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# Read, Write, and Relax: Teachers Perspectives on the Decrease of Naptime in Kindergarten

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**Read, Write, and Relax: Teachers Perspectives on the Decrease of Naptime in  
Kindergarten**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the  
*College of Education*

By

Ashleigh Marion

Under the mentorship of *Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson*

**Abstract**

There have been multiple studies from different perspectives, about the role that naptime plays in early childhood education classrooms. However, there is limited research on how teachers feel about this subject. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand teachers' perspectives and experiences with the current decrease in nap time and how this decrease affects their Kindergarten classrooms. To gain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives of the decrease of naptime in Kindergarten classrooms, I interviewed six veteran Kindergarten teachers. These teachers have taught in Kindergarten classrooms where naptime was part of their schedule and in classrooms where naptime was not part of their schedule. When interviewing these teachers, the participants described their views on the naptime debate and its impact on their young learners. They also explained why naptime is decreasing in the classroom and strategies they use to increase academic interest with sleep deprived students.

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## **Introduction**

Most adults and teenagers can remember days in pre-k and kindergarten with naptime in the middle of the day. Studies report children wake up for their nap feeling well rested, excited, and ready to start learning again (Jones & Ball, 2013). Naps give children some time to relax their mind and their bodies to increase attention for the remainder of the day. The opportunity for a naptime routine is rapidly decreasing due to recent school policy changes to eliminate naptime from pre-k and kindergarten programs.

Studies show that daytime sleep (naps) is an important feature of sleep patterns across early childhood and it is significant for children's health, behavior regulation, and learning (Staton, 2016). However there has been debate about whether naps are an acceptable use of time and/or beneficial in early childhood education (ECE) classrooms. Throughout public ECE classrooms, nap time is decreased and in some cases nap time is eliminated altogether. Classroom nap opportunities are devalued as curriculum demands increase and taxpayers exert pressure on schools and teachers to raise student achievement scores (Kihm, 2014). Teacher's perceptions and experience with the elimination of naptime routines are not documented in the current literature and this study seeks to fill that gap.

Previous research explains the advantages and disadvantages of naptime within early childhood classrooms. One of the most researched and popular advantage of nap time in ECE is the benefits to a child's cognitive development. Collectively these studies indicate that napping aids neurocognitive functions such as declarative and procedural memory, alertness, concentration, and mood (Staton, 2015) Reports show that declarative

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memories are consolidated over naps (Spencer, 2016). Researchers have also found that younger preschoolers who did not nap were not as adaptive to challenging tasks as their napping peers (Kihm, 2014).

In addition to developmental benefits, nap time provides emotional benefits for children. Children are less biased toward emotional stimuli following a nap, and emotional regulation is greater following a nap compared to nap deprivation (Spencer, 2016). Parents expressed a belief that napping promotes improved mood, behavior, and concentration with benefit for learning, play, and functioning in the afternoon and evening (Sinclair, 2016)

Physical health benefits are also well documented. There is a high rate of obesity in preschoolers and research has shown that nap time is a crucial factor in obesity levels. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2014) suggests that in addition to eating the appropriate number of calories for their young bodies, feeling well rested is a protective factor for children becoming overweight (Kihm, 2014). There are many outcomes of childhood obesity such as low self-esteem, bullying, and discrimination. Nap time may be a useful solution to combat several of these problems. Argas et al. (2004) found that obese children slept 30 minutes less than non-obese children a day. Therefore, allowing children to sleep 30 minutes during the day could make a difference. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) preschool children, on average, should sleep between 11-12 hours per day including daytime sleep (Kihm, 2014).

Nap time is also beneficial for children who are transitioning into kindergarten. The transition to kindergarten is a contextual event that challenges childrens' ability to

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maintain good sleep health (Cairns, 2014). Children transitioning to kindergarten are required to wake up earlier, and are, therefore, losing the normal amount of sleep that they are getting during the summer. Without the opportunity to nap during the day, these children lose weekday sleep. The loss of weekday sleep associated with the start of kindergarten is a concern as the children in this sample on average, are barely getting the minimum amount of recommended sleep time before kindergarten (Cairns, 2014). By having a nap time during the day, those children bounce back from the sleep that they lost.

Although there exists research of positive mental development from napping, there is negative mental development research as well. Daytime napping in preschoolers was negatively correlated with performance on neurocognitive testing (Pattinson, 2014). Data has also shown a negative correlation between vocabulary performance and daytime napping in preschool children (Spencer, 2016).

By the time children are in kindergarten, they are between five and six years old. During the first three years of life, daytime sleep is a typical behavior that has clear developmental function. Beyond these years, daytime sleep may only benefit students in circumstances of deprivation or restriction of night-time sleep (Pattinson, 2014). Some individuals believe that after the first three years of life, nap time is no longer a necessity for children in school and that they can get through the day without a nap. Some also feel that nap time is a waste of instructional time. In a study conducted by Pattinson in 2014, found that, during nap time, most of the children within the study do not go to sleep. Out of all the children observed, 71% did not sleep at any point during the scheduled sleep period.

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During the scheduled sleep period, Pattison also noted that there was a decline of emotional climate and behavior management. The overall declines may point to stress for both the teachers and the children during nap time. Teachers are stressed trying to get their children to take a nap, and some children are stressed because they are forced to sit still and take a nap. However, a recent observational study of sleep practices in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centers reported that although all centers provided naptime, only a minority (39%) provided environments that aligned with evidence on sleep supporting behavior (Staton, 2015). In other words, the environment was not a sleep supportive environment.

Although studies have shown that most children do not sleep during nap time, studies have proven that by developing a sleep routine and creating a classroom environment that is supportive of sleep, children are more likely to nap. In an observational study recorded by Staton (2016), teachers who provided a supportive sleep environment engaged in routines that prepared children for sleep time. These routines included a modified physical environment to reduce environmental arousal, and an established calm environment. This was referred to as creating a *supportive* room. Another aspect of creating a *supportive* classroom was to meet the needs of sleeping and non-sleeping children. Educators can achieve this by providing non-sleeping children with quiet alternative activities. In doing so a positive sleeping environment is created for all children.

In some cases, even if nap time is provided, some parents prefer for their children not to nap. Although not specific to the context of ECE, a sample of parents of preschool aged children, preferred that their child not nap, reporting that daytime napping resulted

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in delayed night sleep onset and decreased night-time sleep (Sinclair, 2016). During this study, parents felt as though nap time was no longer developmentally appropriate and that their child did not need a nap. In the results of the study, 78.7% parents preferred that their children not sleep normally while attending ECE. There was 53.3% of the parents who never wanted their children to sleep. However, 25.3% of the parents preferred on odd occasions only. Of those opting for sleep, 11.2% preferred sleep on some days and 10.1% preferred sleep every day (Sinclair, 2016).

Of the 668 participants who provided an open-ended response, 54% identified napping at ECE as a cost, 33.5% identified napping at ECE as a benefit, and 5.7% described naps as both a cost and a benefit (Sinclair, 2016). In a different study parents would implement varying strategies to prevent their child from napping. Various methods reported; giving sweets and engaging their children in activities (Jones, 2013). As parents are the primary caregivers and advocates for the children, as well as consumers of ECE, their preferences and perspectives regarding naptime in preschool ECE are important (Sinclair, 2016).

Although most parents believe that nap time decreases their children's night time sleep, some data suggest that this is not necessarily accurate. Data suggests that when children nap during the day and sleep less at night, the overall quality of overnight sleep is not affected (Spencer, 2016) Even if children take a nap during the day, over the course of the 24-hour day, they are still getting the same quality of sleep.

The majority of children cease napping between three and five years of age, yet, internationally, the allocation of a sleep time during the day for children of this age

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remains a practice in many early childhood education setting (Pattinson, 2014). This calls into question why exactly there is still nap time if ECE children do not need one. Again, several studies discuss the debate on why napping is beneficial and harmful for ECE children. There are rewards to naptime such as cognitive development, health factors, and it is beneficial to students transitioning to kindergarten. However, there are also consequences to naptime such as children not sleeping at night and declines in behavioral management and emotional climate in the classroom. There have also been multiple studies on how parents feel about their children taking naps in ECE classrooms. However, there is limited research on teachers who work with these populations and their experiences with the reduction of naptime. Understanding teacher's perspectives and experiences with the elimination of naptime routines is the next logical question to ask.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research was to explore and understand teachers' perspectives and experiences with the current decrease in nap time and how this decrease affects their Kindergarten classrooms. This study increases our understanding of naptime and how it plays into Kindergarten classrooms.

### **Research Questions**

For this research I have two research questions. These questions serve as the focus of my research. My first research question is "What are the teacher's perspectives and experiences with the decrease of naptime in their Kindergarten classrooms?" My second research question is "How has the decrease of naptime in public school Kindergarten classrooms affected teachers work environment and expectations?"

## Literature Review

There are many reasons why naptime in early childhood education classrooms is beneficial. One reason is that naptime is valuable for a child's health. Research has shown that naptime is a protective factor against obesity. In addition, nap time is favorable to children who are transitioning to kindergarten. There are also reasons why naptime is considered a hindrance in ECE classrooms. One of the reasons is because of parent's opinions. Most parents oppose the idea of naptime in ECE because they believe in conflicts with their children's nighttime sleep. Children's behavior during nap time also plays a big part in deciding whether children should nap in their classrooms or not. However, when a classroom decides to encourage nap time, there are certain supportive practices that teachers can use to meet the needs of their children and manage classroom behavior.

### *Naptime and Obesity*

Although the percentage of children who are overweight has decreased in the past two years, the percentage is still relatively high. Thirty percent of children are at risk for being overweight, and this risk comes with several health and psychosocial outcomes (Kihm, 2014). Some effects of childhood obesity include low self-esteem, teasing, diabetes, and heart disease. In preschool there are many factors that can lead to a child being overweight. Factors such as not getting enough exercise, taking in more calories than they can burn off, or not getting enough sleep.

Kihm (2014) investigated the relationship between preschool student's weight and the quality of their daytime sleep. The purpose of the was to investigate potential

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relationships among preschoolers' weight status, ratio of food intake to energy output, amount of physical activity, and length and quality of nighttime and daytime sleep (Kihm, 2014). It consisted of children from a preschool in Louisiana. These children began school at 7:30 am and ended at 5:30 pm. The participants were a total of 14 children, ranged from ages 4.5-5.5 years.

There were four tools used to collect data by Kihm (2014). The measurement taken was the *Child Health and Sleep Times Questionnaire*. It consisted of birth, gender, height, weight (used to calculate the child's BMI), and hours of nighttime sleep for each day (Kihm, 2014). The second tool was called *Day Time Nap Observation Tool*. This was used by the preschool teachers to assess the number of minutes each child slept during the nap time period (Kihm, 2014). The third tool was called the *Food Intake Measurement Tool*. This tool was used to assess the number of units of food each child consumed during morning snack time, lunch time, and afternoon snack time. (Kihm, 2014). The last tool was called an accelerometer. The purpose of the accelerometer was to measure the children's physical activity throughout the day, evidenced by the number of steps they took during each 24-hour period (Kihm, 2014).

Results found that one half of the children were either overweight or obese. The length of their naptime sleep ranged between eight and 11 hours and the length of their naps ranged from 0 minutes to 94 minutes. The children averaged 6.651 steps per day and consumed approximately 750 calories of food each day at the preschool (Kihm, 2014). A child's weight status and daily caloric intake are dependent on the child's quality of sleep. Nap time in ECE classrooms can be used as a way to decrease obesity among preschool and early elementary school children.

Transitioning to Kindergarten

Although the majority of children attend preschool, some children do not. For those children who do not attend preschool waking up early in the morning to go to school is a new experience for them. This new experience can result in those children not getting enough sleep. In a study conducted by Cairns (2014) states that early school start times are known to result in unfavorable sleep-wake patterns among children (Cairns, 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine changes in the timing, duration, and quality of sleep in young children as they transition to kindergarten (Cairns, 2014).

The study was conducted with 34 five-year old children scheduled to attend kindergarten for the first time. The children were required to wear technology on their wrists called actigraphs to estimate their sleep. The study consisted of three different assessments. The first assessment was completed approximately two to three weeks prior to the beginning of kindergarten (Cairns, 2014). The second and third assessments were within two weeks and after one month of the start of kindergarten (Cairns, 2014).

The results concluded that when transitioning to kindergarten, children lose an average of 30 minutes of sleep. During the first assessment, the average duration of overall sleep for a child not attending preschool was nine hours and 42 minutes. During the first assessment it decreased to nine hours and 10 minutes. Not only did sleep decrease for children who did not attend preschool, it decreased for children who attended preschool as well. The average duration of overall sleep for a child who attended preschool was 10 hours and seven minutes. During the first assessment, the wake-up time for children who did not attend preschool was around 8:01 AM. However, during the

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second and third assessments which was two weeks and one month after the school year started, the wake-up time was around 6:16 AM.

This sudden change in wake-up time and a decreased amount of sleep can have negative outcomes on a child. Not all children adjust the same way to certain changes. Children likely vary in how quickly and successfully they adjust to sudden changes in their weekday schedules and poor adjustment may have negative psychosocial and academic consequences at the beginning of their school experience (Cairns. 2014). By allowing nap time in ECE classrooms, children in this situation have an opportunity to acquire the sleep they have lost.

### Parents Opinions on Naptime

In most cases, parents oppose the idea of their children napping in ECE classrooms. Their logic for opposing nap time were reasons such as, their child not going to sleep at night, nap time was no longer developmentally appropriate, and nap time was seen as opportunistic; they would just let their children sleep whenever they would fell asleep. In Jones (2013) study, napping was perceived as sporadic and opportunistic. Naptime was negatively perceived and prevented by one third of parents. The purpose of this experiment was to inquire about parent's attitudes towards their children taking a nap during the day. The study further explored the association between parents' attitudes and children's daily nap duration. Although this study was not specific to nap time in ECE schools, it does relate to the overall concept of nap time.

The experiment conducted by interviewing parents of three-year-old children about what their attitudes were regarding nap time. The parents were required to

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complete a four-day and five-night sleep diary to record their child's daytime sleep and nighttime sleep. They were required to record when their child went to sleep during the day and how long they slept. Parents also had to record what time they went to sleep at night

The results of the experiment displayed that of the children who did nap, the nap was opportunistic and was not regulated. In other words, the child fell asleep in the car or in the living room by accident. Eighteen parents allowed their children to nap if they wanted to, but did not actively encourage it (Jones, 2013). During interviews parents of 29 children described implementing strategies to prevent their child from napping (Jones, 2013, p. 354). Parents implemented this strategy to ensure that their child would sleep at night. However, there was a small group of parents that encouraged their children to nap. For these parents, the main reason was to prevent children from becoming bad tempered or misbehaving in the absence of naps (Jones, 2013).

There was a positive association of parent's attitudes toward napping with children's daily nap duration. There was a significant correlation between positive parental attitude toward napping and longer child daily nap duration (Jones, 2013). Parents responded positively when their child's nap duration lasted longer each day. In addition, the results displayed that daily nap duration remained significantly longer for children whose parents allowed or encouraged naps compared to those who tried to prevent naps (Jones, 2013). The results also portrayed that longer daily nap duration compensated for shorter nighttime sleep duration (Jones, 2013).

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In an experiment conducted by Sinclair (2016), the results were similar. In this experiment, the majority of parents preferred that their children not take naps while attending ECE. The purpose of this study was to examine parent's preferences toward their children napping in ECE. The experiment was performed by analyzing an open-ended questionnaire completed by 750 parents of pre-school aged children. First, parents were asked to respond to the questions: "If given an option, would you choose for the study child to sleep at their early childhood program or school?" The four response categories were: "Yes, everyday", "Yes, some days", "Yes, on odd occasions", and "No, Never." Second, an open-ended response question asked parents to "explain the reason for your preference (Sinclair, 2016). Respondents were aged between 25 and 66 years and their children were aged between three and six years (Sinclair, 2016).

The data determined that 78.7% of parents preferred that their children not nap while attending ECE. With the responses, parents also provided a rationale of why they preferred that their children not nap. These rationales were divided into three themes; *Child Health and Development*, *Family Functioning*, and *ECE Environment*. In each theme parents provided a cost and a benefit. In reference to *Child Health and Development* costs, parents reported that daytime sleep adversely impacted their children's night time sleep, that their children no longer needed a nap and that regular naps were developmentally inappropriate (Sinclair, 2016). Some parents' benefit in this theme was that regular naps were appropriate and beneficial for young children, citing child age and the role of naps in promoting optimum health and development as key reasons for their preference (Sinclair, 2016)

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In the theme of *Family Functioning*, parents stated that naps impacted family routines such as housework and leaving on time for school in the morning. However, the benefit in this theme was that parents felt as though naps provided them with additional time to spend with their children during the evening. Lastly, in the theme of *ECE Environment*, parents were concerned that the ECE environment was inappropriate for sleep. Two main reasons were cited: the physical environment (too noisy, busy, and full of activities) and the developmental environment (loss of opportunity for learning) (Sinclair, 2016). The benefit was that parents saw nap time as an opportunity for their children to rest and recuperate during the busy and stimulating school day. Overall, the majority of parents oppose naptime in ECE and view it as unnecessary. Parents opposition to nap time could explain why it is decreasing in ECE schools.

### *Children's Behavior During Naptime*

How children behave during nap time plays a part in the debate in ECE. If children misbehave during nap time, teachers could conclude that the students do not need a nap time. How teachers respond to and handle this misbehavior also plays a crucial role in the issue of nap time. If teachers are monitoring and controlling the misbehavior this could prevent some children from having the opportunity to take a nap. In Pattinson's (2014) research the purpose was to observe emotional climate and behavioral management in the classroom during nap time.

To observe the classrooms, seven CLASS (Classroom Assessment and Scoring System) researches were placed into a total of 113 classrooms. Classrooms were

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observed based on three specific domains. These domains were emotional climate, classroom organization, and instructional support. In this study the mandated sleep time, was defined as the scheduled sleep time that all children were required to lie on beds, without alternative activities permitted (Pattinson, 2014). The mandated sleep time ranged from 0 to 140 minutes.

The results concluded that out of all the children that were observed, 71% did not sleep at all during the mandated sleep time. Results also showed that there was decline of emotional climate and behavioral management during the mandated sleep time. The decline in behavioral management at sleep time may suggest that, during non-sleep sessions teachers employ more proactive strategies, and are more accepting of child behavior than they are during the scheduled sleep time (Pattinson, 2014). This data also shows that nap time may be a stressful time for students and teachers.

### *Supportive Sleep Practices*

Although managing a classroom during naptime is not easy, it is an essential part of having nap time. Teachers must find a way to meet the needs of the children that nap and the children that do not nap. Studies have shown that there are effective practices and strategies that teachers can implement to create a supportive and encouraging environment for nap time.

In more of Stanton's (2015) research, she discussed positive sleep practices that teachers can implement in ECEC settings. Her discussion focused on four key questions. "Should there be uniform scheduling of naptime for all children? How should the needs of non-nappers be met? How should the needs of nappers be met? How should the

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contextual and individual variations in sleep be accommodated?” (Stanton, 2015), Staton started by discussing the issue of uniform scheduling of naptime for all children.

There is a need to clearly distinguish between uniform scheduling of sleep time and opportunistic sleep or rest (Staton, 2015). Nap time is a time for the children who need sleep and a time for children who do not sleep to rest. Not every child in ECEC settings will need to take a nap. Therefore, having a scheduled sleep time will most likely not meet the needs of all the children. For nap time to be successful, the caregiver or teacher must meet the needs of the children who need to sleep and the children who simply need to rest.

In every classroom, there are some children who do not need to take a nap. For non-nappers, scheduling of mandatory sleep time translates to extended periods of restricted activity (Staton, 2015). Although short periods of quiet activity may serve to provide rest, extended periods of inactivity are not restful. (Staton, 2015). Nap time is stressful for children who do not nap if they are forced to nap by their teachers or caregivers. Providing quiet and alternative activities for these children is the most effective way of meeting their needs.

There are many factors that influence meeting the needs of children who need to nap. These factors fall into three major categories: the sleep environment (e.g., temperature, light, noise), the behavioral environment (e.g., arousal levels, routines, predictability), and the individual daily context (e.g., diet, physical activity) (Staton, 2015). All of these factors must play an important role when trying to meet the needs of children who nap. A sleep environment must be comfortable, predictable, and have low

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arousal. It is also important to keep the environment quiet so students who want to nap can nap. If a sleep environment does not support sleep, children cannot sleep even if the opportunity to sleep is provided.

No child in a classroom is the same. In classrooms, there are children who nap and children who do not nap. However, each individual child will have characteristics or circumstances that may prevent them from napping. A consistently reported finding is an association between family characteristics and circumstances, including socioeconomic status, parent age, parent education, family structure, and racial or ethnic background (Staton, 2015). A child's home life and structure may affect their ability to nap at school. Some children's home life may increase or even decrease their need for a nap. Sleeping patterns are also associated with a range of disorders. These disorders include ADHD and anxiety disorders. Having a disorder can prevent a child from being able to take a nap.

Staton conducted a different experiment in 2016 and she found that there was a big difference in the classrooms that supported and encouraged sleep during naptime than the classrooms that did not support and encourage sleep during naptime. The purpose of this experiment was to investigate whether the sleep practices in early childhood education settings align with current evidence on optimal practice to support sleep (Staton, 2016). Specifically, the purpose was to explore if classrooms were implementing practices that encouraged children to sleep and met the needs of the children who did not sleep.

The experiment focused on four key domains. The domains were *scheduling*, *routines*, *environmental stimuli*, and *environmental climate*. *Sleep scheduling* was defined

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as the regularity and duration of a child's scheduled naptime (Stanton, 2016). *Routines* referred to activities that were associated with the commencement of sleep and serve to reduce stress and increase predictability for children (Stanton, 2016). *Environmental stimuli* referred to anything that has an influence on the child's sleep during nap time. The *emotional climate* referred to the teacher's behavior and emotional tone during nap time. Stanton (2016) stated that a calm emotional climate can facilitate sleep, whereas an environment that is threatening or punitive may limit sleep and may become associated with a sleep disorder.

In Stanton's 2016 study, observations were made by trained researchers in 118 ECE preschool classrooms. The children in the classroom were ranged from three to six years old. The observations included a record of sleep scheduling, the duration of the sleep period, the number of children and staff present, whether there was choice of activity for children, behavior management strategies used by the staff, the sleep behavior/practices, and the characteristics of the sleep environment (Stanton, 2016).

The results of the study revealed that across all 118 classrooms, there was an overall negative score in the *scheduling* and *routine* domains. Which means that the classrooms did not have regulated and scheduled times for the children to engage in naps. This also means that the classrooms were not providing activities that reduced stress and encouraged the children to sleep. However, there was a positive overall score for the *environmental stimuli* and *emotional climate* domains. This means that the teacher did provide a supportive emotional and behavioral setting for the children to engage in naptime. The study also revealed that the classrooms that had scheduled sleep times did not engage in supportive practices of sleep. The somewhat opposite occurred in other

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classrooms. Classrooms that had positive emotional climate did not develop sleep routines. The classrooms were divided into three categories: Supportive, Unsupportive, and Ambivalent.

Supportive classrooms met the needs of the children that were napping and the children that were not napping. The staff prepared the children for nap time by allowing them to read a book or play with a soft toy on their bed before it was time to go to sleep. The staff in supportive classrooms also provided the children with the choice to nap or not. Finally, the staff moved the room around to reduce the children's arousal. In unsupportive classrooms, nap time lasted up to two hours and children were not able to engage in any alternative activities. Ambivalent classrooms exhibited the same behavior as unsupportive class, however ambivalent classrooms exhibited positive emotional climate.

Spencer (2016) conducted a study in reference to supportive sleep practices. One of the goals of the study was to determine how children would sleep and behave during naptime if the nap was promoted. In other words, how would the children behave and sleep if the teachers encouraged them to nap. The study was conducted by studying the sleep and behavior of 133 preschool children. After parents completed a child sleep habits questionnaire, the children were divided into three categories depending on how often they napped during the week. The three categories were *frequent*, *sometimes*, and *rarely nappers*. The children were observed over a course of 16 days. On one day, the nap was promoted by the teachers. Children were encouraged to nap through verbal encouragement and typical sleep promotion techniques such as back and foot rubbing (Spencer, 2016).

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The results showed that under nap promoted conditions, overall nap duration and behavior was greater. However, it was most successful for *frequent nappers*. *Frequent nappers* had a 100% success rate while *sometimes nappers* had 92% and *rarely nappers* had 73%. The results also revealed that children got significantly more total sleep on the day they were nap-promoted compared with a typical day (Spencer, 2016).

In order for nap time to be effective in ECEC, teachers need to implement certain practices. If supportive sleep practices are not used, children are less likely to sleep. If children cannot sleep then there is no reason to have an opportunity for children to nap in the first place.

Although all of these studies describe the advantages and disadvantages of naptime from multiple points of view, none of these studies describe naptime from a teacher's point of view. None of these studies explore how teachers feel about naptime or how it is beneficial and/or harmful to their classrooms. The purpose of my study is to explore the advantages and disadvantages of nap time from a teacher's perspective.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants and Site*

For this study I interviewed six veteran Kindergarten teachers at different schools. The six teachers I interviewed were Ms. James, Ms. Fisher, Ms. Baker, Ms. Donovan, Ms. Norris, and Ms. Larson (pseudonym names for participants and schools). Ms. James and Ms. Norris are both Kindergarten teachers at Stone Creek Elementary school. Ms. James has been teaching for 20 years and Ms. Norris for six years. Ms. Fisher is also a teacher Stone Creek Elementary. Although Ms. Fisher currently teaches fifth grade, she

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taught Kindergarten for four years. Ms. Larson and Ms. Baker are both Kindergarten teachers at Johnson A. Tucker Elementary School. Ms. Larson has been teaching for 16 years and Ms. Baker for 14 years. Ms. Donovan is Kindergarten teacher at Browns Prep School and has been teaching for 44 years.

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Years Experience</b>
Ms. James	Stone Creek	20 years
Ms. Fisher	Stone Creek	4 years
Ms. Norris	Stone Creek	6 years
Ms. Donovan	Browns Prep School	44 years
Ms. Baker	Johnson A Tucker	14 years
Ms. Larson	Johnson A Tucker	16 years

All six of the participants have experience teaching in Kindergarten classrooms where naptime was part of their every day schedule. These teachers also have experience teaching in Kindergarten classrooms where naptime was not part of their daily routine schedule. The teachers shared their opinions and experiences with naptime in their classrooms. They also shared their what they personally feel are advantages and disadvantage of naptime in the classroom. Some interviews were conducted via telephone and others were conducted face to face in their classrooms. These interviews on average were less than 30 minutes and were conducted before or after school.

### Design

Every teachers' experiences with naptime in their classrooms is different. In this study, it was important for me to capture each teachers' personal opinions and

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experiences with naptime in their classrooms. Therefore, for the design of my study I chose a qualitative narrative design. In a qualitative narrative design, the goal is to (re)story the events and the experiences of the participants. Once I (re) storied each participants' experiences, I looked for reoccurring events or statements, and similar experiences among the participants' stories.

### Interview Analysis

Each interview with the participant was recorded and later transcribed into a document. Once the interview was transcribed I read through each transcription and looked for similar opinions, experiences, pros, cons, etc. among the six participant's interviews. Once I read and analyzed all six transcriptions, I synthesized the commonalities into 4 broad themes.

<u><i>Sleep Patrol</i></u>	<u><i>Supervise &amp; Improvise</i></u>	<u><i>I Need Naptime</i></u>	<u><i>Who Needs Naptime</i></u>
Academics (AC)	Nap When Needed (NWN)	Tired Students (TS)	More Instruction Time (MIT)
Time (TM)	Rest Time (RT)	Students' Home Life (SHL)	Waking Students Up (WU)
School Administration (SA)	Rearranging Instruction (RAI)	Students' Well Being (SWB)	Students Do Not Nap (SDN)

**Figure 1**

As displayed in figure 1, there are 4 themes that indicate similarities that were restated and emphasized throughout the six interviews. Along with each of the four

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themes, there are codes within them. These codes represent specific examples that align with the themes.

**Sleep Patrol:** This theme describes the factors that act as barriers to students having the time to take a nap in Kindergarten.

**Supervise & Improvise:** This theme describes the strategies that are used by the teachers. These strategies are used because naptime is no longer a part of their everyday schedule however, they observe that their students are tired or restless.

**I Need Naptime:** This theme describes the common reasons why these teachers believe that naptime should be a part of Kindergarten's everyday schedule.

**Who Needs Naptime:** This theme describes the common reasons why these teachers believe that naptime should not be a part of Kindergarten's everyday schedule.

## Findings

In this study I conducted interviews with six veteran Kindergarten teachers to gain insight on their perspectives on the decrease of naptime in Kindergarten. The purpose of interviewing these teachers were to answer questions such as "How was naptime beneficial in their classroom?" "How was naptime harmful in their classroom?" "What strategies do these teachers use when their students are tired?" and "Do they feel as though naptime was an asset in their classroom?" I noted that these were the most beneficial and relevant questions during the interview.

As seen in the literature review, most parents prefer for their children not to nap during school. However, in regard to the teachers I interviewed, there were more diverse

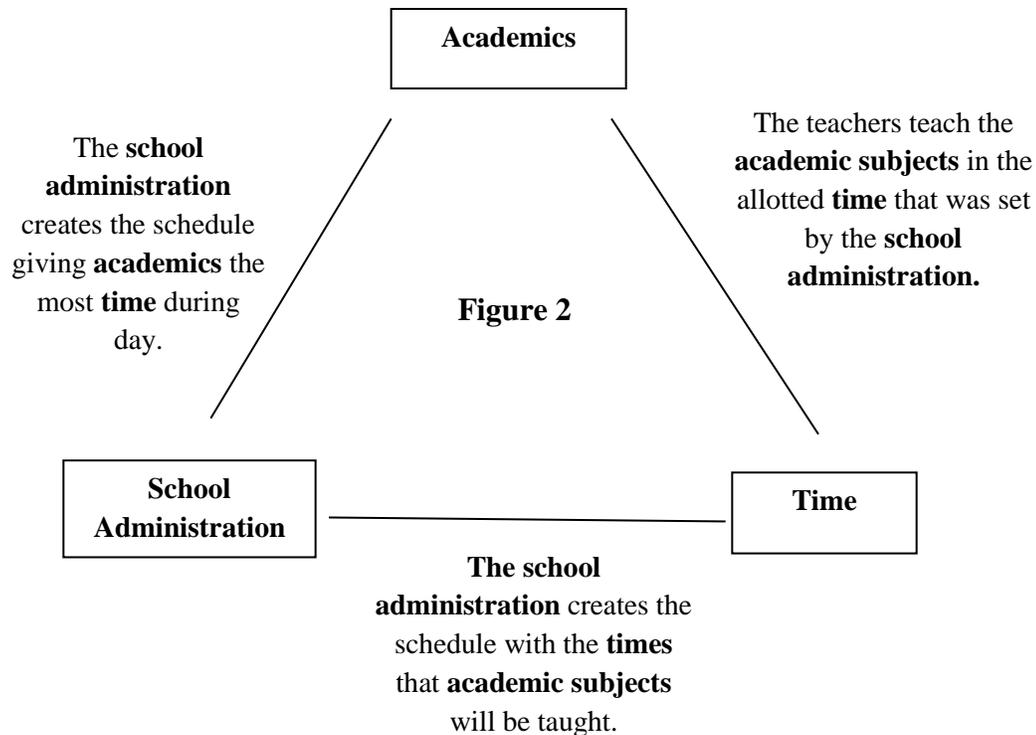
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opinions and preferences on naptime in their classrooms. Three of the teachers expressed that naptime is an asset to their classroom. Two of them expressed that naptime was not an asset to their classroom, and one of them expressed that naptime added some benefit to their classrooms. All of the teachers felt as though naptime in the classroom had a fair share of advantages and disadvantages. The teachers also identified some of the reasons why naptime is decreasing in their classrooms and some of the strategies that they use when they notice that their students are tired.

### *Sleep Patrol*

The most common reasons that teachers identified for naptime decreasing in their classrooms were *Academics (AC)*, *Time (TM)*, and their *School Administration (SA)*. As shown in figure 2, these three factors overlap one another. Each of these six teachers explained that they are required to teach Kindergarten students a lot more content than they were required to teach in the previous years. Some of the teachers even stated that Kindergarten content is now what first grade content used to be. Kindergarten students are expected to learn how to read and write before going to the first grade and it takes a lot of time to teach them these skills. With more the more content that teachers have to teach and the depth at which these teachers must explain this content, there is less and less time for Kindergarten students to nap during the school day.

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Although academics is the most important part of school, four out of the six teachers felt as though naptime was also critically important and should be a part of their everyday schedule. Even though most of the teachers feel this way, they are not in charge of creating their everyday schedule. Administrators decide what time each subject is taught, when recess will take place, when specials will take place, and when or if their naptime will take place. When interviewing these teachers, I noticed a common pattern in their schedules. The administrators would have a set time blocked off for naptime, however that block of time would also be scheduled for something else that the teachers needed to teach. Therefore, the teacher is forced to choose between allowing the students time to nap or going along with instruction.

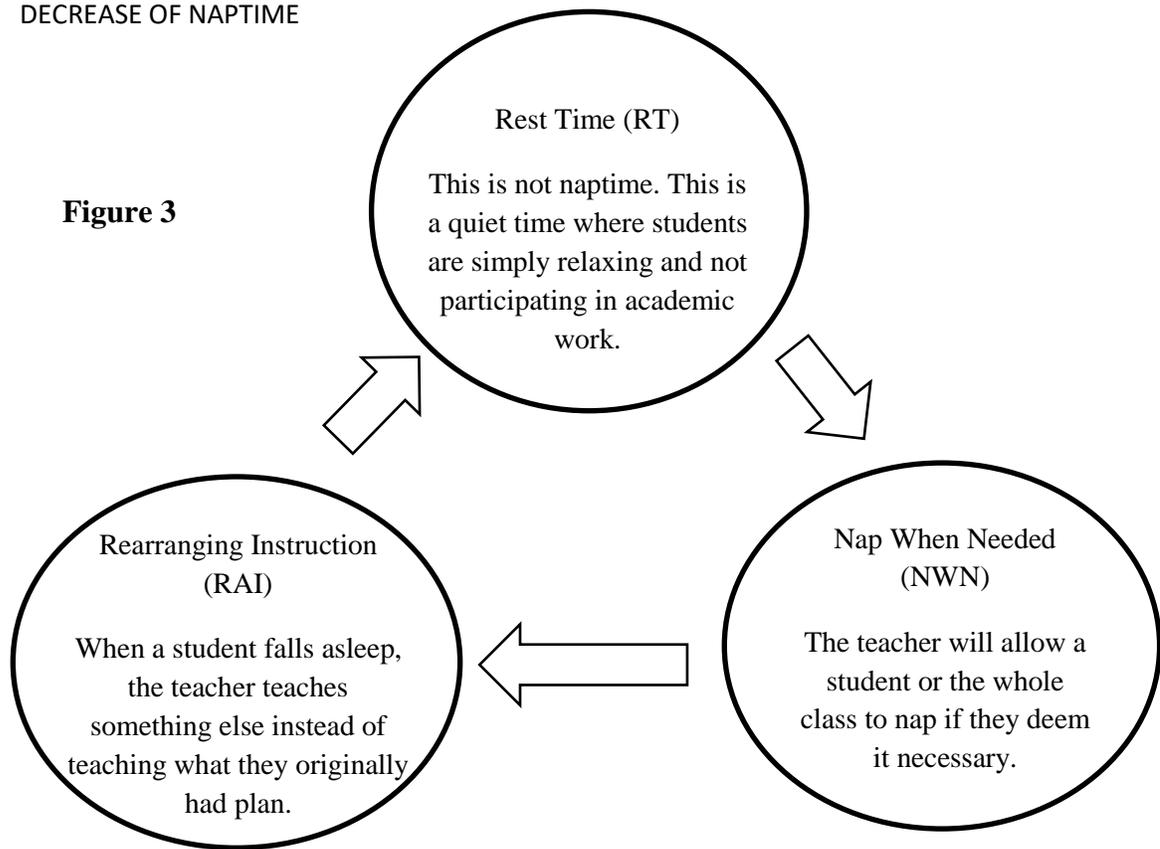
One example of this type of scheduling is with Ms. Baker. She stated in her interview that “Basically, what happened is, and it is still technically on our schedule, but it is lumped into a 30-minute block where we are also required to teach science and social

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studies and that is non-negotiable. And so, there is really no longer a time for it.” Another example of this type of scheduling is with Ms. Larson. She stated in her interview that “I mean you know basically we are given our schedule from our administrators and you know we knew pretty quickly that it was naptime/center time. And you only have 30 minutes, well there is no way you can do naptime/center time in 30 minutes, so you know you had to pick and choose.”

### *Supervise & Improvise*

Just because Kindergarten students do not have an official time set aside for naptime, does not mean that they do not get tired. It also does not mean that the students do not need their rest. Although some of the teachers I interviewed have gotten accustomed to not having naptime as a part of their everyday schedule, it does not mean that the students have adjusted. Kindergarteners in the classroom still get cranky and upset when they have not had enough sleep. This behavior makes it difficult for teachers to teach and for the students to learn. When interviewing these six teachers, there were three common strategies that the teachers used to deal with these behaviors, *Rest Time* (RT), *Nap When Needed* (NWN), and *Rearranging Instruction* (RAI). As shown in figure three, these strategies occur in a cycle. The teachers start with the rest time strategy, move on to the nap when needed strategy, and progress towards rearranging their instruction. Every day, the teacher starts over, and start with the rest time strategy.



Sometimes when students cannot take a nap, having time to just take a break and rest makes a big difference in their behavior and their mindset. Teachers who do not have a scheduled naptime must find a way to give their students some time to rest without them going to sleep. When interviewing these six teachers, each of them had a different way of giving their students RT. Not only is this RT beneficial for the students, it is beneficial for the teachers as well. Although the students are not necessarily completing academic work during RT, the activities that they participate in connect and benefit their learning.

For Ms. Norris, her rest time for the students is sitting down and singing songs. These songs are most often related to their ELA or Math lessons. Ms. Donovan describes her rest time as watching videos such as magic school bus or reading rainbow. Not only is it relaxing for the students to just sit down and watch tv, the videos connect to what

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they are learning in class. Ms. James described her rest time for students as simply having a quiet story time. Her students will sit down on the rug as she reads a story to them.

Reading aloud to children relaxes them. However, when reading to students during RT there is a possibility that these students could fall asleep.

Each of the teachers that I interviewed mentioned that they have had students just fall asleep in the middle of class. Some of the students fell asleep during rest time and some of them fell asleep during academic block time. Each of these teachers also mentioned that they can tell when a student is tired and needs a nap. When this happens, the teacher uses the Nap when Needed (NWN) strategy. The NWN strategy can be used for one student or for the whole class. This strategy is also used when a teacher can tell that a student needs to get some sleep or when a student is already sleeping.

Teachers know when a student is tired based on the way that they are acting. Most of the time, when a student is whining more than usual or telling the teacher that they are tired, they need a nap. Even though the teachers I interviewed did not have a scheduled naptime in their classroom, when a student needed a nap, they would let them take a nap. All of the teachers have a similar way that they implement the NWN strategy. When interviewing Ms. Fisher, she said “I had a great para-pro and she was really good, she would put like a towel behind her desk or something down behind her desk and the kids would lay down back behind her desk.”

The other teachers I interviewed implement the NWN strategy in a similar way. They place a mat behind their desk, or somewhere in the corner of the classroom so that a student can nap if they need to. Sometimes instead of using the mat, some of the teachers

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just send the student back to their desk and let them lay their head down if they need to nap. These NWN strategies are used the same way if the whole class needs a nap. If these teachers determine that the whole class is tired, and they need a nap, they will get out all of the mats and they will let them take one.

Even though all of the students are napping, some students require more sleep than others and may sleep longer. When students sleep longer than everyone else, another part of the NWN strategy is letting those students get the sleep that they need. Instead of waking them up, these teachers let them sleep and continue with their instruction. However, when there are students that are still sleeping, teachers must prioritize their content that they are teaching. There is some content that students cannot afford to miss. Therefore, if there is a student who is still sleeping during critical instruction time, the teacher uses the Rearranging Instruction (RAI) strategy.

When teachers use the RAI strategy they simply teach something else instead of teaching what they had planned for that block of time. Instead of teaching something new, the teacher can review old content, or teach something of less importance. Another way that these teachers use the RAI strategy is by rearranging their daily schedules.

When interviewing Ms. Baker, she indicated that she puts the majority of the academically challenging and those that are critical for promotion to first grade, such as Math and ELA in the morning. She explained that this change was made due to a decline in achievement in Math when it was in the afternoon. She felt as though it was because Math was right after lunch and the children were tired.

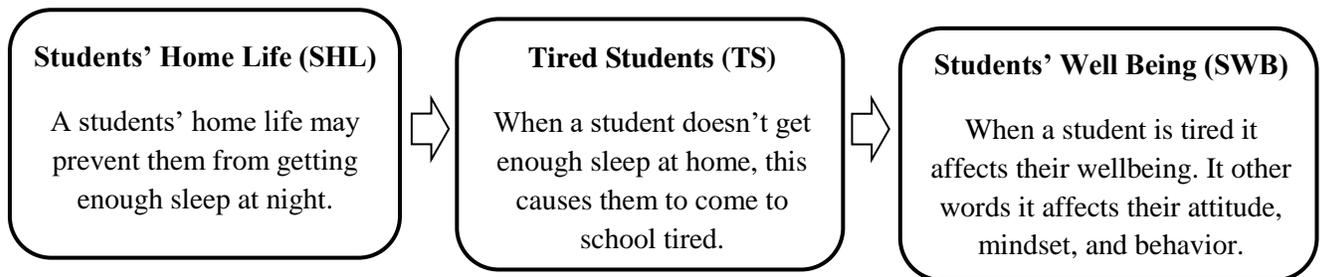
### *I Need Naptime*

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Each of these teachers believed that there were advantages and disadvantages to having naptime in their Kindergarten classrooms. When interviewing these teachers, they all had different reasons why they thought naptime should be a part of Kindergarten.

There were three reoccurring themes that all of the six teachers. These three reasons were *Tired Students (TS)*, *Students' Home Life (SHL)*, and *Students' Well Being (SWB)*. As portrayed in figure 4, these three reasons have an affect each other as a chain reaction in the classroom. The chain reaction starts with the student's home life and ends with the student's well-being.

**Figure 4**



During the interviews, several of the teachers mentioned that they have had students whose home lives prevent them from getting enough sleep. There are many reasons why a student may have trouble sleeping at home. Most of the time, it is the children who did not have more supportive and stable home lives that would need a nap when they came to school the next day. When interviewing Ms. Larson, she explained that for the students who do not get enough sleep at home, having a naptime at school is a big deal for them. She also stated that if they are not getting enough sleep at home, it does have an effect on their ability to pay attention and focus, and just make it through the day. When interviewing Ms. Fisher, she explained that for students who do not have set sleep schedules at home, naptime is the only set sleep time that they have. Although a students' home life may play a role in why a student is tired, there can be a plethora of reasons.

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It has already been stated that Kindergarten students today are expected to learn a lot more content than they were previously expected to. These students are expected to learn how to read and write before the first grade. They are also expected to learn all of their numbers in addition to learning science and social studies. That is a lot of time and stress placed on 4, 5, and 6-year-old children. Not getting enough sleep at home and a long school day can cause a child at this age to feel drained. This was one of the main reasons why these teachers feel as though naptime is an important part of Kindergarten. Kindergarten students are exhausted.

As seen in the literature review, naptime is beneficial for children who are transitioning to Kindergarten. When transitioning to Kindergarten, children lose sleep and are tired because they must wake up earlier. As I interviewed the teachers, many of them expressed other reasons why Kindergarten students are so tired. Ms. Baker stated “And so you know their brains are working so hard all day. Their little bodies are going. They have had specials, they have had you know recess, and their bodies are tired.” Ms. Fisher shared that sometimes even after a nap, her students are so tired after their long day that they would fall asleep while she was teaching. In Ms. Norris’ interview, she said “You can tell by the end of the day they are getting tired, they are getting worn out. They are getting a little agitated, they are getting a little, they are tired.” This quote from Ms. Norris also emphasizes another reason why these teachers feel as though Kindergarten classrooms should have naptime.

In the quote above, Ms. Norris expressed that when Kindergarten students are tired, they are agitated, not only are they agitated, they are frustrated and irritable. Each of these teachers feel as though having naptime in the classroom can be beneficial for a

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students' wellbeing. They have noticed that naptime is favorable to a students' behavioral well-being. In her classroom, Ms. Fisher observed that a lot of times children are mean to other kids and it can be kids that you normally did not see have any of those issues. It is because suddenly they do not know what to do with themselves, because they are exhausted.

Not only have these teachers noticed that naptime is beneficial to a students' behavioral well-being, but their mental well-being as well. Ms. Johnson noted in her interview that children are more alert when they wake up from a nap. In addition to naptime being helpful for those students who sleep, teachers expressed that naptime is even helpful for those students who do not sleep during naptime. In Ms. Larson's and Ms. Baker's interviews, both of them emphasized that for the children that do not go to sleep during naptime, it gives them some time to just relax their minds and their bodies while the other children are sleeping.

### Who Needs Naptime

Even though there were many reasons why these teachers felt as though naptime should be in their classrooms, there were also reasons why they believed that it should not. When interviewing these teachers there were also three reoccurring reasons why teachers did not want naptime in their Kindergarten classrooms. These three reasons were *More Instruction Time* (MIT), *Waking Students Up* (WU), and *Students Do Not Nap* (SDN). When analyzing these reasons, I noticed that there was something different about these codes than the codes in the other themes, unlike the codes in the themes *Sleep*

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*Patrol, Supervise & Improvise*, and *I Need Naptime*, there is no connection or relationship between these codes.

When conducting my interviews, one of the questions that I asked was “How long was naptime when it was a part of your everyday schedule?” The average time for naptime in their classrooms was about 30-35 minutes a day. This meant that teachers were losing 30-35 minutes of instruction every day. Considering how much content Kindergarten teachers are required to teach; 30-35 minutes is valuable time that they cannot afford to waste. In a Kindergarten classroom, one lesson on average is about 30 minutes. So, in retrospect, these teachers missed an opportunity to teach one lesson every day. Once naptime was no longer part of their everyday schedule, teachers had more time to teach.

However, in Ms. Larson’s interview she said that having naptime actually gives her more time to get things done. She explained that when the children are sleeping she uses that time to prepare their take home folders or get a game or activity ready for the next day. However, out of all the teachers, she was the only one that felt this way. The other teachers said that they sometimes enjoy not having naptime in their classrooms because it allows them more time to get things done. In Ms. Norris’ interview, she mentioned that she uses this extra 30 minutes to do more Science and Social Studies activities with her students.

When the teachers did have naptime in their classrooms, there were two reoccurring issues that they would have to deal with. One of those issues was waking the students up when naptime was over. Most of the teachers would have naptime after

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lunchtime, which meant that after nap time was over they still had more teaching to do. However, it was so difficult to wake the students up that they would lose instruction time. Ms. Fisher said that sometimes students would sleep through center time because she simply could not wake them up. Other teachers, such as Ms. Norris and Ms. James, explained that it was difficult getting the students going and engaged after waking them up from their nap.

The second reoccurring issue with naptime in their classrooms was students who do not take naps. Although some of the teachers expressed that naptime was helpful to students who did not nap because they could just relax, some of their students would not sit still and relax. In classrooms like Ms. Norris' where most of the students do not nap, it is difficult to manage their noise and behavior. Not only do these teachers have to get the students to nap, they must keep the students who do not nap quiet and engaged in an activity. That can be very difficult for teachers, especially teachers that do not have para-pros in their classrooms.

### **Discussion**

In conducting this study my goal was to gain more insight into teachers' perspectives on the decrease of naptime in Kindergarten classrooms. My goal was to also understand how having naptime or not having naptime, affected their classrooms. A part of this goal was learning what strategies teachers used and how they managed in a classroom when no naptime provided. As my study progressed, in addition to gaining insight on teacher's perspectives on the decrease of naptime, I discovered why teachers have these opinions and perspectives.

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After everything that I have learned from this study about teachers' perspectives on naptime in the classroom, my perspective has not changed. If anything, this research has further proven to me that naptime is an asset to the classroom. My perspective is that naptime plays a critical part in the classroom routine. It is just as important as any other academic activity. Naptime as a part of students' wellbeing is beneficial for the students as well as the teachers. It gives students and teachers an opportunity to relax their bodies and their minds. Although there are some disadvantages to naptime, I believe that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Part of being a teacher is knowing how to be flexible and taking those disadvantages and find some way to make things work.

### *Strengths and Limitations of the Study*

One limitation of these study is the small pool of teachers that interviewed for this qualitative study. The teachers that I interviewed were all in the city of Smalltown (pseudonym), GA. The stories and experiences of teachers in the city of Smalltown may be different than those of a teacher who teaches in a different city. They also may be different from teachers who teach in other states.

One of the strengths of this study was that it had a qualitative narrative design. In order to gain thorough insight into teachers' perspectives, when I interviewed the teachers I asked open-ended questions. The teachers had the opportunity to explain and express their opinions and experiences openly and honestly during the interview.

Another strength of this study was that I was able to get a diverse group of participants. None of the teachers' experiences and perspectives were exactly the same. Although all of these teachers were in the city of Smalltown, they were spread out

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between three different schools. Even though some of the teachers taught at the same school, their years of teaching experience was varied. Furthermore, some of these teachers had experience teaching Kindergarten in other counties.

### Recommendations for Further Study

As I explained above, I only interviewed teachers in one city GA. However, teachers in other cities and/or states may have different experiences and opinions on the decrease of naptime in Kindergarten classrooms. In order to get a wider range of teachers' opinions, more teachers need to be interviewed. Not only should the number of teachers interviewed increase, but the range and the location of the teachers should extend beyond Smalltown.

### **Conclusion**

There are numerous factors that play a part in whether teachers will have naptime in their Kindergarten classrooms. It is not a decision that is directly made by the teacher or the school administration. Naptime plays an important role in the classroom and not just for the students, for the teachers as well. Naptime can be seen as an advantage or a hindrance to teachers and students in the classroom. However, it simply depends on the teacher's perspective. Furthermore, having naptime a part of a classroom's everyday schedule has both advantages and disadvantages. Nonetheless, the teacher has the power to decide what is important for the students and if they believe that the advantages for sleep outweigh the disadvantages.

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