chapter 3 details the research design, method of data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 describes the research findings, and Chapter 5 includes implications, recommendations, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes a review of literature related to how schools are addressing social responsibility in the 21st century. In particular, the responsibility of schools, teachers, and administrators in delivering a curriculum containing social, emotional, ethical, and academic components is covered. The chapter is divided into three major sections: 1) purpose and influences of education, 2) character education as it relates to social responsibility, and 3) constructivism's support of social responsibility.

Purpose and Influences of Education

The purposes and influences of education can be separated into the following areas: a) academic accountability, b) social responsibility and academic achievement with a subsection on teacher roles, and c) social programs.

“A place where each person can achieve his/her maximum individual potential” could be part of a vision statement from any school district in America. Even though it would be extremely difficult to narrow down a single aim of education, it would be safe to say that not many educators would state that a student's maximum individual potential would be to pass a reading and math test. Due to today's narrow focus on these particular academic subjects, many people question the need for instruction in social responsibility (Gibson, 2009).

Others believe the aim of the educational system should be to develop students who will contribute to an educated and socially responsible society (Bracey, 2006). For example, Noddings (2005) believes that the main aim of education should indeed be moral or one that teaches some responsibility for social instruction. She contends that there is a human dimension to education that must become the core of teachers' work. In her argument for a socially responsible education, she rejects the prevalent idea that responsibility for students is enacted by forcing them to adhere to the current limited prescription of schooling. Responsibility in this regard has distanced teachers and students from each other, relegating them to treatments and subjects. The only function of such a disregard for responsibility is the academic purpose of schooling. Noddings provides this example: "Students are fed, but the rationale for feeding them is not that loving people compassionately feed hungry children but, rather, that 'hungry children cannot learn.' The academic purpose of schooling drives everything" (p. 13).

Historically, there have been three great influential institutions that have formed the character of children and the responsibility to pass on a legacy of values: family, religion, and the school (Likona, 2009). Dating back to the 17th century, European Puritans assigned primary responsibility for teaching social responsibility to the family, which along with religion, values, laws, and the ability to read became the backbone of child rearing. Schools began partnering with families in the early 19th century to provide intensive training to children on moral education (McClellan, 1999).

Hershberg (2005) stated that the public education system has remained somewhat similar to the 19th century when schools were focused on accomplishing three things. The first was to provide students with basic literacy instruction. The second was to socialize the largely diverse

population, in which millions of immigrants from various nations, cultures, and religions came to centrally locate in American cities. Third, using standardized assessments and the bell-shaped curve, schools sorted out the top 20% of students for higher education from which the brightest of these students would go forth to run the country.

Theologians, philosophers, politicians, and educators have long concerned themselves with character, morality, and values such as honesty, compassion, loyalty, respect, trust, responsibility, and others (Casey & Grossman, 2013). These values continue to be taught by parents and teachers; however, students have different needs than the ones in school just 10 years ago. Success in today's workplace depends on the development of people skills involving emotional intelligence, which is equally as important as a student's IQ (Steptoe & Wallis, 2006). Others believe educational leaders should look beyond school success and embrace the goal of life success, helping children become active and committed citizens of their classrooms, families, communities, and workplaces (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003; Campbell, Koliba, & Shapiro, 2006). In the 21st century, according to Bencivenga and Elias (2003), the character of students' social-emotional skills and their academic abilities will define school success. Students are more technologically savvy and exposed to instruction that promotes complex thinking skills and fosters creativity (Silva, 2008). Students are global citizens who not only need to be sensitive to foreign cultures and conversant in different languages, they need to be able to rapidly process information academically and emotionally.

Unfortunately, the success of schools cannot be discussed without reference to its students' scores on state-mandated tests. This single measure has come to mean everything as it relates to the community's perception of school and teacher effectiveness (Comer, 2009). The

accountability of the federal government's No Child Left Behind Act and fear of being labeled as a failure have motivated the increased academic focus of schools (Turner, 2010).

Academic Accountability: The No Child Left Behind Act

The driving force behind all school reform efforts in recent years is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The Act signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002, is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the central federal law in pre-collegiate education (*Education Week*, 2009). Education policy placed emphasis on the federal role in education due to this Act, and it came at a time when there was wide public concern with the state of education in America. Legislation set requirements that affected virtually all American public schools. NCLB centered on improving the education of disadvantaged students and was designed to improve achievement and accountability in schools. Because all students had to be proficient in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year, schools were justified for feeling this perceived pressure (*Education Week*, 2009). Inevitably, NCLB has pressured school districts to concentrate on achieving success on state achievement tests.

To reach what seems like an impossible benchmark, schools and teachers focused on instruction, staff development, and school improvement efforts to improve students' scores on these "high-stakes" state tests (Education World, 2017). Because math and reading are the only subjects targeted by the NCLB Act, they have become the schools' focus, leaving teachers frustrated by such a narrow view of success. Consequently, teachers feel the need to leave out alternative instruction that does not focus on academics. Schools and teachers have cut back on developing citizenship skills because accountability sanctions rely solely on academic test scores

(Jacobsen & Rothstein, 2009). This practice seems impractical due to the social issues that are present in the 21st century school. As important as the issues of charter schools, teachers' unions, and for-profit education, which were hotly contested issues during the 2012 presidential campaign, many wonder where the "child" is in the educational focus. Petri (2009) stated that too little attention was being paid to the child the NCLB law was designed to serve. The demands on teachers and students to perform on state tests are largely seen as a worthless activity by students, teachers, and parents. The tests take far too long to process and are so limited in the information they give to parents and teachers that no real useful information is gained to help guide teachers with instruction (Petri, 2009). Parents end up not receiving student scores for up to five months after the test was taken. Schools are then asked to plan school improvement efforts from scores that are often over sixth months old. The NCLB Act and the focus of academic testing resonates throughout this study due to the perceived importance and pressure present within schools to be academically successful above all other measures.

Social Responsibility and Academic Achievement

The question regarding responsibility for teaching about 21st century social issues surfaces with differing views. The Character.org (2017b) website states that students who learn to care about core values recognize their place in society and the world. As children grow in character, they should develop a more refined understanding and gain a deeper commitment to living according to those values. Rothstein (2004) goes so far as to say the noncognitive goals of schooling such as perseverance, self-confidence, self-discipline, punctuality, and social responsibility are perhaps more important than academic ones.

Social responsibility is difficult to teach because schools cannot give clear answers to students on how to solve social problems. Because educational institutions cannot predict what problems students will face in the future, addressing social responsibility is difficult. “In these confusing times, it is much easier to believe that teaching social responsibility is not the schools’ job at all” (Scherer, 2009, p. 5). Haynes (2009) wrote:

World hunger and the other human tragedies – poverty, disease, tyranny, and war itself – offend a conscious shaped by concern for others. Meeting these challenges today requires more than politics and money; it requires people of conscience who are compelled to act ... Yes, reading and math are important. But what matters most is what kind of human beings are reading the books and doing the math. (p. 6)

Research suggests that social responsibility can be instrumental in the acquisition of academic knowledge and cognitive abilities. By infusing social-emotional and character education into the school system, academic success can be achieved (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003; Jeynes, 2005). Wentzel (1991) reviewed literature on social responsibility and academic achievement with several perspectives on how the two relate to each other. One view purports that social and intellectual competencies are concurrent but separate learning goals. A second perspective suggests that learning and behaving responsibly in the classroom are causally related. The promotion of nonacademic objectives has been a traditional and valued goal for American schools. These include socially responsible behavior in the form of moral character, conformity to social rules and norms, cooperation, and positive social interactions.

In a 1987 study, several hundred parents, teachers, and students were asked about the desired outcomes for students to achieve by age 18 (Ford, Krumboltz, Nichols, & Wentzel, 1987). Social responsibility in the form of consideration and respect for others, interpersonal competence, and moral development was consistently nominated as a critical outcome for

students to achieve, above academic achievement. The study also gathered opinions regarding the role of the school in contributing to nonacademic outcomes. Respondents thought it was less important for students to be taught social responsibility than academic subjects. However, across groups of parents, teachers, and students, the consensus was that schools should play at least some role in promoting interpersonal competence and moral development (Ford et al., 1987).

Academic achievement was the focus of another study by Korkmaz (2007), in which teachers shared their opinions regarding the responsibilities of parents, schools, and teachers. Teacher perception was the focus of a short survey composed of three open-ended questions, in which Korkmaz ranked teacher opinions from high to low frequencies. The results indicated teachers strongly believe that parents should take responsibility in their child's education; however, as it relates to social responsibility, the teachers ranked the parents as role models for their children near the bottom.

When asked about what the school should do, teachers ranked physical capacity, materials, and equipment as priorities, with the school's emphasis on social rules and student behaviors near the bottom of the list. Korkmaz (2007) suggested that schools would not be solely responsible for students' learning and academic achievement because students spend only five hours each weekday in school. During this time, teachers have a significant effect on student achievement and learning, making it difficult to implement qualities associated with social responsibility. However, for students without alternatives, the classroom teacher becomes the sole provider of a socially responsible education.

Teacher Roles in Social Responsibility

Teaching in the 21st century will require teachers to evolve and find roles that meet the challenges and needs of schools and their students. Onderdonk (1995) researched the roles that teachers must adopt to improve American education and meet the challenges of the 21st century. The general research question was to identify the parameters of professional teacher roles, which led to narrower concerns with the consensus of roles played by classroom teachers and whether stakeholders believed these roles should change to meet the demands of the 21st century. Onderdonk also wanted to know if teacher roles could be categorized, thus providing some direction for the change of these roles in the future.

A case study methodology was used to examine the perceptions of teacher roles by teachers, preservice teachers, community leaders, and parents. The study was designed in two steps, which included structured interviews and a card sort. Fifty individuals were interviewed and coded by a descriptor indicating their jobs or school roles. For the card sort, 129 stakeholders participated by rank ordering cards with 35 differing roles printed on them. The respondents sorted the cards based on the two temporal conditions of present and future. Onderdonk (1995) utilized the interview phase of the study to validate the selection of roles and to determine new roles for the card sort. Data collected in this section of the study were transcribed for rank order, along with demographic information about the respondents. The perceptions of teacher roles in these areas would be expected to be different from that of other areas in the country with strong teacher unions, which Onderdonk points out in his study.

Onderdonk (1995) formulates that a new description of teacher and school roles needs to

be developed due to an outdated and unrealistic perception. Two specific areas are of interest as they relate to social responsibility: first the role of the teacher as disciplinarian and second as it relates to a teacher's noninstructional duties: parent surrogate, provider of child care, referee, and social worker. After conducting interviews, Onderdonk added the teacher role of moral role model, which specifically ties in with the theme of social responsibility. Teacher roles that promote a student's social responsibility continued to be supported throughout the first decade of the 21st century. Education in the upcoming years will require teachers to know more about their students' backgrounds, their subject area, and the context of their positions (Lieberman & Miller, 2000).

In Korkmaz's (2007) study, teachers ranked caring for students as the most important responsibility for teachers to increase student achievement. "Teachers should show caring, especially listening, gentleness, understanding, knowledge of students as individuals, warmth and encouragement, and an overall love for them" (p. 369). Obviously, teachers play a pivotal role in the support of values that form the foundation of educating students in social responsibility. This supports the findings of Onderdonk's study that placed educating students about decision making and developing judgment as important roles of teachers and schools. In looking to implement these qualities, schools and teachers are utilizing social programs that rely on the cooperation and partnership of teachers, parents, administrators, and the community (Sanchez, 2005). Many structured models and community initiatives based on social responsibility are currently being implemented and will serve as models in the 21st century's focus on character education (Sanchez, 2005).

Social Programs

Reacting to the need for social programs, character education and community service projects have become commonplace in today's schools. Astor and Meyer (2001) stated that opinion surveys continually show the general public perceives school safety as one of the top issues facing school today. Criminal offenses on school grounds involving school-aged children have intensified public concern over school violence and its negative effects on students, the school itself, and the community (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Robles-Pina & Stewart, 2008). In response to this growing problem, politicians, school officials, parents, teachers, and law enforcement continue to search for ways to address this problem. Astor and Meyer defined violence as a behavior associated with a behavior deficit, which they explained as a lack of social or communication skills. Advocates of social programs and character education point to the benefits schools will reap as students begin to develop moral judgment and values.

There is an increasing number of community and educational leaders who believe schools can and must teach values (Adams 2013; Guidry, 2008). Programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Gang Resistance Education Training (GREAT) help children set goals, resist peer pressure, learn to resolve conflict, and understand how drugs, gangs and violence impact their lives (Drug Abuse Resistance Education, 2008; Gang Resistance Education and Training, 2007). Character Counts and Positive Behavior and Supports (PBIS) are related character education programs that deal with issues historically dealt with inside the home, such as respect, responsibility, self-confidence, and the basic knowledge of right and wrong. Social programs are one way school districts, communities and federal agencies are combating school violence, which is exacerbated due to the great deal of media attention directed at school

shootings, drugs, alcohol, and weapons in schools (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

Prevention efforts are urgent in the Chicago Public School District (CPS), as substance abuse, violence, truancy and a variety of other negative activities have become prevalent. The district's Project Success targets freshmen in eight high schools, providing them with information on alcohol and substance abuse in an individualized setting that includes counseling (Simmons, 2008).

Chicago's South Shore community is providing evidenced-based interventions funded by the Department of Education. The Safe and Healthy Students Initiative provides individualized and group interventions to students who need assistance (Simmons, 2008). These community-based approaches to develop social responsibility have become an integral part of the schools' overall improvement efforts. Schools need to seamlessly and intentionally weave these character education efforts into their curriculum and daily routines in order for these programs to find sustainability (Gibson, 2009).

Character Education and Social Responsibility

Developing social responsibility by preparing students to make ethical judgments and act on them is of growing importance to educators and society as a whole. Character education – because it deals with relations among individuals and groups, societal conditions, and significant educational issues – becomes a vital tool for preparing students to succeed in the 21st century (Berkowitz, Howard, & Schaeffer, 2004). The aim and purpose of character education is to proactively “instill core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and

respect” (Character.org, 2017b). Proponents of character education claim that teaching values to children helps them develop better skills and equips children with moral training to make the right decision in response to underage drinking, violence, crime, and illicit drug use (Boulter, 2001; Davis, 2003; Hochstetler, 2006).

Boyd and Vessels (1996) wrote that teaching character education, morals, and positive social values is a central part of the mission of public schools. They further defined character education as a tool that promotes the development of personal and moral responsibility and helps develop good character and moral virtues. Character education research has profiled different versions that range in scope from a connection to academic achievement to decreases in negative school behavior. It becomes apparently clear that character education is inherent to teaching and overall schooling and is widely accepted as “coming with the territory” in that “it is not a question of whether to do character education, but rather questions of how and by what methods” (Berkowitz et al., 2004, p. 210).

It is clear that developing character requires a comprehensive approach that would provide students with many authentic, character-building experiences. This approach would give students opportunities throughout the school day to develop an understanding of what is right, the desire to do what is right and the habits of actually doing the right thing. (Likona, 2014, p. 8)

Teachers can show videos about character education. Students can go to Sunday school classes at church. Children can be given books to read and study. However, like many skills, character is learned by children through the behavior of those around them, whether that be an adult or another child (Tatum, 2010).

Ware (2006) reported that the culture of a student plays a part in school success and is often overlooked. The culture of schools often resembles the White middle-class norms and

values in the greater U.S. society. This mismatch between school culture and the culture of students creates the potential for misunderstanding of actions and communications between teachers and students. Students who tend to be successful often mirror the values that schools find important enough to teach. Schools and teachers find that teaching social responsibility is central to successful education reform due to its potential to help teachers be more productive and work in a pleasant environment (Ryan, 2010). Ryan stated:

Teachers are continually hassled. They work in morally confused, morally relaxed environments. These environments do not need to be repressive, but they do need to be places where students abandon a culture in which it is acceptable to be sarcastic to each other, to put each other down, to be unfriendly. This negative culture makes children afraid to open up and reach out in class or anywhere else for that matter, because of the interpersonal hostility that they see everywhere, particularly on television. They see this on TV and then come to school thinking that is the way they are supposed to act. (p. 231)

The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) conducted a study that examined ways schools were able to help students become more active members of their community. It was found that 32% of public schools in the United States provided character education as part of their curriculum (Chapman & Skinner, 1999). According to the Character.org (2017b), 40 states now either encourage or require character education through legislation and receive federal character education grants. Many state boards and departments of education, along with 17 states, address character education through legislation. Other states are currently pursuing legislation regarding the inclusion of character education in their public schools.

Advocates for social responsibility see it as a way to combat the continuing decline in citizen engagement in the United States. Chapman and Skinner (1999) stated that teacher perceptions revealed that character education in today's culture is crucial and that although

teaching reading is essential, good character will help students understand their place in the world.

The majority of studies involving social responsibility focus on the effectiveness of individual character education programs on school communities and the perceptions of these programs. Gibson (2009) conducted a quantitative, non-experimental research survey to determine the influence of character education on student and staff development. He utilized surveys completed by high-school-aged students and high school-staff members to support program planning and the improvement of implementation procedures.

Gibson utilized three published instruments, which included the School as a Caring Community Profile, Character in Action Survey, Character Education Quality Standards, and separate original demographic surveys for teachers and students. Data were analyzed using SPSS and divided into three sections profiling students utilizing *t* tests, Mann-Whitney U tests for two independent variables, and linear regression analysis to measure the character-related development of students. He found that students perceived school climate, due to the focus on character-building activities, more positively than teachers. Teachers did, however, feel that character education promoted core ethical values and helped to create a caring school community. A greater sense of connectedness was felt as it related to community members as partners in the character-building process.

Ricketts (2009) studied suburban elementary teachers' perspectives of character education using a qualitative investigation rooted in case study design. Utilizing this design allowed the researcher to understand character education through an insider perspective. This study is especially pertinent to my study, as I used a similar single interview structure that

loosely followed Seidman's (2006) three-interview arrangement. Ricketts chose to craft a single interview structure that condensed Seidman's three key questions of life history, experience, and reflection. Three major themes were developed by Ricketts, which included the need to teach character education, what content should be taught, and how to implement a formal program.

Each participant of the study was found to be in favor of teaching character education with the exception of one, who stated, "My concern is where does the school system stop and where does society and family pick up the slack. It seems like the school is doing a lot these days" (Ricketts, 2009, p. 84). As far as what is important to teach, each instructor was participating in his/her system's approved program, with each one adding character traits they personally deemed important for children to function in today's society. Ricketts's participants detailed numerous strategies for implementing social responsibility into the curriculum, including balanced literacy activities, packaged curricula, classroom meetings, cross-curricular opportunities, and guest speakers.

The current study attempted to fill the hole that was left from Ricketts's (2009) study in examining what areas of social responsibility are the sole obligation of the parents. It clarified perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators about the role of the elementary classroom teacher in providing this type of instruction. The perceptions of the administrators add to the research and lend an important voice to the study. Administrators can refine their thoughts as to the level of implementation of character education programs in their buildings.

Constructivism's Support of Social Responsibility

Constructivism supports social responsibility as schools and teachers promote meaningful choice and autonomy by encouraging pupils to follow their own ideas. The primary concern of constructivist pedagogy is that the learning environment, or culture, encourages student discovery through experience of formal and informal curriculum (Richardson, 2003). Success comes when students are able to critically view and internalize social situations and make solid judgments based on prior instruction (Watson, 2001). Parents and schools are forced to ask questions, solve problems, and construct theories regarding their role in the teaching of social responsibility (Yilmaz, 2008). Phillips (2000) has defined and explained the attributes of social constructivism:

A theory where disciplines that have been built up are 'human constructs, and that the form that knowledge has taken in these fields has been determined by such things as politics, ideologies, values, the exertion of power and the preservation of status, religious beliefs, and economic self-interest.' This approach centers on the ways in which power, the economy, [and] political and social factors affect the ways in which groups of people form understandings and formal knowledge about their world. These bodies of knowledge are not considered to be objective representations of the external world. (p. 6)

Thornberg (2008) utilized a social constructivist perspective in his qualitative study looking at the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students. He investigated how teachers interpreted and defined values education and made meaning of its practice. He also observed how this practice was maintained in everyday interactions between teachers and students. He based the study on ethnographic research in two Swedish primary schools. Field work was conducted in six primary classrooms three to five days a week from October 2002 to May 2004. In sum, 141 students and 13 teachers participated. Participant observations and audio recordings were conducted to examine how the teachers and students thought about values

education. Teachers in Thornberg's study were mainly concerned with students being able to follow the rules and whether the students were kind to others and behaved well. Their view of values education was of an everyday informal process rather than a formalized curriculum. Many teachers became adept at recognizing and seizing the teachable moments that presented themselves each day and became comfortable in the role of values educator.

A review of the discussions about the topic of social responsibility, both positive and negative, provides an appropriate beginning to this study due to the perceived obstacles that face schools and teachers (Shapiro, 2012). The level and amount at which schools emphasize social responsibility and character education has been forced to the forefront of our nation's interest due to what is perceived as increased violence among school-aged children and the ever-present pressure on schools to increase academic accountability (Adams, 2013). Administrators and teachers are forced to balance the academic priorities of the school day with the need for children to have the skills and knowledge to be kind, decent, compassionate, and responsible (Edwards, 2010).

Parents, teachers, and administrators are clear that teaching social responsibility is an important aspect of schooling, but they have become unclear of each other's roles when it comes to the rigor of character education efforts and the line of appropriateness of topics (Huitt, 2004). Based on the findings of this study, school personnel will have a better understanding of the roles of parents, teachers, and administrators in choosing and delivering a curriculum that meets the needs of students. How can schools decide on a social responsibility program if they are unclear about what their community holds important enough to teach? These programs are a financial and political commitment and have social ramifications for students, so schools and their

administrators need to have relevant data as to what their parent community supports. Teachers will be able to gain insights into what classroom issues to expand on and what issues to direct students back to their parents. Parents will gain knowledge of the help that they can expect to receive from their child's school on socially charged topics and what will be left for them to address as parents.

Overview

The methodology presented in Chapter 3 provides a framework for collecting and analyzing data needed to evaluate the purpose of the study, which is to examine the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators about the responsibility of elementary schools in delivering a curriculum that includes social, emotional, and academic components.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that were used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the study's research questions. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers', parents', and administrators' perceptions of an elementary school's role in addressing social responsibility. The following research questions frame this study:

1. What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the role of the elementary classroom teacher in the instruction of the social responsibility of their students?
2. How do teachers, parents, and administrators describe their comfort level with teaching social responsibility?
3. What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the others' role in the delivery of social responsibility?

Chapter 3 begins with a description of the research design followed by a description of the participants involved in the study. Data collection strategies are discussed along with detailed information regarding the procedures that were followed. Analysis techniques are then discussed and followed by the chapter summary.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study research design to contribute to knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena (Yin, 2014).

Qualitative research is rooted in the constructivist paradigm and attempts to examine the world from the point of view of those who have lived it (Mertens, 2010). The qualitative design allowed a “richer and more complex picture of the phenomenon under study than would quantitative methods” (Mertens, 2010, p. 265). Merriam (2009) states the purpose of qualitative research is to “achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14). This study asked teachers, parents, and administrators to reflect on their experiences and elaborate on their perceptions about the role of elementary schools in delivering a curriculum that is socially based. Based on their working knowledge of elementary schools, teachers, parents, and administrators of elementary students were ideal participants.

Due to these participants working within a single school district, the study can be further described as a bounded explanatory case study. This is relevant as the study sought to explain the links between the groups regarding their perceptions of the specific topic of social responsibility in schools (Yin, 2014).

Case study research design assists the researcher with a logical sequence of collecting data connected to the study’s research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions. This sequence begins with the initial set of questions to be answered and ends with the conclusions from these questions. It is important, however, to make sure that the evidence collected addresses the initial research questions (Yin, 2014).

Individual and focus group interviews were utilized to collect evidence and are considered to be one of the most important sources of case study evidence (Yin, 2014). The strengths of interviews as a source of gathering evidence include questions that are targeted and focus directly on the case study topic as well as responses that are insightful by providing explanations and personal views including perceptions, attitudes, and meanings. Weaknesses of interviewing include 1) biases due to poorly articulated questions, 2) response bias, 3) inaccuracies due to poor recall, and 4) reflexivity, in which interviewees give what the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2014). Every attempt was made to avoid instances of bias and inaccuracies by utilizing the same interview questions and protocol with all participants and digitally recording each interview. This was done to ensure that the evidence collected was valid and reliable and worthy of further analysis (Yin, 2014). Evidence was then uploaded into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) for coding.

The next section provides background information about the school district in this study. Demographic and historical information are included to describe in detail the makeup of the school district.

School District

According to its website, School District A is a large unit district located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. In 2015-16, District A served 27,594 students from a multiple square mile area encompassing all or parts of seven municipalities and multiple counties. In 2015-2016, District A was one of the largest public school systems in Illinois. Additionally, District A employed 3,049 regular and full-time staff members. During 2015-2016, the teacher

retention rate was 87.7%, slightly above the state average of 85.8%. Finally, 63.8% of all District A's teachers had master's degrees or above.

Elementary schools in District A employ a number of programs that promote the social responsibility of students. The three main programs include Character Counts, Tribes, and Rachel's Challenge. Each building's administration is allowed to choose which program best suits the needs of the school and community. There has not been a directive from the district mandating which of these programs to use; however, there is an expectation that a program that addresses social responsibility is in place. During the formulation of district goals for the years 2012-2017 and accompanying community survey, the adoption of an overall district program concerning social responsibility was clearly identified as a priority. This was evidenced by a statement rated favorably by the community, which stated, "My school provides adequate and appropriate instruction in socially-positive ideals like trustworthiness, honesty, friendship, good citizenship, sportsmanship, etc."

District A experienced tremendous growth in the late 1990s to early 2000s. The school district went from having five buildings to the current number, with the majority of construction occurring during that time period. The large amount of growth in a relatively short period of time has made the district administration and community adjust accordingly. Adjusting school boundaries and overcrowding in schools happened regularly during that period of time. The community also had challenges that came with increased population, including concerns over economic growth, increased village traffic, and the need for a larger police force.

The district became so large that adjusting to the greater number of schools, administrators, teachers, and PTOs became more difficult. Schools were run as individual

communities, and problems quickly arose with the lack of consistency throughout the district's elementary schools. What might have been good for one building was not for others, so the district administration worked to close these inconsistencies. By this time, elementary schools in the district had numerous ways of addressing teaching social responsibility to its students, to which the parents, teachers, and students had become accustomed. This variance between schools in one district made it an ideal setting for conducting a study that would help readers with information that could solidify a practice that would benefit the entire district. One of the ways the administration looked to close inconsistencies among schools in the district was to implement the house concept.

House Concept

District A schools are assigned to a "house" based in part on their geographic location as well as their proximity to other schools within that house. The house concept is used to break a large system into smaller, more manageable systems by grouping and aligning schools to create a feeder system. The house system ensures that specific elementary schools feed into specific middle schools, which in turn feed into specific high schools, producing continuity for students throughout their educational career.

District A's Purple, Yellow, Maroon, and Pink Houses are each comprised of four or five elementary schools, two or three middle schools, and one high school. The entire educational experience of some students is limited to schools assigned to a particular house. The house concept allows teachers and administrators at each level to share a relatively common student

body and lends itself to improved communication and planning as students move from level to level.

Bracketing the Researcher's Experience

I have worked in an administrative role within the school district for 14 years—the first three years as a middle school assistant principal, 10 years as an elementary principal, and the current school year as Director of Administration and Personnel. I am professionally familiar with the elementary principals and meet with them frequently throughout the school year when collaborating on building and district initiatives. I was cognizant of the relationships prior to the study beginning and was careful to avoid bias when interpreting the data, making sure that they were ingenuous and accurate (e.g., member checking).

One of my main job responsibilities as an assistant principal and principal was to set the overall behavior expectations for the students and establish how the expectations were communicated and carried forward by the staff. Over the last 14 years, I have been exposed to many different character education programs, including Character Counts, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Tribes. Each program includes a balance of positive rewards and negative consequences that have been utilized with students. Years of data have been gathered, and adjustments to each program have been made to fit the needs of the students, parents, and teachers. Each program has worked to varying degrees, and it is my belief that the effectiveness of the program is directly related to the way it is implemented. I believe that setting expectations for elementary-aged children should have numerous methods of recognizing positive behaviors and few negative consequences that are consistently enforced by teachers, parents, and

administrators. I believe that setting high expectations for behavior at the elementary school level, whatever program is used, contributes to an environment that is healthy and conducive to student learning. One of the fundamental aspects of any type of social responsibility program relies on the effectiveness of school personnel to build relationships with students and their parents. These relationships are the most important aspect of any school social program, and until schools find more effective ways of building these relationships, problems will continue to dominate the headlines.

Accurate qualitative research depends on individuals' self-reports, so it was important that participants were comfortable answering questions during the interview as honestly and openly as possible (Mertens, 2005). Assuming the truthfulness of the participants, the findings were based on their perceptions and thoughts only. I followed a strict moral code and honestly adhered to all procedures set forth in the study. I analyzed the data collected and focused on only using the data when formulating conclusions. Utilization of the NVivo11 software allowed the data to be clearly coded, sorted, and aligned to the study's research questions. As a result of the study, I constructed meaning from the collected data and reflected on how my own interactions developed and framed my way of thinking about social responsibility.

Participants

The participants selected for this study were comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators from District A. The selection of each participant group is described in Appendix A. Parents, teachers, and administrators were considered the main groups of individuals who affect the social upbringing of students (Anderson, 2000). Choosing the participants in the study

was of utmost importance to its overall success. Participants were chosen primarily based on interest in the study's topic and availability to participate in the required interviews. If a situation arose in which there was more than the required number of participants in any one area, then the researcher utilized the strategy of maximal variation sampling (Creswell, 2002). This procedure requires that a researcher choose individuals with differing characteristics or dimensions of those characteristics. For this study, differing characteristics included administrative experience, years working within the district, years in the same building, gender, and age. This allowed the study to represent multiple perspectives and views of each group of participants. Eleven of the 12 participants were female and the ethnic background included 12 White participants.

Administrators

All elementary school principals were invited to participate in this study (Appendix B), but only four were chosen, one from each quadrant of the district. A contact visit was set up with all interested principals to explain the background, research questions, and time requirements of the study. The purpose of the contact visit was to evaluate the appropriateness of each participant for the study (Seidman, 2006). A decision was made based on those who had continued interest and satisfied the location requirements of their school. Examples of this sampling technique ranged from level of education completed, to years of teaching experience, to years in the district, to teaching endorsements, to experience with elementary-aged children.

Teachers

All of the district's elementary principals were asked to submit the names and email addresses for two teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade. An introductory email was sent (Appendix C). The only criteria given to principals was that the teachers needed to have at least four years of teaching experience within the district and were currently teaching in a self-contained regular-education classroom. A personal contact then was set up with one teacher from each house. A total of four teachers was chosen based on interest in the topic of study, availability, willingness to participate, and experience with elementary students (i.e., years of elementary school teaching). To diminish any conflict of interest, teachers were ruled out if they taught in the buildings of the principals who participated in the study.

Parents

Parents were contacted and chosen in a similar fashion, with an introductory email first going to each school's Parent Teacher Organizations president (Appendix D). Personal contact with each person who expressed interest was made in the form of a phone call to explain the background, research questions, and time requirements of the study (Appendix E). Four parents were chosen based on interest in the topic of study, availability, and number of children who had attended the district's schools, making sure that only one parent per quadrant was interviewed.

The number of participants was based on the criteria of sufficiency and saturation of information. This saturation point was reached due to the participants identifying similar themes throughout the interviews. It was concluded that additional participants would not reveal further significant information. Twelve participants sufficiently reflected the range of sites that make up

the school district and thus would allow people reading the study to identify with and/or connect to the experiences of those participants who were interviewed (Seidman, 2006).

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of an extensive interview recorded on a digital voice recorder. Handwritten notes and the voice recording were used to accurately capture all of the verbal details shared by the participants (Algozzine & Hancock, 2006; Seidman, 2006). Interviews focused on each individual's experience and thoughts regarding the role of the elementary school in the social education of students. The model utilized was a single interview with each participant: administrator, teacher, or parent, followed by a focus group interview with each separate group. The interviews utilized a semi-structured format, which enabled me to guide the conversation to address the study's research questions. This format was the only method utilized due to its ability to adequately explore the meaning of each participant's experience and to provide context and validity to their responses (Seidman, 2006). Each individual interview was approximately 60 minutes long. The focus group interviews were scheduled within one week after the conclusion of the individual participant interviews. This allowed participants enough time to reflect on the prior interview and also maintain a connection to the next. Both interviews were scheduled prior to the first interview with an effort to keep the agreed-upon timetable. The participant was offered the option of conducting the interview in his/her home or at the school building with which he/she was most associated. The focus group interview was scheduled at a centrally located school building within the district or another agreed-upon location.

Field Testing

The interview questions were field tested. The process involved three representatives from the district: an administrator, a teacher, and a parent. The purpose of the field test was to ensure relevance of the questions and to identify gaps or inconsistencies in the format. Each of these participants was chosen based on familiarity with me due to a working relationship in the district. This familiarity with me excluded them from the formal study. The field-tested interviews were recorded digitally, and feedback from each participant was sought following each pilot interview. Information from the field-tested interviews was used to rephrase and/or clarify questions as well as adjust the interview format.

The field-testing process provided feedback that was very helpful for improving the overall interview protocol. This included information on the relevance and clarity of individual questions and the order in which the questions were asked. I moved interview questions earlier or later in the interviews based on the participant's feedback. The field-testing process also allowed me to anticipate possible responses from the study's participants, thus helping to guide the questioning from one topic to the next. The field testing process also allowed the researcher to practice question delivery and to adjust emphasis on certain words or phrases to guide the participants' responses toward the study's research questions.

Interview Structure

The first interviews established the context of the participants' experience and allowed them to reconstruct the details of their experience within their current circumstance. The focus group interview allowed the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience held for them

and constructed new ideas based on the other participants' comments and reactions (Seidman, 2006). Interview questions followed each interview narrative and aligned to each of the study's research questions.

Individual Interview

Individual interviews asked what experiences qualified participants to speak about the social responsibility of schools. They were asked about their level of involvement in elementary schools and about events in their past they were able to draw upon as they talked about social responsibility. Questions asked participants to describe their present life experiences within the area of elementary schools and their involvement in social responsibility. They were expected to describe the details of experiences on which their opinions were built. The interview delved in depth into the experiences of each participant regarding social responsibilities of the elementary school (see Table 1).

Focus Group Interview

The purpose of each focus group interview was for the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience and interact with other participants in a group setting. Making sense and meaning requires that participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation (Seidman, 2006). The focus group interview was dependent on the first interview due to the importance of participants exploring the past and their description of concrete details of their present experiences (see Table 2).

Table 1

Alignment of Sample Questions with the Study's Research Questions

Individual Interview Questions	Research Question
Tell me about your elementary school experience as it relates to whether you remember it as a positive (i.e. happy) time or being negative (i.e. unhappy) time? Why?	1
Please tell me about your early experiences with learning right from wrong? Who would you credit with teaching you about social responsibility? Who had more of an impact in this area, your parents, teachers, or friends?	1 & 2
How strict do you think your parents were with you growing up? In what ways do you think that you are either more or less strict, when it comes to disciplining your children, than your parents were to you? Does this impact you as an administrator, teacher, and parent? Explain.	1 & 2 & 3
In what ways do you feel teachers and administrators are more or less strict than when you were in school?	1 & 2
Did you ever get into trouble at school? If so, what happened?	1 & 2 & 3
What did you think of how teachers handled kids in your class that got into trouble?	2 & 3
Do you recall ever being bullied or harassed at school when you were growing up and how did you handle it? Did anyone assist you? Do you ever remember bullying anyone yourself?	1, 2 & 3
What role did the school have in teaching you about social responsibility? What role did your parents have in teaching you social responsibility?	1 & 3
Describe your current role and responsibilities, as a parent, teacher, or administrator in teaching social responsibility to students and/or staff members?	1
How much emphasis should be placed on a school's state testing scores? Is it a good way to determine a school's effectiveness? Please explain.	1
The No Child Left Behind Act requires academic testing that is used to label schools as "failing" or "not meeting standards." In what ways can schools use the teaching of social responsibility to improve reading and math? How much emphasis should schools place on teaching social responsibility in this manner? To what extent is this going on at your school?	1, 2 & 3
In your current role how can you make an impact on teaching social responsibility? As a parent why is it important to participate in a study about social responsibility? Why do you think that a study involving social responsibility should include a principal, parent and teacher?	1, 2 & 3

Table 2

Alignment of Sample Questions with the Study's Research Questions

Interview Two – Focus Group Questions	Research Question
What additional thoughts have you had about social responsibility in schools?	1, 2, & 3
What are your thoughts about your school's behavior expectations and their efforts to teach students social responsibility? Do you feel that it is an important focus? In what ways?	1, 2 & 3
In school-related discipline issues, what do you feel is your role compared to either the parents', teachers' or administrators' role?	1, 2 & 3
What does violence at the elementary school level look like? What is your view on the causes of these types of violence?	2 & 3
In your opinion, do teachers and administrators do enough to address concerns or instances of violence occurring at school? How would you address these issues?	1, 2 & 3
In your opinion, what is the parents' responsibility for instances of violence that occur at school? How would you address this issue?	1,2 & 3
How are efforts to teach social responsibility different today for parents, teachers, and administrators than they were when you were in school?	1, 2, & 3
Do you feel that current students are more or less socially responsible than previous generations? Why?	1, 2, & 3
Reflecting back on the previous interview, what additional thoughts would you like to share with me about social responsibility or anything that we have discussed previously?	1 & 2
Given what you have shared in the previous interview, how do you see your beliefs or actions changing regarding teaching social responsibility to students? In what ways?	1 & 2
How well do think you fulfill your role as a social educator? Why do you feel this way? Do you feel that you are or have been successful?	2 & 3
In what areas do you feel that schools currently are successful in teaching social responsibility? What challenges do you see or are the areas where they should do more?	2 & 3
What topics are inappropriate for schools to instruct students in social responsibility? Do you have any examples? Why are these areas different from others? Who would be responsible for teaching these identified topics?	3
Do you perceive schools doing a better job or worse one as it relates to teaching social responsibility to today's students? What makes you think this?	1 & 2

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by utilizing the first cycle coding technique of values coding. Values coding is the application of codes that identify common themes and reflect the participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the study's research questions (Saldana, 2009). Excerpts from the transcripts were organized into nodes or categories that allowed me to connect threads and patterns that could be combined into themes and then comment on the excerpts from interviews in a thematically organized manner (Seidman, 2006). Each node represented a theme or a belief, which included each participant's values, attitudes, personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals and other interpretations of the world (Saldana, 2009). The interviewing format effectively allowed me to code values and document any relevant participant actions. Seidman (2006) explained:

In-depth interviewing's strength is that through it we can come to understand the details of people's experience from their point of view. We can see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context. (p. 130)

This method was chosen due to its appropriateness for explaining cultural values and interpersonal and intrapersonal participant actions and experiences (Saldana, 2009). This method also aligns conceptually with the study's social constructivist framework. The two-interview structure allowed the participants to construct thoughts based on their individual experiences within the interview process itself. Allowing participants to verbalize their beliefs during the interview process allowed them to construct additional thoughts regarding social responsibility that might not have been present prior to this experience (Richardson, 2003). Computer-assisted

qualitative analysis software (CAQDAS) was used to electronically code information. NVivo11 is a qualitative software program that helps researchers organize all types of data, which includes Word documents, audio files, transcripts, videos, and pictures (QSR International, 2017).

Transcribed interviews were entered into the NVivo11 software to help me uncover trends in participants' beliefs that showed up in each interview. The software is designed to help researchers analyze open-ended responses and to display connections, ideas, and findings in a wide range of tools, such as charts and models (QSR International, 2017).

Additionally, identified themes were triangulated and authenticated by the focus group interviews. These interviews substantiated the information shared in the individual interviews, allowing me to hone in on the themes that were truly common between multiple groups of participants.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers employ a variety of techniques to increase the trustworthiness of the research they conduct, that is, how much trust can be given that the researcher did everything possible to ensure the data were appropriately and ethically collected, analyzed, and reported (Carlson, 2010). The methodological triangulation of themes and member checking were used to increase trustworthiness. These procedures are among the most often used in qualitative research, as participants have the opportunity to check or approve the interpretations of the data they provide (Cole & Harper, 2012; Merriam 1998).

Each participant was given the opportunity to member check the individual interviews after they had been transcribed by the researcher. Participants were informed that the researcher

would utilize a transcribing approach that employed partial transcripts, providing partly analyzed portions, leaving out filler words, and fixing grammatical errors. These techniques were utilized to allow participants to focus on their main contributions and not be distracted or embarrassed by narrative that was off topic or sentences that were grammatically incorrect (Carlson, 2010).

Participants were given the choice of electronic or hard copies of the transcripts. I immediately emailed an electronic version to the participants as soon as the transcriptions were completed. None of the participants chose to have a hard copy of the interview mailed to them. Only two participants responded to me regarding the member checking, with neither participant requesting changes to their interview transcript.

Conclusion

This study was designed to provide information on the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators regarding their roles and responsibilities in teaching social responsibility to students in the 21st century. Due to the daily interactions with students, evaluating the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents may be an important indicator in students' moral and character development. The study was designed to gain insight on the differences and similarities of these three influential groups of educators regarding how, when, and how much social responsibility should be taught in schools. Themes that emerged for each research question are discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data collected from the participant interviews that sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the role of the elementary classroom teacher in the instruction of the social responsibility of their students?
2. How do teachers, parents, and administrators describe their comfort level with teaching social responsibility?
3. What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the others' role in the delivery of social responsibility?

Twelve participants consisting of four parents, four administrators, and four teachers were interviewed. The data collection process concluded with three additional focus group interviews that were conducted with each stakeholder group for a total of 15 interviews.

Chapter 4 begins with identification of the study's participants, including their name, stakeholder group, and a general description. Then the major themes are discussed within each research question with tables to visually represent which stakeholder group associated with each theme. Finally, a summary of each section is provided.

Participants

Table 3 includes details of each participant in the study. These details include a pseudonym, identified stakeholder group, and a general description of the participant. The general description includes the house within the district with which their role is associated. Teacher information includes years of experience in education and grade level(s) taught. Parent information includes whether they went to public or private school, what grades their children were in, and what house in the district their children attended. Principal information includes the house in which their school is designated, years of experience in education (if stated) and years as a principal. Family information was also included if stated.

Table 3

Participant Information

<u>NAME</u>	<u>STAKEHOLDER GROUP</u>	<u>GENERAL DESCRIPTION</u>
Amy	Teacher	Yellow House; 10 years of teaching experience; No children
Andrea	Teacher	Purple House; 10 years of teaching experience; Mother of 2 children
Eric	Teacher	Maroon House; 14 years teaching experience; Father of 2 children
Kristen	Teacher	Pink House; 7 years of teaching experience; No children
Beth	Parent	Maroon House; Went to small public school; 2 children, one in middle school and one in 5 th grade

Table continued on next page

Table 3 continued from previous page

Charlene	Parent	Pink House; Went to public school; 2 boys, 5 th & 3 rd grades
Dana	Parent	Purple House; Went to Catholic school; 3 children, Kindergarten, 3 rd & 5 th grades
Elisa	Parent	Yellow House; Went to public school; 2 children, one in middle school and one in 4 th grade
Dean	Administrator	Maroon House; 14 years in education and 5 years as a principal; Parent of 2 children
Jill	Administrator	Yellow House; 3 years experience as a principal; Parent of 5 children
Linda	Administrator	Purple House; 13 years in education with 4 years as a principal; Parent of 1 child
Tony	Administrator	Pink House; 9 years as a principal; Parent of 2 children

Research Question 1

What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the role of the elementary classroom teacher in the instruction of the social responsibility of their students?

Five themes emerged from the data as each stakeholder group described the role of the classroom teacher in teaching social responsibility. Those themes include the necessity for 1) teachers to balance the importance of providing instruction in social responsibility while simultaneously delivering meaningful academic instruction to students, 2) teachers as role models, 3) teachers as effective communicators, 4) teachers *in loco parentis* by time spent with children, and 5) parental support for teacher instruction. Table 4 represents the themes as identified by stakeholder groups, with a different color depicting each major theme. Comments

made by the participants in support of the themes are woven into the narrative. An explanation of each theme follows.

Table 4

Research Question 1: Themes as Identified by Stakeholder Groups

Themes	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Balance Between Teaching Social Responsibility and Academic Content	X	X	X
Teachers as Role Models	X	X	
Effective Communicator		X	X
<i>In Loco Parentis</i> by Time Spent with Children	X		X
Parental Support of Teacher Instruction	X		X

Balance of Teaching Social Responsibility and Academic Content

All three groups identified this theme when asked about the role of the elementary teacher in the social instruction of students. The teachers felt they had an important role in teaching their students social responsibility, and each stressed the importance of balancing academic and social responsibility instruction in their daily classroom routine. For example, Eric, a 14-year veteran teacher, stated, “I think it’s almost another subject area that we have to teach and need a curriculum with lessons that need to be taught” (Individual Interview). Kristin, who teaches primary-grade students, echoed that sentiment: “It’s a huge emphasis. I would actually

say a huge part of our job is the social responsibility piece” (Individual Interview). She

elaborated:

Oh, I definitely think we play a huge role. We’re with them almost more than some of their parents are, so I definitely think we play a huge role. I would love to spend more time focusing on that [social responsibility] at the beginning of the year and really developing that as the year moves on, but I definitely think we have a huge role in it. I think the first few months, that’s all we talk about is how to treat people, how to be respectful, how we behave, right from wrong, things like that. I wish I had more time to get back into that as the school year continues. Once you get into curriculum it’s hard to find the time to always revisit, but I definitely think we have a huge role. (Individual Interview)

Two teachers, however, stated that they felt their main role was to teach the curriculum, specifically language arts and math. Kristen stated, “Language arts and reading are the biggest part of my day” (Individual Interview). Eric’s statement would seem to agree: “It [social responsibility] is definitely not up there with the math and English curriculum and core instruction” (Individual Interview). Teachers often struggled with the balance of delivering the core academic subjects and fitting social responsibility instruction into their day.

Amy, who has taught for almost 10 years but does not have children of her own, felt that there should be an even balance:

Everything is so much into reading and math that we are not emphasizing anything with character development at all. I feel that if there were a way to test for character development or a way for schools to show what they are doing to help some of these kids. It is great if we can teach these kids how to read and write, but if we do not teach them how to be good citizens, I feel that we are failing them. (Individual Interview)

Parents, like teachers, did not see teaching social responsibility as separate from the academic curriculum. Beth, a mother of two boys, stated, “I think it [social responsibility] can be melded in with math and science and English, but to have it as a completely separate subject area would be very hard” (Individual Interview). Dana, who is a parent of three elementary-aged

boys, emphasized the importance of the classroom teacher's role in teaching social responsibility as well as academic subjects. She also hinted to the socio-economic status of students being an additional factor that effects teachers.

It seems that schools that have lower test scores probably need more social responsibility teaching. It kind of correlates. But I don't know. That is tough, because in the long run, I'd say social responsibility is more essential to being a successful human being, versus reading and math, but of course, it's very important as well. (Individual Interview)

Parents supported teachers with a sentiment from the group that they had an extremely difficult job, and they felt somewhat bad for their children's teacher. Beth stated, "I feel bad for these teachers now, all the stuff that they have to get done in a day" (Individual Interview).

Charlene, who also is raising boys, supported the sentiment:

I think that they [teachers] are probably doing the best they can as far as dealing with it [misbehavior]. I think it is a problem that starts at home and is out of their control. You can do so much in the school, but those children go home and are most affected by what happens there. I also think with our current legal system, people in the crazy lawsuits and stuff, I think schools are very limited nowadays on what they can do, so I think they are probably doing what they can, to the best of their ability. (Focus Group Interview)

Dean, who has been in education for 14 years with the last five in the role of building principal, supported Charlene's statement, but as it relates to his community and its characteristic of high student mobility. He began by recognizing the difficult job teachers face when working with children and the constant issue of students moving in and out of his building. "We've got these new kids coming in, and it's teaching them expectations and rules that we have in the building" (Individual Interview). He went on to say:

The frustrating part is that we [teachers] have them for however long and we think they are getting somewhere, then boom, all of the sudden they're off to another school and it's like, gosh, all that hard work for nothing. (Individual Interview)

Dean also felt strongly about the subject of his teachers' lack of time during the school day to teach social responsibility.

It would be great if we had a little bit more time so that we could do [character] mini lessons that we did a few years ago. They were wonderful, and the teachers enjoyed doing them. The kids loved participating in them. The problem was the time, and so even if it was something that was more formal across the district as far as "Hey, it's expected that once a month or twice a month, you're going to do these couple things," and "Hey, you can cut science out a day or social studies out a day, and it'll be fine to do these things," but the biggest problem that we have is just the time of trying to get it all done. (Individual Interview)

Tony, a father of five children who has worked the last seven years as a principal within the district, did not emphasize the lack of time, but he stressed the importance of better utilizing the time teachers currently have with their students. He focused on the importance of teachers not only teaching social responsibility but also improving their capacity to build relationships with their students. "We'd like to focus on and spend time getting teachers' mindsets changed towards teaching expectations versus the old school discipline" (Individual Interview).

Maintaining that teachers should be more reflective and responsible in how they interact with students, he stated, "The respect thing goes both ways. You know right away the teachers that treat kids a certain way. Those kids are going to push back and do things just to get that teacher going" (Individual Interview).

Amy added to Tony's relationship-building comment with her statement on the role of the teacher and teaching social responsibility by saying, "Sometimes I feel like that's more important [teaching social responsibility]; in some of these instances we're simply teaching them to be good humans" (Individual Interview).

Tony's and Amy's comments support the importance of building relationships and positive teacher and student interactions. This related to another theme mentioned by both teachers and administrators and evidenced by Tony's statement: "I think the teachers have to be great role models, more so now than ever before! (Individual Interview).

Teachers as Role Models

While talking about teachers' roles in teaching social responsibility, Kristen did not realize how much she was doing. She quipped, "I didn't realize until after this [interview] that I did as much as I did. I was like, oh, wow, I did more [teaching social responsibility] than I thought" (Focus Group Interview). Amy recognized that her role has evolved over the last few years by stating, "I feel like as the years have gone by, I have become more of a mother and nurse [to my students]" (Focus Group Interview). She continued:

We are the safe place [for students]. We are the place where they are learning everything because at home, they just do not have these social skills. So, I just feel like there is a lot of responsibility put on the teacher to help them [students] through pretty much everything, and I feel, like, as the years have gone on our building has just become so heavy with all the stuff that we have to help these kids through, and we can't get all these things [done]. I just feel like I did not realize how much I actually did. (Focus Group Interview)

Teachers not only recognized the increased number of roles that have become inherent to the profession but also the perceived pressure that comes with the need for them to be a positive role model for their students. Amy expressed frustration with this responsibility:

We almost have to be a role model like 100% of the time. It is as if we do one thing that is socially not acceptable, then the parents automatically think that we are not good for their kids. I just kind of feel like they put us under this microscope, and there is no way out. (Individual Interview)

Amy recognized the importance of her role as a social educator with her students and the time spent modeling expected behavior: “I feel like I’m constantly showing them social cues and social responsibility and what’s right and what’s wrong” (Individual Interview). She went on to say, “Sometimes I feel like it’s more of an importance to teach them to be good humans than some of these things that we’re teaching them” (Individual Interview). Amy went on to describe a particular situation with one of her students that helped her understand and define her role as more than just a teacher of an academic subject. She said:

I had a student who got suspended, like, 12 times, and I felt like most of the stuff that I did with him was spent not necessarily yelling at him or scolding him, but trying to show him that what he did caused things or having him try to explain [what happened]. I just felt like he got his consequence of being suspended. I feel like sometimes there was no teachable moments. We were just suspending him, and we were not explaining to him why, so I felt like a lot of that year was me showing him how to be a good citizen and why you cannot punch somebody. I feel like that as a teacher that is our role and responsibility to explain to the kids or their parents, why what they did was not appropriate and to show them how to respond and take responsibility [for an issue].” (Individual Interview)

Linda, a building principal, saw her teachers as role models and viewed the school’s social responsibility curriculum as more a part of the school culture than in previous years. She had been working as principal for the last 10 years in the same building, which serves one of the most diverse and low-income communities within the district. “Teaching social responsibility is a joint effort, and for me it is understanding where the kid’s coming from and seeing if there is something even deeper [there]” (Individual Interview). Linda’s perspective of her teachers’ responsibility is unique to the others possibly due to the number of problems that her teachers deal with on a daily basis.

I always let the teachers know, ‘You are the adult. You are the professional in this situation. If a child says, ‘No, I don’t want to do that or is having a hard time with a

situation, back off a little. Give that child some space. You as the adult can walk away for a few minutes instead of egging it on.' (Individual Interview)

Linda went on to say that being consistent and building relationships with students and parents are key. She stated that she wants teachers to help by building trust for the school by communicating to parents that they support their children. "We're here to support your kids first and foremost, but if they do make a mistake, then we have to enforce this consequence" (Focus Group Interview). A teacher's role model status is enhanced by the ability to consistently enforce student behavior expectations and effectively communicate appropriate consequences to students and their parents.

Effective Communicators

One overarching theme was evident for parents as they described the role of teachers: to be effective communicators about social responsibility. Communication was mentioned in all four parent interviews, and it was not in reference to communicating the academic curriculum, but rather a curriculum based on social responsibility. Dana, who is a parent of three children ages 11, 8, and 6, started off by emphasizing communication as it relates to the classroom environment: "Communicating things that are going on at school and affecting the classroom environment is somewhat the teacher's responsibility" (Individual Interview). Charlene, who has two boys, one in fifth and the other in second grade, went on to say, "Communicating with parents so they can reinforce things at home, because I believe it is a partnership" (Individual Interview).

Elisa, who also has two children (a girl in middle school and a fourth-grade boy), and Beth, a mother of two boys (one in middle school and one in fifth grade), both communicated the

need for their children's teachers to communicate with them. Elisa wanted to be notified if her older son did anything wrong in class so she could address it with him. She elaborated:

When my son was in fifth grade, the teacher never communicated, and so that rolled over into the middle school where my son thought, 'Oh, I can just get away with anything because the teachers aren't going to contact mom, and they don't know what's going on,' but now, we are catching on. (Individual Interview)

Beth disclosed her view of communication was to be proactive. She had taken on roles within the school and community to where it was convenient for the teachers and administrators to communicate with her. Her titles included Parent Teacher Organization board member, scout leader, and lunch supervisor. Her support for the school was strong due to her perspective of being so involved in her children's educational environment. "I think it is important to show my kids that mom and dad find it [school] important" (Individual Interview). She went on to say that teacher communication was vital and placed blame on parents not paying attention to their own children.

You have to notice these things in these kids, and I think many parents do not pay attention to their kids. I think many parents just let them get on their video games or go play with their friends and they do not pay attention to their kids, as they should. (Individual Interview)

The administrator group included experienced educators who had similar thoughts to both groups of participants. A teacher's need to balance social responsibility instruction and academics was the theme that closely aligned with both teachers and parents. Additionally, each group placed emphasis on the importance of teacher/parent communication, but each had a different emphasis that was specific to his or her building and/or community need. Jill's comment summed up the overall sentiment of the principal group: "Teachers need to be great communicators" (Individual Interview). Jill, a relatively new principal with three years of

experience, characterized her school as one with an involved parent community. She recognized the huge influences that teachers make in their students' social upbringing as role models and the expectation within her community that all teachers are great communicators.

If you do not address it [problem], you will get a call the next day from the parent, wanting to know why it was not communicated, so we do a great job following up. Our teachers are on it. They usually communicate to me if anything has happened in the classroom, especially if it is something in which they needed to contact the parent. (Individual Interview)

Principal success can be directly attributed to the effectiveness of how well teachers communicate not only academic curriculum but also policies and procedures associated with social responsibility. An excellent teacher must have a dedication to and recognition of the importance of their classroom communication methods. The teachers also recognized their inherent role in teaching social responsibility based on the amount of time spent with their students.

In Loco Parentis by Time Spent with Children

Teachers and parents know the importance of the student-teacher relationship and the recognition of the amount of time that elementary students spend with their teacher. The term *in loco parentis* is Latin for “instead of parent” or “in place of parent” and refers to the responsibility that educators have to assume parental status and responsibility when students are at school (West's Encyclopedia, 2008). This is important as both parents and teachers mentioned the amount of time children spend at school to be a factor in social responsibility. Andrea stated, “I always call the kids in my classroom ‘my kids’ because I feel like I’m with them sometimes more than I am with my own children at home” (Individual Interview). She stated:

They're with me probably sometimes more than their parents, so I take that really seriously. I always try to tell the kids at school that we're a team, that we're not here to hurt each other, that we're there to help each other, and so I always start off my year like that, that we're a team and make sure we have each other's backs. (Individual Interview)

Kristin recognized the importance of her teaching social responsibility based on the feeling that it would not happen at all if she did not "dig into it [social responsibility]" at school. She stated, "Some of the students don't have a lot of that guidance at home, so we talk about it at school" (Individual Interview). Kristin went on to point out the importance of introducing social responsibility instruction with her primary students, "This is their first year really being full-time in school and preparing them [socially] for the rest of their student career" (Individual Interview).

Parental Support for Teacher Instruction

Interestingly, as the parents discussed teacher communication and their role in teaching social responsibility, they were quick to emphasize parent responsibility as well. Elisa said, "I think it's the parents' responsibility to teach their children right from wrong" (Individual Interview). She recognized the frustration that some teachers feel when disciplining students: "I think it is hard for the teachers to know where that boundary is. We [teachers] can't just put them in timeout. We [teachers] can send them to the principal's office, but really, what does that do? You're going to have children in there all day, every day" (Individual Interview).

Charlene and Beth talked about their trust in the teacher's judgment on matters of disciplining their children. Charlene stated, "Sometimes you have got to be hands off, so they [children] need to be able to trust other adults to help them recognize right and wrong" (Individual Interview). Beth voiced her support for teachers as well: "I like the way my teacher

disciplines the kids, her way of talking to them and I do not have a problem with her disciplining my child at school” (Individual Interview).

Elisa had a slightly different take on teacher support in suggesting that some teachers were afraid to discipline students for fear of being sued by their parents.

I think that teachers are just scared to do anything without the permission of parents because so many people are libel-happy lately. Like, “Oh, we’re going to sue you for this” and it is not fair to the teachers. You get into this profession to teach, and I think it is hard for them right now. (Individual Interview)

Then Elisa made the following statement, “It needs to go back to the good old days where they [teachers] just taught!” (Individual Interview).

The theme of teacher support by the parents was confirmed during the focus group interview, and aside from Elisa’s individual statement about just teaching academics, parental support for social responsibility was uniformly encouraged and supported (Focus Group – Parents).

Summary for Research Question 1

In summary, five themes emerged from the first research question. All three stakeholder groups identified the need for a balance between teacher social responsibility and academic instruction. Administrators and teachers agreed that balancing these two aspects was paramount and becoming increasingly important. Parents, while finding this balance important as well, overwhelmingly felt the need for teachers to communicate information about their children more completely and more often. Administrators echoed that sentiment as not only a key to a teacher’s success but as being important for the success of the entire organization. Interestingly, teachers

did not mention their amount of communication or lack thereof as a one of their significant roles as it related to social responsibility instruction.

Parents were the only group not to specifically mention the need for teachers to be role models for students, but they did recognize the need to support teachers on issues involving social responsibility. The topic of teachers as role models did surface prominently with administrators and with teachers, but this seemed to cause some angst from teachers as they related the pressures of being positive role models along with the numerous roles inherent to elementary classroom teaching. After hearing the thoughts on the role of the classroom teacher by all three stakeholder groups, the next research question focuses on how comfortable they feel teaching social responsibility.

Research Question 2

How do teachers, parents, and administrators describe their comfort level with teaching social responsibility?

The two themes that emerged from Research Question 2 was that each stakeholder group felt comfortable with the teaching of social responsibility to their students/children; however, each group noted specific topics or challenges they considered uncomfortable. All were supportive of their school's social responsibility programs and referenced them as an integral part of a child's experience, mainly due to the emphasis on setting expectations. Comfortable topics can be characterized by the ability to confidently address the topic with the other groups without causing hesitation or stress. Uncomfortable topics, on the other hand, are more difficult to address, and groups would reasonably anticipate some level of disagreement and dissimilarity when addressing the topic with another stakeholder group. Table 5 lists the comfortable topics

each group had with teaching social responsibility along with uncomfortable topics or challenges.

Table 5

Research Question 2: Topics as Identified by Stakeholder Groups That Impact Teaching Social Responsibility

	Comfortable Topics	Uncomfortable Topics
Teachers	Setting expectations and delivery	Lack of communication, classroom makeup, and parent support
Parents	Reinforcement from school and social responsibility programs	Abundance of problems to address and religion
Administrators	Providing opportunities and support for staff	Parent apathy and lack of district-wide program

Teachers

Comfortable Topics

The ability to effectively set classroom behavior expectations is the goal of every classroom teacher. “My students need to know the expectations and that they are clear and they will be held to that [standard]” (Eric – Individual Teacher Interview). Eric went on to say that he has grown in his comfort level and uses different approaches to teaching social responsibility.

There are times when you have to say, “You know what? It’s okay. We’re going to let that go. We can do better the next time, do better tomorrow.” I definitely have grown in that I’ve always been pretty laid-back but then also very fair in what I expect in the classroom, so it’s usually more conversation-driven. We sit and we talk about it. I don’t necessarily call attention to it as much as I used to. You learn, especially when it comes to students that exhibit behaviors, a lot of those are not their fault or things they can’t really control or it’s more of a reaction to something that happened to them outside of

your classroom as opposed to what they're showing you inside the classroom. (Individual Interview)

Kristin reiterated Eric's comments with her statements about the importance of figuring out what works with students and setting the expectations high so they know what they should and should not be doing. "Teaching social responsibility has become more of an emphasis every year, and it is a big piece of what we are doing" (Individual Interview). She went on to say:

I am more comfortable teaching social responsibility to my students; because as I look back, I see how much being respectful and making good choices will play a role in their success as adults. So, as I look at my students, just because they can't do some crazy fact family in first grade, it's like, 'Are they really not going to be successful in the future because they don't know this?' So, I wish there was more of an emphasis on some of that social piece. (Individual Interview)

Andrea echoed the other teachers' statements on the importance and emphasis of teaching social responsibility and highlighted her school's social-emotional learning committee that helps open teachers' eyes to the importance of teacher social responsibility within the classroom. She stated, "If you can take 5 or 10 minutes out of your day to implement something like a short classroom meeting. You can't do all of it, but you can take a little piece" (Individual Interview). Andrea thought that she did a good job and was comfortable with her implementation of social responsibility in her classroom.

I actually think I do a good job. I feel that way because I think the kids respect me, and I know I respect them, and I think that they like me. I think that they know that I will be there for them, no matter what! (Individual Interview)

She also shared that she tries to be aware of what her students do inside and outside of school.

'Hey, I heard you are on a hockey team. How'd you do this weekend?' I feel like if you are specific with that child and what they are doing, it will turn their attitude completely around, and they will be more open to you. If I could just be specific with them and ask them questions so they know that I am interested in them, and it is not just a 'How's your

weekend?’ I think that they will give you the world back. They will open up to you. They will talk to you about their problems. I try to make a conscious effort to make sure I do that every single year with every child. (Individual Interview)

Teachers overall seemed comfortable with their role of teaching social responsibility based on their articulation of a system and/or plan in place for their students. There was a sense of ownership of what happened inside their classroom and the importance of their role in teaching social responsibility. For example, Andrea stated:

I actually think I have a bigger role than parents do. If it happens at school, I feel like that is my time with the kids, and so I feel it is my job to talk them through [a problem], get the entire story, including anything that may be happening at home. Reflect on it a little bit with them and ask them about things that could change. What they did not like about their behavior, because they need to be aware and how to handle it and how to fix it. I think as the teacher, I am the first person that [problems] should be brought. (Individual Interview)

Amy felt similarly about her responsibility as the teacher:

I feel if a situation happens in my classroom, it is my role is to be there to explain to the parent and to the administrator what happened, and to show the student how to respond or take responsibility in an issue. (Individual Interview)

Amy went on about her responsibility as the classroom teacher: “We are not the ones doling out the punishment, so we should be the ones that explain to the kids or their parents what they did was not appropriate. It is all really about communication” (Individual Interview). One way that teachers disseminate communication about social responsibility is through building-wide programs. These programs provide teachers a way to connect social responsibility instruction to the needs of their students. They reiterate the expectations of students acting in a socially responsible manner, and many teachers use them.

Kristin thinks that programs such as Character Counts and Watchdogs are worthwhile because they “help remind students” of behavior expectations (Individual Interview). These

programs begin the conversation about social responsibility. Therefore, she has had few (if any) situations where she did not feel comfortable instructing students about social responsibility. However, successes in delivering social responsibility instruction was not without its caveats, and teachers were quick to mention the challenges inherent with this type of teaching.

Uncomfortable Topics

The teacher focus group highlighted lack of communication as a source of frustration in implementing and fostering a comprehensive plan of social responsibility. When this lack of communication happened, it caused them to feel uncomfortable. Unequivocally, the teachers agreed that they are the major contact for parents and, when a problem arises, the administration needs to communicate the issue. “I appreciate that they [administrators] are trying not to put something else on our plate, but I know that I am going to get a phone call, and it is better that I know what happened” (Amy – Focus Group Interview). Follow-through and accountability are important for teachers as they work with parents and their children. Teachers and administrators need to work together making joint decisions regarding future steps and consequences for students. Eric confirmed Amy’s appreciation of administrator support and supported the need for effective communication. He described this as one of his biggest challenges when teachers are not told what happened with a student issue. The follow-up phone call from the parents to the teacher can be uncomfortable. “I do not like telling parents’, I have no idea” (Eric – Teacher Focus Group).

Other specific situations were mentioned by teachers as being uncomfortable, causing them anxiety. Kristin mentioned that she had a colleague who dealt with a situation that involved a comment by a young student made about an African-American student volunteer.

When she was telling me that, I was thinking I would have just said, 'That's not appropriate,' and shut it down, but it probably would be important to go back and revisit and discuss why that's inappropriate, and I think that's an area I would probably feel a bit uncomfortable with if it was an issue in my room. It's not something that I've ever really had to deal with, but I can imagine what that would be like if you were [teaching] in a high school or in a middle school, and that kind of a discussion came up. I could see that being uncomfortable, depending on the viewpoints of some of the students. I just would hate to make anyone feel bad. (Individual Interview)

She went on to say that teachers need to step up in these and other uncomfortable situations. "I definitely think that is where we would want to step up and make them understand why it's inappropriate versus shutting down those certain situations. Really open the discussion and have a forum even with the little ones" (Individual Interview).

Teachers also face challenges based on their personal lives that result in uncomfortable situations. Amy, unlike the other teachers, experienced a challenge that affected her confidence in teaching social responsibility to her students.

I have had a lot of parents question my ability to discipline their children since I don't have my own children. I've had a lot of parents say, 'Well, you don't have your own kids so you don't understand,' and it has actually happened a lot more than I would have thought it would happen. Like, I am being mean to their child or I do not have any sympathy, empathy, or anything, so that has been pretty difficult because it happens a lot more often than I thought it would. (Individual Interview)

Amy's experience is another example of the perceived lack of support felt by teachers. Parents scrutinizing teachers' personal circumstances like Amy's can add to the pressure felt by teachers when discussing discipline issues with parents. Pressure from parents and differentiating social instruction for the individual student in their classroom challenges teachers' ability to

effectively teach social responsibility. Kristin reflected how much support some of her students actually need each day.

You don't realize how much you actually support their social-emotional growth because it's just something we do. It's not a lesson plan laid out and it's not something we really think about. Other than my classroom meetings, the other stuff just comes natural because it's what is the right thing to do for the kids. I keep thinking, 'Oh, I do this, too', so I feel like I do so much to support them throughout the day. (Kristin – Focus Group Interview)

All of the teachers agreed with Andrea when she talked about the makeup of her class and with individual students requiring different levels of support. It challenges her ability to socially instruct students. Andrea explained it this way:

It definitely changes depending on the makeup of your class, whatever that one year brings and how [social responsibility is taught] but, I mean, it does change with your group of kids. Sometimes you have a lot of parent support and you know that they are getting a lot of that at home and sometimes you know that they are not, so it definitely can change from year to year. (Andrea – Focus Group Interview)

Andrea went on to say:

I think parents forget how to teach social responsibility topics to their kids or they just don't due to them being so busy these days with school and sports. It would be nice if it was implemented more and if parents are not going to do it, then I believe the responsibility falls on us. (Individual Interview)

Teacher comfort level relies heavily on communication, the makeup of individual students in the classroom, and parental support of their teachers' efforts to teach social responsibility. As teachers look for additional ways teach social responsibility comfortably and appropriately, many look to support parents in what they are doing at home.

Parents

Comfortable Topics

Many people would say that it is paramount that parents and teachers agree on the importance of the elementary school providing social instruction to its students. Social instruction is more comfortable for everyone when this agreement and resulting support are present. Due to this support, Dana began by saying:

There is a large number of kids who need to hear those [social responsibility topics] in school, because they do not seem to be hearing it at home. I support it, because I feel that even if you address these issues at home, there is nothing wrong with some reinforcement at school, and these are very important topics for kids to know. (Individual Interview)

Elisa also agreed with Dana about the school providing social responsibility instruction and added that she felt comfortable with what her children have learned from their school experiences.

Students need to learn and be able to get along and help each other. If someone is struggling, help them out. Like, that's something we really push for my daughter. It's like, 'You see your friend struggling. Help them out. Try to teach them the way that you learned because maybe the teacher isn't teaching them the right way.' (Individual Interview)

Statements from the parents included the favorable way the school implements the character program through the support of the school's social worker. Dana stated, "I am very pleased with our character education [program], and I really like how it's incorporated into the classroom from day-to-day" (Focus Group Interview). Jill also recalled that her children would often quote the social worker: "She teaches them how to say this and that; I do think it's good because it equips kids with the tools they need to be out there dealing with it all" (Focus Group Interview).

Overall the parents responded favorably toward the teachers' and schools' efforts in teaching social responsibility. They felt it helped their children deal with situations they will encounter beyond elementary school. However, for parents, questions of what the school should provide as it relates to social responsibility versus what should be solely the parents' responsibility were uncomfortable.

Uncomfortable Topics

The parent focus group uncovered topics of social responsibility instruction that stressed their comfort level with how and what the schools taught their children. The amount of issues students face and opinions on what role the school should have were somewhat overwhelming as evidenced by Dana's statement:

In some ways, I think we're addressing more, or we're exposing kids to more. We're talking more openly about a lot of things than in the past. But I think that in some ways, there's a lot of roadblocks that prevent schools from doing a good job, because you do have so many people ready to jump in about their rights. Or, 'I don't want you teaching my kid this or that.' And so many people think their opinions always need to be heard, and there's so many different ones out there anymore, it's almost hard to be effective in doing anything anymore, because you're offending somebody or upsetting somebody. So, in that regard, I'd say we're not honing in on things maybe as well as in the past. But maybe in the past, there wasn't as much addressed. (Individual Interview)

In the above quote, Dana also discussed her perception of roadblocks based on the opinions of others and the challenge that parents and schools face when teaching social responsibility. Beth made this statement regarding the responsibilities of home and school:

I think that in a perfect world, kids would really be deeply rooted in that [social responsibility instruction] at home, and school could be for academics, but that's not the world we're living in, so I do think it's a very important aspect, and I think we have gotten away from it. (Focus Group Interview)

Dana talked about decisions she and her husband make in regard to social responsibility:

My husband and I talk about situations, are open with the kids, and try not to shield them from life. Our philosophy deals more with the facts. We are not about, 'We don't want you to see that or do that or be around that.' We try to explain the situation and talk about what we can learn from the situation. We talk to our kids a lot. (Individual Interview)

After talking with her daughter, Elisa decided to opt out of her daughter's instruction of Erin's Law. This law, passed in 2012, requires schools to educate children on sexual abuse prevention through age-appropriate curriculum (Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois, 2013). Elisa went on to say that even though her daughter did not participate, the topic sparked a conversation between her and her daughter on the topic (Individual Interview).

Sex was one of the topics that Charlene, Beth, and Dana supported being addressed at school. Charlene and Beth both had favorable experiences with their child's fifth-grade introduction to sex and human development. Dana felt that sex was more of a personal topic and somewhat uncomfortable for schools to address.

I think drugs, sex, bullying, violence are real-world topics that everybody is at some point going to gain exposure to on some level and kids need to be equipped to handle themselves in certain situations. I think these can be addressed at school; however, religion is the only thing that I really don't think belongs in the school setting. (Individual Interview)

Overall the parents had more comfort with schools teaching all areas of social responsibility. Religion was the only topic identified by parents as uncomfortable for schools to teach their children.

Principals

Comfortable Topics

The principal group seemed to define their role as providing the teaching staff with the programs, resources, and support to implement an effective curriculum centered on teaching social responsibility. Dean attempted to encapsulate the entirety of what goes into a successful program in his building:

We tried to support programs within the Character Counts programs for the last seven years. Everything from artwork, to setting up committees that run lunches with the Principal, to copy character material, to our social worker teaching classes related to Character Counts. We also have teachers promoting social responsibility through health classes, bullying assemblies, principal and assistant principal student talks, lunchroom visits, to group and individual conversations with kids. (Focus Group Interview)

He went on to say that all of these efforts by school staff are evidence that social responsibility instruction is valued.

The principals agreed that they are more proactive than ever before in their tenure as the building leader. Linda made these comments about how comfortable she is with her proactive role in teaching social responsibility:

I think that I fulfill the role to the best of my abilities, by providing opportunities for staff to do the teaching and for the kids to receive the lessons for the programs that we have in place. I believe my role is to empower those people and to develop avenues for the programs, by providing the budget, materials, and assemblies that help the message get delivered. (Individual Interview)

Jill agreed with Linda and talked about her comfort level with her role as a problem solver for students, teachers, and parents. She does not want students to strictly see her as person who dispenses the consequences of their bad choices. It is important to her for them to know that

she is there to help with situations in which students are unclear of the expectations and to help them not to make the same mistake twice. She stated:

It is important for them to understand expectations and be able to restate them to me. They need to know what they are supposed to do and to talk about what that looks like. If they come in again there will certainly be consequences. (Focus Group Interview)

Overall the principals felt they were successful in their role of supporting the instruction of social responsibility in their buildings. The success was measured by their emphasis on programs and relationships that were fostered between the school and community. However, challenges for principals in teaching social responsibility came from a lack of support for school personnel in their efforts to implement social responsibility initiatives and the lack of direction in this area from the district level.

Uncomfortable Topics

The principals identified two main challenges when describing their lack of comfort in their building's efforts in teaching social responsibility: 1) parent apathy toward their efforts to communicate the importance of teaching social responsibility and 2) lack of a district-wide social responsibility program. Dean shared an example of this apathy toward social instruction when the researcher asked him about whether high academic test scores or effective social responsibility instruction is more important in determining a school's effectiveness. He answered:

I believe it [test results] is one way to show your school is moving in the right direction, but people pay attention to scores in math and reading as evidence that your school is improving. When people say that your school is failing due to scores on a test and do not take our efforts to instruct students in social responsibility, I just disagree with that! (Individual Interview)

Dean's was only one example of the frustration the principals had toward their perception of parent apathy of student misbehavior. Linda stated:

I will call home and they will say, 'What did they do today?' On the other hand, they will never call you back to find out what happened. I would like to share information with them about me speaking with their child, but I will not get a call back after several tries. I have called a parent and was told they do not want to be bothered nor come to school to talk with me. (Individual Interview)

Dean echoed this frustration:

I will call a parent and they will frequently come back with something argumentative. Every point you make, they have a counterpoint that implies that their child is perfect, and 'how dare you call me?' I have student witnesses and adult witnesses, but it amazes me how some of those folks are blind to think that their child could do no wrong and is perfect. (Individual Interview)

Dean, whose building is one of the most diverse in the district, thinks that knowing the needs of the students in his building necessitates more emphasis on social responsibility instruction, and there is no room for apathy among parents or schools.

Kids are walking in the door each day with issues that our teachers have to deal with, so I definitely think that it is something that is very important. I think the priority level is different, depending on the clientele that you are serving. We have a number of families just in the last couple of years, kicked out of their homes, foreclosed on, or had to move, for whatever reason. Now they are living in the basement with grandma and grandpa or aunt and uncle or whoever. We have many kids that are coming here with a single parent home and the issues that arise due to them not getting a solid foundation of learning and values at home. We have so many kindergartners, that this is their very first schooling experience ever, and they just do not have the social behavior because they have never been in a structured setting. I hope that sooner rather than later, the district is going to realize that we have been way behind in this area. We need to set aside some time in the day for some of those social pieces, which I think would go a long way as the kids go through their schooling. It would be so beneficial, so beneficial. (Individual Interview)

Dean then switched gears to point out the challenge of promoting social responsibility instruction to the community without the school district having a mandated, formalized social responsibility program. This perceived lack of direction leaves the decision on these matters up

to the individual buildings and their staff. He stated, “That which is valued gets assessed.” He further explained his statement:

We notice that it [social responsibility instruction] is not assessed and it will not be showing up on anyone’s evaluation. It will not be showing up on the front page of the *Tribune* and until it does, it will not be valued. It is whatever the building decides is important. (Focus Group Interview)

Linda echoed this sentiment and listed some of the components that her school attempts.

We do the Character Counts and teach a bullying program through the social worker, the principal and the vice-principal being visible, being in the lunch rooms, talking to the kids as whole groups, that kind of thing. Then obviously the stuff you do one-on-one with a kid when they’ve made a poor choice. So I think we’re way more proactive with it than we used to be, but it would be nice for some direction. (Individual Interview)

Tony summed up his feelings of frustration due to the lack of a district-wide social responsibility program:

As an administrator, I think it’s really important to build a positive climate, culture and learning environment for all students. I’m not comfortable doing nothing. We need to make sure we’re incorporating teaching students how to be respectful, kind, and those are what we need in a district program that incorporates pillars we all can support. I think that’s really important for students to come to a school that has a safe learning environment so they can access learning. (Individual Interview)

Principals will continue to look for ways to support their individualized community in providing social responsibility in spite of no formal direction from either the school district or the state. A program that would validate their efforts and confirm the necessary components and overall direction would go a long way toward increasing the comfort level of building administrators.

Summary for Research Question 2

In summary, successes and challenges were identified by each stakeholder group regarding its comfort level with teaching social responsibility. All three groups identified positive ways they impact their children's and schools' social responsibility instruction. Administrators and teachers agreed that communicating between the school and home was paramount for increasing their comfort level of teaching social responsibility. Support for character programs taught in schools also came from all three groups; however, principals were the only group who felt the need for more direction as it related to an official social responsibility program. Parents clearly wanted the school to continue to assist them in social responsibility instruction and wanted their children to think of school personnel as an ally they can go to for help. The challenges teachers face regarding their comfort level relied on the other two groups in terms of good communication from both parents and administrators and the need for increased support and less apathy toward student issues by parents.

After hearing the thoughts on the role of the classroom teacher by all three groups and how comfortable they felt teaching social responsibility, the next research question focuses on what each stakeholder group believed the others should be doing in their specific role in the delivery of social responsibility.

Research Question 3

What do teachers, parents, and administrators believe is the others' role in the delivery of social responsibility?

Two themes emerged from data that addressed Research Question 3: 1) collaboration of stakeholders is necessary to teach social responsibility and 2) communication among stakeholder groups is an expectation that all feel is impactful to their children/students.

Teacher Role

This section explains what parents and administrators felt was the dominant role of teachers in the instruction of social responsibility.

Parents' Perspective About Teacher Role

Communication was identified by parents as an important aspect of social responsibility instruction, with a focus on home-school partnership. Charlene began with an emphatic, "communicate!"

Working hand in hand together. Just like at curriculum night, or even sometimes at Meet the Teacher. The teachers will have their book, and these are the hot points. These are the expectations for the class, so that the parent knows what's going on. There should be no surprises. (Individual Interview)

She went on to highlight the parent-teacher partnership:

If there continues to be a problem, the teachers communicate that with the parents, so they can reinforce things at home. I think it is a partnership, and it's extremely important. If there are issues, the administrators can step in; however, I think for the teachers that the first thing is to communicate expectations and boundaries. (Individual Interview)

Similarly, Elisa stated, “Teachers need to communicate with parents ... period!”

However, she placed the primary importance on parents in teaching students right from wrong with the school’s support.

I think it’s the parent’s responsibility to teach the children right and wrong, and they should take that responsibility seriously, whether they are at school or at a friend’s house or at a sporting event. (Individual Interview)

The support and partnership between home and school is grounded in the belief that what the school is teaching is factual and in accordance with the parent’s beliefs. Dana expounded on the previous parents’ thoughts when asked about the role of teachers in teaching social responsibility:

I’m actually fine with pretty much any topics presented with factual information, not so much, ‘This is what we think you should do.’ ‘These are the facts.’ ‘This is what we know.’ ‘This is research done. This is what’s healthy and what is not healthy’. (Individual Interview)

She elaborated:

I do think sometimes information is better received when it’s not the parents. I think that there’s a large number of kids who need to hear those things in school because they maybe aren’t going to hear it at home, so I support it, because I feel like even if you’re a household that is going to address those issues, there’s nothing wrong with the reinforcement at school. (Individual Interview)

Parents overwhelmingly wanted and appreciated teachers who reinforced positive behavior while at school.

I am very pleased with how my school does [teaches social responsibility]. I think it is incorporated into day-to-day activities through the Character Pillars, and it’s reinforced consistently every day. I like that they’re not just bringing it in once a semester with a random assembly. It’s a day-to-day thing so they actually learn to live it, and it becomes ingrained and helps their thought processes to make good choices and have good boundaries. (Parent Focus Group - Dana)

The topic of positive behavior reinforcement was mentioned by parents as it related to their children's classroom atmosphere. For example, one parent said it best when she said:

The classroom atmosphere is so important. The behavior of the other kids that are with them. I know my son acts differently around other kids and when the teacher zeros in and really positively reinforces that [good behavior], 'I really like how Billy was respecting his friend.' When the teacher models for the kids. (Parent Focus Group – Beth)

Elisa also supported positive behavior recognition by teachers in her statement, "Children need to feel good about themselves because, if not, they are going to think that they cannot do well on a test or assignment and their [academic] scores are going to reflect that" (Individual Interview). Administrators similarly stressed the importance of positive reinforcement and communication among teachers and parents, along with their teachers' ability to build an overall positive relationship with students' parents.

Administrators' Perspective About Teacher Role

Teacher communication with both parents and their administrator is vital to the success of an elementary school or any school for that manner. Principal Jill emphasized that point: "An incident with a connection to social responsibility and student behavior can determine the success of your classroom and the relationship with the classroom's parent community" (Individual Interview). She went on to elaborate her viewpoint:

Especially with the parent community that is so involved. If you don't address it [incident], you will get a call the next day from the parent, wanting to know why it wasn't communicated, so we do a great job following up. Our teachers are on it. They usually communicate to me if anything's happened in the classroom, especially if it's something they needed to contact the parent about. If it was bullying or somebody was hitting somebody, they always let me know. They come in or email me to let me know they spoke to the parents. They'll copy me on emails, just so I know if I get that parent call that it has been addressed. It is so important that we communicate! (Individual Interview)

The importance of teachers working with parents cannot be overstated. Administrators set expectations that teachers stress the importance of parents following up at home with classroom expectations. Principal Jill emphasized:

It's key that the teacher follows up at home, and if you [parents] have any questions after following up or talking to your students, give me a call so we can talk about it. You hear that word a lot, but you need to partner ... it needs to be a partnership. Whatever's happening at school, if they [parents] can be consistent at home in giving the same message [as the teacher], you're more successful. (Individual Interview)

Principal Linda expanded on the topic of success being contingent on communication and partnership:

Expectations need to be "over-communicated" to students. Many of them [students] have been in the building since they were kindergartners and many of them have been here four or five or six years, and students and parents have gotten the same messages [about social responsibility]. They understand the pillars [character expectations] much better. They understand what being respectful is, what being responsible is, and citizenship. They just have a better feel for that, and I'd like to think it's making a difference, and the [discipline] data, reflects that over time. (Individual Interview)

Teachers have many roles and wear many hats as it relates to the education of students, but according to parents and administrators, the role of communicator is the most important. Parents specifically focused on the importance of the communication of factual information and the reinforcement of positive behavior in the classroom. While in agreement, administrators additionally focused on teachers' ability to build a relationship with parents and partner with them in teaching topics related to social responsibility.

Parent Role

This section describes what teachers and administrators felt was the dominant role of parents in the instruction of social responsibility.

Teachers' Perspective About Parent Role

Teachers strive to provide a positive environment for their students, which includes setting clear expectations for not only classroom procedures but for behavior expectations as well. For instance, Eric stated that his classroom has positive accountability and a strict environment with expectations for how they treat one other (Individual Interview). Eric buttressed that statement with what he wants from his students' parents:

I ask my parents every year to support me ... If I'm calling you, it's because I feel like it's something we need to be on the same page about. If we're not, you and I can have that discussion, but it shouldn't go to the student that you're not supporting what the student and I talked about. If you and I disagree then we can talk about it and maybe, I can help you understand where I'm coming from. I can address why it's a bigger problem than what you feel it is, or you can help me to understand that, 'Okay, it's something that from now on, maybe we'll handle a little bit differently,' but we still need to be on the same page in this one instance. (Individual Interview)

Eric hinted in the previous quotation that he believed that parents do not always support the teacher in front of their children. This type of behavior undermines the authority and credibility of teachers and only makes it more difficult to enforce behavior expectations. Parents want to shield their children from negative consequences and struggle with having conversations that prepare students on how to deal with negative situations (Individual Interview). This lack of support and follow-up was echoed by Kristin, an experienced fifth grade teacher:

I would like the parent to be that support for us. I feel, like, if it doesn't connect at home, if what we're trying to do at school doesn't carry over in the home, it makes it extremely difficult for it to become a consistent at school. You always hope and stress at the beginning of the year, 'We need you to back us up', and you hope that that's what is going to happen, and that they're going to address it when the child gets home. Unfortunately, I don't know that that's always the case. (Individual Interview)

Additionally, teacher Andrea had this to say about parent follow-up and when a student breaks a classroom expectation: “I think I should be their first go-to, and I think the parents should be there, hopefully, to back the teacher up and to help their child through it” (Individual Interview).

Amy also stressed the desire for parents to inform her of classroom issues. Her description was one that all four teachers echoed, which summarized the parental role of support and follow-up as viewed by teachers:

I just feel like sometimes like parents should follow through with consequences at home, as well, but sometimes feel like the hardest part is when you call a parent and you explain what their child has done, and they either, one, don't think it's a big deal, so they don't even acknowledge it, or sometimes they go the opposite end and they choose a punishment for their child that's, like, way extreme. So it's almost like you become afraid to call some of these parents at all. (Individual Interview)

Parental support and follow-through was not only emphasized by teachers but by administrators as well and this type of support was identified as an essential aspect of a functional school community (Principal Focus Group).

Administrators' Perspective About Parent Role

The administrators had communication concerns similar to the teachers when describing their view of the parental role in the school's delivery of social responsibility instruction.

Principal Dean shared this perspective about calling home:

Ideally, when I pick up that phone to call home, I hope that parents are going to be supportive of what we're doing here on our end. They will be understanding that obviously [infraction] this happened, there needs to be a consequence, and this is the consequence. I also hope that there's follow-through at home. The child, obviously, will get the consequence here, whatever it may be, but then there should also be, in my opinion, some sort of consequence at home, so that the child knows that we here at school have these set rules and expectations that you need to follow, and mom and dad are going

to support those rules and expectations at school, and they're going to show you that they support them because they're also going to give you a consequence at home. (Individual Interview)

This sentiment was common among the Principal group, with Dean describing a common frustration regarding the “pushback” that is occasionally received:

You will call a parent, and they will come back with something. Every point you make, they've got a counterpoint, and not their child. Their child's perfect, and 'How dare you call me?' and even though I've got student and adult witnesses, it still just amazes me at how some of those folks are so blinded by the fact that they think that their child could do no wrong and is perfect. (Individual Interview)

Jill, who served as a principal in multiple buildings in the district, reiterated Dean's frustration regarding the attitude of some parents by adding:

I've seen how different it can be when parents are involved and supportive at home versus when they don't care. The student comes to school knowing there's no consequences at home, because no one really cares at home, and so at school, it is very difficult to change behaviors because there's no incentive to change if nobody cares at home. (Individual Interview)

Incentivizing the need for students to engage in social responsibility instruction needs to come from both home and school. Parental support, trust, and responsibility are paramount to student success as described by all of the administrators. One said it best when he shared:

We all want parents to be supportive. I think building that trust with parents is key, though, so they don't just think that you're out to get their kid right off the bat. I think that's the issue for some parents, that's what they come in thinking, 'You're just looking for a problem with my child.' So it's figuring out a way to build that [trust] up and within your school community. (Focus Group Interview - Dean)

It becomes difficult when parents are not perceived as taking responsibility for their children, and this is when administrators look to balance the relationship building with parents and the restrictive consequences for student misbehavior. Linda explained that approach in this way:

You express your concern to the parent, but at some point in time, we can't control what they do at home, so if they are not helping you make positive changes, and their child keeps doing behaviors that are detrimental to themselves or others, then sadly, you have to start suspending the child. It becomes, 'Well, I understand you don't think this is a problem, but it's a problem here.' Maybe that inspires some action on the parents' part. Sometimes it does, sometimes not so much. (Individual Interview)

Parents often look through the single lens of what is best for their child when it comes to the teaching and reinforcement of social responsibility, whereas teachers and administrators have multiple lenses and must thoughtfully balance what is best for their classroom, school, and overall community. Parents are provided with information from the school, which includes how schools deliver their social responsibility curriculum. Both groups want parents to support these efforts, follow-up and reinforce behavior expectations, and be responsible for their children in what happens at school.

Administrator Role

This final section will describe the main roles of school administrators as they relate to a school's social responsibility instruction. It is common for teachers and parents to have strong views as they relate to the role that administrators have in a school's delivery of and the effectiveness of a social responsibility curriculum.

Teachers' Perspective About the Administrator Role

Administrators are responsible for everything that goes on in a school, and according to teachers, being supportive of staff with students and parents is near the top of the list. This support is all encompassing and paramount as it relates to delivering social responsibility. Being

supportive and being willing to assist with communication were identified as the main roles of the administration in delivering social responsibility to students.

Eric related how his teaching is affected by his administration, by saying, “My teaching is guided by the way the administrative team drives the building as it relates to discipline and character values” (Individual Interview). Kristen described when she utilized her administrators to assist with communication:

I think those ones [behavior incidents] where you worry about it not being communicated effectively to parents. If you knew that there would be a gray area or something where you just want some kind of support, whether it be, silent support, or just knowing that they are there if a question comes up. If you feel more comfortable with them answering, so parents know it is important. Also, if I feel like there’s something that is not being resolved in the classroom or if it is something bigger. (Individual Interview)

Amy not only wanted support, she also had a clear explanation of the role of the administration as it relates to communication and discipline consequences:

I feel like the administrator’s responsibility is definitely to explain to this child what they did and what their punishment was going to be and why they got that punishment. When the student is processing what they did, I feel the principal and the teacher should work together to process with them as to ‘What can you do differently next time?’ I feel like the principal or assistant principal should be the one that gives the consequence, and I feel like that relationship should be clear. The student should know that they are the person that’s giving them the punishment. It blurs the lines on whether the teacher or principal is the one who gives the consequences. (Individual Interview)

She continued her thought about the principal’s role by stating:

I feel like it’s the principal’s responsibility, or assistant principal’s responsibility to investigate the situation and then to call the parent, especially if it doesn’t happen in my classroom. If it happens at recess or somewhere else, it should be their responsibility, because I wasn’t there. If it happened in my classroom, then I feel like it’s my responsibility to tell somebody. (Individual Interview)

Communication from administrators was a common thread with parents and was also highlighted by teachers as a main role in delivering social responsibility. Administrators setting expectations and solving “big” problems were also accentuated.

Parents’ Perspective About the Administrator Role

The overarching school expectations, whether for academics or behavior, rest on the communication skills of the administrator. Parents relegated the communication and ability to solve big problems to the school’s highest authority. As it relates to social responsibility, parent Dana only wanted the administration to get involved if it is a big deal. She stated in her individual interview, “If it got to be a bad enough issue, then the administrator would need to step in, but then I feel like administrators only need to really be handling disciplinary issues if they are a really big deal.”

Like Dana, Charlene and Elisa also agreed by saying that administrators “should step in if things don’t get worked out by the teachers,” and “they should receive a call from the principal, which is much worse [for their children].” However, according to Beth, where the principal was once a “fear factor,” she sees the role more as a facilitator and someone who sets expectations.

The principal was kind of a fear factor in a way when communicating and dealing with behavior infractions. Where now, the principal is out and about and friendly, and it [the position] is not a fearful thing. However, I do feel that there was a little bit more respect for the position [in years prior]. (Individual Interview)

Administrators may not elicit fear and tears from students upon entering their office, but they are more important than ever as it relates to supporting and communicating behavior expectations related to the delivery of social responsibility. Teachers are reliant on administrators to solve those problems that are not easily resolved between students, parents, and teachers.

Administrators need to continue to support teachers and parents as the need for additional social responsibility education changes in schools.

Summary for Research Question 3

In summary, the roles of each stakeholder group were identified by each of the other stakeholder groups regarding their delivery of social responsibility. All three groups identified the importance of communication by their counterparts when delivering social responsibility instruction.

Teachers were tasked with presenting factual information and reinforcing positive behavior from their students. Both parents and administrators identified the importance of teachers partnering with students and parents for the smoothest and most successful social responsibility program. It would seem that the delivery of social instruction would be severely hampered in its efforts without ongoing communication between home and school.

Parental support for the initiatives and decisions made by teachers and administrators was clear. Whether it was support for a classroom procedure, curriculum, or activity, teachers want parents to be supportive and follow up with students regarding social responsibility efforts that are put in place. Administrators want to work with parents by communicating expectations, but they also look for support in decisions based on social responsibility expectations that have been put in place in order for the schools to be an orderly and safe place to learn for their children. Parents taking responsibility for their children's actions and not undermining school-based decisions would go a long way to a more supportive partnership with schools.

Administrators' supportive role was confirmed by both the teachers and the parents as they both relied on communication that served to set expectations and to resolve the major issues that centered around social responsibility.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the study were presented to develop an enhanced understanding of the perceptions of elementary school stakeholders in teaching social responsibility at the elementary level. The chapter was organized into three main sections corresponding with the study's research questions. Themes that emerged from each question were examined from each stakeholder's point of view. These findings will be compared and contrasted with existing literature in Chapter 5. The chapter presents the relationships between the current literature, qualitative findings, and identified themes. It will also detail the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

“The world howls for social justice, but when it comes to social responsibility, you sometimes can't even hear crickets chirping.”
– Dean Koontz, *Deeply Odd*

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that exist about social responsibility at the elementary level by teachers, parents, and administrators. This study not only explored the perceptions of the roles of all three groups, but it also described each group's level of comfort with teaching social responsibility to children, including what they believed were each other's roles in delivering such instruction.

The study supports previous research that calls for the need to teach social responsibility (Bracey, 2006; Gibson, 2009; Likona, 2009; Noddings, 2005). Many sources mention the need for social responsibility instruction; others recognize the crushing pressure that schools and teachers face to raise assessment scores (*Education Week*, 2009; *Education World*, 2017; Jacobsen & Rothstein, 2009). Bencivenga and Elias (2003) found that social-emotional skills coupled with academic abilities define school success, but they failed to mention who is responsible for teaching these skills. This study adds to the current literature by beginning the conversation on who is responsible for teaching social responsibility to our youngest learners.

There has been a great deal of research on social responsibility programs, with many predominantly dealing with the implementation of character education types of programs by schools and/or teachers (Ford et al., 1987; Gibson, 2009, Ricketts, 2009). Korkmaz (2007) did study teachers' perceptions of the roles of parents and schools, but with a focus on academic achievement and only a slight mention of role models and the importance of social rules and

behaviors. Other research involving social responsibility has centered on the myriad of social programs marketed to schools to assist with social responsibility instruction (Adams, 2013; Guidry, 2008, Simmons, 2008).

This study included 12 individual interviews and three focus group interviews from three main groups of people who educate elementary-aged children: parents, teachers, and administrators. The strength of this study was the experiences of the collective group in articulating their perceptions of each other's roles and obligations in teaching social responsibility.

The first major takeaway from my study came from participants' responses while answering Research Question 1. When asked about the role of the elementary classroom teacher in the instruction of social responsibility, both teachers and administrators felt the need to balance social responsibility and academic instruction. For example, teacher Eric stated that social responsibility instruction is almost as important to his students as math and English. He went on to say that it should be "part of our district's curriculum and part of our instruction." Teacher Kristin bolstered that statement, saying language arts and reading were the biggest part of her primary students' day, but her emphasis definitely went toward balancing her students' social and academic expectations (Individual Interview). As found in this study, this concept of balance also aligns with Casey and Grossman's (2013) statements connecting how educators place importance on values, such as honesty, compassion, loyalty, respect, trust, and responsibility while simultaneously teaching the academic curriculum. This concept of balance between social and academic instruction is one that all teachers in America strive for, based on their altruistic efforts to bring social responsibility instruction into the schools (Berkowitz et al.,

2004; Gibson, 2009). As a principal, my yearly professional development goals contained both an academic achievement target and a climate goal for the building. My success was dependent on a balance of many things, including the instruction and development of students' social responsibility. I stressed to the school community that both of these facets were paramount to achieving a school that was not only an enjoyable place to work but also to send your children. I feel that to be a successful building leader, current and future principals need to frequently assess if their professional development and school improvement goals have a balance of academic and social responsibility components. In my attempt to support the achievement of these goals, many approaches were put in place that promoted this message.

Ricketts's (2009) study detailed numerous strategies for implementing social responsibility by teachers, including class meetings, packaged curriculum, and guest speakers, along with emphasizing their role in this type of instruction. However, responses from parents in the current study suggest this does not hold the same importance to them. More specifically, parents did not care as much about the method or even the content of message that was taught to their children as long as it was communicated to them in advance. For instance, parent Beth did not identify specific social responsibility topics that were exclusionary from her child's education. However, she was adamant about the importance of school's teaching factual information on sensitive topics such as religion and sex education. Dana and Elisa objected to these same topics as well and stated that these would be matters better addressed at home. Additionally, both appreciated that they were informed of what was to be taught, which in turn sparked conversations with their children at home.

In this study, parents viewed communication as a gateway for a trusting home-school relationship. Additionally, trust was diminished based on how and when information was communicated and not necessarily the content of the information. Historically, parents have supported moral improvement and developing nonacademic outcomes for students (Ford et al., 1987; Korkmaz, 2007; Onderdonk, 1995); however, similar to Ryan's (2010) study that described teachers feeling hassled by parents, the current study still contains undertones of teachers feeling uncomfortable when addressing issues of social responsibility with parents. In the current study, parents were much more accepting of a curriculum based on social responsibility if they had prior notice and opportunities to ask questions, as evidenced by parents asking for "proactive" communication and frustration with deferred communication. This exacerbated the mistrust of teachers and the perception of missed opportunities to discuss important issues with their children (Dana, Charlene, Beth & Elisa – Individual Interviews).

The second major takeaway from my study is from Research Question 2, which delves into each group's comfort level with elementary schools teaching social responsibility. The agreement and level of comfort was consistent between groups in that schools should have a major role in helping students become socially responsible as they matriculate from grade to grade. However, teachers did not realize the amount of social responsibility instruction they provided to their students until they were prompted. They did not seem to realize how many different student issues they dealt with on a daily basis. Eric, for instance, indicated that so much of his classroom instructional time is spent on teaching social responsibility that it could be and frequently was an additional taught curriculum separate from other subjects. This supports Onderdonk (1995), who identified 35 teacher roles that included curriculum instructors,

classroom managers, computer technicians, mentors, coaches, social workers, psychologists, friends, and parents. Evidence from the current study does not indicate that any of these roles have gone away over the last 21 years. This was reinforced during the teacher focus group interview when Eric reported, “I just didn’t realize how much I actually did,” which was echoed by the entire focus group. Andrea’s sentiment punctuated the thought, “Oh, wow! I did more than I thought!” Interestingly enough, parents came to a similar realization regarding the efforts that teachers make in emphasizing social responsibility.

Parents were cognizant of teachers’ efforts and the difficulties they encountered when disciplining some of their students. This was due to the threat of reports to administration and litigious consequences for instruction that did not line up with beliefs that occur at home. Dana mentioned “roadblocks” that prevent teachers from doing a good job because of the threat of violating a parent’s rights when teaching their children certain subjects. Elisa emphasized this point, stating that teachers seek permission for everything because they are afraid of people suing them. The parent focus group discussed the current legal system and how they felt schools were doing the best they could in spite of the threat of “crazy lawsuits” against schools and teachers. Beth summed it up nicely during the focus group interview: “Right now, I think society is trying to find its place of how to handle those new challenges in social responsibility.” Dealing with these challenges could be mitigated by establishing clearer guidelines for each other’s role in teaching social responsibility topics and as a viable avenue to strengthening the home-school relationship.

The importance of a positive relationship between teachers and parents connected with the third major takeaway, from Research Question 3. This question examined each stakeholder’s

thoughts on the role of the other groups in the instruction of social responsibility. The importance of parental support in the form of communication and the reiteration of teacher and school expectations was identified as each group described the others' role. The emphasis of this takeaway centered on all three stakeholder groups' clear communication regarding student behavior and the expectancy of parental support. A harmonious student/school relationship was found to be a driving motivation for all three groups and of vital importance to student success. This relationship directly focused on parental support of the school's social responsibility instruction efforts. Parent Elisa recognized the amount of time her children spend each day at school depends on assistance with teaching them social responsibility. She elaborated, "It is our responsibility to raise our children and assist you in helping them when at school" (Individual Interview). Assistance in the form of parental support would strengthen that connection and make it easier for teachers to be consistent with their teaching and enforcing social responsibility instruction. Teacher Kristin explained, "We need you to back us up!" Teacher Amy's call for parent support is just simply following through with consequences and/or conversations at home regarding social responsibility. Korkmaz (2007), in his study dealing with teacher perception, found that teachers strongly believed parents needed to support them and take responsibility for their children's education. This is harmonious with the current study regarding teachers stressing the importance of parents as primary role models. This is emphasized by the principal focus group statements that fostering parent support and trust is the key to strong educational community. Principal Dean described his thoughts when calling parents with unfavorable news: "I can only hope when I pick up that phone, that they [parents] will be supportive of what we are doing on our end." He continued, "It amazes me how some parents are so blinded and think that

their child can do no wrong.” Principal Linda agreed: “If they [parents] do not help and support what we are trying to do at school [at home], it is not going to be effective at school either.”

Principals are faced with the unfortunate situation of what to do when parental support is inconsistent or absent. All four principals agreed that parents should be teaching social responsibility at home and supporting the school’s efforts in this area. “Parents need to understand that we are here to support kids first and foremost, and if the school needs to step in and teach social responsibility than that is what will happen” (Jill – Principal Focus Group).

The current study supports past research on teacher roles by emphasizing the reciprocal desire for both parents and teachers to communicate and support students in their academic and social responsibility learning (Korkmaz, 2007; Onderdonk, 1995). This is not a new concept; however, as teacher roles continue to expand and evolve and the social issues that students face continue to grow, this will become a topic of greater importance. Parents and teachers need to realize that as society changes, so will the needs of children and to properly support them; educators and parents need to communicate and work together reinforcing these new expectations with positive social responsibility instruction.

Social Responsibility Findings in Relationship to the Theoretical Framework

Social constructivism was selected as the theoretical framework of this study because it aligns with the way children develop principles of social awareness and moral discourse (Battistich et al., 2001; Yilmaz, 2008). This form of education is gradually constructed into children’s formal education beginning with the earliest days of schooling. Children’s social interactions, good and bad, are based on the culmination of their individual experiences and

constructed each day as they interact with their teachers, parents, and peers (Atkinson & Housley, 2003). Social constructivism supports each of the major takeaways of my study as schools search for ways to provide genuine opportunities for students to acquire social responsibility skills. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: a) a well-thoughtout social responsibility curriculum that is implemented throughout the school year by school personnel, b) classroom activities that address social issues, c) a positive and negative feedback system for students that is clearly communicated to students and parents, d) community/parent organization events that support social responsibility that use identical language as the classroom teacher, and e) additional opportunities for parent and teachers to conference with the students present. The culmination of these efforts socially construct stakeholders in the vision and mission of a socially responsible school environment. Students can spend up to six years in a K-5 elementary school, gradually learning the tenets of social responsibility. Additionally, a school community that supports and empowers teachers who embrace opportunities to help students will undoubtedly have teachers who are more comfortable with the delivery of social responsibility topics, which connects with Research Question 2. Building this comfort level of teaching social responsibility begins with incorporating the opinions of parents, teachers, and administrators. The current study builds on Thornberg's (2008) study, which observed how teachers perceived social responsibility in the daily instruction of students. Additionally, it discussed the process of how schools taught social responsibility and the development of teachers' comfort level.

The concept of teachers' comfort level and struggle with balancing academic and social instruction in the classroom can also be socially constructed with an effective professional development plan and regular follow-through based on current and best practices. Training for

teachers on implementation of a social responsibility curriculum and how to communicate with parents should be a regular and ongoing process that becomes gradually ingrained into a school's and teacher's plans.

Schools that implement and continuously refine a program based on yearly data will reap the benefits of common expectations and the understanding of social responsibility expectations by its students, staff, and parent community. A formalized social responsibility curriculum would support stakeholders, as expectations would be constructed over time as students move to each successive grade and each having similar understanding of learned social responsibility behaviors practiced and reinforced each year. This social constructivism becomes the norm as the school continues to cultivate positive relationships, social instruction, and responsibility for its students and community.

Implications of the Study

There are clear implications of this study for all stakeholder groups as schools emphasize the importance of delivering a curriculum that includes social responsibility. This section provides these implications for each group.

Parents

This study has two clear implications for parents. One common thread throughout the study was that parents want to be communicated with regarding their child's academic and social education and to somewhat control the content presented by school personnel. Many parents wanted input into what is taught to their children as it relates to social responsibility and related

content. That being said, parents need to be active partners in their children's education and be proactive as it relates to familiarizing themselves with their school's social responsibility curriculum. This includes classroom expectations for behavior and consequences that occur when these expectations are not followed. For example, parents should expect consequences if their students make an insensitive comment regarding the appearance, mannerisms, or race of another student due to violating the expectation that students respect each other. Teachers' and administrators' expectations of students and the interpretation of disrespectful behavior is often different than what is perceived by students and their parents. Schools need to communicate to parents what type of behavior and speech is considered disrespectful and the consequences for such behavior. This can be done in many ways, including specific literature sent or presented to parents, additional face-to-face meetings, and family nights or programs based on respect. Another example is to provide adequate notice to parents prior to teaching topics related to sex; drugs; political views; books with themes of magic, witchcraft, and zombies; and topics related to personal health, to name a few. Parents can then make informed decisions regarding what information their children receive at home and from school.

Ideally, parents would be upfront and reach out to teachers and administrators regarding objections to the material and manner in which it is presented, but this is rarely the case. Schools need to make special efforts to communicate with families of marginalized groups, which include low income, English language learners, special education students, and parents who do not express an interest their child's social responsibility instruction. This could include individualized meetings, phone calls, reports, paper copy of memos, home visits, classroom

visits, and programs that serve to bridge the communication gap and show a personalized interest in their students and the value of the parent/guardian connection with school.

Schools need to make sure they are clearly communicating the curriculum, including what will be taught throughout the school year. Teachers and administrators need to be cognizant of the areas that historically receive parental objection, which typically include themes of drug abuse and prevention; books with adult themes of sex, adultery, and drug use; themes of witchcraft or religion; and teachers injecting personal political views into classroom conversation. Proactive communication highlighting areas of concern that previous experience has shown to be problematic for parents will stop instances of negative pushback. This includes negative phone calls to the principal and district office personnel, negative teacher conferences, and phone calls that can strain the parent/teacher relationship.

Based on my experience as an administrator, I would ensure that topics dealing with human sexuality, drugs, alcohol, Erin's Law, health, and politics, including presidential elections, be addressed within the proper context by school staff. Then parents would have opportunities to either provide feedback, accept the curriculum and associated instruction, or schedule students to abstain from the objectionable content. Erin's Law being the exception, parents have every right to monitor and withhold their children from perceived controversial information. Communication between home and school has many avenues and an abundance of ways for schools to communicate academic and social responsibility curricula. These methods of communication not only include paper memos and newsletters; schools are increasing the utilization of technology in the forms of email, phone blasts, text messages, webpages, classroom apps, Facebook, Twitter, and many additional options to communicate with stakeholders. Parents

should take advantage of this information explosion to utilize their preferred form of communication with schools and teachers. This includes email, text messages, and updated teacher webpages.

The second implication for parents is the perceived lack of support that many teachers feel is prevalent from parents. This perceived lack of support is due to teachers filling the many roles that come with being a teacher and the backlash of them stepping over some serendipitous line of appropriateness that parents arbitrarily set for them. This was expressed by parent Elisa, who commented in her interview about the difficulty teachers have in knowing where are the boundaries of what is acceptable to teach and what is not, as it relates to social responsibility. Backlash from parents includes negative phone calls to principals and district office personnel and the passing on of negative teacher/school experiences with friends and neighbors in the community, which some perceive as detrimental to the school's reputation. This undermines the school's standing in the community that administrators and teachers work so hard to build.

Parents need to stop and reflect on situations that happen to their children in the classroom and realize the lens that they are looking through as it relates to school expectations for all students. Parents want what is best for their children; however, teachers and administrators must do what they feel is best for all the children in a classroom or grade level. Parents must expand their views of what is right/wrong/acceptable to include the classroom and school communities that their children are a part of. Teachers and administrators are tasked with instructing more than one child at a time, whether that be 30 students in a classroom or 800 students in a school. A social responsibility curriculum that might not be right for their children does not mean it is not for other students. Parents Dana and Elisa identified the need for schools

to assist parents with the numerous issues that school-aged children face daily. Communication from parents on issues that students are currently facing at home would allow teachers to differentiate classroom expectations based on this information. Teachers who know their students are facing personal or family issues can be sensitive to their dilemmas and react accordingly. Parents need to trust teachers to do what is in the best interests of their children. This trust is cultivated in many ways that range from teachers increasing their communication, to efforts to build relationships with their students' parents, to making sure all communications home are positive, professional, and accurate. Any communication that is lacking these qualities undermines the teacher's credibility and de-emphasizes the importance of the original communicated message.

Teachers

One of the main tenets of the current study was the need for teachers and schools to communicate effectively, especially as it relates to social responsibility instruction and delivery. Consequently, one main implication from my study is for teachers is to communicate more often and more thoroughly than they currently do. This communication will require additional time from a teacher's busy schedule; however, doing so could eventually save time and foster positive relationships with parents. While parents and administrators identified the importance of communication to a school's success, teachers did not. This could suggest that the teachers already felt they communicated sufficiently regarding social responsibility or that their communication was not problematic. However, the teachers' focus group did identify a lack of communication with their administrators as an uncomfortable topic and source of frustration.

When teachers send students to the office for breaking a school rule or expectation, it becomes the administrator's prerogative as to what discipline the student receives. Teachers do have options, which include providing the administrator with enough background information that the administrator would act similarly to the teacher, contacting the administrator prior to sending the student so they could collaborate on a proper consequence, or not sending the students to the office and issuing a classroom consequence that does not require the administrator's participation. In the last of these options, the teacher not only controls the consequences but retains the control over the situation, as the student is responsible to the teacher and not the administrator. If the consequence is major and in line with serious infractions outlined in the parent/student handbook, then an administrator would need to be involved.

The administrator then communicates the consequence to the parent without much (if any) input from the teacher. Even though the parent receives the consequences from the administrator, questions related to the incident fall back on the teacher. Questions include: What exactly did the student do? What did the other student(s) do? What was the teacher's reaction? How was my child treated? The administrator is left to answer these questions without having witnessed the incident, which can lead to misinformation or parts of the incident being left out of the explanation. This frequently leads to parents getting a different version from the child when they get home, which undermines the credibility of the administrator. The teacher frequently does not receive all of the information from the administrator prior to the parent calling the teacher about the incident. The more accountability a student can have toward the teacher, the more control a teacher can have over his/her classroom and the more accurate information can be relayed on to the parent.

Again, this miscommunication compounds the mistrust and lack of credibility parents often attribute to school administrators and teachers. I think this reveals an essential requirement for successfully implementing any social responsibility program in schools. If teachers and administrators cannot communicate effectively and deliver the same messages regarding social responsibility instruction to their communities, then it will always remain a roadblock to school effectiveness. Communication protocols between home and school need to be designed in a way that, if done correctly, enhances parental trust in teachers and administrators. This becomes the heart of the problem, as teachers and administrators are pressed for timely and accurate information to parents.

When meeting face to face with parents and after-school phone calls are not feasible, other forms of communication become necessary. Notes, texts, emails, and newsletters then become ways teachers communicate with parents, which can be perceived and misinterpreted in ways that were not intended. When possible, teacher and administrator collaboration needs to occur on correspondence home, which deals with social responsibility expectations and discipline consequences. Just as teachers differentiate for students, administrators need to differentiate for teachers in determining the amount of support provided to teachers as they communicate with parents. This communication needs to be scrutinized for clarity and message purpose. Professional development training for teachers needs to include strategies and concrete examples of appropriate and effective communication strategies.

New teachers observe mentors teaching the academic curriculum, but they rarely observe them in a parent conference or listen in on a parent phone call. Assistant principals and teachers, with parent permission, should be able to listen as more experienced educators model

communication strategies with parents. Effective notes and written communications should be explicitly taught to neophytes to increase the likelihood that parents will understand and accept positive and negative information about their children. The goal should be for parents to endorse teachers as role models for their students and to diminish the amount of mixed messages regarding their children's behavior or the need for social responsibility instruction. Any roadblock to teachers being role models or being perceived as trustworthy is unacceptable in today's society, and steps like the ones mentioned above must be taken to rectify this problem.

Administrators

Implications of this study for administrators are twofold. The first implication is the need for administrators to convey a message of solidarity to parents, teachers, and the overall community regarding the importance of delivering a curriculum of social responsibility. The success of this message begins with communication with and support of parents, teachers, and administrators. All information coming from the building is managed by the building administration, whether it is curricular in nature, academic/social instruction, teacher communication, or behavioral expectations. Principals need to scrutinize the overall message being sent to parents regarding the expectations of student behavior along with the topics of social responsibility addressed in each grade level. For example, Erin's Law is introduced, in an age-appropriate manner, at each grade level, which then needs to be communicated to parents. The health curriculum at each grade level begins with the introduction of healthy foods in the earliest grades and graduates up to drug and alcohol abuse in the intermediate grades. Administrators need to ensure this information is being communicated to parents at the beginning of the school year and again as they begin the specific lessons. Many building

administrators send various forms of communication, including letters, newsletters, automated phone messages, and personal messages to parents on major topics to ensure notification. Faculty meetings and staff development days are held to ensure that timelines are followed and teachers have the pertinent information to answer questions regarding curriculum, classroom management and social responsibility instruction. Programs specifically focused on social responsibility, as well as the corresponding professional development for teachers, need to be thoughtfully planned prior to implementation. The building administration needs to show data on how the program will benefit students and the overall building.

Data used when implementing social responsibility programs could include a plethora of information. Examples include the number of discipline referrals, infraction type, consequence, time of day, location, repeat offenders, and categories including gender, race, low income, English language learners, special education, bus routes, and subdivision. This information will help the staff decide the direction, focus, and overall importance of social responsibility instruction. Successful administrators can motivate their faculty as it relates to communicating the same message and implementing a program that everyone believes will benefit students. This transitions into the second implication for administrators, which is how to support teachers as they implement social responsibility curriculum.

Communication was identified by all stakeholder groups as a key for successful social responsibility instruction in that issues arose when parents felt they were not being communicated with effectively. The fact that teachers did not mention lack of communication as a barrier to successful social responsibility instruction lends itself to being an area to which administrators need to pay attention. Administration's balancing parental concerns with teacher

support can be one of the most stressful parts of the job. Administrators need to protect their relationship with their teachers to move forward with the numerous tasks, initiatives, and projects that are commonplace throughout any given school year. Examples of this support can range from administrators issuing a simple lunch detention to a student to sitting in with a teacher during a contentious meeting with a parent who does not agree with the consequence of a classroom infraction. It is not only advantageous to foster positive relationships with teachers to preserve an optimistic building climate, but teachers are the main respondents, along with parents, to the 5Essential survey that Illinois schools take each year. The survey is a comprehensive view of the school as it relates to school improvement and has a section specifically related to teacher-principal trust. This information is available to the public and specifically expresses the viewpoint that staff have toward the building principal. Overall, principals value their job of supporting the teachers in all areas of instruction, and their success depends on the ability of their staff to implement and communicate initiatives related to social responsibility.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, the results were based on interviews with participants who were attached to schools within a single school district. The participants knew that the researcher worked alongside their principals and could have answered in a way to not seem negative toward their school or teacher. This may limit the validity of the study, and viewpoints from participants in different school districts with no connection to the researcher would be different. Second, the study consisted of parents who held offices for their school's

Parent Teacher Organization. Since these positions are strictly volunteer positions, these individuals likely enjoy and spend more time interacting with school personnel. Diversification of this sample to include parents who have voiced displeasure with school policies and procedures would likely produce additional information valuable to teachers and principals as they reflect on their school's social responsibility programs and procedures. Third, the participants were all from the same large suburban school district. The results could be different if the participants came from a smaller district or one that had different demographics. Last, the study included experiences from only all Caucasian participants. This mirrored much of the school district; however, future research should include individuals of other races and differing socio-economic backgrounds.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study support the need for additional research on how social responsibility is perceived, communicated, and implemented by school stakeholders. The first recommendation for future research would be to include additional participants in the study. There were 12 participants within each of the four houses, or sections, of the district. So each section of the district was only represented three times each. Additional participants would allow the researcher to cross-reference data not only by teacher, parent, and administrator but by house designations as well. This would deliver a viewpoint with conclusions being sorted by area of the school district, which could be extremely interesting as the houses differ in makeup going from north to south. These differences include racial and socio-economic diversity, but more interestingly there is perceived diversity within the district related to privilege, wealth, and level

of education. Another recommendation would be to utilize Seidman's (2006) original interview protocol, which called for three separate interviews with each participant. The participants could reflect on the previous interview, which would then frame their perspective for the subsequent interviews. This connects with the constructivism theoretical framework in which learning is developed from the experience of previous situations.

A third recommendation would be to spread out the interviews over an entire school year, allowing participants to note areas of social responsibility within the school and in the role of their children's teachers. This would also allow sufficient time to reflect on topics of social responsibility that were considered comfortable or uncomfortable. If extended to multiple years, this study could result in longitudinal data that spanned multiple years, teachers, and administrators. A fourth recommendation would be to utilize a mixed-method research design that incorporated a quantitative survey with a Likert scale that measures the comfort level of parents, teachers, and administrators with teaching social responsibility. This method could also be used to select different participants, perhaps ones who did not like school growing up or who identified a pervasive mistrust in schools. This information could be used to frame questions for the qualitative individual and focus group interviews. A fifth recommendation would be to interview participants from the same district who had a common program for delivering social responsibility instruction. This would give the researcher some insight into best practices relating to implementation and an in-depth critique of the positives and negatives of the program. A district-wide program would allow the researcher to primarily focus on the differences of the participants and not the variance of information presented to students.

A sixth recommendation would be to choose a classroom of students to receive a new social responsibility program or choose a sample of teachers per grade level to implement a social responsibility program with a pre- and postsurvey, which would be administered to students and teachers. This survey could focus on need, content, and delivery of the social responsibility curriculum. Teachers and administrators could then track information such as classroom discipline referrals, parent contacts, and positive interactions they determine would be the result of the curriculum. Finally, I recommend expanding this research to additional school levels. Middle and high school parents, teachers, and administrators would lend additional viewpoints and recommendations about the topic. Additionally, elementary, middle, and high school students could be included to not only add a fourth voice to the conversation but to add a perception that could legitimize or delegitimize the perceptions and feelings of each stakeholder group. The student perspective could not only add to the research of the perception of social responsibility programs but could add to the strategies for implementation and sustenance of them as well.

Conclusion

An abundance of time and effort is placed on issues surrounding teaching social responsibility to our youngest students. Teachers, parents, and administrators of elementary-aged children want similar things for their students, which include the ability to make good social choices, follow behavior expectations, and safely receive information appropriate and helpful to them as they move onward in their educational careers. Teachers wear many hats and have numerous responsibilities regarding the educational and social instruction of their students. The

findings from this study confirmed that the role of the teacher is a complex one and changes over time as new situations arise. The expectation exists that teachers not only teach and care for their students, but they should be excellent communicators with parents and administrators as well. Communication with parents became a central focus of my study and the key ingredient to the success of teachers in teaching social responsibility. Schools need to embrace every opportunity to teach social responsibility to their students and make it central to the mission of the school. Parents need to embrace these efforts and look for ways to support teachers and to reiterate social responsibility themes and lessons at home. The few topics identified by parents as uncomfortable for schools to teach need to then be communicated back to the school to avoid the miscommunication and confrontations that erode the home-school relationship.

Large school districts should utilize the resources they have and take advantage of the experience of other teachers and administrators. Programs that are successful in teaching social responsibility should be shared and adapted by other schools within the district. Schools should not have to reinvent the wheel as it relates to social responsibility programs, so a central program throughout a school district would be extremely beneficial.

Moving forward as a district administrator, I would facilitate the consolidation of social responsibility programs within elementary schools in my district. I would encourage the sharing of proven communication strategies and events to address the uncomfortable topics parents, teachers, and administrators struggle with. Time from institute days as well as administrator and faculty meetings could go toward problem-solving ways to implement a common social responsibility program. This would allow themes to be communicated district-wide, utilizing the district's human relations department in a centralized effort instead of many uncoordinated ones.

The community, which is so vested in the school system, could partner with and support a common effort with social responsibility days and events.

The efforts of schools to branch out and support families in teaching social responsibility should be praised and recognized as a measure of school performance, just like reading and math assessment scores. Schools should be encouraged to continue to address climate, safety, and social emotional learning alongside reading, writing, and math. When this type of instruction becomes an equal and important part of the schooling process, only then might we see headlines on the nightly news that do not profile the death of a school-aged child.

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APPENDIX A
PARTICIPANTS

I. Administrators

- a. Administrators will be identified by a positive response to an introductory email from the researcher.
- b. One elementary-level administrator per quadrant of the district will be selected. If two or more administrators from the same quadrant are interested, the one with the most years of experience in education will be selected. If both administrators have the same number of years of experience the one with the most years of service in the district will be selected.
- c. If multiple Administrators with similar background and experience are interested in participating in the study, the researcher will use the strategy of maximal variation sampling that was described in Chapter 3.
- d. Each participant will sign a consent form prior to the first interview.

II. Teachers

- a. Principals will be asked to submit names and email addresses to the researcher of two teachers that have taught in the district for four years thus are considered tenured teachers.
- b. An introductory email will be sent to these teachers and personal contact will be made with all teachers that reply expressing interest in the study.
- c. One teacher from each *House* will be selected that has expressed interest in the study, availability, and a solid background in teacher elementary students. This will be determined by years of experience teaching at the K-5th grade level.

- d. In order to avoid conflict, teachers will be ruled out if they teach in the buildings of principals participating in the study.
 - e. If multiple teachers with similar background and experience are interested in participating in the study, the researcher will use the strategy of maximal variation sampling that was described in Chapter 3.
- III. Parents
- a. Parents will be contacted based on names submitted by each school's Parent-Teacher organization. Personal contact will be initiated based on parent replies of interest.
 - b. Parents will be selected based on interest in the study and availability.
 - c. Parents with varied number of children and backgrounds will be selected with an attempt to select a diverse group of people that are representative of the community.
 - d. One parent per school community will be selected to participate in the study.
 - e. If multiple parents with similar background and experience are interested in participating in the study, the researcher will use the strategy of maximal variation sampling that was described in Chapter 3.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW CORRESPONDENCE – PRINCIPAL

Dear Principal,

I am completing the dissertation research requirements for a Doctor of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Northern Illinois University. My Dissertation Advisor is Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins. My research examines teachers, parents, and administrators' perceptions of an elementary schools role in addressing social responsibility.

As a Principal in District [REDACTED], you have unique experience and expertise in teaching social responsibility to students at your elementary schools. A review of the current literature has disclosed little information about the perceptions of administrators as it relates to social responsibility. The information attained through this research will describe the current perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators and how communication can be improved between these three groups of individuals for the benefit of elementary students. Your feedback as a practicing administrator is a key to the reliability of information collected. When my research is complete, overall results of the study will be available by request at [REDACTED].

The study will consist of two interviews each lasting approximately one hour in length. The first interview will be with the researcher only, while the second interview will include the other administrators in the study forming a focus group. Information from the interviews will be coded so that no identifying information can be linked to you or your school. Your participation will not impact your employment status. The information you provide will be kept confidential, as opinions and perceptions will only be presented in summary. I do not anticipate that participants in this study are at any risk other than what is assumed in normal life. Your participation in these interviews is completely voluntary. There are no consequences for not participating in this research study. You are free to withdraw at any time without reason or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you DO want to participate please respond to this email or contact me at the following phone number ([REDACTED]) and I will contact you regarding your participation.

If you DO NOT want to participate in the study, please just delete this email with my regards.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at the number or email above or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins ([REDACTED]) or [REDACTED]. Thank you for taking the time to support this project.

Sincerely,
Scott B. Fink Ed. D. Candidate
Northern Illinois University

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW CORRESPONDENCE – TEACHER

Dear Teacher,

I am completing the dissertation research requirements for a Doctor of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Northern Illinois University. My Dissertation Advisor is Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins. My research examines teachers, parents, and administrators' perceptions of an elementary schools role in addressing social responsibility.

As a Teacher in District [REDACTED], you have unique experience and expertise in teaching social responsibility to students in your elementary classroom. A review of the current literature has disclosed little information about the perceptions of teachers as it relates to social responsibility. The information attained through this research will describe the current perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators and how communication can be improved between these three groups of individuals for the benefit of elementary students. Your feedback as a practicing classroom teacher is a key to the reliability of information collected. When my research is complete, overall results of the study will be available by request at [REDACTED].

The study will consist of two interviews each lasting approximately one hour in length. The first interview will be with the researcher only, while the second interview will include the other teachers in the study forming a focus group. Information from the interviews will be coded so that no identifying information can be linked to you or your school. Your participation will not impact your employment status. The information you provide will be kept confidential, as opinions and perceptions will only be presented in summary. I do not anticipate that participants in this study are at any risk other than what is assumed in normal life. Your participation in these interviews is completely voluntary. There are no consequences for not participating in this research study. You are free to withdraw at any time without reason or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you DO want to participate please respond to this email or contact me at the following phone number ([REDACTED]) and I will contact you to set up Interview One.

If you DO NOT want to participate in the study, please just delete this email with my regards.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at the number or email above or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins ([REDACTED]) or [REDACTED]. Thank you for taking the time to support this project.

Sincerely,
Scott B. Fink Ed. D. Candidate
Northern Illinois University

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW CORRESPONDENCE – PARENT

Dear Parent,

I am completing the dissertation research requirements for a Doctor of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Northern Illinois University. My Dissertation Advisor is Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins. My research examines teachers, parents, and administrators' perceptions of an elementary schools role in addressing social responsibility.

As a parent of an elementary student, you have unique experience and expertise in teaching social responsibility to your child. A review of the current literature has disclosed little information about the perceptions of parents as it relates to social responsibility. The information attained through this research will describe the current perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators and how communication can be improved between these three groups of individuals for the benefit of elementary students. Your feedback as a parent is a key to the reliability of information collected. When my research is complete, overall results of the study will be available by request at [REDACTED].

The study will consist of two interviews each lasting approximately one hour in length. The first interview will be with the researcher only, while the second interview will include the other parents in the study forming a focus group. Information from the interviews will be coded so that no identifying information can be linked to you or your child's school. The information you provide will be kept confidential, as opinions and perceptions will only be presented in summary. I do not anticipate that participants in this study are at any risk other than what is assumed in normal life. Your participation in these interviews is completely voluntary. There are no consequences for not participating in this research study. You are free to withdraw at any time without reason or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you DO want to participate please respond to this email or contact me at the following phone number ([REDACTED]) and I will contact you to set up Interview One.

If you DO NOT want to participate in the study, please just delete this email with my regards.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at the number or email above or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins ([REDACTED]) or [REDACTED]. Thank you for taking the time to support this project.

Sincerely,
Scott B. Fink Ed. D. Candidate
Northern Illinois University

APPENDIX E
TELEPHONE PROTOCOL

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study to examine teachers, parents, and administrators' perceptions of an elementary schools role in addressing social responsibility.

The study will consist of two interviews each lasting approximately one hour in length. The first interview will be with the researcher only, while the second interview will include participants with the same job title as yours to form a focus group. Information from the interviews will be coded so that no identifying information can be linked to you, your school or your child's school. The information you provide will be kept confidential, as opinions and perceptions will only be presented in summary.

The following questions will be asked of each subject prior to setting up the first interview.

1. Do you foresee any problems with completing the two required interviews?
2. Do you mind if the interviews are recorded?
3. Where would you be more comfortable meeting for the interviews, my school office, your home, or another location?

The date of the first and second interviews will be set up, if possible, during the introductory phone call.

“Thank you again for participating. I will see you on _____ at _____ time”. If you have any questions or would need to reschedule one of the interviews, please call me at [REDACTED].” Thanks.

APPENDIX F
CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research project titled Teacher, Parent, & Administrator Perceptions of Social Responsibility at the Elementary School Level being conducted by Scott Fink, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to ascertain teachers, parents, and administrators' perceptions of social responsibility at the elementary school level.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study I will be asked to participate in one individual interview and one focus group interview each lasting approximately one hour long. I will be given the opportunity to review the transcripts of my interviews for accuracy.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Scott Fink ([REDACTED]) at [REDACTED] and/or Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins ([REDACTED]) at [REDACTED]. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at ([REDACTED]).

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include increased communication between teachers, parents, and administrators regarding the extent of their responsibility to socially educate children.

I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential and will be coded so that no identifying information can be linked to me or my child's school. Transcripts of the interviews will be kept by the researcher and will not be used outside the parameters of this study.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature

Date