

Spring 5-22-2017

# Factors That Influence Student Academic Motivation and How Those Factors Impact the Student Achievement of Third Grade Students

Veronica Knapper  
veronica.knapper@students.cau.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cauetds>

 Part of the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Knapper, Veronica, "Factors That Influence Student Academic Motivation and How Those Factors Impact the Student Achievement of Third Grade Students" (2017). *Electronic Theses & Dissertations Collection for Atlanta University & Clark Atlanta University*. 72.  
<http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cauetds/72>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Clark Atlanta University at DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses & Dissertations Collection for Atlanta University & Clark Atlanta University by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. For more information, please contact [cwiseman@auctr.edu](mailto:cwiseman@auctr.edu).

ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

KNAPPER, VERONICA

B.S. TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, 2001

M.A. CAPELLA UNIVERSITY, 2008

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AND  
HOW THOSE FACTORS IMPACT THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT  
OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

Committee Chair: Trevor Turner, Ph.D.

Dissertation dated May 2017

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that motivate third grade students to perform well academically and to learn how those factors impact student achievement. Additionally, the researcher wanted to gain an understanding of teachers' perspectives regarding student motivation, observe strategies teachers use to motivate students, and observe motivated students' behaviors. To do this, the researcher surveyed 37 third grade students, interviewed two third grade teachers, and observed two different third grade teachers. The results of the study indicated that student academic motivation is significantly impacted by two factors: parent involvement and home environment. The results also showed that reading achievement is closely linked to school environment. Having this information is helpful because it will enable school administrators and teachers to develop strategies to target the factors that have been found to have the most significant impact on student academic motivation.

The qualitative research indicated that teachers tend to rely on extrinsic rewards and use strategies such as verbal praise, visual aids, and touch to motivate students. The behaviors that motivated students display include paying attention to the lesson, working diligently, and asking questions. If schools combine the strategies used by teachers and focus on increasing parental involvement, helping parents to create home environments that foster academic success, and making sure the school environment enables students to feel safe, it is likely that administrators would see increases in student academic motivation across the district.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AND  
HOW THOSE FACTORS IMPACT THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT  
OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY  
VERONICA KNAPPER

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2017

© 2017

VERONICA KNAPPER

All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Trevor Turner, for all the support given to me throughout this process. He taught me a great deal about research and more specifically, quantitative research. I thank him for all his help and for pushing me to fulfill my goals. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Barbara Hill and Dr. Sheila Gregory. I thank them for their insight, encouragement, support, and all of their recommendations. I am so grateful for all of the time and effort each of my committee members put into this project to help me complete it.

Furthermore, I want to thank all of the teachers and students that participated in the study, as well as the principal of the school where the study was conducted. I thank them for allowing me to work with them and for going above and beyond to help me with data collection.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family and close friends. My parents, L. C. Smith and Patricia Knapper-Smith, continually supported me with encouraging words, prayers and love throughout this process and without them I would not be the person I am today. I am blessed to have such an amazing support system. I also thank my close friends for the numerous times they listened to me, encouraged me, and comforted me as I worked on this project and throughout my time in graduate school. I am so thankful to have such special people in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... iii

LIST OF FIGURES ..... vii

LIST OF TABLES ..... viii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ..... 1

    Problem Statement ..... 5

    Purpose of the Study ..... 6

    Variables ..... 6

    Research Questions ..... 7

    Significance of the Study ..... 8

    Summary ..... 9

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 10

    Home Environment ..... 10

    Parental Involvement ..... 12

    Student-Teacher Relationship ..... 13

    Peer Relationships ..... 13

    Instructional Strategies ..... 15

    School Environment ..... 16

    Summary ..... 17

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ..... 18

    Theory of Variables ..... 18

CHAPTER

Definition of Variables and Other Terms .....	22
Relationship among the Variables .....	23
Limitations of the Study.....	24
Summary .....	25
IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	27
Research Design.....	27
Description of the Setting .....	28
Sampling Procedures .....	29
Instrumentation .....	30
Participants/Research Location .....	37
Data Collection Procedures.....	37
Statistical Applications .....	39
Summary .....	39
V. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.....	40
Purpose of the Study .....	40
Study Permissions.....	40
Ethical Issues .....	40
Quantitative Process.....	41
Quantitative Data Summary.....	53
Qualitative Process.....	54
Alignment of Research Questions to the Interview Protocol.....	54
Analysis of the Interview Data .....	55



## CHAPTER

Summary of the Interview Data.....	56
Observation.....	57
Alignment of Research Question to the Observation Protocol.....	59
Analysis of the Observation Data.....	59
Summary of the Observation Data.....	61
VI. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	62
Purpose of the Study.....	62
Significant Findings.....	62
Recommendations.....	66
Enhancing the Research.....	68
APPENDIX	
A. Student Survey.....	70
B. Observation Protocol.....	73
C. Interview Questions.....	74
D. Letter of Parental Consent.....	75
E. Statement of Consent for Teachers.....	76
F. Student Permission Slip - Consent Form.....	77
REFERENCES.....	78

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Figure

1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid .....20
2. Relationship between the dependent and independent variables .....24

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1. Variables and Survey Items Measured by Each Variable.....	30
2. Correlation: Student Motivation .....	31
3. Correlation: Home Environment.....	32
4. Correlation: Parent Involvement.....	33
5. Correlation: Student-Teacher Relationship.....	33
6. Correlation: Peer Relationships .....	34
7. Correlation: Instructional Strategies .....	35
8. Correlation: School Environment .....	35
9. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Statistics .....	36
10. Pearson Correlations of Independent Variables.....	43
11. Regression on Student Motivation.....	44
12. Student Motivation Coefficients .....	44
13. Excluded Variables .....	45
14. Independent Variables Correlated with Reading Achievement.....	46
15. Reading Achievement Quartiles .....	48
16. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Student Motivation.....	49
17. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Home Environment.....	49
18. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Parent Involvement .....	50

Table

19. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and School Environment.....	50
20. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Instructional Strategies.....	51
21. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Peer Relationships.....	52
22. Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Student-Teacher Relationship.....	52
23. Factor Analysis .....	53
24. Research Questions Aligned to Interview Questions.....	54
25. Research Questions Aligned to the Observation Protocol.....	59

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Student motivation refers to a student's level of engagement in the learning process. When discussing student motivation, scholars typically recognize two major types of motivation: Intrinsic and Extrinsic (Center on Education Policy [CEP], 2012). Intrinsic motivation refers to self-motivation (CEP, 2012). In other words, it is a student's desire to learn information, achieve a goal or perform a task simply because the student takes pleasure in doing so and sees the value in it (CEP, 2012). Intrinsic motivation is believed to be the most powerful type of motivation (Fabien, 2015). When a student is intrinsically motivated, they are less likely to be deterred by factors such as peer pressure, complacency or indecisiveness (Fabien, 2015). According to Bandura (1977), when a person is intrinsically motivated or possesses self-efficacy skills, he or she believes in his or her ability to organize and execute a plan of action that may be required to solve a problem.

Extrinsic motivation refers to working to achieve a goal because it will produce a certain result (CEP, 2012). Students who are extrinsically motivated don't necessarily take pleasure in the learning process, but they may show engagement in school because they want to graduate or because they do not want to disappoint their parents (CEP, 2012). In other words, these students are motivated by outside forces, whereas intrinsic motivation comes from within. Either type of motivation may produce positive results

(CEP, 2012). Regardless of the type of motivation a student possesses, researchers believe a high level of motivation is key to academic success (CEP, 2012). Not only has a high level of motivation been linked to better academic performance, it has also been linked to better conceptual understanding, higher self-esteem, increased satisfaction with school, increased graduation rates and better social adjustment (CEP, 2012). Bandura (1977) also asserted that when students have self-efficacy skills they develop a stronger sense of commitment toward their interests and activities and recover faster from setbacks. Motivated students are resilient and because of their belief that they can achieve, if they fail initially they do not give up as easily as unmotivated students (Bandura, 1977). If students are unmotivated, it is extremely difficult to improve their academic performance in school (CEP, 2012) because motivation affects how students relate to their teachers, how much time they devote to studying, and how they go about seeking help when they are having difficulties with an assignment.

Because student academic motivation leads to increased academic outcomes, it is extremely important for schools and school districts to understand their role in helping to motivate students (CEP, 2012). Schools all across America are held accountable for how well they educate students and prepare them for the next level of performance (The White House, 2009). With the development of education reform initiatives, such as Race to the Top and the Every Student Succeeds Act and with the implementation of accountability tools, such as the Career and College Ready Performance Index, schools districts feel the pressure of ensuring their students have access to a complete and competitive education (The White House, 2009).

The College and Career Ready Performance Index, is Georgia's accountability tool for determining how well its schools prepare students to achieve at college or career ready levels. This tool assesses how well students perform on state tests and other measures of college and career readiness and the graduation rate for high school cohorts (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). In order for students to perform well on state tests and to graduate high school with their cohort, they must be motivated to do so. This is why it is so important to understand the factors that impact student academic motivation and how those factors impact academic achievement.

Scholars believe there are four dimensions related to motivation: (a) Competence, (b) Control/Autonomy, (c) Interest/Value, and (d) Relatedness (CEP, 2012). Competence refers to a student's belief about their ability to complete a task (CEP, 2012). Control refers to a student's feeling of being in control and seeing a direct link between their actions and a certain outcome and autonomy refers to a student being able to choose whether or not to undertake the task and/or how he or she goes about completing the task (CEP, 2012). Interest/Value refers to a student's interest in completing a task and the value they assign to it (CEP, 2012). Relatedness refers to a student's belief that completing a task will produce social rewards, such as a sense of belonging to a classroom or other desired social group, or praise from a desired person (CEP, 2012). Relatedness also refers to the authenticity of classroom assignments, or how a student relates to the assignment. When teachers teach authentic lessons, they teach lessons that enable students to solve real world problems (Educational Research Newsletters and Webinars, 2016). Solving real world problems impacts student academic motivation

because students realize their engagement in the lesson holds the possibility of making an impact outside of the classroom environment (Educational Research Newsletters and Webinars, 2016). Having an audience beyond the school walls changes the problem from a simple exercise to something more meaningful, more important and more relatable (Educational Research Newsletters and Webinars, 2016). At least one of these components must be satisfied in order for a student to feel motivated to complete an activity or work toward a goal (CEP, 2012). The more components that are met, and the stronger they are met, the greater the motivation the student will feel (CEP, 2012).

The interplay of the components listed above, combined with outside factors, all play a role in determining whether or not a student will be motivated and to what degree (CEP, 2012). External factors that impact student academic motivation include home environment, parental involvement, student-teacher relationships, peer relationships, instructional strategies and school environment.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher investigated several external factors that were believed to impact the student academic motivation of third grade students in a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia. Additionally, the researcher gained insight into teachers' perceptions regarding student academic motivation, observed behaviors that motivated students display, observed teaching practices that impact student academic motivation, and examined the relationship between student academic motivation and academic achievement. More specifically, the researcher examined how student academic motivation impacts the oral reading fluency level of the research participants. The researcher has worked with students in this particular



elementary school for five years and over the course of time she has heard many teachers talk about the lack of academic motivation some students display. This is evidenced by students' refusal to participate in class, submit homework, complete classroom assignments and follow school rules. Because student academic motivation appears to be a concern, the researcher surveyed the students to understand what motivates them to learn and perform well academically. The researcher also examined the oral reading fluency levels of the research participants to determine the link between student academic motivation and student achievement. Additionally, the researcher gained insight on the teachers' perceptions regarding student academic motivation and observed classrooms to observe behaviors that motivated students display and to observe instructional strategies that contribute to student academic motivation.

### **Problem Statement**

There are many factors that impact student academic motivation and motivating students contributes to academic success. Therefore, it is important for administrators who are employed in the district in which the research study was conducted to know which factor has the greatest impact on student academic motivation with their specific student population. It is also important to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding student academic motivation, observe the behaviors of motivated students and examine the link between student academic motivation and student achievement. Although there is a wealth of research on student academic motivation, none of that research has been conducted with students in the particular elementary school where the researcher conducted the study. It is important to gain an understanding of the beliefs of students

within the school and specifically on the beliefs of third grade students attending the school. It is also important to interview teachers and observe classrooms in order to gain teachers' perspectives on student academic motivation and to observe teaching practices and strategies that may contribute to student academic motivation. Having this understanding is the only way teachers can be certain they are catering to students' needs and motivating them using the most effective techniques and teaching practices. It is equally important to examine the oral reading fluency levels of the research participants to understand the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to conduct a mixed method analysis with third grade students attending a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia in order to determine what factors motivate them to perform well academically and which factor has the greatest impact on student academic motivation and student achievement. In addition, the study sought to understand teachers' perspectives on student academic motivation, identify teaching practices that contribute to student academic motivation, identify behaviors in which motivated students engage, and examine the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement.

### **Variables**

The dependent variables in the study are student academic motivation and student achievement. The independent variables are home environment, parental involvement,

the student-teacher relationship, peer relationships, instructional strategies and school environment.

### **Research Questions**

The study focused on understanding the following quantitative and qualitative research questions.

#### **Quantitative Research Questions**

- RQ1: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and home environment?
- RQ2: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and parental involvement?
- RQ3: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and the student-teacher relationship?
- RQ4: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and peer relationships?
- RQ5: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and instructional strategies?
- RQ6: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and school environment?
- RQ7: What variable has the highest statistical significance on student academic motivation?
- RQ8: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and home environment?

- RQ9: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and parental involvement?
- RQ10: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and the student-teacher relationship?
- RQ11: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and peer relationships?
- RQ12: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and instructional strategies?
- RQ13: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and school environment?
- RQ14: What variable has the highest statistical significance on student achievement?

### **Qualitative Research Questions**

- RQ15: How does the teacher define student academic motivation?
- RQ16: In what ways does the teacher try to motivate students in the classroom?
- RQ17: What behaviors do students engage in when they are motivated and engaged in a lesson?
- RQ18: How does student motivation impact academic achievement?

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from the research will benefit the school district in which the research was conducted because they will aid in enabling district level administrators to determine if teachers are teaching using strategies that are shown to motivate students

and increase student achievement. It is hoped that teachers will gain a better understanding of how students need to be taught in order to maximize students' learning potential. Ultimately, if teachers are able to increase student academic motivation and are focused on student achievement, it will help to produce greater academic gains and higher graduation rates for students across the district.

### **Summary**

Student academic motivation is extremely important to the academic success of students. Due to education reforms, state mandated tests, and accountability processes, schools must do everything in their power to increase student achievement and graduation rates. In order for this to occur, schools must find ways to increase student academic motivation. They must learn the factors that impact student academic motivation and ensure they address those factors in their strategic plans. The research study is important because it will help school administrators and teachers understand the factors that impact student motivation based on the student' perspectives, it will give the district insight on the teachers' perspectives regarding student academic motivation, and it will help the district understand the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement by examining the oral reading fluency levels of the research participants.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose research study, the researcher examined how the independent variables impact the dependent variables. In other words, how does the student's home environment, parental involvement, the student-teacher relationship, the student's peer relationships, the teacher's instructional strategies and the school environment impact student academic motivation and student achievement. According to the literature, students who come from a positive home environment have higher levels of academic motivation and student achievement (Fabien, 2015). A positive home environment consists of an environment that is caring, supportive, loving, nurturing and stable. Students who do not come from such an environment may arrive at school hungry, angry, depressed, withdrawn, bitter, lethargic or stressed out, all of which will negatively impact their level of engagement and their performance in school (Fabien, 2015).

#### **Home Environment**

Research examining the link between home environment and academic motivation found that parental habits are a better predictor of motivation than parental income (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986). One habit in particular that led to increased academic motivation was reading to children. When parents read to their children on a regular basis, it formed positive reading habits in their children which

ultimately led to higher reading achievement (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986). Moreover, when students come from homes plagued with “family disruption issues” or homes where they experience one or more of the variables listed below, their academic achievement is negatively impacted.

- They do not live with their biological parents.
- They frequently move from house to house.
- Their biological parents are not married.
- Their primary caregiver frequently changes.
- They do not live with their biological father.
- They do not spend time with their biological father.
- They have been or are currently involved with Child Protective Services.

(Somers et al., 2011)

There is a vast amount of research indicating that academic motivation and achievement as measured by grade-point average was higher amongst students who lived with both of their biological parents (Somers et al., 2011). Likewise, students who lived in homes without their biological father experienced a lack of academic motivation, which led to lower academic achievement and worse educational experiences (Somers et al., 2011). In summary, family instability leads to decreased academic motivation, therefore it can be determined that a student’s home environment plays a significant role in how motivated they are to excel in school (Somers et al., 2011).

### **Parental Involvement**

Studies have long determined there is a clear link between parental involvement and academic success, but there is also a link between parental involvement and intrinsic motivation (CEP, 2012). There are many ways a parent can show they are involved in their child's education. Parents can help children with a specific skill that is being taught in school, attend school meetings or events, ask their children about their school day, help with school projects or encourage their children to study for tests and quizzes (CEP, 2012). Parents' attitudes about their children's competence and their expectations on how much their children can achieve also has a strong influence on motivation (CEP, 2012).

Gonida and Cortina (2014) found that parents who help their children with homework while using an autonomous- supportive parenting style have more success with increasing their child's motivational development than parents who use an alternative parenting style. Autonomous-supportive parents promote their children's motivational development by helping them to master goals and acquire new skills (Gonida & Cortina, 2014). This style of parenting not only increases student motivation, but it also results in better academic achievement (Gonida & Cortina, 2014). Parents who help their children using a parental control parenting style were less successful in increasing their children's motivational development. (Gonida & Cortina, 2014). This is also true for parents who do not help their children at all (Gonida & Cortina, 2014).



### **Student-Teacher Relationship**

The student-teacher relationship is one of the most important factors impacting student engagement and academic achievement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). In a study conducted by Skinner and Belmont, strong empirical evidence was found for a reciprocal relationship between teacher behaviors and student motivation in the classroom. Teachers' interactions with students had the most powerful effect on behavior and students' perceptions of their teacher (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). In other words, when students feel cared for they begin to think their needs are met and they experience increased feelings of competence and determination (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The study concluded that students' level of motivation was both influenced by their perceptions of teachers and teachers' actual behaviors (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This suggests students who experience their teachers as warm and affectionate feel happier and more enthusiastic in class (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Students who believe their teachers provide clear expectations, strategic help and contingent responses also feel happy and enthusiastic about learning (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Based on the findings in this study, positive student-teacher relationships foster high levels of student motivation and lead to increased academic achievement amongst students (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

### **Peer Relationships**

In addition to the student-teacher relationship, peer relationships are a fundamental factor in the development of academic engagement and achievement (Furrer, Skinner, & Pitzer, 2014). Positive peer relationships consist of three

components: warmth, structure and autonomy (Furrer et al., 2014). Warmth is a key component of positive or high quality peer relationships (Furrer et al., 2014). When students support, listen to and show respect for one another they are more likely to feel cared for and understood. Warm interactions with peers create a climate of comfort and meet students' need for connectedness and belongingness (Furrer et al., 2014). When students' needs are met they tend to take a more active role in their learning; thus they are more motivated to achieve (Furrer et al., 2014).

Interactions with peers that contribute to structure are also important in the development of increased motivation (Furrer et al., 2014). According to Skinner, Furrer, and Pitzer (2014),

...Peers provide contextual affordances that can support academic competence (Wentzel, 2009b). For example, when interacting with classmates, students practice communicating, give and receive feedback, model academic competencies, resolve conflicts, provide help and advice, and create shared academic goals and behavioral standards (Parr, 2002; Wentzel, 2009b).

Predictable, instrumentally supportive interactions between classmates (e.g., interpreting teacher instructions, sharing materials) promote structure and, therefore, feelings of competence because students know they can rely on their peers for information and help. (p. 106)

Autonomy is needed to foster student motivation because when students experience a sense of autonomy, they begin to feel empowered and in control which leads them to want to take ownership of the learning process (Furrer et al., 2014). Peers

promote autonomy when they seek to understand each other's viewpoint (Furrer et al., 2014). When students cooperate in groups, examine their beliefs, help other students, explain their learning, engage in self-exploration and share their ideas, they create an autonomous environment that supports independent thinking and increased engagement and achievement (Furrer et al., 2014).

### **Instructional Strategies**

Another external factor influencing student motivation that was examined was instructional strategies. Many researchers believe that in order to motivate students, teachers must possess the ability to interest and challenge students from diverse racial and social backgrounds (Tollefson, 2000). In order to successfully accomplish this task, teachers must teach using multimodal teaching strategies to ensure they capture the learning style of all students (Tollefson, 2000). Additionally, the expectancy theory of motivation suggests that the amount of effort a student expends on a task is based upon the degree to which the student believes he or she can successfully achieve the task (Tollefson, 2000)). Therefore, teachers who give work that is too challenging or overly complicated may unconsciously decrease their students' motivation to complete the assignment (Tollefson, 2000)). For example, consider a teacher who gives complicated math problems to a group of students who dislike math and have never experienced success in math class. Because these students have a negative perception about math and believe the work is difficult, it is likely they will be unmotivated to attempt or complete the task (Tollefson, 2000). In order to make certain teachers are able to motivate all students, it is important they differentiate instruction. If they do not, they may give work

that is too challenging to some students, which will negatively impact academic motivation, engagement and achievement (Tollefson, 2000).

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) found that in order to increase student achievement teachers must engage in “high-yields” instructional strategies that consist of having students’ identify similarities and differences, summarize and take notes, complete homework, create nonlinguistic representations, such as graphic organizers and participate in cooperative learning groups. Teachers should also make certain they reinforce students’ effort, set clear objectives and provide feedback in a timely manner (Marzano et al., 2001). When teachers set high expectations for students and educate students using research based teaching strategies they are able to have profound impacts on student achievement, even when they teach in schools that are considered “ineffective” (Marzano et al., 2001). This proves that individual teachers can make a huge difference in student learning outcomes. It also suggests that teachers need to administer instruction using specific strategies in order to maximize students’ learning potential (Marzano et al., 2001).

### **School Environment**

Research has demonstrated that school environment or school climate impacts student engagement, student achievement and the development of positive social skills amongst students (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2016). In-fact, studies show there is a significant difference in student achievement between schools with a positive school environment and those with a poor school environment (GADOE, 2016). School environment refers to the norms and expectations that exist in a particular school,

including a student's feeling of safety and security, the physical environment of the school building, a student's ability to build positive, respectful and lasting relationships with others and a student's ability to develop healthy social and emotional connections with others (GADOE, 2016). Studies have also shown that school environment significantly impacts student achievement (GADOE, 2016). Data from Georgia's End of Course Test from 2008-2012 showed that school environment had a statistically significant impact on the math performance of middle and high school students and was linked to positive gains for other subject areas as well (GADOE, 2016). Data also showed that increases in school environment led to decreases in disciplinary incidents and suspension days per FTE and increases in student attendance (GADOE, 2016). Therefore, it can also be concluded that school environment not only impacts academic achievement, but it also has a significant impact on the behavioral outcomes of students (GADOE, 2016).

### **Summary**

Each of the factors listed above directly impacts student academic motivation, which ultimately impacts student achievement. The researcher learned which of the above factors had the greatest impact on student academic motivation, gained teachers' perceptions on student academic motivation, observed teachers' classroom to identify teaching practices that aid in increasing student academic motivation, observed the behaviors motivated students display and examined the relationship that student academic motivation has on student achievement.

CHAPTER III  
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**Theory of Variables**

The theoretical framework for the study was based upon Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Maslow's Theory of Motivation.

**Vroom's Expectancy Theory**

Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory posits that an individual will choose to engage in one behavior over other behaviors due to what they expect the result of the specific behavior will be (Lunenburg, 2011). In other words, the motivation of the selected behavior is determined by the desirability of the outcome (Lunenburg, 2011). Vroom identified three variables associated with the expectancy theory: Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence (Lunenburg, 2011). Expectancy is the belief that one's effort will produce a desired outcome. Instrumentality is the belief that one will receive a reward if the performance expectation is met. Valence is the value one places on the desired outcome (Lunenburg, 2011). According to Vroom, the expectancy theory can be summarized by the following equation:  $M = E * I * V$  (Motivation = expectancy (x) instrumentality (x) valence) (Lunenburg, 2011).

This theory applies to student academic motivation because in order for schools to help students achieve academically (the school's mission) they must first help students to believe their efforts will produce a desired outcome (expectancy), such as good grades,

graduation from school, honor roll, affection and adoration from teachers and parents, etc. Next, schools must help students to believe that if they work hard, they will be rewarded (instrumentality) with praise from teachers and parents, good grades on tests, and acknowledgment of high intelligence. Finally, schools must help students to place a high value on academic success (valence). If students value academic success they will work hard to achieve success. It is the schools' duty to help students see the value in excelling academically. It is the researcher's belief that in order to help students excel academically; schools must motivate students to work hard in order to achieve academic success. In order to motivate students, schools need to know which factor (home environment, parental involvement, the student-teacher relationship, peer relationships, instructional strategies or school environment) has the greatest impact on student academic motivation so they can ensure school leaders and teachers focus on that factor when selecting instructional materials, creating the school's vision and mission, teaching students, providing parenting tips to parents, and hiring support staff.

### **Maslow's Theory of Motivation**

Maslow's Theory of Motivation is based on the premise that humans are motivated by unsatisfied needs and that certain basic needs must be satisfied before higher needs can be satisfied (Maslow, 1951). According to Maslow's theory, people have general needs that must be satisfied before they can act unselfishly and reach the ultimate goal of self-actualization. As a result, in order for a teacher to motivate a student, he or she must determine the student's needs. Once the student's needs have been determined, the teacher must seek to satisfy those needs (Maslow, 1951). When a

student's basic needs are met, new needs will surface until the student finally reaches the point of self-fulfillment (Maslow, 1951). In other words, when one need is met it stops acting as a motivator, and the next need, one that is ranked on a higher level, starts to become the new motivator. Figure 1 illustrates Maslow's Needs Pyramid. The pyramid is a hierarchal model of human needs.



*Figure 1.* Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid.

As the diagram shows, Maslow's Theory of Motivation groups human needs into five basic categories. Physiological needs are those that are required to sustain life, such as shelter, food, sleep, water and air (Maslow, 1951). According to Maslow's theory, if these basic needs are not met, a person will become very motivated to satisfy them. Higher needs will not be met until these basic needs are satisfied. This is important for teachers to recognize because many of the students who attend the school where the research study was conducted come from underprivileged homes. If a teacher wants to motivate a student to learn academic content and thrive in school, he or she must make



certain the student's physiological needs are taken care of. In other words, the teacher must make sure the student has had a decent meal to eat, had a good night's sleep, and so forth.

Safety needs are met when a person is free from physical or emotional harm (Maslow, 1951). If a student is worried about getting beat up after school, or if they are being abused at home, they will not be motivated to learn academic content, such as multiplication. When a person feels threatened, his or her primary motivation is to alleviate the threat (Maslow, 1951). Safety needs include living in a safe area, being healthy and having enough money to ensure physiological needs are always met. In other words, safety needs help people feel secure (Maslow, 1951).

Social needs refer to a person having a sense of belonging. Social needs are considered the first level of the higher needs (Maslow, 1951). A student's social needs will be met when they feel they are loved and cared for and when they are able to make and maintain friendships. If a student feels rejected by their peer group, they will not be motivated to excel in school. In-fact, when students feel rejected in most cases they do not even like school.

Esteem needs are divided into external and internal motivators. The external esteem needs are recognition, attention and social status (Maslow, 1951). Teachers help students to fulfill their esteem needs when they praise student work or behavior and when they help students to feel important by encouraging them and telling them they are intelligent and have the potential to accomplish their dreams. The internal esteem needs refer to accomplishment and self-respect (Maslow, 1951). Regardless of what a teacher

tells a student, it is important for that student to feel a sense of accomplishment within him or herself. Students must feel valued and have a sense of pride in their abilities and the work they produce. When a student has low self-esteem, they are less likely to believe a teacher who tells them they can go far in life. The belief that a student can excel and reach their goals must come from within and be reinforced by loved ones.

Self-Actualization is the highest form of motivation on Maslow's Needs Pyramid (Maslow, 1951). Self-actualization is a need that Maslow felt would never be fulfilled by the majority of the population because people continue to grow and change. Self-actualization refers to the quest of a person reaching their full potential and is defined by motivating factors that include truth, wisdom, justice and meaning. The small percentages of people that Maslow thought would achieve self-actualization are believed to experience profound moments of happiness and harmony (Maslow, 1951).

Maslow's Theory of Motivation was chosen as one of the theoretical frameworks for the mixed methods study because it focuses on the underlying needs that must be met in order to impact student academic motivation and increase student achievement.

### **Definition of Variables and Other Terms**

Following are the definitions of the dependent and independent variables.

**Home environment** is defined as the physical and dispositional characteristics of a student's home.

**Instructional Strategies** include the teaching style and type of instruction delivered by the teacher.

**Parental Involvement** is the level of active participation on the part of the parent to the school and the student as evidenced by the parent's attendance at school events or school meetings, phone calls to the teacher, inquiries about the student's day at school, homework and study help and discussions about schoolwork with the student or school.

**Peer Relationships** are defined as the level of academic interest among a student's peer group or the extent to which a student's friends like to study and complete schoolwork.

**School Environment** is defined as the physical dimensions of a school building, including the school's appearance, safety and comfort level of students.

**Student Academic Motivation** is defined as a student's desire to excel academically as evidenced by his or her participation in class, completion of classroom assignments and homework, study efforts, and grades.

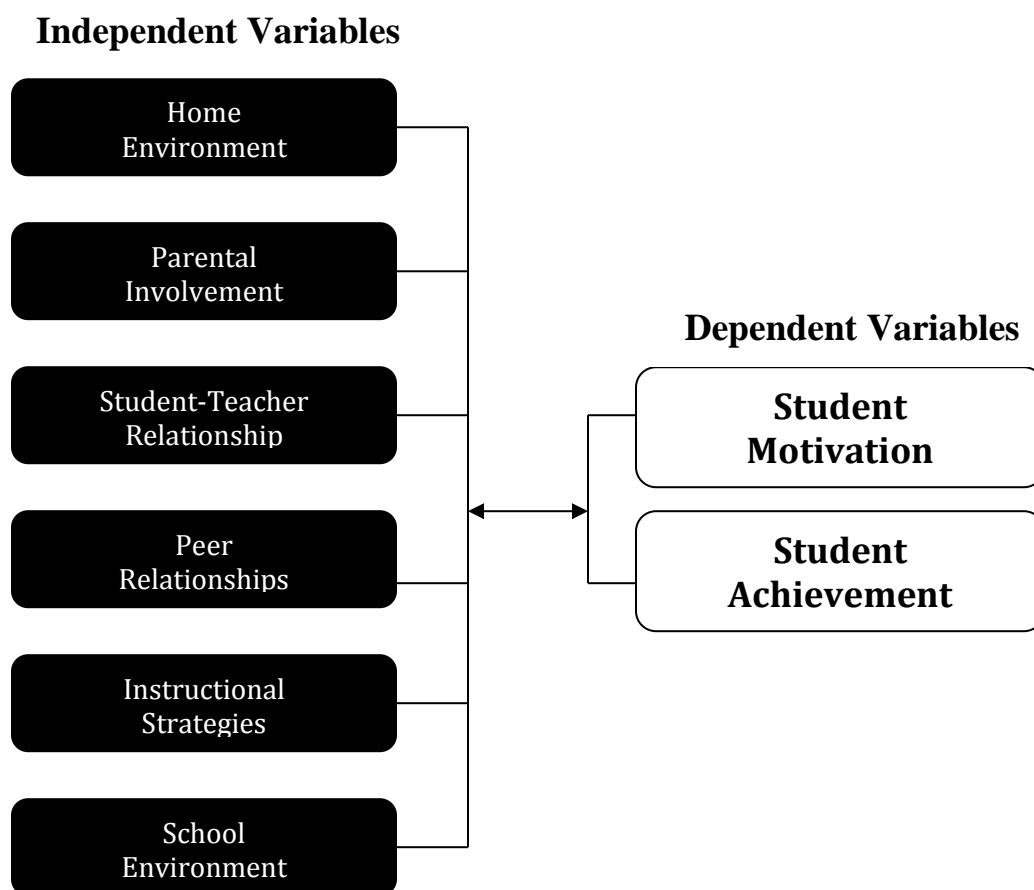
**Student Achievement** is the academic performance of a student or the extent to which a student will meet grade level standards on the Dibels Oral Reading Fluency Assessment.

**Student-Teacher Relationship** is the level of care and concern a student believes the teacher has for him or her. When a student feels understood by the teacher and feels comfortable talking openly with the teacher, it is believed a positive student-teacher relationship exists.

### **Relationship among the Variables**

The relationship between the dependent and independent variables is illustrated in the following figure. All of the independent variables directly impact the dependent

variables; however, the researcher examined the degree that each independent variable impacted the dependent variables and which of the independent variables had the greatest impact on the dependent variables (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2.* Relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Within every study there will be challenges to overcome that may limit the findings within the study. Although the researcher took measures to ensure the validity of the research study, the limitations encountered included the truthfulness of the

respondents, the student respondents' reading ability, the respondents' perceptions of the survey items, the student respondents' maturity level, and teacher bias. Additionally, the researcher is an employee in the school district where the research was conducted, which may have impacted the respondents' statements. The research was also limited to one school and one grade level; therefore, the research may not be generalizable to other school districts. Further limitations include the researcher's inability to account for all factors that may impact student academic motivation such as the socioeconomic status of the students' families, the students' age and gender, or the students' cognitive abilities. The researcher attempted to overcome the limitations by writing the survey using simple, clear, and concise language, by encouraging all participants to be honest when completing the survey and answering the interview questions, by ensuring the participants understood there were no right or wrong answers, by sending home a permission slip to parents explaining the purpose of the study, by having the students and teachers sign consent to participate in the study and by ensuring the respondents knew their answers to the interview questions would be kept confidential.

### **Summary**

In summary, the researcher conducted a mixed methods analysis with third grade students to (a) explore the statistical significance of each dependent variable on the independent variable, (b) determine which variable (home environment, parental involvement, the student-teacher relationship, peer relationships, instructional strategies and school environment) had the greatest impact on student academic motivation and student achievement, (c) interview teachers in order to gain insight on their perspective

regarding student academic motivation, (d) observe teaching practices that may impact student academic motivation and observe the behaviors motivated students display, and (e) examine the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement. Using Victor Vroom's Expectancy theory and Maslow's Theory of Motivation, the researcher hopes to help schools' determine how they can motivate students to use their efforts to achieve the desired outcome of academic excellence.

CHAPTER IV  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design**

The researcher conducted a mixed methods research design. The reason for this design choice is that the researcher desired to (a) determine the statistical significance of several factors that impact student academic motivation and student achievement, (b) determine the factor that had the greatest impact on student academic motivation and student achievement, (c) observe teachers' classrooms to identify teaching strategies that impact student academic motivation and observe behaviors motivated students display, (d) gain teachers' perspectives on student academic motivation by conducting an interview, and (e) examine the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement, by examining the research participants' oral reading fluency levels. In order to do this, the researcher surveyed third grade students in a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia. The survey contained statements about student academic motivation, the student's home environment, parental involvement, the student-teacher relationship, peer relationships, instructional strategies and the school environment. The students read each statement and rated the statements using a Likert rating scale. The school has approximately 80 third grade students. It was hoped that 100% of the students would participate; however, approximately 47% of the students participated in the study. Additionally, the researcher interviewed two teachers'

classrooms, observed two classrooms, and analyzed the research participants' oral reading fluency levels. Conducting a mixed methods study enabled the researcher to examine quantifiable data and to understand teachers' perspectives and insights on student academic motivation.

### **Description of the Setting**

The research study was conducted in a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia. The school has approximately 500 students. Following is the demographic breakdown of the student population.

- 73% white
- 12% black
- 11% Hispanic
- 3% mixed race, and
- 1% American Indian

The school is located in an area that is largely surrounded by homes vs. apartments. As a result, the school has a transience rate of approximately 5%; however, the school is a title I school with 56% of students receiving free and reduced lunch. The school's English Language Learner (ELL) population is 7% and 9% of the students have a disability that qualifies them for the special education program. The retention rate of teachers is very high. In 2015, only one teacher left the school and it was because she relocated to South Georgia. Forty-Five percent of teachers have a bachelor's degree, 18% have a master's degree, and 23% have an education specialist degree.



The researcher surveyed students in the third grade; there are approximately 80 third grade students. Fifty-seven percent of the students are male and 43% are female. Seventy-seven percent of the third grade students are white, 11% are black, 10% are Hispanic, and 2% are mixed race. There are four teachers who teach third grade. One hundred percent of the third grade teachers are white.

### **Sampling Procedures**

The research study was conducted in a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia. The school is made up of students in grades Pre-K thru fifth grade; however, only students in third grade were asked to participate in the study. The school has approximately 80 third grade students; however, there were only 37 research participants. The researcher chose to work with third grade students because as a former third grade teacher, the researcher believes third grade is a transition grade for students; therefore, it is the grade where student academic motivation begins to decline. Each of the third grade students received a consent form that was signed and returned to the examiner prior to the student's participation. Additionally, the researcher interviewed two third grade teachers to gain insight on student academic motivation and observed two different third grade teachers' classrooms to identify teaching strategies that impact student academic motivation and identify behaviors motivated students display. The researcher also examined the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement, by examining the oral reading fluency levels of the research participants.

### Instrumentation

A survey, developed by the researcher, was used in the study. The survey variables along with the items measured by each variable are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Variables and Survey Items Measured by Each Variable*

Variables	Survey Items
Dependent Variable	
Student Motivation	<p>I raise my hand to answer questions in class.</p> <p>I do my homework and study for tests.</p> <p>I care about the work I turn in to my teacher</p>
Independent Variable	
Home Environment	<p>I have a set place and time to study or do my homework.</p> <p>I study or complete my homework inside my home.</p> <p>I like my student area.</p>
Parental Involvement	<p>My parents help me with my homework.</p> <p>When I come home from school, my parents ask me about my school day.</p> <p>My parents come to my school for meetings with the teacher or for other events that happen in my school.</p>
Student-Teacher Relationship	<p>My teacher is fair.</p> <p>My teacher cares about me.</p> <p>My teacher helps me when I need her.</p>
Peer Relationships	<p>I work well with other students in my classroom.</p> <p>My friends help me with my schoolwork.</p> <p>I am friends with students who try their best in school.</p>
Instructional Strategies	<p>I understand the work my teacher gives me.</p> <p>I pay attention to my teacher when she is teaching.</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Variables	Survey Items
Independent Variable	
Instructional Strategies	My teacher allows my classmates and me to work together to complete an assignment.
School Environment	I feel safe at school. My school is clean. I have been bullied at school.

Validity and reliability tests were performed on the survey scales. The item-to-scale correlations show content validity for each variable. Tables 2-8 show that each item correlates very strongly with its variable showing a high level of content validity.

Table 2

*Correlations: Student Motivation*

		StudentMot	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
StudentMot	Pearson Correlation	1	.552**	.774**	.482**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.003
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 1	Pearson Correlation	.552**	1	.207	-.290
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.219	.081
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 2	Pearson Correlation	.774**	.207	1	.223
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.219		.185
	N	37	37	37	37

Table 2 (continued)

		StudentMot	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
Item 3	Pearson Correlation	.482**	-.290	.223	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.081	.185	
	N	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

*Correlations: Home Environment*

		HomeEnv	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6
HomeEnv	Pearson Correlation	1	.615**	.502**	.719**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.002	.000
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 4	Pearson Correlation	.615**	1	-.058	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.733	.350
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 5	Pearson Correlation	.502**	-.058	1	.095
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.733		.577
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 6	Pearson Correlation	.719**	.158	.095	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.350	.577	
	N	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4

*Correlations: Parent Involvement*

		ParentInv	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9
ParentInv	Pearson Correlation	1	.603**	.682**	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	36	36	36	36
Item 7	Pearson Correlation	.603**	1	.151	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.380	.665
	N	36	37	36	37
Item 8	Pearson Correlation	.682**	.151	1	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.380		.234
	N	36	36	36	36
Item 9	Pearson Correlation	.659**	.074	.203	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.665	.234	
	N	36	37	36	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5

*Correlations: Student-Teacher Relationship*

		StudTeachRel	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12
StudTeachRel	Pearson Correlation	1	.731**	.728**	.731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 10	Pearson Correlation	.731**	1	.399*	.255
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.014	.128
	N	37	37	37	37

Table 5 (continued)

		StudTeachRel	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12
Item 11	Pearson Correlation	.728**	.399*	1	.253
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.014		.130
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 12	Pearson Correlation	.731**	.255	.253	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.128	.130	
	N	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6

*Correlations: Peer Relationships*

		PeerRel	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15
PeerRel	Pearson Correlation	1	.442**	.719**	.519**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	.000	.001
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 13	Pearson Correlation	.442**	1	-.101	-.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.551	.551
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 14	Pearson Correlation	.719**	-.101	1	.149
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.551		.377
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 15	Pearson Correlation	.519**	-.101	.149	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.551	.377	
	N	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7

*Correlations: Instructional Strategies*

		InstructStrat	Item 16	Item 17	Item 18
InstructStrat	Pearson Correlation	1	.796**	.673**	.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 16	Pearson Correlation	.796**	1	.340*	.246
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.039	.143
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 17	Pearson Correlation	.673**	.340*	1	.145
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.039		.393
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 18	Pearson Correlation	.637**	.246	.145	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.143	.393	
	N	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8

*Correlations: School Environment*

		SchoolEnv	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21
SchoolEnv	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**	.654**	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 19	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1	.341*	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.039	.623
	N	37	37	37	37

Table 8 (continued)

		SchoolEnv	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21
Item 20	Pearson Correlation	.654**	.341*	1	.153
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.039		.367
	N	37	37	37	37
Item 21	Pearson Correlation	.718**	.084	.153	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.623	.367	
	N	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Cronbach Alpha test shows the reliability of each variable. Table 9 shows that each scale is above .600, which is the coefficient typically used to indicate an acceptable level of reliability. This indicates the survey is a reliable instrument.

Table 9

*Cronbach Alpha Reliability Statistics*

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items
Student Motivation	.690	4
Home Environment	.708	4
Parental Involvement	.735	4
Student-Teacher Relationship	.790	4
Peer Relationships	.655	4
Instructional Strategies	.776	4
School Environment	.749	4



### **Participants/Research Location**

The participants for the research study included third grade students who attended a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia and their third grade teachers. The school has approximately 500 students and 80 third grade students. The school has exactly 4 third grade teachers. Each third grade teacher has approximately 19-20 students. The teachers' classrooms are equipped with a promethium board and the students have access to computers. The research was conducted in an art classroom at the elementary school. The researcher gained access to the research setting because she is an employee in the school district where the elementary school is located. The third grade participants were given the survey only if the researcher received a signed consent form from their parents.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

To collect the data, the researcher completed the following steps:

1. Met with the principal of the school to explain the survey, review the consent form and ensure the principal was aware of why the survey was being conducted and how it would benefit the school and the school district.
2. Worked with the principal and one of the third grade teachers to choose a day that consent form would be handed to each student.
3. Collected the consent forms (students were given approximately one month to return the consent form) and determined a day the surveys would be administered to each student.

4. On the day the surveys were administered, the researcher read a student consent letter to each of the students. Students were given an opportunity to decline participation in the research study. The students who did not sign the consent form were sent back to their homeroom classrooms. Students who did sign the consent form were given the survey.
5. Administered the student surveys to the student in a large art classroom within the school. The researcher read the directions on the survey verbatim. The researcher read survey items to students upon request.
6. The researcher assigned a number to each student and instructed them to write their number on the survey in lieu of their name. The survey was collected immediately upon completion and the students were sent back to their classroom.
7. After the surveys were collected, the researcher decided on a date to conduct the teacher interview and observation.
8. The researcher observed the teachers on the selected date.
9. The researcher attempted to interview the teachers, however the teachers did not feel they had time to sit through an interview, so the interview questions were distributed electronically upon request.
10. The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze and quantify the survey data.
11. The researcher coded the interview and observation data in order to analyze the qualitative data.

### **Statistical Applications**

The researcher used the SPSS software to conduct a Pearson-Correlation, a regression analysis, and a factor analysis to determine which of the independent variables had a significant impact on the dependent variables. The researcher further analyzed the data to determine which independent variable had the greatest impact on the dependent variables.

### **Summary**

The researcher conducted a mixed methods research study on the factors that impact student academic motivation and student achievement in a suburban/rural elementary school in Northwest Georgia. The researcher surveyed 37 third grade students and analyzed the data using the SPSS software to determine the statistical significance between the dependent and independent variables. Additionally, the researcher interviewed two of the third grade teachers and observed two different third grade teachers' classrooms and analyzed the data. The researcher examined the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement by examining the oral reading fluency levels of the research participants.

CHAPTER V  
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine factors that motivate third grade students to perform well academically and to investigate how those factors impact student achievement. Additionally, the study proposed to examine the perspectives of third grade teachers regarding student academic motivation and to examine the behaviors that motivated students display. In order to complete the study, the researcher conducted a mixed method analysis, which allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

**Study Permissions**

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on June 16, 2016. Obtaining permission from the IRB enabled the researcher to work with human subjects. Permission from the superintendent of the school district where the research was conducted was gained on July 18, 2016.

**Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues were addressed in the initial stages of the research by obtaining parental consent for the students that participated in the research study as well obtaining consent from the students themselves. Both the parents and students were aware that

participation was voluntary and that no adverse action would be taken if students opted not to participate. Additionally, consent was gained from the teachers and they too were made aware that participation was voluntary and that they would not be penalized in any way if they chose not to participate.

In addition to obtaining consent, the participants were told that their names would not be used in the research. The researcher hoped to encourage honesty by ensuring the participants' anonymity. The teachers were also ensured that their interview answers would not be shared with anyone nor would the researcher discuss her observations of the teachers' classrooms.

### **Quantitative Process**

To obtain the answers to the quantitative research questions the researcher administered a survey to 37 third grade students on September 16, 2016. The survey was administered to 13 students in an art classroom at the students' school beginning at 8:30 a.m. When those students completed the survey, the researcher brought 11 more students into the classroom and when they completed the survey 13 more students were brought into the classroom. The students were divided into groups due to limited seating and to allow the researcher to monitor student behavior.

Prior to completing the survey, the researcher read a student consent letter aloud and required the students to sign the consent form if they desired to participate in the research study. Once consent was obtained, the researcher read the survey directions and the students began working quietly. The students were allowed to return to their classroom as soon as the survey was complete.

Once all the surveys were complete the researcher used Microsoft Excel to code the students' answers. That data were entered into the SPSS software and analyzed using a Pearson Correlation, a regression analysis, and a factor analysis. The quantitative research questions used to guide this study follow.

RQ1: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and home environment?

The statistical significance between student academic motivation and home environment is .008, which indicates a statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables (see Table 10).

RQ2: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and parental involvement?

Table 10 shows that the statistical significance between student academic motivation and parent involvement is .033. This suggests a statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables.

RQ3: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and the student-teacher relationship?

The statistical significance between student academic motivation and the student teacher relationship is .070, which indicates a statistically significant relationship does not exist between these two variables (see Table 10).

RQ4: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and peer relationships?

Table 10

*Pearson Correlations of Independent Variables*

		StudentMot	HomeEnv	ParentInv	StudTeachRel
StudentMot	Pearson Correlation	1	.430**	.356*	.292
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008	.033	.079
	N	37	37	36	37
		PeerRel	InstructStrat	SchoolEnv	
StudentMot	Pearson Correlation	.041	.174		.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.809	.303		.801
	N	37	37		37

The statistical significance between student academic motivation and peer relationships is .809, which indicates a statistically significant relationship does not exist between these two variables (see Table 10).

RQ5: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and instructional strategies?

Table 10 indicates a statically significant relationship is not present between student academic motivation and instructional strategies. The significance of the relationship is .303.

RQ6: What is the statistical significance between student academic motivation and school environment?

Table 10 shows that the statistical significance between student academic motivation and the school environment is .80. This indicates that a statistically significant relationship does not exist between these two variables.

RQ7: What variable has the highest statistical significance on student academic motivation?

A regression analysis was done to determine the answer to research question 7.

Tables 11, 12, and 13 show the results of the regression. From these tables it can be seen that the variable that has the highest statistical significance on student academic motivation is home environment.

Table 11

*Regression on Student Motivation*

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.429 <sup>a</sup>	.184	.160	.76227

a. Predictors: (Constant), HomeEnv

Table 12

*Student Motivation Coefficients*

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.937	.834		7.119	.000
	HomeEnv	.312	.112	.429	2.772	.009

a. Dependent Variable: StudentMot



Table 13

*Excluded Variables*

Excluded Variables <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Beta In	T	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
1	ParentInv	.249 <sup>b</sup>	1.565	.127	.263	.908
	StudTeachRel	.187 <sup>b</sup>	1.164	.253	.199	.924
	PeerRel	-.026 <sup>b</sup>	-.161	.873	-.028	.975
	InstructStrat	.055 <sup>b</sup>	.340	.736	.059	.926
	SchoolEnv	-.070 <sup>b</sup>	-.431	.669	-.075	.945

a. Dependent Variable: StudentMot

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), HomeEnv

The data show that when student academic motivation is compared to home environment, parental involvement, the student teacher relationship, peer relationships, instructional strategies and school environment, a statistically significant relationship exists between student motivation and home environment and student motivation and parental involvement.

The students' reading achievement was also correlated with the variables. A correlation analysis shows that none of the independent variables correlated with reading achievement. Following are the research questions related to reading achievement.

RQ8: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and home environment?

The statistical significance between student achievement and home environment is .461. This suggests there is not a statically significant relationship between these two variables (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Independent Variables Correlated with Reading Achievement*

		RdgAch.	SchoolEnv	InstructStrat	PeerRel
RdgAch	Pearson Correlation	1	.240	-.072	.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.153	.672	.692
	N	37	37	37	37
		StudTeachRel	ParentInv	HomeEnv	StudentMot
RdgAch	Pearson Correlation	.235	.101	.125	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.161	.558	.461	.341
	N	37	36	37	37

RQ9: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and parental involvement?

Table 14 shows there is not a statistically significant relationship between student achievement and parental involvement. The significance between these two variables is .558.

RQ10: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and the student-teacher relationship?

The statistical significance between student achievement and the student teacher relationship is .161. This suggests there is not a statically significant relationship between these two variables (see Table 14).

RQ11: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and peer relationships?

Table 14 shows the statistical significance between student achievement and peer relationships is .692. This suggests these two variables do not have a statistically significant relationship.

RQ12: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and instructional strategies?

The statistical significance between student achievement and instructional strategies is .672. This suggests there is not a statically significant relationship between these two variables (see Table 14).

RQ13: What is the statistical significance between student achievement and school environment?

The statistical significance between student achievement and school environment is .153. This suggests there is not a statically significant relationship between these two variables (see Table 14).

RQ14: What variable has the highest statistical significance on student achievement?

Although none of the independent variables proved to have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, student achievement, Table 14 shows

that the variable that has the highest statistical significance on student achievement is school environment.

Seeing that the variables did not show significant correlation with the independent variables, cross tabulation analysis was done to see if any patterns emerged. For this purpose, achievement scores were divided into quartiles based on percentile measures (see Table 15).

Table 15

*Reading Achievement Quartiles*

---

RdgAch.	Valid	37
	Missing	0
Percentiles	25	58.00
	50	71.00
	75	92.00

---

The following tables illustrate why there are no significant findings between reading achievement and the independent variables. Table 16 shows that 16 students had high levels of student motivation, but low levels of reading achievement, while 14 students had high levels of student motivation and high levels of reading achievement.

Table 16

*Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Student Motivation*

		StudentMot				Total
		6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	1	1	6	3	11
	2.00	0	4	1	6	11
	3.00	0	0	3	4	7
	4.00	0	1	4	3	8
Total		1	6	14	16	37

Table 17 shows that 14 students felt positively about their home environment, but experienced low levels of reading achievement, while 13 students felt positively about their home environment and experienced high levels of reading achievement.

Table 17

*Cross Tabulations: Reading Achievement and Home Environment*

		HomeEnv					Total
		5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	0	5	1	2	3	11
	2.00	1	2	4	3	1	11
	3.00	0	1	2	3	1	7
	4.00	1	0	3	3	1	8
Total		2	8	10	11	6	37

Table 18 shows that 13 students had high levels of parental involvement, but low levels of reading achievement, while 11 students had high levels of parental involvement and high levels of reading achievement.

Table 18

*Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Parent Involvement*

---

RDGACH2 \* ParentInv Crosstabulation

		ParentInv						Total
		4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	0	1	2	4	2	1	10
	2.00	1	1	3	2	2	2	11
	3.00	0	1	2	2	1	1	7
	4.00	1	0	0	4	3	0	8
Total		2	3	7	12	8	4	36

---

Table 19 shows that 16 students felt positively about their school environment, but had low levels of reading achievement, while 13 students felt positively about their school environment and had high levels of reading achievement.

Table 19

*Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and School Environment*

---

RDGACH2 \* SchoolEnv Crosstabulation

		SchoolEnv					Total
		5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	1	2	2	4	2	11
	2.00	1	2	5	3	0	11

---

Table 19 (continued)

RDGACH2 * SchoolEnv Crosstabulation		SchoolEnv					Total
		5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	3.00	1	0	2	1	3	7
	4.00	0	1	1	3	3	8
Total		3	5	10	11	8	37

Table 20 shows that 17 students think their teacher uses effective instructional strategies, but had low levels of reading achievement, while 12 students think their teacher uses effective instructional strategies and had high levels of reading achievement.

Table 20

*Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Instructional Strategies*

RDGACH2 * InstructStrat Crosstabulation		InstructStrat					Total
		5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	1	1	4	3	2	11
	2.00	0	3	2	5	1	11
	3.00	0	1	5	0	1	7
	4.00	0	2	4	2	0	8
Total		1	7	15	10	4	37

Table 21 shows that 14 students have positive peer relationships, but have low levels of reading achievement, while 11 students have positive peer relationships and high levels of reading achievement.

Table 21

*Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Peer Relationships*


---

RDGACH2 \* PeerRel Crosstabulation

		PeerRel					Total
		5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	1	1	5	3	1	11
	2.00	0	6	3	2	0	11
	3.00	1	2	4	0	0	7
	4.00	0	1	5	2	0	8
Total		2	10	17	7	1	37

---

Table 22 shows that 17 students have a positive relationship with the teacher, but have low levels of reading achievement, while 13 students have a positive relationship with the teacher and have high levels of reading achievement.

Table 22

*Cross Tabulation: Reading Achievement and Student Teacher Relationship*


---

RDGACH2 \* StudTeachRel Crosstabulation

		StudTeachRel				Total
		5.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	
RDGACH2	1.00	0	3	1	7	11
	2.00	1	0	5	5	11
	3.00	0	2	2	3	7
	4.00	0	0	1	7	8
Total		1	5	9	22	37

---



The data were also subjected to a factor analysis to see if this could explain the reading achievement scores. A factor analysis tends to show variables that are grouped together in a similar set of responses. Table 23 shows the results of the factor analysis.

Table 23

*Factor Analysis*

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>			
	Component		
	1	2	3
PeerRel	.808	.001	.075
InstructStrat	.782	.232	-.157
StudTeachRel	.669	.235	.459
ParentInv	.546	.541	-.133
StudentMot	-.011	.874	.093
HomeEnv	.196	.706	.117
<b>RDGACH2</b>	<b>-.280</b>	<b>.180</b>	<b>.774</b>
<b>SchoolEnv</b>	<b>.477</b>	<b>-.061</b>	<b>.706</b>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

### Quantitative Data Summary

The quantitative data shows there is a statistically significant relationship between student academic motivation and home environment and between student academic motivation and parental involvement. Additionally, when the data were broken into quartiles, they showed that reading achievement is closely related to home environment.

In addition, reading achievement is closely related to the school environment as shown by the factor analysis.

### **Qualitative Process**

To obtain the answers to the qualitative research questions, the researcher gave the interview questions to two of the research participants on September 27, 2016. The participants were allowed to submit the answers to the research questions electronically upon request. The participants requested to submit the interview questions electronically because they did not have time to sit through a traditional interview. The participants answered the research questions individually and submitted them to the researcher on October 7, 2016 and October 20, 2016. Both of the research participants were third grade teachers who have been teaching at the school for more than 10 years. The interview protocol contained six items that asked questions about the teachers' perspectives of student academic motivation.

### **Alignment of Research Questions to the Interview Protocol**

Table 24 aligns the research questions to the items on the interview protocol.

Table 24

#### *Research Questions Aligned to Interview Questions*

Research Question (RQ)	Interview Question (IQ)
RQ 15	IQ 1
RQ 16	IQ 2
RQ 17	IQ 4
RQ 18	IQ 5, 6

### **Analysis of the Interview Data**

After analyzing the interview protocol, the researcher was able to identify ten themes that answered the research questions. Following is a list of identified themes from the research:

- Intrinsic Motivation
- Willingness
- Paying Attention
- Reward
- Academic Excellence
- Success
- Completing or Attempting Activities
- Participation
- Hard Work
- Ability

Qualitative research questions and answers are listed below:

RQ15: How does the teacher define student academic motivation?

Student academic motivation was generally defined as a student's desire to participate in class activities or complete a task.

RQ16: In what ways does the teacher try to motivate students in the classroom?

The research participants indicated they reward students in order to increase academic motivation. Rewarding students allows teachers to acknowledge students' accomplishments and to motivate students to continue to strive for academic excellence.

In one instance rewarding students consisted of providing them with “cool cash” for grades of 90 or higher. In another instance the students were rewarded with tickets they could trade in for prizes, such as candy or homework passes. Students could also save their tickets and would be rewarded with 5 real dollars if they were able to save 100 tickets.

RQ17: What behaviors do students engage in when they are motivated and engaged in a lesson?

The research participants stated that motivated students pay attention to the lesson and work diligently to complete a task. One teacher also stated that motivated students have a positive attitude and take pride in their work, while the second teacher stated that motivated students volunteer to answer questions.

RQ18: How does student motivation impact academic achievement?

The research participants felt student motivation was directly linked to academic achievement. When students are motivated to learn, they achieve at higher rates because they are more curious than students who are not motivated. This curiosity causes students to ask questions, read and listen, which are the exact traits needed to help students thrive academically.

### **Summary of Interview Data**

The interview data indicate that student academic motivation is a student’s desire or willingness to participate in their education. Student academic motivation directly impacts student achievement because it increases students’ curiosity and causes them to pay attention to the lesson and take ownership of the learning process. This is evidenced

when students ask questions, listen, and work diligently to finish an assignment.

Tangible rewards, such money (real or fake), tickets, candy, prizes and awards, are frequently used to motivate students. When students are motivated they perform better academically than unmotivated students.

### **Observation**

Along with interviewing two participants, the researcher observed two different participants in order to watch how the participants motivated students and observe the behaviors motivated students display. The researcher observed the first participant on September 26, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. for 45 minutes. The observation occurred in the teacher's classroom. There were 18 students in the classroom and 1 teacher. The student desks were arranged in rows. There were two rows of five desks facing the front of the classroom and at the end of each row there were two desks facing inward; therefore, the desks were arranged like a capitol letter "I." There was a round table toward the back left side of the classroom, which is where the researcher sat to observe the lesson. The teacher walked around the classroom throughout the lesson, however her desk was in the front of the classroom across from the door. Her desk faced the classroom door.

The teacher began the lesson by introducing the topic to the classroom: repeated addition. The researcher observed several strategies that were designed to motivate students. The strategies observed included reading a picture book on repeated addition, reading the picture book in an interactive way, allowing all students to use manipulatives, verbally praising students and calling students by name when they performed a task accurately. There appeared to be a high level of engagement amongst the students, which

was evidenced by their participation in the lesson. The students performed the task the teacher read in the book, finished the teacher's sentences when they heard a familiar phrase that was repeated throughout the book, raised their hand to answer questions and clapped or said, "YES" when they got an answer right.

The second observation occurred on September 27, 2016 at 8:15 a.m. and lasted for 45 minutes. There was one teacher in the classroom and nineteen students. The students were seated on the carpet in the front of the classroom and their desks were arranged in two rows of eight, with a small gap in each row after the fourth desk. The teacher desk was in the front of the classroom next to the carpet where the students were seated and the researcher was seated at a round table in the back of the classroom.

When the researcher walked in the classroom, the teacher was sitting at her desk operating her computer screen, which was projected on the white board for all the students to see. The teacher showed the students a video about writing genres, which immediately captured the students' attention. The video contained a cartoon character who talked to another character about the different genres of writing. The students laughed at the humor in the video and their eyes were glued to the screen. After the video presentation, the teacher put up a menu on the board and the students were instructed to choose a menu option from the board and state the reasons why they would like to have that menu option for the school cafeteria. The students were completing a prewriting activity that would lead into developing a persuasive essay.

Motivation techniques observed by the researcher included the use of technology, verbal praise, walking around the room and offering encouragement, such as stating,

“You can do this,” when students appeared confused and placing a gentle hand on students’ shoulder to offer support. The students appeared engaged in the lesson, which was evidenced by them raising their hands, talking about the assignment, asking questions, laughing at the video and working hard to complete the graphic organizer.

### **Alignment of Research Questions to the Observation Protocol**

Table 25 aligns the research questions to the items on the observation protocol.

Table 25

#### *Research Questions Aligned to the Observation Protocol*

Research Question (RQ)	Observation Question (OQ)
RQ 16	OQ 1
RQ 17	OQ 2

### **Analysis of the Observation Data**

The observation allowed the researcher to answer two research questions. Those questions along with the answers follow.

RQ16: In what ways does the teacher try to motivate students in the classroom?

The results of the observation indicated that the teachers used technology, visual aids, such as graphic organizers and picture books and manipulatives to motivate students in the classroom. Additionally, verbal praise, maintaining close proximity to the students, gently touching students and offering words of encouragement were also observed as techniques used to motivate students.

RQ17: What behaviors do students engage in when they are motivated and engaged in a lesson?

The researcher observed students displaying the following behaviors, which showed their engagement in the lesson: the students raised their hands, asked questions, worked cooperatively to complete the task, talked about the assignment, laughed during humorous parts of the lesson, maintained eye contact with the teacher, followed teacher directions, smiled during parts of the lesson and answered questions.

According to Maslow's (1951) Theory of Motivation students will feel motivated to perform a specific task when their social and esteem needs are met. During the observation the researcher observed teachers helping students to fulfill both their social and esteem needs, which is one of the reasons it is believed students in each classroom showed high levels of engagement. The teachers were able to fulfill students' social needs because they allowed the students to work cooperatively. When students work in cooperative learning environments it fosters collaboration and communication. This increases students' ability to make friends and learn about their peer group. The teachers also fulfilled students' social needs by gently touching students on the shoulder to affirm them or to offer support. This enabled students to feel loved and cared for.

Students' esteem needs were met when the teachers praised the students and offered words of encouragement. Praising students helps them to feel important, lets them know they are intelligent and affirms their potential to accomplish the task. Praising students also allows students to feel accomplished and helps them to develop a sense of pride in their abilities and the work they produce.



### **Summary of the Observation Data**

After observing two different classrooms for 45 minutes each, the researcher was able to observe various teaching strategies that were used to motivate students and various behaviors students demonstrated when engaged in a lesson. The strategies used to motivate students include walking around the classroom in order to reduce the distance between the teacher and the students, the use of touch, reading interesting material to the students, using technology and humor in the lesson, using manipulatives and reading interactively. These strategies helped students to fulfill their social and esteem needs and contributed to high levels of student engagement. Because of this, it can be concluded that the more successful teachers are at motivating their students, the more engaged students will be in the lesson. The goal of all educational institutions is to increase academic achievement; therefore, if teachers are able to effectively motivate students, by using one or more of the strategies seen in the observation, it is likely their students will be engaged at high levels, which may lead to increased achievement.

CHAPTER VI  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between student academic motivation and student achievement by investigating factors that contribute to student academic motivation and student achievement. The study also proposed to understand teachers' perspectives on student academic motivation and gain insight on the behaviors motivated students display. The researcher chose to conduct a mixed method analysis to complete the research study.

**Significant Findings**

After an analysis of the data, the findings indicated parental involvement and home environment had the greatest impact on student academic motivation with the population of students used in the research study. The findings further indicated that students tended to be motivated by extrinsic rewards. Therefore, teachers tried to motivate students with cash, candy, and other rewards. Teachers also used technology, graphic organizers, story books, praise and manipulatives to increase student academic motivation. When students were motivated, they raised their hands, asked questions, followed the teacher's directions, and worked diligently to complete tasks. All of these behaviors helped to increase academic achievement.

The literature supported the findings because studies have shown that parental involvement and home environment play a key role in increasing student motivation. Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried (1994) found a clear correlation between parental involvement and student motivation. Even when parents were unable to assist their children with educational activities, they were able to increase their children's feelings of competence and help them to develop a positive attitude about school and education in general when they were involved in the educational process. When parents have high expectations of their children, provide them with the resources they need to thrive in school, and support their children's initiatives, motivation is likely to increase.

Knowledge of this information regarding motivation is important for district level administrators because they can use this knowledge to ensure that each school in the district has a goal to increase parental involvement within their individual schools. Studies showed there is a clear link between parental involvement and academic success and between parental involvement and intrinsic motivation (CEP, 2012). Therefore, district level administrators need to ensure that each school engages parents in the learning process. This can be done by increasing the communication between home and school with weekly newsletters and invitations to attend school functions or volunteer in the classroom. School level administrators should also be encouraged to develop an active parent-teacher organization within their school.

Home environment was also linked to increased student academic motivation. Homes that had computers, books, puzzles, and other learning materials helped to stimulate children's thinking. Students from home environments without these kinds of

learning tools tended to be less motivated (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele (1998). Additionally, Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008) found that children's intellectual development during infancy was most strongly influenced by home environment. Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried (1998) determined that children whose homes had greater cognitive stimulation displayed higher academic motivation from ages 9 through 13. These findings indicate home environment plays a significant role in student academic motivation from infancy through early adolescence.

If schools increase parental involvement, they can then speak with parents about the importance of creating home environments that contribute to good study habits. One habit in particular that leads to increased academic motivation is reading to children. When parents read to their children on a regular basis, it forms positive reading habits in children, which ultimately leads to increased reading achievement (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986). Parents can also help increase student academic motivation by making sure their children have a quiet place to study and complete their schoolwork. Parents should also make sure their children like their study area. It is likely that parents may not realize their home environment impacts their child's motivation level or they may not know how to create a positive home environment for their children; therefore, it is the school's responsibility to make sure they equip parents with this knowledge.

Additionally, the research on student academic motivation supports the use of teachers motivating students with extrinsic rewards because research states that even when students are motivated by extrinsic rewards, a high level of motivation is linked to better academic outcomes (CEP, 2012). Therefore, although the most of the students in

the study seemed to be more extrinsically vs. intrinsically motivated, extrinsic motivation still leads to positive results.

This also aligns with Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory. Victor's Vroom's Theory states that individuals will engage in a desired behavior based on what they expect the result of the behavior to produce (Lunenburg, 2011). The teachers felt that students showed higher levels of motivation when they were rewarded with cash or prizes (Expectancy). Students trusted the teachers to give them their earnings if they complied with the teacher's expectations (Instrumentality), and the tangible rewards were of value to the students (Valence). Therefore, the students were highly motivated to perform the task ( $M=E*I*V$ ).

Further research indicated that when teachers engage in instructional strategies to increase motivation (such as greeting students, providing positive feedback, and praising/encouraging students), students begin to feel they are valued members of the learning community, which in turn contributes to higher academic achievement. Academic increases occur because when students feel valued, they are more likely to exhibit behaviors that contribute to academic success, such as listening to the teacher and engaging in the lesson (Wall, 2013).

This research is meaningful for district level and school based administrators because it will help them understand what they need to focus on in order to increase student academic motivation and academic achievement within their school buildings. School administrators have the job of ensuring they prepare students to meet rigorous curriculum expectations, graduate high school and become productive and contributing

members of society. This can only be done if administrators begin to focus on helping students to excel academically when they first enter school and throughout their academic careers. As many educators would agree, the road to graduation begins in preschool. Therefore, educators must become knowledgeable of the research on student academic motivation and learn how student motivation contributes to academic success. They must understand how to motivate students and ensure they create and implement strategic plans that focus on increasing student motivation if they truly want to help students successfully navigate along the road to graduation.

## **Recommendations**

### **District Recommendations**

To increase parental involvement and help parents develop supportive home environments, the superintendent of the district in which the study took place may want to consider the following recommendations:

1. Ensure every school in the district has an active parent teacher organization.
2. Ensure every school in the district has a webpage that highlights happenings within the schools.
3. Post board meetings on the school district's web page to aid in increasing community participation at the meetings.
4. Ensure each school has a parent resource center to provide parents with parenting tips and homework support.
5. Ensure the district has monthly meetings with parents to offer parent training seminars. The topics of the seminars can focus on creating supportive home

environments, how to use specific school related technology, how to increase student motivation, how to help with projects or homework, etc.

6. Allow parents to sign paperwork that will allow their child to bring their laptop home. Parents should be instructed on how to make sure students use and care for the laptop appropriately, but it is important that all students have access to computers within the home environment.

### **Principal and Administrative Staff Recommendations**

In order to make sure the school works to increase parental involvement and help parents understand the importance of creating supportive home environments for their children, principals and assistant principals may want to consider the following recommendations:

1. Have book drives at the school. Book drives are events where parents bring gently used books their children may no longer read and donate them to the school. When enough books are collected, the school can put the books on display and allow parents to select any book their child may like. It is similar to a “book swap” and will help parents in need to make sure they have books available for their child to read within the home environment.
2. Ensure the school works to make parents feel welcome in the school building by allowing parents to visit classrooms, eat lunch with their child and volunteer within the school.

3. Ensure each teacher contacts parents about positive student behaviors instead of only contacting them when negative behaviors occur. This will aid in building positive rapport between home and school.
4. Provide trainings at the school on how to use various applications on the student laptop and how to properly care for the laptop.
5. Allow teachers to use technology to communicate with parents. For example, teacher can text parents to remind them of test dates and email them the study guide.
6. Allow teachers to use YouTube to provide examples of how to complete various assignments. Parents can go to the teacher's YouTube channel to learn how they can help their children with homework or projects.
7. Allow teachers to use YouTube to create short infomercials on how to create a supportive home environment. Parents can visit the school's YouTube channel to gain ideas and to learn what a supportive home environment consists of and how it benefits students.

### **Enhancing the Research**

To validate this study further, the following items are recommended:

1. Conduct a larger study on a wider sample that studies additional variables.  
For example, future researchers may want to examine how socioeconomic status and demographics may impact student academic motivation and student achievement.



2. Conduct the study in an urban area to learn how the data may be impacted by geographic location.
3. Conduct a more-in depth qualitative analysis by interviewing teachers and parents instead of focusing solely on the teachers' input.
4. Interview building level administrators to gain their insight on student academic motivation.
5. Survey parents to see how they view their children's motivation levels.

## APPENDIX A

### Student Survey

Student Number \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read each statement and circle one answer for each number. Make sure to choose an answer for every number. If you are unsure of an answer, just think of the answer that best fits what you think and make your best choice. There are no right or wrong answers. Just answer honestly and give 100%.

1. I raise my hand to answer questions in class.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

2. I do my homework and study for tests.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

3. I care about the work I turn in to my teacher.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

4. I have a set place and time to study or do my homework.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

5. I study or complete my homework inside my home.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

6. I like my study area.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

7. My parents help me with my homework.

Never                      Sometimes                      Always





## APPENDIX B

### Observation Protocol

#### Central Questions:

1. In what ways does the teacher try to motivate students?
2. How engaged are the students in the lesson?

#### Sub-Questions:

1. Does the teacher ask questions to the students?
2. Do the students raise their hand to answer questions?
3. Are the students looking toward the teacher or the board when the lesson is taking place?
4. Do the students ask questions when they appear confused?
5. Does the teacher offer verbal praise to any of the students?
6. Does the teacher offer encouragement to the students?
7. Does the teacher utilize technology or manipulatives when teaching the lesson?
8. Are the students taking notes?
9. Do the students seem to enjoy the lesson as evidenced by their participation, facial expression or cooperation with peers?
10. Does the teacher use physical contact or proximity to motivate students (placing a hand on a student's shoulder or walking around the classroom)?

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions

1. How would you define student motivation?
2. In what ways do you try to motivate the students in your classroom?
3. To what extent do you think students are motivated in your classroom?
4. What behaviors do students display when they are motivated or engaged in a lesson?
5. How does student motivation impact academic achievement?
6. Do you think students need to be motivated in order to achieve academic success?  
Why or Why not?

APPENDIX D

Letter of Parental Consent

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Veronica Knapper, and I am a student in the Educational Leadership program at Clark Atlanta University. I am also an employee within the school district and have been employed in the district since 2011. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in a study that will investigate specific factors that impact student motivation. In order to complete this study, I am asking for your permission to allow your child to complete a multiple-choice survey that asks questions about student motivation. The school principal and my professors at Clark Atlanta University have reviewed the survey and agree that it is age appropriate for third grade students.

Your child will not have to write their name on the survey and their name will never be included in any of the research findings. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and will be completed at school in the teacher's classroom.

As a reminder, the school principal, assistant principal and third grade teachers have been informed about the research study and have agreed to allow me to conduct the research. Participation in this study is to help the school district gain more information on factors that help motivate students to perform well in school. Participation is entirely voluntary; therefore, it is your right to decide that you do not want your child to participate in the study.

If you are willing for your child to participate, please sign and date the form below and have your child return it to their teacher as soon as possible. I appreciate you and your willingness to consider helping with this research and I thank you, in advance. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (770) 606-5800 x2384.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please sign and date below if you will allow your child to participate. A copy of this form can be provided for personal records.

---

I have read and understand the above information and I give permission for my child to participate in the study by completing a multiple-choice survey.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Statement of Consent for Teachers

Your participation in a study to investigate factors that impact student academic motivation and to help determine how those factors impact student achievement is being requested. For the purpose of the study, the researcher is requesting your help in administering a survey to students who have obtained signed permission to participate in the study. Additionally, the researcher is requesting to conduct a short interview to ask questions about your perceptions about student motivation and/or to observe your classroom to identify teaching strategies that contribute to student academic motivation and to observe behaviors that motivated students may display.

The school principal has been informed of this study and has agreed to allow the study to be conducted. Participation in this study is 100% voluntary and is not required. Participants have the right to decide they do not want to participate in the study at any time. The decision not to participate in the study will not have negative consequences. The participants will not face any increased risk of loss of any right or benefit they may be entitled to.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants' names will never be used in the study at any time. Participants' names will never be attached to interview or observation protocols. All identifying information will be removed from all data collection instruments. All information from the interview and observation will be summarized and analyzed using the utmost discretion.

#### CONTACT PERSON

For any questions regarding the research study and/or participation in the study, please contact:  
Veronica Knapper  
Clark Atlanta University  
Department of Educational Leadership  
223 James P. Brawley Drive S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30313  
Email: v.knapper79@yahoo.com  
Phone: (770) 606-5800 x2384

#### COPY OF STATEMENT OF CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPANT

If the participant understands the terms of the study, understands this form and is willing to participate, please sign and date below. A copy of this form can be provided for personal records.

Participant's Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX F

### Student Permission Slip - Consent Form

Dear Student:

My name is Veronica Knapper, and I am a student in the Educational Leadership program at Clark Atlanta University. I also work at your school. I am asking for your permission to allow me to work with you to ask you questions about student motivation. In order to help me, I am asking for you to complete a multiple-choice survey that asks questions about student motivation. You will not have to write your name on the survey and your name will never be used. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete and you will complete the survey at school. If you do not want to take the survey, you do not have to. It is your choice and nothing bad will happen if you do not take the survey.

If you would like to complete the survey, please sign and date below. You can have a copy of this form if you would like one.

---

I have read and understand the above information and I would like to participate in the study by completing a multiple-choice survey.

Child's Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*, 191-215.
- Center on Education Policy. (2012). Student motivation: An overlooked piece of educational reform. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.gov/fulltext/ED532666.pdf>
- Center on Education Policy. (2012). What roles do parent involvement, family background and culture play in student motivation. Retrieved from [http://www.UsherKober\\_Background4\\_Motivation\\_5.22.12.pdf](http://www.UsherKober_Background4_Motivation_5.22.12.pdf)
- Eccles, J. S., Wigfield, A., & Schiefele, U. (1998). Motivation to succeed. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Volume 3—Social, Emotional and Personality Development* (5th ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Educational Research Newsletters and Webinars. (2016). The four characteristics of authentic learning. Retrieved from <http://www.ernweb.com/educational-research-articles/the-four-characteristics-of-authentic-learning/>
- Fabien, J. (2015). Motivation: Factors affecting student motivation. Retrieved from <http://joyettefabien.hubpages.com/hub/Selfmotivationforsuccess>
- Furrer, C. J., Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2014). The influence of teacher and peer relationships on student's classroom engagement and everyday motivational resilience [Electronic Version]. *National Society for the Study of Education*, *113*(1), 101-123.

Georgia Department of Education. (2015). *Accountability*. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Pages/default.aspx>

Georgia Department of Education. (2016). *School climate and the CCRPI*. Retrieved from [http://r.search.yahoo.com/\\_ylt=A0LEVzSnOzdXhwoAhO9XNyoA;\\_ylu=X3oDMTByOHZyb21tBGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZ0aWQDBHNIYwNzcg-/RV=2/RE=1463266343/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fwww.gadoe.org%2fCurriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment%2fCurriculum-and-Instruction%2fDocuments%2fSchool%2520Climate%2520and%2520Student%2520Achievement\\_July%25202013.ppt/RK=0/RS=4tSF3jUd5LAp0yFzySIicpb2ucA-](http://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0LEVzSnOzdXhwoAhO9XNyoA;_ylu=X3oDMTByOHZyb21tBGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZ0aWQDBHNIYwNzcg-/RV=2/RE=1463266343/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fwww.gadoe.org%2fCurriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment%2fCurriculum-and-Instruction%2fDocuments%2fSchool%2520Climate%2520and%2520Student%2520Achievement_July%25202013.ppt/RK=0/RS=4tSF3jUd5LAp0yFzySIicpb2ucA-)

Gonida, E. N. & Cortina, K. S. (2014). Parental involvement in homework: Relations with parent and student achievement-related motivational beliefs and achievement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84, 376-396.

Gottfried, A. E., Fleming, J. S., & Gottfried, A. W. (1994). Role of parental motivational practices in children's academic intrinsic motivation and achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 86(1), 104-113.

Gottfried, A. E., Fleming, J. S., & Gottfried, A. W. (1998). Role of cognitively stimulating home environment in children's academic intrinsic motivation: A longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 69(5), 1448-1460.

Greany, V., & Hegarty, M. (1987). Correlates of leisure-time reading [Electronic version]. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 10(1), 3-20.

- Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). Expectancy theory of motivation: Motivating by altering expectations [Electronic version]. *International Journal of Management, Business and Administration*, 15(1), 1-6.
- Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research based strategies to increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: McRel.
- Maslow, A. (1951). *Social theory of motivation*. New York: Social Science Publishers.
- Neuman, S. B. (1986). The home environment and fifth grade students' leisure reading [Electronic version]. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(3), 334-343.
- Schunk, D. H., Puntrich, P. R., & Meece, J. L. (2008). *Motivation in education: Theory research and applications*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall
- Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(4), 571-581.
- Somers, C. L., Chiodo, L. M., Yoon, J., Ratner, H., Barton, E., & Delaney-Black, V. (2011). Family disruption and academic functioning in urban, black youth [Electronic version]. *Psychology in the schools*, 48(4), 357-370.
- The White House. (2009). *Fact sheet: Race to the top*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-race-top>
- Tollefson, N. (2000). Classroom applications of cognitive theories of motivation [Electronic version]. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12(1), 63-83.

Wall, A. (2013). *Belonging in the middle grades*. Retrieved from [www.middleweb.com/5587/belonging-in-the-middle-grades/](http://www.middleweb.com/5587/belonging-in-the-middle-grades/)