The Advantages of Looping on Students Self-Efficacy
and Perspectives from Teachers and Parents

By
Rachael Bunce

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Supervised by
Dr. Diane Barrett

School of Arts and Sciences
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

Looping is when a teacher and class stay together for two or more consecutive years; a teacher with a class of first graders would be the teacher with the same set of children for the second grade year. Looping is a practice that dates back to times of the one room school house and is seldom continued to be implemented in schools around the world when it has several benefits. It can build strong relationships between the teacher, student and parent, provide more instructional time, increase student’s self-efficacy, and make support available for students that need extra assistance or those in need of more challenging experiences. Teacher and parents of the Genesee Community Charter School, GCCS, completed a survey to show what their perspectives of looping are. The survey results correspond with earlier research, although the GCCS uses other practices that may draw similar conclusion of success in the classroom.
Dedication

This research is dedicated to the community of teachers, students and families of the Genesee Community Charter School. Without the experiences that have been provided when teaching at the GCCS, looping would not impacted this research. The GCCS is an inspirational community of individuals that allowed me to discover the absolute joy in teaching.
Table of Contents

Introduction 6

Literature Review 7

A Family of Learners 7

Advantages to Looping 10

Disadvantages of Looping 14

Teachers Perspectives 16

Parent Perspectives 17

Student Achievement and Self-Efficacy 19

Summary 21

Methodology 23

Background on Genesee Community Charter School 23

Parent Survey 25

Teacher Survey 26

Results 28

Parent Survey Results 28

Teacher Survey Results 31

Discussion 34

Conclusion 41

References 43

Appendix A: Parent Survey Questions on Looping Perspectives 45

Appendix B: Teacher Survey Questions on Looping Perspectives 47
List of Tables

Table 1: Parent Survey Responses 30
Table 2: Teacher Survey Responses 32
The Advantages of Looping on Students Self-Efficacy and Perspectives from Teachers and Parents

In studies of looping, teachers and parents have shared both their positive and negative perspectives of looping. The effects of looping on the teacher/parent/student relationship, student-academic achievement, and the overall effects of looping in a classroom have been widely researched.

Teachers of today face many challenges in the classroom. To combat some of the problems they are presented with, teachers and their districts are rethinking the traditional grade-level teacher and looking towards looping as a tool to aide their children in academic success. Looping or a multi-year assignment is when a teacher moves from one consecutive grade level to the next with the same group of students. In the U.S., teachers who loop with their class tend to stay together for two to three years before moving to a different teacher, therefore a teacher with a first grade class will move with her students to second grade and possibly to third grade depending on how many years the district has decided to implement the program.

The following research explores looping, how it affects the classroom community, student’s behavior and academic achievement as well as the parents and teachers perspectives of looping classrooms. It will include and discuss the benefits that looping provides for students, parents and teachers along with some of the challenges that can occur.
Literature Review

Looping is not a new concept in the field of education. The one room school house was a similar arrangement as well as the multi-year practices that have been implemented in German schools for quite some time. It has shown to improve the student’s academic achievement, behavior in the classroom and confidence. Looping provides strong relationships between teachers, their students and their parents that ensues the improvement in the students academic performance. Although there are the occasional problems that can develop, most of the children and adults that have been involved in looping experiences have reported positive feedback and would chose a looping classroom another time if they were given the opportunity. Prior literature has examined the advantages and disadvantages of looping; both the advantages and disadvantages affect the relationships that are established, the students’ efficacy as well as parent and teacher perspectives.

Looping presents children with an adult and peers that will be in their lives that they can build a relationship with. As the bond grows and fulfills needs of the students they can begin to focus their attention on learning instead of subconsciously concentrating on the basic need of belonging. Looping allows for a relationship to exist for an extended amount of time so that each year when the child comes back to school they do not need to go through this process of becoming acquainted with a new teacher and new classmates.
A Family of Learners

When teachers and children have been together for several years, like in a looping classroom, there is a sense of family atmosphere because of the bond that is created between them (Jacoby, 1994; Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992; Simel, 1998). In this classroom community where the relationships are built on trust, the children share experiences of success and failure with their peers and act as team members in a society to resolve problems (Hanson, 1995; Hitz, Somers & Jenlink, 2007; Rodriguez & Arnez, 2007). This concept of a community of learners working together to build knowledge and experiences has been supported by educational theorists such as Dewey, Scott and Thorndike (Simel, 1998). The students within a looping classroom develop with one another to live in a community together where they are presented with real-life problems that can prepare them for the challenges society will toss at them in future situations. As this community grows, they can then begin to learn together as well as from one another.

As reported by a Deborah Meier, a New York City educational theorist, in the work by Cistone and Shneydermand (2004), “teachers and students need to be well-acquainted with one another in order to achieve necessary levels of communication that would support learning” (p. 48). The children, especially elementary school aged children need to develop healthy relationships with adults and peers. These long-term associations can be vital to the development of the student in the classroom (Hedge & Cassidy, 2004). When children are surrounded by adults and more competent peers that allow them to be involved in
The Advantages of Looping 9

in-depth engagement with others, it supports their verbal communication and literacy development, cognitive processes, emotional development and ability to socially engage with others (McCown & Sherman, 2002; Pianta & LaParo, 2003). Looping fosters the experience and the time for children to cultivate the healthy bonding interactions they need (Jing-Qui, 1997; Nichols & Nichols, 2003).

Maslow’s Hierarchy.

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, one of the basic human needs is that of belonging, once that sense of belonging to a group is fulfilled, learning can occur with the child (Rodriguez & Arnez, 2007). All the references to looping identified that looping with the same teacher created an essential and strong bond between the students and the teacher. When there is a long-term relationship established between the teacher and the student, it has been revealed through research that the child’s performance in the classroom has improved.

Children that come from unstable homes begin to see school as a second home, a place that the child can consider to be their own and a place where they can feel safe (Bracey, 1999; Simel, 1998). Each child needs to have someone that is consistent in their lives and produces an environment that is warm and inviting; somewhere the child can feel comfortable. Many teachers today offer continuity and security that is lacking in the lives of several children in the form of the teacher being a role model, mentor and friend, which provides a support system for students (Barnes, 1991; Butzin, 2004; Hanson, 1995). Without a significant relationship, built on trust, no considerable learning can occur with a student that comes from poverty (Coash, 2005). Many times it is exactly these students, ones
that come from poverty, that fall behind the class and often times are just pushed to the next grade level without performing as they should. As a support system and a sense of belonging fulfill the students’ basic need to be part of a group, it would seem foolish to switch these children to a new teacher every year to start a new bond. This community that has been created is a plus for the students involved in the looping classroom and can now be carried with them for more than one year.

Advantages of Looping

Not only does looping allow the students to build a bonding connection with an adult and peers, it has many advantageous aspects in the classroom. As children come back for the second or third year they know what to do when they enter the classroom, as does that teacher know how to provide the necessary tools for each student to learn to his or her best ability. As the members of these looping classrooms move from grade to grade with one another teachers have taken notice in the changes in behavior that the students display, in addition to their attendance rates.

Knowing Your Student.

Looping has many advantages in the classroom. Because the children feel more comfortable they are less anxious for the beginning of the new school year (Hanson, 1995). When the teacher and the students come back for the second year of their looping cycle, the teacher and the students are both aware of what to expect. The teacher does not have to go over rules and procedures of the classroom and allow the students to have time to acquaint with one another.
The advantages of looping (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004; Jacoby, 1994; Little & Dacus, 1999; Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992). Neither does the teacher have to perform numerous tests to identify each child’s basic skills to plan further instruction, as these assessments may take up most of the first month of the school year (Jacoby, 1994; Little & Dacus, 1999). Not having to go through a transitional period of getting to know one another and the classroom procedures provides the teacher with almost an extra month of instructional time (Butzin, 2004; Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004; Hanson, 1995). When the children come back to school the teacher can dive right into instruction. Many teachers do not even have to wait for the first days of school, some teachers have learning packets that will go home over the summer and they also have the unique experience of being able to build on what they have done the prior year (Hanson, 1995). As a class they can refer back to books to compare and contrast authors or refer back to projects to build on previously developed skills (Jacoby, 1994).

Since the teacher has spent much time getting to know the students over the past years, the teacher can readily anticipate their wants and needs (Hedge & Cassidy, 2004). Over this time the teacher also comes to know the students preferred ways of learning, behavioral patterns, interests, emotional stability and social skills (Nichols & Nichols, 2002). When the teacher develops such a profound knowledge of their students they can make the environment more conducive to learning for their students. They may also be able to detect when there is something wrong with a student and confront the child to talk with them. Because of the trusting relationship that was built they will feel comfortable
sharing new information with their teacher. Situations that happen outside of the classroom often affect a student's learning in negative ways, so if the classroom teacher can devise a plan, along with the student, their learning can continue to grow. Not only is the teacher intuitive to how his/her students feel, but because of the relationships that have been built the other children in the classroom can be very responsive as well.

Planning Instruction.

When a teacher has the same set of children it can be beneficial to their planning of instruction. Since the teacher already knows the children, he/she can plan individualized instruction, which can be helpful for many children, especially those with special education needs (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004; Little & Dacus, 1999; McCown & Sherman, 2002). As the teacher has experienced extensive time with his/her students they can also pick up on what knowledge the students have accumulated outside of school which can be highlighted and shared with the class (Zahorik & Dichanz, 1994). Teachers can use what they know about their students to their advantage when placing them in partners or groups the teacher can strategically put children with strength in the subject or content along with a struggling student as an effort to give the struggling student more support.

When children of a looping class come back to school they feel more comfortable knowing their teacher, the expectations and their peers. Shy students become more confident, with improved self-esteem with looping because the amount of stress that accompanies a new school year with unfamiliar people and
procedures is diminished (Lacina-Gifford, 2001; Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992). Many children who are shy go unnoticed by the teacher and with looping the student is provided the opportunity to open up, make friends and demonstrate their ability in the community. With the extra instruction time, the basic skills and content for struggling students begins clicking and it may catch them up to grade level (Chirichello & Chirichello, 2001; Jing-Qui, 1997; Little & Dacus, 1999). Teachers are constantly faced with the overwhelming demand of catching up students that fall behind. Looping may be an answer, since the students come into the new school year to learn content and skills, instead of the traditional rules and procedures. For many students this can make the difference between being held back a year and progressing with the rest of their classmates.

**Behavioral Issues.**

There are less behavioral issues of the second year of a looping cycle, as a teacher stated, “The same teacher’s consistent use of discipline and particular type of disciplining is really helpful” (Hedge & Cassidy, 2004, p. 135). Even administration has taken notice in the amount of disciplinary problems; they believe that looping has decreased the number that they have been presented with (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004). If a problem does arise the teacher has already developed a rapport with the parents and is the best liaison to handle the problem, instead of passing on the problem to someone else, the administration (Barnes, 1991). It can be more effective for both the teacher and the student when they can meet together to devise a solution with the parents and the teacher has the support of the parent because of the relationship they have developed over the year.
As has been discussed, looping with the same children for a consecutive year has shown that students feel more comfortable and are excited to come to school. Some research has suggested that these effects of looping have an affect on student attendance, that it actually improves the attendance of students within looping classrooms (Bracey, 1999). When students are present in school more often there is less catching up to do, which can provide more time for learning and clarification.

**Disadvantages of Looping**

Even though research has shown that looping can be extremely advantageous for student development there are also some drawbacks that need to be considered. Teachers need to be prepared to deal with a situation where either the parent or the child does not connect well with the teacher. Looping may also make it difficult for children to move to a new teacher once the looped class has completed its time together. The teachers can have difficulty with a new curriculum as well as the district affording the necessary support to give to teachers.

**Complications in the Relationships.**

There needs to be an alternative for students and parents who have complications in getting along with the classroom teacher or the teaching style of the instructor may not compliment the learning style of the student, who is the looping teacher and is expecting to have the same group of children next year (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004). In this instance the teacher, parent or administration must intervene and allow for an alternative placement of the
students in another classroom. In this occurrence there could be the possibility that another student will join the class, who is not used to the expectations and procedures of the already bonded class. Both the teacher and the students need to welcome the new student and help them adjust to the classroom openly to ensure their success in their new educational environment. Studies have shown that sociable children do not have problems adjusting to the looped class, but those children that are shy may cling to the teacher.

Although the relationship that is established between the teacher and the student is beneficial in many ways, one setback can be that it makes it difficult for both the teacher and their students to say good bye at the end of the second year. When peers have been with one another for such a long period of time, the separation to move on to a new class, a new teacher and a new classroom can cause some anxiety for children. Although in many cases the students have gained confidence throughout the past years working with the same teacher and classmates, it can be difficult to move on once that special bond has been created.

_Unfamiliar Curriculum._

Another issue that can arise is that the teacher is not familiar or comfortable with the new curriculum of the second year of the loop and important (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004; Jacoby, 1994). In this case, instructional time can be lost. If the teacher has a weakness in teaching a certain subject area, his/her students will be at a loss in future years from having the same teacher for two years and not adequately preparing their students for the potential curriculum.
**Cost Implications.**

While some studies have stated that looping is extremely cost effective, other studies have presented the idea that it may need some of the districts budget for it implementation and support. When the program is first starting out or new teachers are beginning to loop, they should be provided with the opportunity to attend conferences and workshops and in attendance they would need a substitute to cover for them (Simel, 1998). Also with teachers taking on a new grade level, their materials will need to be upgraded and extra planning time is needed to plan for both of the grade levels, especially if it is the teachers first year with the new curriculum (Simel, 1998).

**Teacher Perspectives**

As teachers are one of the main components of looping it is important that they are supporters of the strategy that they are implementing in their classrooms. Almost all of the research on looping or multi-year classrooms reflects positive responses on looping from both teachers and their administration. In a study by Little & Dacus (1999), one teacher pointed out that she is pleased with the outcomes of looping and that when she “finds what works with her students, it works for two years” (p. 44). Since the students stay with a teacher for two or more consecutive years, they know the students interests and learning styles, which can help them prepare for the following year and drives the instruction to be “constructivist, or child-centered, rather than curriculum centered” (Hanson, 1995, p. 43; Hedge & Cassidy, 2004).
Heartwarming Experiences.

Looping can be a rewarding process for teachers as they stay with the same children, creating a bond and a lasting relationship. And while each child moves at their own “unique pace, teachers can experience the joy of seeing even the late bloomer blossom” (Hanson, 1995, p. 43). Being able to see such monumental moments as students getting their niche in school is very rewarding and why many teachers do what they love the most, teach. One teacher in an article by Little & Dacus (1999) reported, “I think looping has made me a better teacher” (p. 44). With results as gratifying as these it demonstrates that all the work teachers put into looping really pays off for them just as much as it does for their students.

Demanding Aspects.

Although looping can be rewarding for teachers, it can also be demanding. The teachers have to become fluent in two or more curriculums and if it is the teachers first time looping, it can be an intense work load trying to develop lesson plans and goals for the new school year. Many teachers wonder if in the second year they will be able to motivate their students, challenge them in new ways to keep them interested in the new curriculum (Jacoby, 1994; Simel, 1998). This can be a tough endeavor as the students become used to the teacher, their teaching style and the tricks that the teacher uses to motivate the children. In many situations the teacher has to develop new ways to motivate his/her students, which pushes the teacher have to use much of their own time investigating innovative ways to entertain the class.
Parent Perspectives

Within a looping classroom the parents are also affected by the sense of community and it has been shown to increase the involvement of the parents in the classroom (Nichols & Nichols, 2002). The parents begin to feel comfortable, just as their children. With this new bond parents and teachers alike felt more comfortable around each other as a teacher from Little & Dacus (1999) stated, “Now I know them (the parents) on a first name basis… they completely trust me” (p.44).

Parental Support.

Throughout the research on looping it has appeared consistent that almost all parents were supporters of looping; they indicated that being in a looping classroom had positive effects on their children’s attitudes toward school and the learning process (Rodriguez & Arnez, 2007). When one child is eager to learn it has a complimentary result on their peers. This in turn creates a classroom environment that encourages and fosters learning.

Parental Involvement.

In a looping classroom there is not only a relationship that is established with the students; teachers and parents develop a union. Since a child’s parent is the most imperative relationship in their child’s lives it is essential that the parent and the teacher develop a working relationship to benefit the students’ success. The adults in the students’ lives feel more comfortable approaching one another with problems happening with the child, academically or behaviorally. With the trusting relationship between the teacher and the parent, both of them can reflect
on the growth of the child and work together to develop long-range goals for the child (Nichols & Nichols, 2002). As teachers invite parents to join in the process of their child’s education, there tends to be a larger increase in parent involvement in events like fund-raising and parents volunteering in the classroom and for fieldtrips (Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992). When the involvement of the parents increases in the child’s academic activities it has been shown to increase the achievement of the student (Simel, 1998).

**Student Achievement and Self-Efficacy**

Since the students have grown a connection with one another, it helps them to feel less nervous in class discussions, it benefits those students whose English is their second language and students become less distracted by one another. They begin to assist each other as one teacher in a study by Simel (1998) stated, “they help each to the point that, it is just amazing” (p. 335).

**No More Anxiety**

Children that are coming back to school in their second year of a looping cycle have less anxiety about the first day of school and the upcoming year since their previous year was spent with the same teacher as well as classmates. One student’s response from a study by Hanson (1995) stated, “This is the best first day of school. I can be with my teacher from last year. I can see my friends. I like school” (p. 43). If all students came to school with the same confidence and enthusiasm, our schools would be a much different place. Also when children are comfortable in their classroom surroundings they are more apt to take risks (Chirichello & Chirichello, 2001). As students work together in this community
they gain more knowledge and develop a better understanding of content by challenging, questioning and confirming one another’s ideas (Zahorik & Dichanz, 1994).

**English Language Learners.**

Looping can benefit students whom are English Language Learners, ELL, as well as those students who have special needs. The classroom environment allows the students to feel comfortable which in turn builds their confidence level. ELL students find themselves speaking there new language without apprehension moving them on in the curriculum and closer to other students in the class (Hitz et al, 2007). The students in the class with the ELL child have the benefit of being exposed to a culture other than their own, helping them to develop an understanding and respect for cultures from around the globe.

**Knowing Your Peers.**

When the children are familiar with their peers, they begin to know each others personalities and behaviors that may normally present themselves as a problem. The students learn how to deal with one another’s disruptions but as a new child comes into the class their unfamiliar behaviors can be disruptive, as time moves on the students get used to the new behavior, but it is as the new students interrupted the ecosystem within the looped room (Simel, 1998). Since the students have bonded in this classroom community they act as a family, helping one another when they are in need. As reported by Muzzuchi & Brooks (1992), a student in the classroom whose father had died, “the whole class shared in his sense of sadness and tried to help him through it” (p. 62). Whether it
be something to celebrate about, like the completion of a puzzle, the mourning because of the death of a family member or pet or a classmate moving away, the children in a looping classroom are there to support one another (Jacoby, 1994).

*Academic Improvement.*

Within classrooms that loop, research has suggested that looping has a positive effect on student academic performance. The most improved area of academics has been seen in reading and writing (Jacoby, 1994). In a study by Rodriguez & Arnez (2007), students of looping and non-looping classrooms took part in taking assessments; the tests revealed that there was a significant difference in the performance of language arts and that looping plays a role in academics achievement especially in the areas of writing strategies, vocabulary, and rereading comprehension. The students also become more independent with the familiarity of the classroom, being able to focus better on the task at hand (Muzzachi & Brooks, 1992).

*Summary*

Administrators, teachers, parents and students must all be involved in the child’s educational experience to ensure that the child is getting the most of their educational career, whether it is a looping or non-looping classroom. As our classrooms and students become more diverse in culture, personality, special needs and academic ability, there needs to be a solution to help children to receive the education they deserve. Looping may be the answer, providing a gift of time that is well overdue in this fast paced world (Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992).
Just as an educator reported to Coash (2005), “Education, particularly in a democracy, has to involve heart as well as head, attitude as well as information, spirit as well as scholarship and conscience as well as competence” (p. 18). Looping involves all of these characteristics and can provide the service of education that our society so desperately needs. With support coming from teachers and parents and with the collaboration that comes along with looping, this new structure of a classroom community can help many of our students to achieve higher levels of knowledge and understanding.
Methodology

Looping is a technique used by educators to try to improve students’ academic achievement and progress in the classroom as well as develop enhanced relationships between the teacher, student and their parents. It is a new trend being used in the states where a teacher will stay with the same class of students for two or more consecutive years. Loops can begin at any grade level and may also end at any grade level depending on the choices of the school district and the teacher. Throughout the research teachers and parents have both reported positive experiences with looping, except for the exception of a few parents or teachers that were unsatisfied with their experience, and it is extremely important for both the parents and teachers to be positively involved in their child’s educational experience. Looping classrooms can provide; the child with a trusting adult relationship, peer to peer bonds, consistency with rules and expectations, which can allow for more instruction time, and improved parent involvement because of the strength in the parent-teacher relationship. As a result of these benefits of looping, in many cases students have been more successful in their academic venture.

Background on Genesee Community Charter School

Parents and teachers of students at the Genesee Community Charter School, GCCS, located on the Rochester Museum and Science Center campus will be surveyed on their perceptions of looping; how it affects the relationships that are built, their child’s attitudes towards school and their child’s academic achievement. The GCCS is in the Rochester City School District and is located in
the Rochester City Limits. The students as well as their parents are residents of the city of Rochester or one of the many surrounding suburbs. Students that attend the GCCS were applicants that were chosen through a lottery system, unless one of their parents works at the school or a sibling is already attending school at the GCCS. This system of selecting students provides a diverse background of students to build their school and classroom community.

The curriculum and the procedures of the GCCS are not that of a traditional school. They follow an expeditionary learning curriculum where they have three large units a year that are majorly parts of the social studies and science requirements, but the topics are integrated throughout all of the subjects of study. They also follow Design Principles, which are the backbone of the schools philosophy and are influenced by character education. Also because the GCCS is relatively small with one classroom for each grade level and containing 28 to 32 students in each class, the GCCS has two teachers that co-teach in each classroom as well as a teacher’s aide. Each classroom has 31 students, with the exception of the sixth grade that has 28 due to students leaving to go to middle school. As part of their schools uniqueness, there are three loops that a student may go through, K/1, 2/3, 4/5 and then 6th grade there is a new set of teachers that you do not loop with because the next year the students have moved on to a new school. At the GCCS there is a large population of students that have attended the school since kindergarten, but just as any school there are students that leave and new students that join at different points in the school year, in different grade levels.
Parent Survey

The parents of the children that go to the GCCS received an introductory letter explaining who the researcher is, what they are researching and why they are researching it, along with a copy of a twelve question survey. The survey asked the parent to provide some basic information of what school their child attends and how many years their child has been in a looping classroom experience. Following the initial information there were a series of ten statements that were answered with a four point scale, ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. An option of not applicable or neutral was not provided as an option to compel the parents to have an opinion and provide feedback for the researcher. The statements that the parents responded to were based on how comfortable the parent felt with their child’s teachers and school and how the parent believed a looping classroom affected their child’s achievement, perceptions, and behavior in school. The parents that were surveyed were those of first graders and above, due to the fact that parents of kindergarteners have not yet experienced their child going through a loop.

As any school many students have siblings that attend the same elementary school as them. Each student was sent home a letter and a survey regardless of their siblings, so some families may have received more than one copy, in some instances even three. Out of the 183 surveys that were sent to parents and families, 57 of them were returned and many of them replied with extensive feedback of their outlook on looping.
Teacher Survey

All of the teachers and teacher aides that have worked at the GCCS for more than one year were asked to participate in the looping teacher survey, even including the kindergarten teachers if they have previously participated in a looping cycle. The team of sixth grade teachers was not asked to contribute their viewpoint of looping in the survey as they have never participated in a loop. The teachers and teacher aides were asked how long have been a teacher, how long they have worked in a looping classroom and how long they have been involved in working at a school other than a looping school. As the parents, the teachers and teacher aides were asked to respond to a series of four initial questions followed by ten statements, the statements were different of those that the parents answered, but the same rating scale was used. They were asked to respond to the statements based on a four point scale, ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. An option of not applicable or neutral was not provided as an option to compel the teachers to have an opinion and to provide feedback for the researcher. There was space provided for the teachers to leave additional comments as well. The teachers and teacher aides were asked to respond to statements that allowed them to reflect how they felt looping affected their effectiveness as a teacher, their relationships with both the students and their parents and how it affected student’s self-efficacy and performance in school. At the end of the allotted time for the survey responses, 4 teachers or teacher aides had filled out the survey, when 18 surveys were expected to be returned.
All of the data from the surveys was collected during February to March of the 2008-2009 school year. The introduction letter and survey for the parents were sent home with the student and were asked to be returned to their one of their child’s teachers within one week. Teachers were also given one survey each to be completed and picked up at the end of that same week. The researcher picked up the surveys at the end of the week.
Results

Looping is a strategy that the Genesee Community Charter School, of the Rochester City School District, has used since the time it has opened to improve their students’ performance in the classroom. In this study, parents of the children that attend the GCCS in addition to the teachers that teach at the GCCS completed surveys regarding their perspectives of looping; how it affects relationships, student academics, and student behavior in the classroom.

The surveys were compiled into a spreadsheet and the four point scale was given a numerical rating, strongly agrees was represented with four, agrees with three, disagrees with two and strongly disagrees with one. The average, mode and frequency of the data were found, which allowed the results to be evaluated for patterns more easily. In order to determine more accurate and significant results that data was assembled into to two categories of strongly disagree/disagree and strongly agree/agree and percentages were calculated for comparisons between the categories.

Parent Survey Results

On the survey, a number of parents chose not to circle an option that was provided or added a comment to several of the statements that the statement was not applicable because their experiences as well as child’s experience has only been those within a looping school, so they do not know else wise. A few of the parents expressed frustration with having a child attending the GCCS, a school that practices looping, while their child did not experience looping due to unfortunate teacher configuration. Many of the parent comments and results of
the survey provided insight that geared towards positive attitudes regarding looping, with a couple of drawbacks.

Table 1 shows the amount of parents that either strongly disagreed/disagreed or agreed/strongly agreed with the corresponding statement on the survey, which is labeled with Q and a number. The total number of responses is different for each question due to the fact that some parents opted not to provide an answer to the statement. The percentages of the participants that disagreed or agreed with that statement were estimated to the whole number and in accordance with the total number of participants that had responded to the statement.

After examining Table 1, there are two significant results. There was not one statement that the parents as a whole had responded to in disagreement. All of the percentages in the agree/strongly agree rows are above 50%, yielding that in this community at the GCCS the parents support looping classrooms. There were also two statements, Q8 and Q11, in which 100% of the participants agreed with the testimonial. Question 8 and 11 had asked the parents to respond to the statements touching on the subject of referring other parents to inquire about looping classroom and their confidence level in the teacher’s ability to know their child’s strengths and weaknesses to plan instruction, see appendix A to view survey statements.

Another significant finding is conveyed through the results of three other statements whose results had shown the highest percentages in the disagree
### Table 1

**Parent Survey Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree/Disagree</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>43 (96%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>48 (96%)</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>41 (91%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>32 (78%)</td>
<td>41 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>51 (96%)</td>
<td>53 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>53 (100%)</td>
<td>53 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>16 (33%)</td>
<td>32 (67%)</td>
<td>48 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>19 (43%)</td>
<td>25 (57%)</td>
<td>44 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>54 (100%)</td>
<td>54 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>46 (96%)</td>
<td>48 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
category. Even though they are not greater than 50%, Q6, Q9 and Q10 were statements that many of the parents felt looping has had little impact on. These statements relate to how their child feels about school and how the parent is involved in their child’s education. As the findings show approximately half of the parents felt that looping has not effected their involvement in their child’s education and many had added statements that they would advocate for their child regardless of looping.

*Teacher Survey Results*

Although many of the teachers at the GCCS did not complete the survey, those that were collected at the end of the period of the week provided responses that were useful. Teacher and teacher aide results were organized as those of the parent surveys, into compiled data grouped by strongly disagree/disagree and agree/strongly agree.

The average amount of time that the teachers at the GCCS have been teaching is 6.8 years, with the average time that these teachers have been in a looping setting is 5 years. The majority of the time that these participants have spent in the classroom they have practiced looping. This reflects positive attitudes towards looping, because if they were not satisfied with their experiences in a looping classroom they have the opportunity to leave. The teachers’ enthusiasm for looping shines through when the percentages on Table 2 are examined, because they are 75% and above. The problem with the data gather is that the total number of participants only adds up to four teachers, so unfortunately not much information was gathered. If the pool size of the
Table 2

Teacher Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree/Disagree</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participants were larger and the same results were yielded then there would be
more significance in the values of the statements and even with the limited
amount of teachers that participated there were several statements that everyone
agreed with.

Given that all of the responses that were gathered were in the majority of
agreement with the statements on the survey, it suggests that they support looping.
Also the statements in which 100% of the participants agreed with the declaration;
Q5, Q6, Q8, Q9, and Q11, related to how looping affects students self-efficacy,
academic success and how looping can improve teacher/parent relationships, see
appendix B to view survey statements.
Discussion

Although there was not an overwhelming response to the surveys, the information that the parents and teachers of the GCCS community provided support that looping creates stronger relationships among teachers, students and parents, also the teacher is more aware of each student’s capabilities and therefore they can better plan instruction for their class. Through the parents and teachers, students’ perspectives were assumed, and the majority of students have improved self-efficacy when they are involved in a looping classroom, due to familiarity with their peers, classroom procedures and teachers, and a sense of belonging in their classroom community.

As in prior research, when a child belongs to a group and feels comfortable with the people around them they have fulfilled one of the basic human needs of belonging, which allows them to then focus on learning (Rodriguez & Arnez, 2007). The foundation of the strong relationships built in a looping classroom fosters learning as is demonstrated between the research and a parent comment from the GCCS. The parent of the GCCS community stated,

I certainly agree that looping strengthens relationships between students and teachers and parents and teachers…one of my son’s classes did an over night field study at the beginning of the year (third grade) this was only possible because the teachers already knew the kids and they had a strong working relationship.

Looping has allowed this school, the GCCS, to provide superior learning opportunities for their students due to the development of the relationship that
they have achieved. Several other parents from the GCCS commented on the survey that the relationships made allow the teacher to be acquainted with the students to “challenge, support and encourage” them. As many prior researches had noted, since the teachers have already worked with the children before, they can plan instruction that is more individualized (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004; Little & Dacus, 1999; McCown & Sherman, 2002). Another parent from the GCCS also stated, “It affects how (the) children learn and (how the) teachers teach.” This statement sums up what looping can provide for all of those involved, teaching and learning become more individualized so that the students can perform to the best of their ability, which occurs only after the need to belong is fulfilled.

Several of the parent participants had remarked that statement eleven on the survey was one of the most important aspects of looping, “I have confidence that my child’s teacher knows my child’s strengths and weaknesses to help them to be successful in their looping classroom.” By the end of a new school year with each other, the teacher knows quite a bit about their students; interests, learning styles, capabilities, difficulties, behavioral patterns, emotional stability and social skills (Nichols & Nichols, 2002). When a student is not themselves, the teacher can often sense that as ne parent declared, “I like knowing that my child’s teachers have seen him over time and can be alert to subtle changes in him.” Since the teacher and students have worked together for enough time to build a relationship, the teacher can readily anticipate their students’ wants and needs (Hedge & Cassidy, 2004). This is an advantage of the relationship
developed for both the teacher and the students to work together successfully in a classroom community.

Although the results of the survey were in favor of looping, a couple statements on the survey, nine and ten, were commented on by some parents that looping has had no effect on their involvement in their child’s education and how they feel about confronting their child’s teacher.

Being an active parent, my first job is to advocate for my child. I am always involved within my child’s education and schools. One must always be consistent within ones child’s education to help partner with the teachers in better their child’s academic success. In my opinion, looping classrooms had no affect on increasing my involvement because I have always been involved in my children’s schools.

This seems to be true in many of the families whose child goes the GCCS, since each family has to submit an application to be considered for attendance to the GCCS. These parents have been actively involved in choosing an elementary school for their child and continue to stay involved throughout the years, where aversively in past research looping has increased the involvement of parents in their child’s educational experience due to a trusting, comfortable relationship build between the parents and teacher (Nichols & Nichols, 2002; Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992).

Even though looping has been regarded as advantageous for all of those involved, it does have set backs. In some instances the teaching style or personality of the teacher may clash with those of a student or parent, it can make
the looping experience difficult particularly since a loop is two or more years (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004). Although the results of the GCCS surveys show that parents and teachers see the advantages of looping, many of them commented on personality conflicts. One parent stated it best,

Here’s the catch with looping, if there is a teacher that your child does not click with, it can be two years of hell. My child hated (going to) school the second year of a bad loop, I actually loved the teachers and had no problem with them, and that made it miserable for all of us.

Especially at the GCCS this can be problematic, since there is no other classroom for the student to transfer to. There is a definite correlation between past research and the results received from the GCCS community. Having other options for the parent and the student when there is a personality conflict is defiantly something that should be considered in schools that practice looping.

The teacher participant outcome on the survey agreed with what prior research has accounted for; that looping facilitates strong relationships, and can improve student’s behavioral and academic performance. Although these teachers agree that looping is beneficial, comments from the GCCS teachers on their surveys added more insight to their school and what they feel may add to their unique school’s success with their students. As one teacher remarked,

(My) answers to these questions can be skewed because of the other characteristics of our school (responsive classroom, expeditionary learning). It might seem that student’s success is based mostly on looped classrooms in this school, but I think expeditionary learning is a bigger
factor. Looped classrooms might not have the same results in a traditional school setting.

This teacher sees looping as a tool that can be beneficial for their students, just as research has provided, but there are other factors that may influence the achievement their students. Another teacher reflected,

I worry that my responses might be missing some downsides especially relating to having the same students together since kindergarten. While the class culture focuses on empathy, caring, diversity, inclusion, etc… some students get to be like siblings and push each others buttons. I think this takes away from a small number of students taking risks in certain situations, especially at the 5th grade level.

Each GCCS teacher stated considerations as to why their school may appear to agree with prior research, but may vary due to biased opinions of looping in the particular school environment they teach in. Since the GCCS is not a traditional elementary school, factors such as expeditionary learning, responsive classroom and that their students are together for several years clouds the opinions of the teachers’ perspective of looping.

Despite the fact that the GCCS is a rare school community, similarities between the research and teacher responses are apparent. Looping aides students when teachers know them, as a fifth grade teachers explained, “Overall getting to know students so well is tremendously helpful, especially for learners who are challenged in one way or another or learners who need more challenge. It also helps with social problem solving.” Those students in need of services, special
education or English Language Learners, begin to feel more comfortable in their learning environment with peers helping them to succeed in the classroom (Hitz et al, 2007). Both the research and perspectives of the GCCS teachers confirms that looping assists students with special needs. This aspect of a looping classroom can help to close the gap between students falling behind and those that are at grade level.

It does not only help those who are in need of extra help or support. At the beginning of the second loop, curricular instruction can occur sooner, since the students are familiar with many of the routines of the classroom from the year before (Cistone & Shneydermand, 2004; Jacoby, 1994, Little & Dacus, 1999; Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992). “By the second year we already know the student’s strengths and weaknesses and can plan ahead for accommodations. While we still restart our classroom routines the 2nd year, it goes much faster and we can jump into learning quicker,” just as this teacher proclaimed looping allows for more learning time. When the teachers and students are familiar with what to expect and what is expected of them, there is more time available for instruction and learning. If looping were practiced for more than two years there may be a significant amount of extra instructional time gained.

While this research coincides with past research, it was a small population of participants. Overall many of the teachers have worked a majority of their teaching experience in a looping school in addition to almost all of the population of students and parents, this looping school has been their only experience in school, and therefore have nothing else to compare it to. The GCCS also uses
unconventional practices like a responsive classroom and expeditionary learning, which add to their successfulness in their school and classrooms. For this reason the parents and the teachers may have shown positive perspectives on looping when they can also be affected by other sources at the GCCS.
Conclusion

In the future research of looping, a larger pool size is needed to yield results from more than those of one particular school. It may also prove to be beneficial to compare perspectives of teachers, parents and students from looping and non-looping classrooms as well as examining test results from the two different styles of classrooms. These alterations to looping research may produce stronger results in the advantages or disadvantages of looping that can create a classroom where students are able to learn to the best of their ability.

Looping is a useful tool that schools in the United States should begin using to help their students to succeed. In the education system that is in place now, there are many students falling behind grade level as well as in need of services that take dedication, documentation and advocacy on the students’ classroom teacher’s behalf. When a student and teacher can work together for more than one year, progress can be made not only in the child’s academic ability, but the teacher has more evidence to provide for the student to get services. This is true for those that are excelling above grade level also, the teacher and student can build a program for the student to keep them progressing at the pace and academic ability that is suitable for them. Not only can students progress because of extra help or a challenge from familiar adults, they build much needed relationships that support the learning environment.

As looping becomes more popular and practiced in elementary schools around the country, they need to be aware of ways to prevent negative responses to this strategy. There needs to be an alternate option for situations when there is
a personality conflict, another classroom for the student to go the following year. Also the school or district should provide optional professional development or support for teachers involved in looping because they are teaching a new curriculum year to year. Overall looping can be an extremely beneficial practice that can help our children to succeed and prepare them more properly for their future.
References


Appendix A

Parent Survey Questions on Looping Perspectives

Researcher: Rachael Bunce, St. John Fisher Graduate Candidate

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Diane Barrett, Director of Graduate Program in Mathematics, Science & Technology Education

Answer each question to the best of your ability:

1. What school does your child attend?

2. How many year(s) has your child(ren) been in a looping classroom?

3. The adjustment from one year to the next with the same teacher was less stressful than prior years.
   - Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

4. My child is more comfortable with their classmates and teachers in a looping classroom.
   - Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

5. My child’s academics have improved from having the same teacher for more than one year.
   - Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

6. My child’s attitude towards school has improved because of a looping classroom.
   - Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

7. Your child has positively reacted to having the same teacher for more than one year.
   - Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

8. I would recommend to another parent to inquire about looping and enroll their child in a looping classroom.
   - Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree
9. I feel more comfortable confronting my child’s teacher when there is a problem in the second year of the loop.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

10. Looping has increased my involvement in my child’s education.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

11. I have confidence that my child’s teacher knows my child’s strengths and weaknesses to help them to be successful in their looping classroom.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

12. Looping has built a stronger relationship between me and my child’s teacher.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Teacher Survey Questions on Looping Perspectives

Researcher: Rachael Bunce, St. John Fisher Graduate Candidate

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Diane Barrett, Director of Graduate Program in Mathematics, Science & Technology Education

Answer each question to the best of your ability:

1. How many years have you been teaching?

2. What school do you currently teach at?

3. How many years have you taught in a looping classroom?

4. Have you taught in a school that has not used a looping method? If yes, how long?

5. Looping has made the transition of the second year with the same students smoother and more successful.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Students are accustomed to the rules and transitions of the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. There is more learning that can happen in the second year of a loop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. Students feel more comfortable speaking and sharing ideas with their classmates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
9. Students academic achievement has improved in a looping classroom.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

10. Looping has improved the discipline and management of the classroom.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

11. The relationship and communication with students’ parents is improved in a looping classroom.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

12. There is more parent involvement and support from parents of students in a looping classroom.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

13. Working in a looping classroom has improved my attitude towards your profession as a teacher.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

14. The relationships built with the students are more meaningful and lasting.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________