The Impact of Expectations on Student Perceptions

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THE IMPACT OF EXPECTATIONS ON STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

by
Taylor Ann Huey

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2018

Approved by

___________________________________
Advisor: Dr. Allan Bellman

___________________________________
Reader: Dr. Renee Cunningham

___________________________________
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Dedicated to:

My parents and teachers

For setting high expectations, supporting me, and encouraging me to reach my full potential.
ABSTRACT
TAYLOR ANN HUEY: The Impact of Expectations on Student Perceptions
(Under the direction of Dr. Allan Bellman)

The impact of expectations on student achievement has been researched for decades. My study began with the intention of researching and recording the impact of my own expectations on low-achieving students. However, the focus of my research evolved after meeting and building relationships with my students. After observing the exceedingly low standards my students held for themselves, my interest shifted to how expectations impacted students’ self-perceptions. I recorded my observations of their attitudes, behaviors, and work ethic throughout the year; I also gave them an anonymous survey at the end of the year questioning them about their aspirations for the future and their perceptions of themselves and the expectations of their parents/guardians and teachers. Additionally, I kept a daily journal containing specific interactions with individual students that provided me insight on their academic growth and transformations of their self-perceptions. The results of this research revealed a direct positive correlation between the expectations of both parents/guardians and teachers on students’ self-perceptions. Specifically, when there was room for my students to improve their grades, and both their parents/guardians and teachers had high expectations of them (expected them to improve), my students, too, felt they were capable of improving. Moreover, building meaningful relationships with my students strengthened the impact of my expectations on their self-perceptions.
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INTRODUCTION

Why I Became Interested

Currently, I am in my senior year as a secondary math education major, and in the process of my student teaching experience. The high school where I am placed recently created a new class called Math Lab for the 2017-2018 academic year. The class would consist of the lowest 25% of students enrolled in Algebra I according to their most recent Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores. The purpose of the class is to provide struggling students with an additional hour of mathematics each day to remediate and refine their algebra skills. The goal was that this extra hour each day would profoundly grow these students and move the high school closer to closing the achievement gap between its advanced and struggling students.

The student teaching program at Ole Miss for secondary math education majors is particularly unique. Each student teacher is paired with an experienced, licensed teacher before the fall of their senior year. This teacher is referred to as one’s clinical instructor; the clinical instructor acts as a mentor and role model throughout the student teaching process. We begin collaborating with our clinical instructors during the professional development days before the first day of school, and we are with them every day until the students leave for the summer. Furthermore, each student teacher is given a focus class; the focus class is the one class of the day when the student teacher is supposed to gradually take over as the real teacher in place of their clinical instructor. A focus class is
the primary class in which student teachers are able to practice implementing the methods and strategies they’ve learned about in their college courses. This is the class that student teachers will learn how to handle classroom management, try out new ideas, and fail over and over again; however, this is also the class where student teachers learn and get the most experience. Because we have our focus class for the entire year, we are able to really get to know our students and build meaningful relationships with them. I was given a section of Math Lab as my focus class this year. I was fortunate enough to have complete control of this class from the very first day of school. In building relationships with my students, I have observed their many passions, frustrations, successes, and failures. I have observed their work ethic, motivation, and desire for success. For a year, I have watched them grow as students and individuals.

In getting to know my students, I quickly became aware of their strikingly low expectations of themselves, as well as their lack of academic motivation. I wondered where these expectations came from. It is not uncommon for my students to say things like, “because I’m not smart” and “I can’t do this.” Time after time, I was caught off guard when my students would come into my classroom bragging about passing a test, as in making a C or D. It befuddled me that my students were not only satisfied, but proud, to meet such low standards when I know they are capable of so much more. It is for this reason that I have defined my own personal working definition of high expectations for the purposes of this research as expecting a student to perform better (make higher grades) than they are presently making, unless the student is presently getting straight A’s in every class, then high expectations entails maintaining their current grades. I chose this definition with the inspiration of students developing a growth mindset; that is, when
there is room for students to improve their grades, they believe they are capable of improvement.

Multiple students have made it clear to me that simply passing is, in fact, being successful, and making an A on a math test is unrealistic. The desire of these students for being average is mind-boggling. I cannot help but wonder from where this expectation originates. Does it come from home, from peers, from teachers? It is from this curiosity that I began paying closer attention to my students’ interactions and behaviors in class. In addition, I paid even closer attention to my own thoughts and behaviors when I was interacting with my students. My intention was to identify when and how I convey expectations to my students, and to observe the change in their attitudes and academic success or failure throughout the academic year.

The Essential Question

It is from this organic inquiry that I developed the focus of my thesis research. The more I paid attention to my students’ attitudes and achievements, the more interested I became in not only how their negative attitudes came to be, but what I was doing (or not doing) to contribute to them and/or what I should be doing to alter them. Rather, were my expectations affecting them at all? I wanted to research something that would contribute to my philosophy of education and help me to become a better, more informed teacher. Thus, the essential question became, “How do expectations impact students’ perceptions of themselves?”
CHAPTER I: EXPECTATIONS: THE BASICS

Expectations are a natural part of life. People say not to “judge a book by its cover,” but to some degree the purpose of a cover is intended to relay some information about what is contained on the inside. The purpose of the cover is to attract a reader—to entice the interest of a reader and convince them to indulge further. In the same way, people express themselves in a way in which they desire others to perceive them. Therefore, it is natural for some sort of judgment, or expectation, to be an integral part of our human existence.

However, where is the line drawn? What is appropriate to assume about a person from their outward expression alone or from another person’s opinion? This is where the problem in our society embeds itself. This social issue stems from the fact that people take the cover of a book and assume its emotional and intellectual capacity—it’s credibility. However, the emotional and intellectual capacity, morality, and otherwise internal aspects of a person cannot be determined by the cover, but rather by picking up the book and making the effort to read and analyze its contents.

Furthermore, this matter is undeniably an issue that arises in the field of education. The effects of teacher expectations on students are observed across borders and districts; they are found in both public and private schools as well as in all grades k-12. This issue has no restrictions or limitations, because the issue stems from society and human nature itself. The major concern with this matter from an educational standpoint
surfaces when a teacher has pre-conceived low expectations of his or her students. These pre-conceived expectations of students come from multiple different outlets; however, the majority of them are derived from the knowledge of the student’s previous academic success and the opinions of coworkers. Merely having these expectations does not magically affect students’ attitude and performance, but the translation of the expectations into behavior has observable consequences (Cotton 1989).

With that, it is important to understand how said expectations are translated to behavior and thus a factor affecting student outcomes. Most researchers accept the following description of the process.

1. “Early in the school year, teachers form differential expectations for student behavior and achievement.

2. Consistent with these differential expectations, teachers behave differently toward various students.

3. This treatment tells students something about how they are expected to behave in the classroom and perform on academic tasks.

4. If the teacher treatment is consistent over time and if students do not actively resist or change it, it will likely affect their self-concepts, achievement motivation, and levels of aspiration, classroom conduct, and interactions with the teacher.

5. These effects generally will complement and reinforce the teacher's expectations, so that students will come to conform to these expectations more than they might have otherwise.

6. Ultimately, this will affect student achievement and other outcomes. High-expectation students will be led to achieve at or near their potential, but low
expectation students will not gain as much as they could have gained if taught differently” (Cotton 1989).

Now, what follows should be quite obvious. How can a student be expected or motivated to be successful when their teacher, the person whose job is to provide them with motivation to succeed, expects them to fail? Teachers cannot expect students to fail. It is not an option. It is a teacher’s responsibility to push students to be the absolute best they can be—to pursue their maximum potential. It is a teacher’s obligation to never give up on a child. A teacher should be a mentor and a voice of inspiration and constant encouragement in students’ journeys towards finding success. Henry Ford is commonly quoted saying, “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.” This idea of self-fulfilling prophecies is essential to my research. How can we ever expect our students to see success if we don’t believe they can be successful ourselves. I truly believe that students will rise to their expectations.

Continuing, I believe that if teachers make it a point to become aware of their expectations and how those expectations translate to behaviors and interactions in the classroom, they can prevent the negative effects that result from occurring. With that, The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) published a paper dedicated to outlining what a classroom culture of high expectations looks like. They define ten different observable and measurable strategies that teachers can establish in their classrooms to create an environment of high expectations. The strategies are as follows:

1. Help all teachers develop, communicate, and implement classroom motivation and management plans.
2. Develop instructional plans that facilitate bell-to-bell teaching.
3. Create classroom organization and arrangement that spurs productivity.

4. Establish high expectations.

5. Communicate high expectations to students and parents.

6. The student as worker – implement instructional activities that actively engage students.

7. Keep students on target.

8. Encourage frequent and relevant feedback that works.

9. Establish grading practices that communicate high expectations and decrease frustration.

10. Deal with severe behavior. (Reynolds 2004).

The paper goes into detail about exactly what each strategy entails and what it looks like in the classroom. For the purpose of my paper, I am going to focus on those aspects that deal specifically with establishing high expectations. Those strategies include numbers 4, 5, 7, and 9. While the other strategies are important, they deal more with motivation and classroom management.

Number 4, establish high expectations, involves modeling expectations for students. This means that the teacher should provide examples of what results or finished products they expect to receive from their students. The students should have a very clear idea and understanding of what an acceptable finished product looks like, and they should know they are capable of producing such a product. SREB says, “Students will work harder if they have a grasp of the big picture and examples of the final product(s) they are expected to replicate” (Reynolds 2004).
Number 5, communicate high expectations to students and parents, involves sharing with parents what you expect from their children and communicating with them often. Parents should be involved in their children’s education, and it is the teacher’s job to reach out to them and encourage them to be as involved as possible (Reynolds 2004).

Number 7, keep students on target, involves refusing acceptance of low quality work. SREB says, “Students, like all people, tend to do what is expected of them — especially if they are not let off the hook. If teachers assign homework but do not review it or use it, students will stop doing it. If teachers accept poor quality work, students will perpetually slap something on paper just to have something to turn in. A smaller quantity of quality work is better than reams of mediocre work” (Reynolds 2004).

Finally number 9, establishing grading practices that communicate high expectations and decrease frustration, is similar to number 7 in that it is another way of refusing to accept low quality work. The grading scale will not include failing grades, but rather products that are not ready yet. This is very similar to the culture of assessment in the charter school SEEQS that I observed in Hawaii. This school defined different levels of achievement as: starting, striving, succeeding, and soaring. Likewise the SREB does not promote the idea of failure in the classroom. They say, “The culture of assessment needs to reflect that every student is capable of — and expected to — produce acceptable work. Sub-standard work will not be accepted (Not Yet!) as final until it is at least minimally acceptable. This type of grading embraces the conviction that all students can and will learn. It decreases frustration and shifts the responsibility for grades earned from the teacher’s red pen to the student’s choices and degree of effort” (Reynolds 2004).
All of this research is essentially common knowledge at this point, for it is merely a fraction of the decades of research concluding that teacher expectations directly impact student achievement. However, there has been little exploration of the impact that both parent/guardian and teachers have on students’ perceptions of themselves. (Rubie-Davies, et al. 2010). Due to my personal observations, interactions, and relationships with my students over the past year, I have become especially interested in this investigation.
CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

A realization of the difficulty in researching this topic came quickly. Expectations are personal, and each student is unique. Moreover, each student brings individual academic and personal backgrounds along with individual perceptions of their own capabilities. I have instant access to all of my students’ grades; however, the only way to acquire information about their personal backgrounds and perceptions is by asking. Therefore, I created a survey consisting of fifteen questions to determine just that. The survey that I used can be found in Appendix A. Forty-two students took the survey, twenty-one math lab students and twenty-one honors algebra II students. Thus, my study was truly conducted over two extremes. Half of the responses came from low-achieving, struggling students, while the other half came from above average, honors students. I asked my students about their plans after graduation, their best and worst subject, favorite and least favorite subject, as well as the highest degree of their parents or guardians. I also asked the students questions specifically about expectations. The first asked what kind of academic student they were with choices A, A-B, B, B-C, C, and Lower. For purposes of this paper, a student choosing “A” signifies the student makes straight A’s on his or her report card, choosing “A-B” signifies the student makes both A’s and B’s on his or her report card, etc. The second question asked what kind of academic student they felt they were capable of being with the same answer choices. The third asked them what kind of academic student their parents expected them to be, and the fourth asked what
type of academic student their teachers expected them to be, each with the same six answer choices. It is important to note that these are not necessarily the actual expectations from parents (guardians) and teachers, rather the perceptions of the students. The actual expectations of parent (guardians) and teachers are irrelevant, for they have no impact on the students unless the students believe these are the expectations that others have of them. Beneath the second, third, and fourth questions, there were follow up questions asking the students to explain why they felt the way they did. These answers were intended to provide insight as to how expectations are or are not being communicated to the students from their individual perspectives. This later became a particularly interesting question, in that, most students were not able to articulate why they felt their parents/guardians and teachers had certain expectations of them. The last two questions asked the students who they specifically felt had high expectations of them and low expectations of them with answer choices parents/guardians, teachers, friends, self, other, and no one. They were instructed to select all answer choices that applied to these two questions. After collecting these surveys, my intention was to look for trends and patterns in the answers and explanations; I was not looking for any specific correlation. I would look at them as separate classes at first. I was interested to see the responses of students in a remedial class compared to the responses of students in an honors class. Then, I would compare the results to check for trends among the students as a whole.

In addition to the surveys, I have kept a daily journal reflecting on my student teaching as required of all student teachers in the secondary math education program at Ole Miss. In my journal, I regularly recorded meaningful and organically occurring
conversations and interactions with my students that contributed to my research. As the year progressed, I became close to several students; these students were typical students in each of my classes. I was able to observe and record the changes in their attitude, behavior, and performance. These invaluable experiences have given me a deeper, more personal understanding of how students are influenced by expectations. I was able to take these personal interactions and compare them to the findings in my student surveys.
CHAPTER III: GATHERING DATA AND ANALYZING RESULTS

Students’ Perceptions of Themselves

It was not long ago that I was a high school student tormented by social and academic expectations. I remember the impact this had on me. My parents had exceptionally high expectations of me. They instilled the importance of academics in me at an early age. I still recall which teachers had high expectations of me and which did not. I know which teachers genuinely cared about me and which did not. It is from these expectations that I derived the expectations that I hold for myself still today.

Likewise, every student has a unique perception of himself or herself, and from that perception, they derive personal expectations. A student’s perception of himself or herself is multi-faceted. Students judge themselves physically, socially, and academically in an attempt to find their place in the microcosm of society that we call high school. Unfortunately, there is not much that one can do as a teacher when it comes to a student’s physical or social view of himself or herself. However, it is a teacher’s responsibility to augment their academic self-evaluations. Before a student steps foot into the classroom, they have predetermined expectations of themselves, their academic potential and capabilities, GPA goals, plans for graduating and going to college, etc. They have individual expectations of how they will behave and perform in each class. So many factors contribute to students’ perceptions of themselves, and that perception uniquely defines each student and is telling of their attitude, behavior, and performance in school.
It is up to the teacher to get to know each student, combat negative perceptions, promote hard work, and find ways to motivate, encourage, and challenge students to exploit their full potentials.

Math Lab: Initial Observations

Math Lab, in its very essence, provides a negative label for the students enrolled in the course. The class was created for students who have shown a skill deficit in math. These are students who have a history of struggling and failing. So, before these children ever stepped foot in my classroom, I had pre-conceived expectations of their academic abilities and behavior. I challenged my students less, provided heavy remediation and direct instruction, rarely gave them inquiry-based lessons, and failed to indulge in conceptual classroom discourse.

From a student perspective, I can only imagine that being labeled as “low,” “struggling,” or “slow” is not only discouraging and hurtful to one’s self esteem, but also communicates low expectations. A student who struggles with a specific topic is not likely to enjoy the subject. Therefore, two hours a day of a subject that you do not enjoy is bound to cause frustration, anxiety, and general unhappiness.

The diagrams below represent data from the surveys supporting this idea. In the diagram on the left, students in math lab were asked the question, “What subject are you worst at?” Given the makeup of the class, by default, all of the students have shown a deficit in mathematics according to standardized testing or their first semester Algebra I grades; however, thirteen of the twenty-one students identified Math as being the subject they are worst at out of the four state tested classes (Math, English, Science, and History).
That means that eight of the students in math lab struggle with Math, but they have identified that they have even greater issues with another subject.

The diagram on the right asked the same students about their interest and enjoyment of the four subjects, Math, Science, English, and History, rather than their performance. The question asked, “What is your least favorite subject?” Of the twenty-one students in math lab, ten of them enjoy math least of all core classes, while eleven of them dislike another subject the most. In sum, I teach a class of twenty-one struggling math students, where almost half of them dislike the content in my class more than any other content area. On top of that, they are in math class twice a day. It was not uncommon for me to hear complaints of frustration, defeat, and misery from my students in regards to their math classes.

To find out more about the students’ perceptions of themselves, the survey asked several questions pertaining to their plans after graduating high school, academic and otherwise. It also asked the students about the education of their parents or guardians. Math lab students’ responses are recorded in the following diagrams.
The pie chart above is a representation of the highest academic degree of the parents or guardians of my math lab students. Only eight students’, or 38% of the class, parents/guardians went to college, and of those eight, only two continued their education to pursue either a Master’s or PhD. Nine students, or 43% of the class, indicated that their parents/guardians either did not graduate high school or graduating high school was their highest academic distinction. Shockingly, the remaining four students, or 19% of the class, were unsure of the degrees of their parents/guardians and were not able to indicate their highest degree. In a way, I feel like not knowing the degree of one’s guardians is worse than knowing of their lack of education. To me, this says that education is not a prioritized topic of conversation in these students’ homes.
The chart above is a representation of the breakdown of math lab students’ plans immediately after graduating high school. First and foremost, in the beginning of their high school careers, 100% of my math lab students intend on graduating high school. This is not a surprising fact, but it is a reassuring fact. Moreover, eleven of them, just over half at 52%, indicated their plans of attending a 4-year university right out of high school. Another seven students, a third of the class, indicated they plan on attending a junior college. This makes a total of eighteen math lab students, 86% of the class, that plan on continuing their education after high school by means of either community college or a university. This number more than doubles that of their parents/guardians, in which only eight of them were indicated to have pursued any type of education after high school. However, only six students out of eighteen total indicated that they plan to receive an academic scholarship for school. Of the students planning on attending a university directly after high school, only three out of eleven of them plan to receive an
academic scholarship, while six believe they will receive an athletic scholarship.

Knowing my students, I can make the assumption that several students indicated they planned on attending a university with every intention of getting an athletic scholarship and playing sports. I encourage my students to follow their dreams and pursue their passions, but there is only one student in my class who I think has a real chance at a Division 1 athletic scholarship. Therefore, some of these aspirations may be skewed based on sports dreams.

_Honors Algebra II: Gaining Perspective_

I was assigned my second class as a student teacher. As I previously mentioned, secondary math student teachers receive a focus class in the fall; I taught this class from the very first day. Beginning the first day of the second semester, I picked up an additional class teaching Honors Algebra II under a different clinical instructor. For the remainder of the year, I taught both Math Lab and Honors Algebra II. In the same way I observed and built relationships with my Math Lab students, I bonded with my Honors Algebra II students. The atmospheres of the two classes were and are drastically different. In getting to know these students, I have found that the majority of them are intrinsically motivated. The Honors Algebra II students are highly motivated by their grades. There are four to five students with me during lunch each day to get extra help, catch up on a lesson they missed, or retaking an assessment. It is common for my honors students to be unhappy with a B; they will use their free time to retake assessments intending on pulling their grade up from a B to an A. These students will do anything for extra credit; they are extremely driven and ambitious.
When I was given this class, my pre-conceived expectations of the students was that they were very sharp, they would never be a behavior problem, they would study and do their homework, and F’s would never be a concern. I do my best to consistently challenge them, and we move at a quick pace. I often give them discovery-based lessons and have conceptual conversations. I have high expectations of every student in that class.

I gave my Honors Algebra II students the same surveys as the ones I gave my Math Lab students. In a similar manner, I gathered data from their responses to the surveys to get an idea of the perceptions that these students have of themselves. The following diagrams represent what I found.

The chart above represents the highest degree of the parents/guardians of the Honors Algebra II students. The difference between the degrees of the Math Lab students
and the Honors Algebra II students is both obvious and drastic. Sixteen of them indicated that their parents have either a Master’s or a PhD; that is eight times as many as Math Lab and over 75% of the class. Another four graduated from a university, totaling over 95% of their parents/guardians who continued their education after high school. Recall only 38% of Math Lab students indicated that their parents/guardians continued their education after high school. The influence, example, and expectation of the two classes coming from home will likely be drastically different given the extreme backgrounds of these students.

Once again, I have recorded, analyzed, and organized the responses from my Honors Algebra II class with respect to their plans following their graduation of high school. The diagram above is a representation of those responses. Among theses students, the obvious trend is that they plan to go to a 4-year university upon finishing high school.
In fact, all but one student indicated that this was their intention. The one student who seems to be an outlier plans on entering the military. Of the twenty students who plan to go directly to a university, sixteen of them are planning on receiving an academic scholarship. That is 75% of them as opposed to the 33.3% of Math Lab students. The plan for these students to continue their education after high school matches the percentage of their parents/guardians going to college perfectly. The academic history and achievement of a parent or guardian has an obvious correlation to their children’s academic aspirations. There seems to be a positive correlation between the degree of the parent or guardian and the academic goals of a their children. As parents/guardians have higher academic degrees, their children have higher academic aspirations. These aspirations do not only include what type of school they want to go to, but also which school and how they will afford attending the school, be it scholarships, work, loans, etc.

*Comparing the Two Classes*

In gaining this comparison, I realized that I expected my honors students to behave and remain on task, and they did. I expected my math lab students to misbehave and be off task, and they were. I made it clear to my honors students that failure was unacceptable, and they always came in for extra help and to take reassessments. To the majority of my math lab class, I communicated no expectations of academic performance. All they had was their Algebra teachers’ expectations, their parents’ or guardians’ expectations, and the label of being in math lab, or expected to do worse than other students on assessments by default.
In juxtaposing the two extremes, the classes appear to be exact opposites of each other in most every way. They have different academic performance histories, different home lives and expectations from home, different attitudes towards school and academic studies in general, different expectations from peers, and different perceptions of themselves, etc. However, my research aligns the two extremes in the impact that both their teachers and parents/guardians expectations has on their individual perceptions’ of their academic potentials. The following data and analyses summarize my findings. For a better visual comparison of the two classes, all of the charts/graphs can be found side-by-side in Appendix B.

Math Lab: Analysis of Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Guardian Expectations: Math Lab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart above represents a comparison of my Math Lab students’ responses to the questions “What kind of student do your parents or guardians expect you to be
“What kind of student are you academically?” and “What kind of student are you academically?” Math Lab is particularly interesting, because no student is currently making straight A’s in all of his or her classes; so, technically, there is room for improvement for each individual child. In analyzing the results, it is quite obvious that these parents/guardians all seem to have high expectations of their children. In fact, all but one student indicated that their parents expect them to perform better than how they are currently performing. This particular student’s parents/guardians expect them to make A’s and B’s, but that is how they are presently performing. This student provides an interesting case and will be revisited later when discussing outliers. Ultimately, this data indicates that my Math Lab students almost always believe their parents/guardians expect more of them in regards to their academic achievement.
Next, I examined students’ current grades verses their responses to the survey question, “What kind of student do your teachers expect you to be academically?”

Similar to the results regarding the expectations of their parents/guardians, it seems these students largely believe their teachers have high expectations of them. In fact, there are only three students indicating their teachers do not expect them to improve their current grades; rather, they feel their teachers expect them to maintain their current academic status. Two of the three students falling into this category are currently making B’s and C’s, while the other is making strictly C’s. These three students will also be addressed later on. Thus, including the one student from above whose parents/guardians expect them to maintain A’s and B’s, there is a total of four students in my Math Lab class that do not feel that both their parents and teachers have high expectations of them. Irrefutably, over 80% of my class has interpreted that both their parents and teachers expect more of them.
Now that it has been determined there is some sort of communication of high expectations to the majority of my students, I questioned what impact it was having on them. Seemingly, there was no direct correlation to their academic achievement. All but one student is making B’s and C’s or below. Therefore, expecting a student to make A’s does not directly translate to a student making A’s. However, the expectations do seem to have a significant impact on the students’ perception of themselves, specifically their academic capabilities. The diagram above compares students’ current grades to their responses to the survey question, “What kind of student do you think you are capable of being academically?” Although, the results are not as dramatic as those from the parent/guardian and teacher expectations, there is nevertheless a visible shift in the same direction. In fact, of the seventeen students whose parents/guardians and teachers both had high expectations of them, fourteen of them reciprocated high expectations of themselves. To be clear, the students specified they were capable of
achieving an academic status higher than that which they are currently achieving. This means that 82% of my Math Lab students whose parents/guardians and teachers communicated high expectations to them, in turn, had high expectations of themselves. Indubitably, there is a positive correlation between the combined expectations of parents/guardians and teachers on students’ perceptions of themselves.

Here is a diagram that clearly shows where both teachers and parents/guardians have high expectations of their students. As previously mentioned, the large majority of parents/guardians and teachers of these students expect them to perform at a higher level, specifically, seventeen out of twenty-one students, or 81% of the class. To reiterate, there are only four students who do not feel their parents/guardians and teachers both expect them to improve their current grades.
In exploring this new conjecture, I reviewed the results from the students’ surveys regarding the questions stated above on parent/guardian expectations, teacher expectations, and student perception of capability. The diagram above summarizes the results. Comparatively, it is clear that these answers are much closer than any of the previous three. It appears that the parent/guardian and teacher expectations may still be higher than the students’ perceptions of their capabilities in several instances; however, they are significantly closer together than any of them were to the students’ current grades. Therefore, I am only claiming that high parent/guardian expectations along with high teacher expectations have a positive correlation to students’ perceptions of their academic potential.
Honors Algebra II: Analysis of Expectations

After sorting through all of the results from the Math Lab surveys, I examined the Honors Algebra II surveys looking for similar conjectures. In regards to the range of current letter grades as well as expected letter grades, Honors Algebra II was entirely different. While all but one of the Math Lab students are making B’s and C’s or below, there is only one Honors Algebra II student making B’s and C’s, while the rest of the class is making higher. Specifically, eighteen of the twenty-one students are currently making straight A’s or all A’s and B’s in their classes. Clearly, the majority of these students are already performing very well. From observations and interactions with my class, I have speculated the general trend is they are intrinsically motivated and already have extremely high expectations of themselves. These characteristics oppose that of my Math Lab students almost completely.
The chart above represents a comparison of my Honors Algebra II students’ responses to the questions “What kind of student do your parents or guardians expect you to be academically?” and “What kind of student are you academically?” Unlike Math Lab, where no student is currently making all A’s and each student has room to improve, I have nine Honors Algebra II students who are currently making straight A’s. Given that an A is the highest letter grade that any student can receive in high school, high expectations of these students would default to maintaining straight A’s in all of their classes. In investigating the similarities and differences in the results of the two classes, I found that there is an obvious trend of high expectations among the parents of both classes. Once again, theses graphs can be found side-by-side in Appendix B. In Honors Algebra II, all but three students indicated that their parents expect them to either maintain straight A’s or do better than they are currently doing. Mimicking the situation with the student in Math Lab, all three of these
students parents expect them to maintain their current grades of A’s and B’s. Interestingly enough, all eighteen of the other students feel their parents expect them to make straight A’s. Ultimately, these results are supporting evidence conveying that children believe their parents/guardians expect more of them academically when there is room for improvement.

Next, I examined students’ current grades verses their responses to the survey question, “What kind of student do your teachers expect you to be academically?” Just glancing at this data, it is not quite as apparent as the chart before as to whether the teachers have high expectations of the students as defined by my working definition. Actually, it seems as though the teachers’ expectations of the students are very similar to their current grades. However, looking at the surveys individually, there were just five students indicating their teachers do not expect them to
improve their current grades or maintain all A’s. Rather, four of the five students feel their teachers expect them to continue performing as they are presently, and one student feels like their teachers have low expectations of them. This student is currently an A student, but somehow their teacher has communicated they do not expect more than A’s and B’s. Without overlapping students, there are a total of six students in my Honors Algebra II class that do not feel that both their parents and teachers have high expectations of them. Therefore, around 70% of my class has interpreted that both their parents and teachers either expect them to maintain straight A’s or expect more of them.

The diagram above compares students’ current grades to their responses to the survey question, “What kind of student do you think you are capable of being academically?” In examining this question, I was very curious as to whether they would
follow the same pattern as my Math Lab students. The answer is yes. Fifteen of the twenty-one students who took my survey in Honors Algebra II indicated that both their parents/guardians and teachers had high expectations of them. Once again, that means that they expected them to perform better than they are currently or to maintain perfect grades. Of those fifteen students, fourteen of them reciprocated high expectations of themselves. This means that 93% of my Honors Algebra II students whose parents/guardians and teachers communicated high expectations to them, in turn, had high expectations of themselves. Once again, there is an apparent positive correlation between the combined expectations of parents/guardians and teachers on students’ perceptions of themselves.

The diagram above displays where both parents/guardians and teachers have high expectations of their students. As previously mentioned, the large majority of
parents/guardians and teachers of these students expect them to either maintain perfect grades or to perform at a higher level; specifically, fifteen out of twenty-one students, or 71.4% of the class. To reiterate, there are only six students who do not feel their parents/guardians and teachers both expect them to either maintain straight A’s in all of their classes or improve their current grades.

In the same way that I reviewed the results from the Math Lab students’ surveys regarding the questions on parent/guardian expectations, teacher expectations, and student perception of capability, I examined those from Algebra II. The diagram above summarizes the results. Comparatively, it seems that the students’ perception of their capability is closest to their teachers’ expectations. It appears that the parent/guardian expectations may still be higher than the students’ perceptions of their capabilities in
several instances; however, it unmistakably illustrates the trend that high expectations from parent/guardian and teachers results in positive growth among students’ perceptions of their scholastic abilities. Once again, I am only claiming that high parent/guardian expectations along with high teacher expectations have a positive correlation to students’ perceptions of their academic potential.

A Closer Look at the Outliers

Of all of the students in both Honors Algebra II and Math Lab that indicated both their parents/guardians and teachers had high expectations of them, only three students did not reciprocate high expectations of themselves in the sense that they do not believe they are capable of making higher grades than they are currently making. However, a closer look at their surveys indicates otherwise.

The first student I want to look at is a math lab student currently making C’s in his or her classes. This student feels both parents/guardians and teachers expect B’s and C’s; yet, the student, seemingly unaffected, feels they cannot do better than C’s. However, this student also happens to be one of the three Math Lab students indicating they plan on attending a 4-year university with an academic scholarship after graduating high school. Additionally, this student is one of the only students in Math Lab specifying in their response to the survey question, “Who has high expectations of you? (Select all that apply), they have high expectations of themself. In considering students’ perceptions of themselves in their entirety, that is, looking at the bigger picture, my speculation is that this student’s perception of his or her capabilities and aspirations for
success and achievement is amplified, even though it is not specifically indicated in his or her growth mindset with respect to grades alone.

The second student is an Honors Algebra II student currently making A’s and B’s in all of his or her classes. Both parents/guardians and teachers expect this student to get all A’s; however, the student continues to believe that A’s and B’s are the best they can do. Likewise, this student reveals in other capacities a clear expectation of academic success and achievement. For example, the student specifically marked “myself” when asked, “Who has high expectations of you?” Also, the student plans to attend a 4-year university after high school with an academic scholarship and plans to eventually become a pharmacist. To me, it seems quite clear that this individual’s perception of himself or herself is one of definite success and high academic achievement. So, when looking at these students’ overall, rather than their grades alone, it is apparent that both students have considerably more than adequate perceptions of their capabilities. Continuing, I presume there are several cases similar to this one, in which students feel they are putting 100% effort into their studies and never rising above the A/B level, yet their overall academic perception of themselves is reasonably superior. My hypothesis is that these students have realistic high expectations of themselves, that is, doing their absolute best implies maintaining their current grades. However, my research is not able to draw conclusions in regards to this topic.

The third and final student, unfortunately, does not follow this pattern. This is a Math Lab student currently making B’s and C’s. While teachers expect B’s and parents expect A’s and B’s, this student expects to continue making B’s and C’s. The student explains, “That is easiest.” This is also a student who plans on going straight to work
after graduation, and he or she has specifically indicated low expectations of himself or herself. The data on this student bothers me. Not only is this the singular case that completely opposes my speculations, but also this “piece of data” represents a child. This survey tells the story of a student. I was set on figuring out why this student was different, and why he or she does not fall in line with the rest. What I found was that in the explanation the student wrote for the teachers’ expectations, he or she said, “I don’t know so I guessed.” To me, this suggests that the expectations were not well communicated. From this observation, I became curious as to the effects that the way in which expectations are communicated has on a child. Other examples of students’ responses to this question are outlined in Appendix C. Whether or not expectations are communicated intentionally or unintentionally, individually or generally, clearly or vaguely, meaningfully or thoughtlessly, they are nevertheless communicated to students in one way or another.

Due to the copious amount of research done on how expectations impact student achievement; I believe it is of the utmost importance to ensure that, as a teacher, one is communicating expectations purposefully as to avoid miscommunication. Furthermore, my theory is that clear, meaningful, intentional, and individual high expectations will have the greatest impact on students. However, once again, this is not a conclusion I am able to draw from my research alone.

The Other Side of the Coin

So, according to my observations, when both parents and teachers communicate high expectations to students in some way, the students show they too feel they are capable of performing at a higher level. However, what happens when either the parents
or teachers do not have high expectations, or both the parents and teachers do not have high expectations?

In Math Lab, there were only four students who indicated either one or both did not have high expectations. Of the four, two of them agree with the lower of their parents/guardians or teachers; that is, they do not believe they are capable of improving their grades. On the other hand, two of them agree with the higher of their parents/guardians or teachers; that is, they do believe they are capable of improving. In Algebra II, there were five students indicating that either their parents or teachers did not expect them to perform better than they currently were. Four of the five students agreed with the lower of their parents/guardians or teachers expectations; they also feel they are not capable of doing better. One student, however, did indicate they felt they could do better, opposing both the expectations of their parents and teachers. Of the nine total students in both classes that do not feel both their parent and teachers have high expectations of them, six of their perceptions of their own capabilities remain stagnant; they do not believe they are capable of improvement.

Looking at these six specific students’ surveys a little closer, I noticed other similarities in their responses. There seemed to be two different things taking place with this group of students. The first is that expectations from parents and teachers are not being communicated effectively. Again, examples of these responses can be found in Appendix C. For the two Math Lab students, neither one of them wrote a response to the survey questions asking them to explain why they felt their parents and teachers expected the grades they specified. To me, this means that they had no explanation. The expectations were not effectively, meaningfully, or individually communicated to these
students. This is the second time that I have noticed a lack of effective communication of expectations resulting in the student having low expectations of themselves. In fact, one of these students actually specified they have low expectations of themselves. The second group of students, the remaining four, were all Algebra II students who currently make A’s and B’s. Although A’s and B’s is not perfect, it is literally the closest one can get. A’s and B’s are above average; they are good grades. All four of these students explained that they feel they are not capable of doing better, because when they work hard, study, and do their best, these are the grades they make. One student said, “I think this is a good place for me to stay.” One of them is the Honors Algebra II student who plans on going to the military. Only one of them plans to get an academic scholarship. Two of them specifically indicate they have high expectations of themselves. In analyzing these students in depth, my opinion is that A’s and B’s is holding these students to a high standard. They are currently doing the best they can; maintaining these grades is having realistic high expectations of themselves. These students are truly aware of what they are capable of, and I truly believe they are exhausting their full potential in maintaining these grades.

There was also one Algebra II student that felt their teachers had low expectations of them, lower than they were currently performing. This student is making straight A’s, but indicated that their teacher is fine with low A’s. The student explained this is not up to their standards. This particular student is obviously extremely motivated and feels they are not being challenged enough by their teachers. For a highly motivated A student that does not feel challenged enough by their teacher, their perceptions of themselves will not be affected.
More Outliers

So, what about the students who still believed they were capable of more when both their parents/guardians and teachers communicated expectations of remaining static in their academic achievement? In my classes, there was just one of these students. I investigated this particular student in depth. The student explains his or her perception, “I put off studying” and “I don’t do as well as I could.” Just as the other Honors Algebra II students seem to be very aware of their capabilities, this student appears to know they are currently slacking off. This student plans to get an academic scholarship and attend a university, where he or she is thinking of becoming an astrophysicist.

Although I do not have the data or evidence to draw these conclusions, my outliers lead me to hypothesize that there are two types of academic students -those who are intrinsically motivated and those who are not. Students who are intrinsically motivated have high expectations of themselves. They push themselves to be the best they can be; therefore, their parents/guardians and teachers expect them to work hard and be successful. In this scenario, it is the teacher and parent/guardian expectations that are influenced by the students’ work, rather than the students’ work being influenced by their teacher/parent(guardian) expectations.

In contrast, it seems that students who are not intrinsically motivated are highly influenced by their teacher and parent/guardian expectations. These are the target students of my research. My prediction is that students who feel their teachers’ have low expectations of them will meet and be satisfied with those expectations. Similarly, if teachers/parents/guardians have high expectations of students, they will meet, and occasionally exceed, those expectations. The goal is that these students would eventually
change the perception they have of themselves, and in turn, become intrinsically motivated students, expect more of themselves, and push themselves to be the absolute best they can be in all aspects of their lives.
CHAPTER IV: MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Relationships Strengthen Expectations

There are a couple of students in Math Lab with which I have developed stronger relationships than others. I have gotten to know them very well, and I have become a mentor to them. They look up to me, respect me, and I can see the influence I have on their lives. The following are just a few examples of personal interactions with students that support my research. Each of these students is representative of a typical “Math Lab student,” meaning each of them embodies the standard behaviors, attitudes, and demeanor that are characteristic of the students in my Math Lab class.

Sean’s Story

I bonded with one student in particular very early on; for purposes of this paper, I will refer to him as Sean. Sean was one of the students that would come hang out with me before school every day and often during lunch; he tells me all about his day to day frustrations, concerns, successes, etc. He has a self-proclaimed temper problem; he often loses his temper in class or at practice, and he will come in and vent to me about what happened. I help him to cool down, and we talk about ways he could have handled the situation differently and how he can prevent a similar situation from occurring again in the future. I remember one day specifically when Sean came into my class before taking his Algebra I test and said, “Ms. Huey, I think I’m gonna pass my test today.” I said back
to him, “Sean, you better do more than just pass the test. I expect you to get an A. I know you know the material; I’ve seen you work the problems.” He said, “Alright Ms. Huey, I’ll get you an 89, okay?” I said, “Alright Sean, just promise me you will do your best.” He responded, “Yes ma’am.” Later that day, he came into my class disappointed that he made an 85 on his test. This is the same student who earlier in the year was completely satisfied with a D. I witnessed Sean’s expectation of himself continue to increase throughout the year. A student who was struggling to pass ended the first semester with A’s and B’s. I was able to directly see the impact I was having on this child. I was able to observe the incredible impact that a teacher can have on a student when they take time to invest in them, truly believe in them, and communicate high expectations to them.

Isaac’s Story

Comparable observations resulted after similar interactions with another student who I’ll call Isaac. Isaac and Sean would generally come in to see me together. They made it a point to come and find me every morning just to check in on me. Isaac and I became very close early in the school year. He vented to me about his opinion on confronting disrespectful authority. He advocates respecting people that respect you; he has no respect for people who do not respect him. He has no problem cussing out a teacher, walking out of class, or engaging in a power struggle to make a point of his strong beliefs. Isaac knew how much I cared about him and his life; he knew I respected him, his feelings, and his opinions. Because I earned his respect and communicated a genuine concern for him, he came to me about everything. He would often come in during lunch to ask for advice about personal matters. This relationship carried over into
the math classroom. Isaac started off the year with the same mentality as Sean. He was satisfied with simply passing, but often struggled to do even that. I made it a point to tell him that he could do better, and I believed in him. I knew he could be successful. He would come to just hang out with me at lunch, and I would make him work problems. He did them without hesitating. With constant encouragement, he gained confidence. He started coming in to tell me that he felt like he was going to ace his assessments, and he would often brag about being successful. Continuing into the second semester, Isaac is more focused and engaged in class. He has been a leader in groups several times. Just like Sean, I have seen the evolution of Isaac’s perception of himself and the impact that my expectations has had on him, specifically when it is reinforced by our personal relationship.

*Sally’s Story*

I noticed similar changes in another student who I had grown close to; I will refer to her as Sally. Sally spent the entire first semester on her phone, off task, and passing Algebra I by the skin of her teeth. Her mom insisted she start coming to tutoring immediately for support. Because Sally and I had become close the first semester and she looked up to me as a mentor, she requested that I tutor her rather than her Algebra I teacher. She came to tutoring about once every two weeks. Along with working Algebra problems, she would tell me all about her personal life and high school drama. She asked me for advice like an older sister figure; she valued my opinion and desired my approval. The more that I got to know Sally and worked with her individually, the more she paid attention in class, participated, and asked questions. I encouraged her to prioritize her
schoolwork over her social life; I made it clear that she was not performing at her capabilities. She began doing her homework, studying, and retaking assessments to improve her grades. I reaffirmed her for working hard, and I made sure she knew I was proud of her. Unlike Isaac and Sean, Sally is someone whom I could relate to in my personal life. It was the best experience to not only teach a student, but also mentor an impressionable adolescent.

Chris’s Story

These experiences did not only occur with my Math Lab students. I was able to build similar relationships and see the growth of several Honors Algebra II students as well. However, the students described in these stories are not necessarily typical “honors students.” They are representative of the entire class in regards to their grade-dependent motivation and attitude about school; yet, both students are in the lower 25% of my class. The first student that comes to mind is someone I will refer to as Chris. Chris made a C in Algebra II the first semester before I was the teacher. To give context, a C is the lowest grade that any Honors Algebra II student made, and he was one of six of the students finishing with a C. It goes without saying that he was performing in the lower 25% of this class at the end of the first semester. He was someone who I quickly noticed was struggling to keep up with the pace of the honors class. When the first unit test of the second semester occurred, he failed it. I told the students to message me on schoology or talk to me after class if they would like to reassess the material on the unit test and improve their grade. Chris stayed after class, and he said, “Ms. Huey, I did really bad on this test. I would really like to improve my grade, but I don’t know how to do any of it.” I
told him, “No worries! When can you meet with me? As long as you are willing to put in the work and do your best, we will get you there.” He thanked me, and we met the next day after school. We went over his test, and I retaught him the content he was missing one-on-one. I told him what to go over again that night, and he came to take the retest the next day. As he began, he seemed very anxious and was making simple mistakes; I could tell he was still not confident in the material. I took his paper, and I told him that I was not giving him the retest until he was confident that he would be successful. I made it clear to him that learning does not have a time limit. People learn at different paces. We took that time to go over the material once again. I told him to come back when he really felt confident in his skills. When he came back, he aced the test, and I replaced his grade with the A that he earned. For the rest of the semester, Chris was the most actively engaged student in my class. He did not hesitate to ask questions when he did not understand something. He came in to get extra help on homework and problems he didn’t understand during class before the test rather than after. I began to get to know Chris really well; I became very invested in him as both a student and individual. I learned all about his life, his goals, and his dreams for the future. He knew I had his best interest in mind and that I cared about his success; in turn, Chris bought into the way that I taught. He took the opener and closers seriously; he collaborated with any group of students I placed him with. He did everything I asked of him in class, and then put in extra work when he knew he was falling behind. He earned an A in my class 3rd quarter; he knew I was proud of him. I was able to watch a student that had gotten C’s all first semester, and who believed that was the extent of his capability, change his perception and work to make the grades that reflect his full potential. Not only did his perception change, but
also his new perception influenced his motivation, effort, and achievement. This is truly everything a teacher could dream of for her students.

Billy's Story

The last student I will mention is another Honors Algebra II student; I’ll call him Billy. Similar to Chris, Billy also received a C for the first semester. My clinical instructor told me that he never came in for extra help during the first half of the year. Just like Chris, Billy failed the first unit test I gave them. It was obvious from the beginning he was missing a lot of prerequisite skills for the course. He struggled in class. I encouraged Billy to make an effort to come in and address some of his misconceptions about the content. I would allow him to relearn the material and retake the test to prove to me he knew the content. Slowly but surely, Billy began coming in for extra help. He came in before school, during lunch, during free periods, whenever he got a chance. I quickly developed a relationship with this student, and I learned a lot about his life. I learned that his parents have extremely high expectations of him; they wanted him to go to an Ivy League university. However, when he did not meet those expectations, they lost interest in him and focused only on his sisters. Now, he feels like a disappointment, and he puts a lot of pressure on himself to do well. I continued to encourage and support Billy; any time that he wanted to work on Algebra II, I made myself available. He knew that I would do anything to help him be successful, so he took advantage of that and did everything he could to improve his grades. Billy ended up with a B for the 3rd quarter. Although this was not an A, it was an improvement. Billy was not making straight A’s, but he was doing his absolute best. His change in attitude changed his perception of his
capability. This new attitude changed the amount of effort he was putting into class, which resulted in an improvement of his grades.

Reflection on My Personal Experience

These are just a few of the many experiences I have had interacting with and building relationships with my students. They are at such a vulnerable and impressionable time in their lives. I realized that building relationships with students and setting high standards for them will impact them. If you prove to a student that you care about them, they will respect you, they will work for you, and they will meet, and often exceed, the expectations you set for them.
CONCLUSION

My findings

Ultimately, it seems that parent/guardian and teacher expectations have a direct positive correlation to students’ perceptions of themselves. In almost every case, when both the parents/guardians and teachers have high expectations of a child, that is, expect them to make higher grades than they are currently making or maintain straight A’s, the student, too, feels they are capable of performing at a higher level. In fact, 90.6% of my students specifically indicated that their perception of their academic capabilities increased as their parent/guardian and teachers’ expectations of them increased. Of the thirty-two students that indicated both their parents/guardians and teachers expected them to make higher grades, only three of them did not reciprocate those expectations of themselves. Rather, three students specified they did not feel they were capable of improving their current academic status. However, in analyzing the bigger picture in regards to these students’ academic perceptions of themselves, two of the three students indicated otherwise high expectations of themselves. They both plan on going to a 4-year university after graduating, receiving academic scholarships to pay for college, and have a desire to enter into the medical field. Additionally, they both specifically indicated they have high expectations of themselves. So, truly, there is only one case where a students’ perception of their academic capability did not increase along with the expectation of their parents/guardians and teachers.
Furthermore, the claim seems to hold true when analyzing the opposite case. Of the ten remaining students, nine of them fall into the category where either one or both of their parents/guardians and teachers expect their grades to be exactly what they are, that is, where a student has room to improve their grades, they do not expect improvement. Of the nine students falling into this category, six of them have academic perceptions of themselves agreeing with the lower of their parents/guardians and/or teachers. Two of their perceptions agree with the higher of their parents/guardians or teachers. Only one student feels they are capable of achieving higher than both their parents/guardians and teachers expect them to. So, it seems that students’ perceptions of their capabilities again agree with that of their parents/guardians and/or parents. Specifically, 88.8% of students’ perceptions agree with that of either their parent/guardian or their teacher, and the trend seems to be the students’ perception agrees with the lower of the expectations. However, I do not have quite enough data to definitely draw this conclusion.

Moreover, there was one student who indicated their teacher expects lower grades than they are currently making. This is the only student that feels this way. This student is already a straight A student; he or she feels that their teachers’ expectations are not up to their standards. This students’ perception of their capability is unaffected by the seemingly low expectations of their teachers.

Lastly, relationships strengthen expectations. With every personal relationship I have built with a student in the past year, I have witnessed first hand the impact that my expectations have had on the student. Not only my expectations of them academically, but also my advice, encouragement, discipline, and disappointment is all extremely valued and highly respected by those students. After analyzing and researching how my
personal expectations have impacted my students; I believe I must hold myself accountable for their academic performance, perception of their academic ability, and thus their academic motivation. My goal is to notice when, why, and how I form expectations of my students. I will make myself very aware of those expectations and how they translate to behavior. From there, I will use the strategies outlined in my literature review to ensure that my actions in the classroom convey that of high expectations of all students. My hope is that this awareness and these intentional changes in the classroom will counteract any translation of low expectations and prevent any negative outcomes or effects on student learning, attitude, and achievement.

Limitations

However, there are several limitations to this research. For one, I cannot draw conclusions in regards to the frequency in which students’ perceptions of their academic capabilities agree with the lower of their parents/guardian or teachers, because I do not have a large enough sample size to determine if there is or is not an unassailable trend.

Also, I conducted my research in both a remedial course and an honors course – two extremes. Therefore, I cannot determine whether or not my conclusion would hold in a general classroom of average students.

Additionally, I asked my students to indicate and explain the expectations their “teachers” had of them. As I asked my students about all of their teachers, rather than just one, the responses were analyzed under the assumption that the students felt their teachers all had the same expectations of them. This is not necessarily true. Furthermore, the students were inquired about their grades in all of their classes, rather than one class
specifically. This does not allow for a case when a student may have A’s in all of their classes, but a C in one subject. Each of these generalizations limits my research.

Lastly, I was limited to the extent that my surveys were anonymous, and I was only able to use information volunteered by the students. In other words, I was not able to follow up with the students concerning their answers. In complying with the restrictions of IRB in regards to interviews with minors, I was not able to question the reasoning behind my students’ answers, their feelings towards the matter, etc. This prevented me from being able to draw conclusions about determining realistic verses unrealistic expectations. It also stopped me from being able to thoroughly analyze the effectiveness of expectations that are communicated through meaningful and individual interactions, rather than unclear, impersonal, blanket statements.

Extensions of My Research

These limitations lead directly into the extensions of my research. In several of my math education classes, I was taught that the true story of any data is found in the outliers. So, in taking the time to analyze and explore the outliers of my research, I was able to form hypotheses about other factors potentially affecting expectations and their impact on students.

For one, I would be interested in researching the growth or lack of growth of lower level students who have both teacher and parent/guardian support as well as high academic expectations of themselves. When all of these factors are in play, how is student achievement affected? I would like to see how and when expectations of others paired with self-expectations impacts the process of student growth.
Additionally, I would like to explore what determines a realistic expectation from an unrealistic expectation, and if there is a difference in their individual impacts on students. Rather, are students more or less impacted by unrealistic expectations of achievement? Continuing, I am interested in the difference between expectations that are communicated through meaningful and individual interactions, as opposed to unclear, impersonal, blanket statements. I could give my students a follow up survey of sorts asking them to give an in-depth explanation as to how their parents/guardians and teachers communicate high/low expectations to them. The survey could ask something like, “In the past month, how have your teachers expressed to you their expectations for your success?” My hypothesis in regards to each of these questions is that realistic expectations will have a greater impact on student achievement, and expectations that are communicated through meaningful, individual interactions will show a significantly greater impact on students’ perceptions and achievement.


<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233668787_Expectations_of_achievement_Student_teacher_and_parent_perceptions?enrichId=rgreq-13549e803dd967bb171512d1af69a365-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlc3NldGlvblIyMzV0abcjVzY292ZXJQYWdlc3NldGlvblIyMzV0acJ4%3D%3D&el=1_x_3&_esc=publicationCoverPdf>.
APPENDIX A

1. What are your plans for after high school?
   o Junior college
   o 4 year university
   o Work
   o Military
   o Other:___________________________

2. Where do you want to go to school and why? (If applicable)

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. What do you want to be when you get out of school/go to work and why?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. How are you planning on paying for school? (Select all that apply)
   o Parents/Guardians
   o Academic Scholarship
   o Athletic Scholarship
   o Working
   o Loans
   o Not Applicable

5. Of these subjects, which are you best at?
   o Math
   o English
   o History
   o Science

6. Of these subjects, which are you worst at?
   o Math
   o English
   o History
   o Science

7. Of these subjects, which is your favorite?
   o Math
   o English
8. Of these subjects, which is your least favorite?
   - Math
   - English
   - History
   - Science

9. What kind of student are you academically?
   - A
   - A-B
   - B
   - B-C
   - C
   - Lower

10. What kind of student do you think you are capable of being academically?
    - A
    - A-B
    - B
    - B-C
    - C
    - Lower

   Explain why?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

11. What kind of student do your parents or guardians expect you to be academically?
    - A
    - A-B
    - B
    - B-C
    - C
    - Lower

   How do you know?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
12. What kind of student do your teachers expect you to be academically?
   - A
   - A-B
   - B
   - B-C
   - C
   - Lower

How do you know?
________________________________________________________________________________________

13. Who has high expectations of you? (Select all that apply)
   - Parents/Guardian
   - Teachers
   - Friends
   - Myself
   - Other:________________________
   - No one has high expectations of me

14. Who has low expectations of you? (Select all that apply)
   - Parents/Guardian
   - Teachers
   - Friends
   - Myself
   - Other:_____________________
   - Everyone has high expectations of me

15. What is the highest degree of either of your parents or guardians?
   - High School Diploma
   - Associates Degree (2 years)
   - Bachelors Degree (4 years)
   - Master's Degree
   - Doctoral Degree
   - None of the above
APPENDIX B

What Subject Are You Worst At?
Honors Algebra II

- Math: 24%
- Other: 76%

What Subject Are You Worst At?
Math Lab

- Other: 38%
- Math: 62%

What Is Your Least Favorite Subject?
Honors Algebra II

- Math: 19%
- Other: 81%

What Is Your Least Favorite Subject?
Math Lab

- Other: 52%
- Math: 48%
Parent/Guardian Expectations:
Math Lab

Parent Expectation
Student Current Grade

Parent/Guardian Expectations:
Algebra II

Current Grade
Parent Expectations
Teacher Expectations: Math Lab

Teacher Expectations: Algebra II
**Student Perceptions: Math Lab**

![Bar chart showing student perceptions and current grades in Math Lab.](chart1.png)

- **Student Current Grade**
- **Student Perception of Capability**

**Student Perceptions: Algebra II**

![Bar chart showing student perceptions and current grades in Algebra II.](chart2.png)

- **Student Current**
- **Student Perception of Capability**
Teacher Vs. Parent/Guardian Expectations:
Math Lab

Teacher Expectation
Parent Expectations

higher than current
equal to current
lower than current

Teacher Vs. Parent/Guardian Expectations:
Algebra II

Teacher Expectations
Parent Expectation

higher than current (or maintaining all A's)
equal to current (if not currently an A)
lower than current
Student Perceptions Vs. Expectations: Math Lab

Student Perceptions Vs. Expectations: Algebra II
APPENDIX C

Not clearly communicated expectations from teachers: (8)

“---“
“---“
“---“
“I don’t know so I guessed”
“I don’t know”
“I really don’t know”
“Idk”
“Just seems like it”

Generic expectations from teachers: (7)

“That's what they expect for everyone”
“They teach us so we will be able to make a 100”
“They want you to do your best”
“They want you to be successful”
“Because they expect the best”
“They say we can do better and tell us to push hard”
“They are nice like that”

Teachers expect students to do how they’ve done in the past: (5)

“That's how I perform”
“Because that’s what I have done in the past”
“They’ve told me what they expect; based on my grades”
“I’ve had all A’s my entire life”
“I have never finished with a B in my life or in their class”

Teachers' expectations dependent on student attitude or behavior: (5)

“Because I work hard and do my best”
“My teachers know that I really want good grades and good understandings of things”
“They know I get stressed when they aren’t (A’s)”
“I believe that teachers know how much effort you put into a class and with me it’s not a lot”
“Because I am smart just choose other stuff“
Low expectations of teachers: (1)

“They don’t see a problem with a low A, but that isn’t up to my standards”

Verbally communicated expectations from teachers: (8)

“They tell me”
“We have talked”
“Y’all tell me”
“Some of my teachers will say, “I know you can do better than that.””
“They tell me I can do better”
“Some teachers have told me they expect big things”
“They have told me”
“Cause they constantly sayin it”

Personalized (show relationship) expectations from teachers: (8)

“Because they know that if I try I can do good on things”
“They know what I am capable of doing”
“They know I am capable”
“They expect a lot from me”
“Because they try to motivate me”
“There’s always a soft encouragement”
“Teachers push me to make A’s”
“Because they believe in me”