

The Pencil Box: Report of Impact on Students and Teachers

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Performed by: Nkem Ike, Zachary Qualls,
Angie Williams, Robert Frame, and Diana Williams

Under advisement of Dr. Peter Stromberg

University of Tulsa

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Introduction

Background:

Financial inequality is a problem that faces Americans on a daily basis, a troubling situation to face when necessities such as health care and a stable living environment are systematically put in to question. A particularly troubling social problem that many American people face is the fact that a large percentage of school children live under or around the poverty line. A lack of money for students and their families can cause a wide array of challenges for the prospects of the child achieving a good education because showing up to school on a daily a basis does not provide the guarantee of the best schooling experience for the child. A significant issue for many children is the financial power to provide their supplies in their classes. Supplies such as pens, pencils, and paper can be a challenge for a considerable amount of parents to afford. Having the correct equipment can be crucial to the development and educational growth of the child because it allows them to be engaged in class and complete school work, without feeling the adverse effects of financial inequality. The financial ability to purchase school clothing, backpacks, and personal hygiene products can also be a source of hardship for the student because these items allow them to have a sense of pride and confidence without feeling inadequate to classmates that can afford those things. In recent years, it has fallen upon school teachers to remove the inequalities in the classrooms by purchasing the materials for their students because a growing number of them cannot afford it. However, with approximately 41% (29.8 million) of American children living on the brink of poverty in 2016 (NCCP, 2018), this creates a heavy price for teachers that spend hundreds of dollars helping these students with the school equipment that they need.

In Oklahoma alone, the poverty rate is relatively high compared to most states. The state poverty rate is approximately 16%, with the population under the age of eighteen falling into a poverty rate of 23% (CWLA, 2018). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, many American families have experienced economic gains in recent years, but children are still most likely to live in a household that is too poor to provide their basic needs (NCCP, 2018). In Oklahoma in particular, 22.6% of households were food insecure in 2015. A lack of resources was a severe set of conditions that prevented the access to adequate food sources. Oklahoma also suffers terribly from child poverty. Approximately 453,000 Oklahoma children live below 200% of poverty (CWLA, 2018). These circumstances place tremendous pressure on Oklahoma families to provide extra funding for resources that they cannot afford to provide; unfortunately, this falls on to the children in the family. This plays a significant role in the educational experience for children as 80.3% of students enrolled in Tulsa Public Schools live at or below the national poverty level (Oklahoma Department of Education Low Income Report 2018).

The role of education can be significant to underprivileged children because it gives them the chance to learn and change their life path by improving their employability potential. However, being a student in Tulsa is not the most comfortable position because many of them fail to meet the financial ability to provide materials and supplies for their classes because these their family cannot afford it. If this was left to the families to provide supplies for the students, the potential for financial inequality between students will increase because some students have supplies and others do not. Teachers in the Tulsa region have taken it upon themselves to step up and provide materials for their classes to limit the financial inequalities within their classrooms. Students in these classrooms are given an equal opportunity for successful education because no

child is limited because they cannot afford the materials and supplies. Fortunately, there is now an organization in Tulsa called the Pencil Box which aims to alleviate pressures put on teachers to provide school supplies. Throughout our research with the Pencil Box, our primary research question is to understand whether the provided school supplies improve the child's engagement in the classroom and academic success.

The Pencil Box:

The Pencil Box is a charitable organization located in Tulsa, Oklahoma that provides school supplies to teachers teaching in eligible Tulsa Public Schools. Their mission states "Our goal is to offer students hope for tomorrow by empowering them for success today with a wide variety of materials that support learning, including basic supplies like books, crayons, paper, scissors, pens, and pencils, as well as enrichment and incentive items teachers can use to motivate and inspire student engagement." (The Pencil Box, 2018) Teachers are eligible to shop at the pencil box, but they must teach pre-kindergarten through 12th grade at a Tulsa Public School where 70% of students living at or below the national poverty level (The Pencil Box, 2018). This is an essential concept as an organization because the Pencil Box strives to eliminate social inequalities for children.

The Pencil Box can function in a variety of ways. One reason is through the partnership that the organization creates with the participating teachers. After a teacher has met the criteria to participate in the Pencil Box program, the teachers are required to pay a small fee of \$35. This is an annual participation fee that gives the teacher unlimited access to the materials. According to the Pencil Box website, in the 2017-2018 school year, teachers received an average of \$800 worth of supplies. This is critical for teachers because on average they were spending between

\$500-\$1000 of their salaries to provide supplies before the Pencil Box. On the other hand, the primary way that the Pencil Box functions and provides these critical services is through generous donations. The Pencil Box is a charitable 501(c)(3) organization funded solely through generous donations from corporations, businesses, foundations, and individuals. It is important to note that the Pencil Box is not publicly funded, nor does it receive support from United Way (The Pencil Box, 2018).

Similar Organizations:

The Pencil Box is an umbrella organization for the Kids in Need Foundation, which aims to provide school supplies to children that come from extreme poverty across the United States. In 2017 the foundation helped 200,000 teachers and 6.2 million children in severe poverty across the United States. It is estimated that over their 23-year existence, over \$1 billion has been donated to children that are in need. (KINF, 2018) The mission of the Kids in Need Foundation is to improve the school experience of impoverished children by providing them with the basic tools to learn; this is anticipated to improve grades, classroom behavior, increased engagement, self-esteem boosts and improved attitudes towards school.

There are two primary demographics that the Kids in Need Foundation aim to serve: students and teachers. They help children at schools where at least 70% of students are enrolled in the federal free or reduced lunch program. These children often come from extreme poverty where families cannot afford to pay for rent and groceries. In these homes, school supplies are not a priority. They provide support through their National Network of Resource centers and their School Ready supplies program. An additional part of the student program is helping

children affected by natural disasters return to normal through their Second Responder program (KINF, 2018).

The Kids in Need foundation also helps to improve the financial conditions for teachers in the United States. Many of the teachers were forced to pay for supplies out of their pocket before this program, and on average they spend \$578 per year on school supplies for their classroom (KINF, 2018).. The foundation offers over forty resource centers across the country where teachers can go to obtain free school supplies. Programs like those of the Kids in Need Foundation have been crucial to helping teachers provide for their impoverished students, helping reduce inequality, and increasing engagement in the classroom. The Kids in Need Foundation has been an excellent model for the Pencil Box to follow because they have shown that proved success. Other smaller foundations are similar to the Pencil Box, but the Kids in Need Foundation is the most impressive model because of the success that is shown in teachers and students that helps improve the overall successful school experience.

Review of Literature

Introduction:

The Pencil Box's key question asks if their program helps students be more engaged in the classroom. To answer this question, it is necessary to examine if the socio-economic status (SES) impact of students ability to achieve academic success. To discuss this issue further it is important to define engagement. According to the Higher Education Academy, student engagement is defined as the "interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and

enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution” (The Higher Education Academy 2010). The National Association of Independent Schools defines it as “meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment.” To have a well-rounded definition of student engagement it is imperative to understand the relationship between students and the school environment, educational authority figures, peers and curriculum. This means “engagement is a multidimensional (multifaceted) construct that can be measured with all the dimensions dynamically interrelated” (The National Association of Independent Schools User’s Guide and Toolkit for the Surveys of Student Engagement: The High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) and the Middle Grades Survey of Student Engagement (MGSSE) 2016). Regardless of the definition of engagement it is clear that students who are engaged in the classroom are more likely to succeed (Klem & Connell 2004, McLoyd, 1998). Students who do not feel engaged are more likely to exhibit disruptive behavior, truancy and juvenile delinquency.

From the literature it is clear that student engagement is considered to be an ideal predictor of assessing a students’ academic achievement but before student engagement can be measured, it is first important to highlight the factors that may cause students to be disengaged (Carini, Kuh, Klein, 2006). These factors can include socioeconomic status (SES), relationships with their teachers and other students, classroom size and institutional approaches to punishment, to name a few. The Pencil Box seeks to address the SES component to student engagement and how it impacts their access to school supplies. For a number of these students, the financial obstacles hinder their ability to be engaged and therefore achieve academic success. The more students are equipped to handle life in and outside of the classroom the more confident they feel. For students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds it is imperative that they get the

resources they need to overcome these obstacles that may cause disengagement (Klem, Connell, 2004)

Karl Whites 1982 study, “The Relation Between Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement,” examines the magnitude of socioeconomic status (SES) and student engagement. His article looks at meta-analysis to examine this relationship. His examination had two objectives: the first is to establish what the correlations were between standard variables of SES and academic achievement and second to measure the strengths of these outcomes. The literature that existed prior to Whites study, showed an extremely positive correlation between SES and student engagement and achievement. The 1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey cemented this idea and every behavioral scientist that followed came to the same conclusion at this survey (Coleman et al., 1966). Whites study, however, disrupted this trajectory and questioned the use SES when measure student achievement and engagement.

White used meta-analysis to examine the impact SES had on student engagement. According to White, “meta-analysis requires the reviewer to locate either all studies—or a sufficiently large representative sample of studies—on a given topic, express the results of each study in a common metric, and then quantify or code the various characteristics of each study that may have affected its results.” These results implore statistical measurements (i.e. mean, median, standard deviation and standard error) and therefore, “correlation, cross-tabulations, multiple regression, and analysis of variance” are used to create a more holistic picture of the ways in which associations create various outcomes (White, 1982).

Various factors or variables were used to determine the relationship between SES and academic engagement. The factors he considered were as followed: the unit of analysis, type of achievements, grade level, SES reporting error, achievement range restriction, percentage ethnic

minority, year of study, number of items, number of students, type of publication, sample, type of SES measure (income of family, education of parents, occupation of head of house, home atmosphere (e.g., parents' attitude toward education, parents' aspirations for their children, cultural and intellectual activities of the family), dwelling value, school resources, subjective judgment), number of SES groups and internal validity of the study. Whites study offered interesting results. He found that there was a relationship between SES and student engagement this correlation only accounted for less than 5% of a measurable impact. This study implied that SES played a much smaller role in measuring academic achievement which was not the norm. White's findings are still being contested and there are studies from the last 30 years that reinforce his initial findings and others that again show a strong correlation (i.e., Lamdin, 1996; Sutton & Soderstrom, 1991).

There are a number of factors that can explain the fluctuation of scholarship regarding this subject. The first could be researchers began to look into even more factors that could determine the relationship between SES and engagement i.e. parental occupation and family structure. They also could now focus more on changed which can but are not limited to family sizes and structures. As the next articles will show, research began to focus on more dependent variables such as race and engagement of teachers not just students (Sirin 2005). The change in focus by more recent scholars does not make White's research obsolete, it does add to his findings to ensure a more complete assessment of the factors that cause or deter student engagement.

The article "School Characteristics Related to Student Engagement" by Jeremy D. Finn and Kristin E. Voelkl examined aspects of the academic environment of at-risk youth to identify features that were closely related to higher levels of student engagement. This 1993 study was

important to educational assessment scholars because before little research had been done that positioned student engagement as an outcome of the educational process. In order for student engagement to exist, two components had to be fulfilled: participation and identification.

Participation and identification exhibit multiple features that are key to recognizing how student engagement is reflective of the educational process. In order for participation to be recognized the student, on a fundamental level, must be cooperative, receptive and present in the classroom. These outcomes are key to academic success. The next level of participation is reached when enthusiasm with not only the curriculum but with the process of learning is identified. The other factor that Finn and Voelkl highlight in their article is identification, which they define as the feeling that students rightfully “belong” in the academic environment. One way to make sure that students feel identification in the classroom is to engage them early. Although identification was not new to educational assessment scholarship, previous works examined the concept under the umbrella of “school membership” (Goodenow, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). The more that students are involved in classroom learning and activities the better chance they have of feeling successful throughout their academic career (Finn 1989, Finn & Voelkl 1993). Due to the fact that adverse behavior is the result of nonparticipation and disidentification Finn and Voelkl argue that engagement can be manipulated to prevent student disengagement.

For their nationwide study, Finn and Voelkl identified three factors that result in disengagement: being a minority in an urban school, low SES, and coming from a home in which English is not spoken. The participants in this study consisted of interviews from 6,488 students from 758 schools across the United States. Of the students who participated, 28% were African-American, 33% were Hispanic and 39% were non-Hispanic White eighth-grade students who

had to exhibit one or more the previous factors. The study measured the effects of class size, being a minority student and the severity of punishment in their respective academic environment. This study found that there was a significant correlation between student engagement and class size, there was a moderate association between being a minority student and active participation and was little relationship found between the school code of conduct severity and being receptive.

In their 2004 article, “Relationships Matter: Linking Teacher Support to Student Engagement and Achievement,” Klem and Connell hypothesized that there was a link between teacher support and student engagement. This research was different from the previous two studies because its main focus was on if teachers had an impact on student receptiveness. Data for this study was collected by the Institute for Research and Reform in Education to validate the Research Assessment Package for Schools (RAPS). “RAPS measures components of the self-system process model by surveying” students (RAPS-S), teachers (RAPST) and school records (RAPS R). Klem and Connell used surveys from both teachers and students from six elementary and three middle schools in urban districts. They measured academic achievement, behavior, engagement and experiences of teacher support.

This study highlighted and measured two forms of engagement among students: ongoing engagement (with various components) and reactions to different challenges. Ongoing engagement highlights students’ emotions and thought processes to what is happening in the classroom. Behavioral engagement encompasses the ways in which students approach the learning process. This can mean, the amount of time they spend on work, their ability to concentrate on tasks and their inclination to act when the opportunity presents itself. There is also an emotional component to engagement that Klem and Connell’s outlined. This includes

students exhibiting levels of positivity after the completion of tasks while also demonstrating enthusiasm, curiosity and interests in subjects. There is also a cognitive component to engagement that emphasizes a students need to understand why what they are doing is important. What sets Klem and Connells' article apart from other studies of engagement is the measurement of students' reactions to challenges. This component looks into the ways in which children cope when faced with difficulties. But mostly, it examines whether or not students engage when faced with perceptions of failure in the classroom (Klem, Connell 2004). This study determined that there is a strong correlation between teachers that support their students and the level of engagement that students possess. What is perhaps unsurprising about this study is that students were more engaged in the classroom when they perceived support from their teachers.

Conclusion:

The literature regarding socioeconomic status and student engagement is continuing to blossom. The scholarship no longer only examines if there is a correlation or the strength of that correlation between engagement and socioeconomic status. Now researchers are asking questions regarding the ways in which student engagement is conceptualized and how it can be discussed in ways that are more effective for future research. White's experiment, which was groundbreaking to say the least, left out fundamental questions regarding race and ethnicity while only examining surface level socioeconomic issues. Finn and Voelkl looked into the race, more succinctly, however, their analysis left out how these students interact with authority figures inside academic settings i.e. teachers and principals. The Klem and Connell article offered a well-rounded approach to the methodology of student engagement that cover the basis that the previous studies did not. However, it did not elevate the subject in a way that critiques

the historical application of student engagement analysis as more recent work like the Fredrick and McColskey article exemplify (Fredrick and McColskey, 2012). Hopefully, the study of student engagement continues in that trajectory.

Methodology

Focus Group Coordination:

Initial contact with the Pencil Box was facilitated via email through The Pencil Box's Director of Operations Susanna Belzley. Meeting times were discussed with the focus group research team to determine times for an initial visit to the Pencil Box facility. Two focus group researchers made an initial visit to the Pencil Box in efforts to discover overarching research questions the focus group aimed to discover. Within the initial contact meeting it was noted the Pencil Box was seeking to highlight their mission and goals with themes of engagement and success in classroom settings. The interview questions were designed from these initial visits in conjunction with the goals of The Pencil Box in mind.

Susanna Belzley utilized her contact information listings to invite participating Pencil Box teachers to a focus group (Appendix A). On behalf of the researchers Susanna invited a cross listing of participating teachers to a focus group held on the evening of Thursday, September 27th from 4:30pm to 6:30pm. The Pencil Box opened their doors for invited teachers to shop from 4:30 to 5:30 and then dinner was served while the focus group was being conducted. The focus group was held on site at the Pencil Box, but it should be noted that the focus group was conducted with participating teachers and researchers only. No Pencil box staff was present during the interview process in hopes to alleviate any skewness of data results. All

focus group participants were made aware that the interview session was being recorded and no identifiable information would be used. All proceeding interviews and transcripts in this report contain no identifiable information from participants. Dinner was purchased through the funds secured through the Odell Foundation and no monetary incentives were given by either researchers or the Pencil Box to focus group participants.

The focus group was conducted in a round table style discussion with participants and interviewers sitting together in a boardroom. Ten teachers were invited to participate in the focus group. Six teachers replied to invitations and five participated in the final focus group.

Research Questions:

Primary research questions for the focus group centered around themes of engagement. The Pencil Box was searching for anything that can be used to show that children who have the right supplies engage in the learning process more or become better participants in the classroom. It is assumed that having the right tools and being prepared to participate and perform in classroom settings results in more involvement therefore resulting in deeper engagement and higher levels of success in school. This study is concerned with the need for classroom engagement and ultimately what this engagement looks like in the classroom.

Focus Group Questions:

Preliminary focus group questions were answered within the context of the focus group or answered directly from interviewer questioning. Questions concentrated on engagement issues for the focus group cycled around the following:

Table 1: Preliminary Focus Group Questions
1. How did you hear about the Pencil Box Program?
2. How important is the Pencil Box Program to you/your students?
3. How accessible do you think the Pencil Box Program is?
4. How do you know what your students need?
5. What is the process for your school to get school supplies?
6. Do you go individually or for your school?
7. Have you ever given away supplies to other teachers?
8. Do you distribute these supplies to everyone or just students that ask for them?
9. Have homework outcomes changed?
10. Roughly, what is the percentage of students that benefit from the program in your classroom?
11. Do you feel like your students are engaged/disengaged in the academic process?
12. What do you feel is a key factor in their engagement/disengagement?
13. If disengaged, did the Pencil Box Program increase engagement in your classroom?
14. What are the limitations of the Pencil Box Program?
15. Any stories you'd like to share?

Analysis:

This report utilizes both the focus group responses (Appendix B) and eight previous interviews (Appendix C – J) from individual teachers in the “2016 School Supply Impact Study: Tulsa” to illicit themes regarding The Pencil Box’s interest in classroom engagement. Methods for analyzing this data rely on thematic grouping analysis. This focuses on grouping strategies to identify common themes among the focus group and interviews, draw meaning from them, and communicate the importance.

Limitations:

Limitations for this study can be attributed to small sample size. There was only five focus group and eight interview respondents. Other limitations can be attributed to time limit and sample representation. The team was only able to conduct one focus group and only had eight previous interviews available. With more time, additional focus groups could have been performed to obtain a wider perspective. Additionally, the focus group was not able to represent all grade levels and every educational content area. Although invited to participate in the focus group, no high school or social studies teachers were present.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic grouping qualitative analysis revealed five overarching themes and subsequent sub-themes relating to the preliminary research questions. Although there were 15 preliminary questions, the primary intent of the focus group relates to the impact of the Pencil Box program on the impact of student engagement. Most of the overarching themes relate to this sentiment.

Additionally, the focus group revealed important themes that were not previously considered, including the impact of the Pencil Box program on the teachers and the level of satisfaction the teachers have regarding their experience with the program staff. Overall, all five themes reflect elements of student engagement and success both in and out of the classroom. The five overarching themes include:

Table 2: Overarching Themes
1. Student Success
2. Quality of Supplies Provided
3. Student Sense of Pride
4. Teachers Less Stressed
5. Quality of Pencil Box Staff

Student Success:

Improving holistic student success through the availability of supplies and items from the Pencil Box was a recurrent theme derived from the focus group and previously conducted interviews. Student success relies on more than just the amount of time that they are in the classroom. The availability of virtually endless supplies teachers are able to offer to their students helps them to be successful in the classroom and at home. This allows them to have equal opportunity to complete and engage in work during class as well as have the supplies available to complete homework at home. The Pencil Box program allows teachers to help students succeed both academically and socially by providing a spectrum of items ranging from pencils and school supplies to soap and hygiene items. The teachers noted that because of the Pencil Box, they are able to provide the students with everything they need to be successful and engaged in the classroom plus things to help them be successful outside the classroom. One

respondent discussed how the Pencil Box allows her to always have supplies that will help students be successful throughout the school year:

“I have pencils and that kind of stuff out where they can get to it, that way they don’t have to ask for it, but I also tell them that if they need something to make them successful for the year to let me know”

Regarding student success at home, one respondent discussed how the program allows them to provide materials for the students to take home for use on homework:

“95% of our students come from lower income, so ‘If you don’t have something at home, say you need a ruler, or you need crayons, let me know’ and I can get that for them”

Another participant agreed, noting:

“They have the option of saying ‘I don’t have a pencil, can I take it home?’ They have that option, and if they let us know then we can get it for them”

Still another respondent recollected how the Pencil Box sets her students up for success by reminding them:

“They could take [supplies] home, allowing them to complete their homework.”

The program is not limited to writing school utensils and paper, the following respondent commented:

“Kids that have ripped backpacks can come to me and I can give them a new backpack”

Throughout the focus group and interviews a common sentiment expressed by the respondents was that when students do not have supplies, they are not able to participate in class. It was noted that the Pencil Box program allows each student to have supplies needed for success, and the students are more engaged because they have everything needed to participate. One respondent recalls how student engagement relates to availability of supplies:

“You have those students that don’t have anything ... if you don’t have access to it, basically you have a kid that’s sitting there not doing anything. To even the playing field you have to give everybody what they’re supposed to have, so they are more engaged in class because they have what they’re supposed to have in class.”

Quality of Supplies Provided:

Another recurring theme identified from the focus group and interviews revolved around the high-quality of the supplies the respondents receive. Respondents across a wide range of grade level and subject areas all reported that the supplies they utilize in their classrooms from Pencil Box are of the best quality. They are much better than what their students are able to provide and better quality than even the teachers can supply. With this, the teachers are less burdened because when supplies are equitable and ubiquitous students do not feel jealousy for one another’s supplies, and every student is given the opportunity to be successful because every student has the same supplies to work with. Expressing this theme, these respondents expressed the idea of equity among the students supplies:

“I am able to get the exact same set of materials for every single child in one visit instead of each child wanting a different type that another child has.”

“Each child has their very own quality supplies to complete their work in class”

The focus group respondents also alluded to the idea that higher quality supplies lead to more possibilities in the classroom as well as higher engagement among the students. Students have a wider variety of creative supplies that allow them to experience things they might not otherwise be able to. When the students have quality supplies they do not have to waste class time repairing, sharing, or making do with supplies that are sparse and insufficient. With less

time being spent on supply management and repair, the teachers can spend more time teaching and conducting activities they would not have the time or resources for otherwise. Additionally, without the need to manage and share insufficient supplies, students will be able to spend more time on task, keeping them engaged and increasing their valuable learning potential. Some of the respondents discussed how the quality supplies affected the students in their particular classrooms:

“Their creative ability has been expanded because of all the wonderful donations of art supplies”

“By having the high-quality things here it’s like they realize how much variety there is here and its special because it becomes their things for them in the classroom.”

“Prang watercolors are the better watercolors and the pencils we get here are Ticonderoga’s ... That’s the premier pencil ... the lead doesn’t fall out and the lead isn’t broken inside the pencil”

“Before the Pencil Box, I was using those big metal scissors that didn’t meet in the middle, so you couldn’t really cut ... They had the Fiskars, and those are really good.”

Student Sense of Pride:

Many respondents talked about the sense of pride that their students felt as a result of supplies from Pencil Box. Without proper materials, a student may not feel confident enough to do what is needed to be successful. They feel ashamed, so many will not ask for help when they need it. Instead, they do nothing or they act out. This only exacerbates the issue because they are not learning, and their grade is suffering. When all students are provided with the opportunity to have supplies, this type of student will not feel nervous or embarrassed because it

is being offered to every student. They may then feel confident enough to complete their work and have pride in their abilities. Respondents state how the simple act of having the supplies needed helps students feel like that are capable of accomplishing their tasks:

“It makes things better for them in terms of feeling like they can do it”

“Everyone on equal footing. They feel like they can do it.”

The students are able to not feel prideful because, although their parents may not be able to afford supplies, no one is aware. In the classroom, all students have equal opportunity regardless of income. Some respondents discussed how having these supplies available for all students increase student pride and helps reduce the incidence of low self-esteem that can come with income disparity:

“If you have the materials to do the work you feel prouder ... a lot of our parents just don't have the money to go and buy materials for their children and if they do they are coming in with Dollar Tree stuff ... they don't last and they break.”

“Students do not feel awkward of hesitate to ask if they have a need”

“All my students were able to have supplies needed without the guilt or embarrassment”

Teachers less Stressed:

Since they do not have to buy supplies for their classrooms, teachers have the ability to do more for and with their students. They do not have to spend their personal money on basic necessities, so teachers are less stressed. This was a common theme expressed by the respondents in both the focus group and interviews. It was also one that the team had not previously considered as a possible outcome. Many respondents expressed that they would not otherwise have supplies for their classroom if it were not for Pencil Box.. Many teachers do not have

supplies provided by their school district, and Pencil Box makes it possible. Some respondents expressed how spending less of their own money on supplies alleviates stress:

“Lets me spend less of my own money on student supplies”

“I’m not stressed anymore trying to buy as much as I can.”

“They’re giving us the opportunity to not have to spend out of our own pocket and giving us the opportunity to do more with our kids than we would be able to otherwise.”

“You don’t have to spend as much money [on supplies] ... then you can spend it on something else that you find that you need.”

Many of the respondents said that up to 95% of their students come from low income households. They have so many needs that exceed the basic school supply needs. Since Pencil Box reduces the financial stress of teachers, they are able to help students in more meaningful ways. One respondent told a story of a student in a class that was being bullied because they smelled bad. They expressed to the respondent that they didn’t have any deodorant at home, and they were not sure if their parents had the money to buy it for them. The respondent offered to buy the student some deodorant. This same respondent told another story of a time that they purchased pants and a sweater for a student that was not even in their class because the student’s parents were having trouble affording the uniform clothing. Since they did not have the stress of stocking their classroom with basic supplies, this respondent was able to provide a wonderful helping hand to these students in a way not otherwise possible. This respondent explained: *“If there is a child that needs something, then we will bend over backwards to get it.”*

Another followed up with:

“If we are not spending our money on school supplies then we can do things like that and not feel like we are stealing from our family.”

Many respondents also noted that they are less stressed in the classroom because the ample supplies help the class to flow better. When the classroom environment is smooth and every student has what they need, engagement and time on task increases which leads to better overall learning. Two of the respondents specifically mentioned this concept:

“It makes the flow of the classroom a lot better”

“It has made it a better environment for me and my students”

Quality of the Pencil Box Staff:

Another theme that had not previously been considered consists of the quality of the Pencil Box staff themselves. This theme is not necessarily related to classroom engagement, but it is an important theme to include. Most of the respondents expressed gratitude for the staff of the Pencil Box, and they described many ways in which the staff goes above and beyond to help teachers:

“[A Pencil Box staff member] was talking with me and discovered I needed some laminating sleeves, she had a few packages and asked if I wanted a pack ... I said ‘Yes!’ and she gave me two packages of laminating sleeves! I must have grinned from ear to ear!”

“Everyone [at the Pencil Box] is so nice and helpful”

“You can tell the ladies here if you need something, and they will find it for you.”

“They gave me these really cool pastels which is something that I have not been able to order to replace in my classroom ... Now my 5th graders are so excited!”

“It’s really great because the people here are so great with what we need and are aware of.”

“It’s just amazing to me the amount of care that is given when you come in and they always say, ‘What do you need? What can we help you find?’”

Analysis Conclusions:

Overall, the culmination of the focus group and interviews suggest that effect of the services provided by the Pencil Box improves holistic engagement and opportunities for success among students and teachers. The 5 overarching themes dovetail together forming a program that expands opportunities and helps students achieve the most successful educational experience possible. Many of the respondents in the focus group stated that they have even started volunteering at Pencil Box because they believe it is so valuable. Finally, some group members gave input about the overall value of the program:

“If it wasn’t for the Pencil Box Program then we wouldn’t have art”

“Supplies should never be a barrier to them receiving an education”

“I had no crayons ... I would have had no paint I wouldn’t have markers ... I needed new scissors ... by the grace of God I’ve been able to come here and able to get those things.”

Conclusions

Overall, this qualitative research concludes that student academic performance is affected through providing necessary supplies vital for student success. This research shows the Pencil Box program’s quality supplies improves student engagement, success, and self-esteem. Considering the limitations of the focus group and interviews provided, finite conclusions

regarding students' quantitative academic success cannot be reported. However, the qualitative aspects of student engagement in the classroom is clearly evident through the resources provided in this report.

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Appendix A

Email of Invite

Dear Teachers,

Please join us for a special night of shopping and dinner on Thursday, September 27th from 4:30pm to 6:30pm. We will be opening the store just for you! Shopping will be from 4:30 to 5:30 and then dinner will be served. We have invited Nkem and Zachary, University of Tulsa Grad students, to join us this evening. They are helping us research the impact of the supplies we distribute in your classrooms. There will be an open round table discussion during dinner (they will be recording audio, but all data will remain anonymous). Let me know if you will be joining us, please RSVP by Tuesday, September 25th so we can order the right amount of food.

Please note this is by invitation only, please do not share this email with other teachers. I

hope you have a great weekend and I look forward to seeing you on the 27th.

Thank you,

Susanna Belzley

Director of Operations

The Pencil Box

w. 918.442.2222

c. 918.899.0199

susanna@pencilboxtulsa.org

Appendix B

Focus Group Interview

Teacher 1: I teach math and science, so that kind of a double whammy because we do a lot of projects in both sections and I need a lot of glue and a lot of paper to get the projects over.

Sometimes they can do the projects at home, but if they have a problem with materials then they can come and see me, and I will give it to them, so they can finish their projects. So, it has been a big help because of that, and a lot of that comes out of my pocket if I don't have it and I have to buy it.

Teacher 2: I teach 7th grade math, the way that I use the materials that I get is, I have a student area where they can come up. There is a container with three draws, the bottom one is for paper, the middle one is for loose leaf and graph paper and they just come up when they need it, but I have requested that they come up one at a time, so they won't fold them or make holes in them. I also have pencils and that kind of stuff out where they can get to it, that way they don't have to ask for it, but I also tell them that if they need something to make them successful for the year to let me know. So, I've had kids in the last week come by and ask me for spirals or binders because their binder broke, so I keep that under the table near me, so they can come and grab stuff when they need it.

Teacher 3: Before the pencil box I bought almost everything myself because I'm a special education teacher and they don't provide special ed curriculum for teachers. You make it yourself, and Pinterest has been real helpful.... But I usually take paper, and teaching autism we have lots of messes and paper towels are awesome... tissues, we go through tissues like crazy. So, before that I would spend a fair amount of money on 10 kids, there is also kids in other

classes that if they don't have a pencil on the way to class they know where to stop and find me, because supplies should never be a barrier to them receiving education.

Teacher 4: I teach art from K through 5th grade, and if it wasn't for the pencil box this year then we couldn't have art. Why? When the supplies that were handed out by the school, there were no crayons in the building, I had no crayons to use. I would've had no paint because watercolor paint last about a year and the children use them up, markers, I wouldn't have had markers there weren't markers left over. I needed new scissors because the old nasty plastic ones had given out, so by the grace of god I've been able to come here and able to get the things ... and again I have spent my own money, I still spend my own money to do some of this stuff just like yesterday I went to buy paper plates, so we could make pigs! So, the less I have to Oh! And I find stuff that can enrich what we're doing. We were doing our thank yous to the pencil box because when you receive you give thanks back and that has always been an important part for me, but it's important for me to get the kids involved in that because that's what they want us to do. So, I got our kids to do an art project to say thanks with it and they had given us some really cool metallic markers and they thought they were the coolest and the best thing ever, I mean seriously, I had many classes coming in throughout the day telling me the same thing. So, they're giving us the opportunity to not have to spend out of our own pockets and giving us the opportunity to do more with our kids than we would be able to do otherwise. This has been a blessing for me and the first year that I have been a part of the program.

Teacher 5: I teach pre-k, 4-year old's. I'm certified to teach through to eighth grade, but I have no desire to teach the older kids, and the pencil box as all of them have said, you don't have to spend as much money and if you decide to follow the budget part of your own salary then you can spend it on something else that you find that you need. When I moved to this new school

they had expanded two classrooms so there was now four pre-k classes and it was a brand-new section and it was awesome, it had new tables and chairs, but the state had only allotted for that ... the expense of it. It didn't allow for all of the materials, so I walked into a classroom with very little extra because we do a lot of hands on work. So other teachers would let me use other things and share with me, last year a teacher was letting me use her large hollow blocks that we use for doing building and architecture and she moved closer to home and so she took them with her and I didn't have any blocks this year. As it turned out when I was volunteering here in the summer, we were cleaning some donations that had been brought in the summer and I have some foam blocks now. The quality of the materials that we get from the pencil blocks, I am able to get the exact same set of materials for every single child in one visit instead of each child wanting a different type that another child has or bringing a different type from home so they're all different. If I went to the store I would just buy whatever was in my budget, so by having the high-quality things here it's like they realize how much variety there is here and its special because it becomes their things for them in the classroom. They do share and they don't fight over them as much, 4 year old's will always heavily discuss things but they get excited about everything and things that are new, I have found treasures in donated items or purchased donated items like office supplies that I thought "ooh I could use that in an art activity" or in a language activity, I got a classroom set of dry erase boards with the marker already in it, so we could do it together as a class and practice the writing together and not fear tearing the paper to shreds because they can't get their writing right on the page because they're trying to erase. But we use a lot of medium in pre-k, we use paint, we use markers, we use pencils and we use anything and everything that ... even the shaving cream we use it when we write because you can write in it and wipe it away and it makes the room smell wonderful.

Zachary: Do any other teachers of older grades find that students have that same sense of ownership over materials and supplies from the pencil box that was described here?

Special Ed Teacher: You know Prang watercolors are the better watercolors and the pencils we get here the Ticonderoga's they say Lowes on them, but that's the premier pencil. You sharpen that pencil and the lead doesn't fall out and the lead isn't broken inside the pencil.

Math & Science Teacher: Or have no lead in them at all, we got sent pencils one time that had no lead inside of them.

Special Ed Teacher: Before the pencil box of was using those big metal scissors that didn't meet in the middle so you couldn't really cut, we all know the ones I'm talking about, they're really old because they're cast the one piece. The first year they had the fiskers and those are really good

Pre-K teacher: well I'm left handed so I realized that a lot of things growing up they didn't have left handed stuff, they didn't have left handed scissors, so I realized that I started moving my hand differently to get them to cut in the opposite direction. The other children I watched them cutting and its difficult, but the fisker does it either way, you can use it left or right hand.

Special Ed Teacher: You can tell the ladies here if you need something and they will find it for you, like if you tell them I really need a filing cabinet they'll kind of go search for one for you.

Art teacher: Yeah like one time I came in and they said, "have I got a surprise for you" and they gave me these really cool pastels which is something that I have not been able to order to replace in my classroom because pastels go really quickly, it's like chalk, its softer than chalk and anything kids use. Its softer than crayons, it's softer than colored pencils and so it disintegrates, so when I saw them I went *GASP* Now my fifth graders are so excited and they share, you know mine I have a community thing, kids don't have to bring anything to class because I supply

anything they might have to use, because I don't want them dragging it down the hall and that kind of stuff. They use my scissors, my pencils and my stuff because I have that stuff sharp and ready to go because I'm very anal about that stuff. I replace, I never as a kid liked using broken crayons because that really got on my nerves, so I take care of my crayons and if crayon needs replacing then I will replace it with another one, and the one's I break get recycled at AAA at the end of the year. It's really great because the people here are so great with what we need and aware of.

Bobby: So how did you all hear about the pencil box, how did that come about?

Special Ed Teacher: When it first started the school, liaison was *Inaudible name* she was teacher for I don't know 35 years, and it was 4 years ago that she came to a faculty meeting and handed out the forms. In the first year it was a \$35 fee, but you were limited to \$250 worth of materials and that lasted not very long, and it went to being unlimited now

Angie: So, you pay \$35?

Pre-K teacher: Yeah, it's like a membership per year and we sign a form saying that we will not share our stuff with other teachers in the school and it will only be used in our classroom. You're not providing material for anyone else.

Other teacher: 95% of our students come from lower income, so if you don't have something at home say you need a ruler, or you need crayons let me know and I can get that for them, because the stuff is for us but it's also for our kids.

Pre-K Teacher: Even our backpacks

(Entire group agrees)

Other teacher: Yeah kids that have ripped backpacks can come to me and I can give them a new backpack

Angie: What do you think the relationship is between having the school supplies and engagement in the classroom? Versus the traditional way of having a school supply list and buying school supplies?

Art Teacher: It's a pride thing, if you have the materials do to the work you feel prouder. Like I said, a lot of our parents just don't have the money to go and buy materials for their children and if they do they're coming in with dollar tree stuff, and nothing against that because I shop at the dollar tree religiously but for the pens and the pencils and the crayons, they don't last and they break... you color with them once and they break and it's not because you push down its just the quality. Sometimes the color is off and it's important for children to be able to recognize colors properly

Special Ed Teacher: Well I'm a special ed teacher and just because I have kids in my class, I still have kids that go to regular class and we have parents and teaching assistants in the building and those kids that don't have their supplies they know where to come. Like if your teacher requires a composition book, composition books aren't cheap, a spiral is so much cheaper, but some require a composition book, but the kids know where to get the supplies from.

Angie: So, have you seen a different for those that have been in the program over a year maybe have you seen a difference between not having the support versus having the pencil boxes support?

Math and Science teacher: Well you have those students that don't have anything, and if you don't have access to it, basically you have a kid that's sitting there not doing anything. To even that playing field you have to give everybody what they're supposed to have, so they're more engaged in the class because they have what they're supposed to have in the class. They have stuff to work with and they don't have to borrow someone else's stuff and it makes things better

for them in terms of feeling like they can do it as opposed to a kid just sitting there with the teacher saying “so you don’t have a pen and you don’t have a pencil, ugh” you know, and everyone gets frustrated.

Zachary: Now what grades are you teaching right now?

Math and science teacher: Grade 6 math and science

Bobby: So how does this affect homework? If the supplies are for the classroom, how do the children go about taking care of their homework?

Math and science teacher: they have the option of saying I don’t have a pencil can I take it home, they have that option. And if they let us know then we can get it for them, if they don’t let us know because they don’t want to do the homework anyway, if they tell me I didn’t do homework because they didn’t have a pencil then they had no excuse

Pre-K teacher: Because we come more than once a semester, we can come and get supplies even if we have limited class size like mine is 20 according to the state. Sorry I lost my train of thought

Other teacher: I remember 15 years ago in July and August the teachers would call each other and say “staples has pencils on sale” so you could only get so much so you had to take your cousin and your aunt to help you get some. They were good because there was a public limit and a teacher limit, I don’t watch those ads anymore and think that I have to go and get my teacher limit. That is a big deal because July and August come around and I’m not stressed anymore trying to buy as much as I can. They set it up here really nice and had each grade on separate days and that kind of stuff so not everybody is here at once.

Angie: So what percentage of your students do you feel benefit from the pencil box?

Math and Science teacher: I would say between 75% and 80%

Other teacher: I would say about 90%

Special Ed Teacher: it depends from year to year, but it was probably lower this year around 50% percent because I had parents that were bringing in supplies, I don't ask for paper and pencil and stuff, but I ask for tissues, Clorox wipes

Pre-K teacher: I use Clorox wipes a lot

Art teacher: I would say 100% of my student I see, because seriously imagine teaching art without crayons and markers and that was not available to me this year if it wasn't for here.

Special Ed Teacher: I remember at one-point last year (referring to the art teacher) that she needs valentines stickers and googly eyes, so I ordered those for her because I'm a single person and I'm raising myself and she's not, so I try to do that when I can.

Art teacher: And that's it, you have to rely on the kindness of strangers, it's like we've introduced ourselves to a bunch of strangers and they're taking care of us. Like I said it's just amazing to me the amount of care that is given when you come in and they always say, "what do you need, what can we help you find?" I volunteer now, I started volunteering here because I love the atmosphere, I love being able to help other teachers, I love getting to know what's here you know even more so because I spend time restocking and 31 bags is a partner.

Special ed teacher: Its high quality. I have a visor organizer for my car, I'm not using that in the classroom but it's an incentive for me. Like a couple of years ago they had, they advertised them as lunch boxes, but they had six pack coolers, so they were big, so when we go to work were taking bottles of water, you're taking your food and breakfast goes with me ... so its big bags, they're like \$38 but we got them for free.

Art teacher: We got these big bags, I have mine out in the car loaded with stuff I had to bring home tonight, its looks like the size of a diaper bag but it's perfect for teachers, like you can fit in

your laptop and you can fit in your books, you can even fit the crayons and the markers in there but it's like it's just amazing. Today when I came through they had these little crate-like things and I will take that in, and I'm not sure exactly what I will do with them, but it gives me a way to organize my supplies. So, the organizational materials for my supplies, again the type of things I'm not going to get the money to get to go purchase myself, but it gives me a nicer way to organize my things, I just appreciate all of the things that they're able to provide ... I don't know how to explain how much (cut off)

Special ed teacher: It's not just kid supplies, there's bookends and post-it notes, and one time I came in and Suzanna had saved me a post-it note holder that was a cat because I built the cat box that is outside

Pre-K teacher: she also pulls in hygiene products, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap... just different things like that, that you don't think about needing it especially as they get older, at the 5th and 6th grade sometimes they start changes and their bodies start changing and they start to smell.

Zachary: So, the hygiene products are not necessarily paper and pencil, but how do you think those type of products help with student engagement in the classroom?

Special ed teacher: Food stamps don't buy toothbrush and toothpaste and if all you're getting is food stamps then you're not getting other things.

Art teacher: I literally had two days ago a student tell another Student that he stank and reiterating more than once that he stinks, so he apologized because he didn't have any deodorant and he was upset so he came up and talked to me. So, I'm sat at the table with the two kids and the little kid said "you know I took a shower today before I came to school, but I just don't have any deodorant at home and I can't help it, I'm trying. I'm really trying hard, I don't want to stink, I'm not trying to be stinky. My clothes are clean, the kid was literally choked up and he

said his parents just don't have the money. I said to the young man, "listen you let me know" and he said "I don't know if my parents would buy me it, I never asked" I said "well you let me know if you need me to, I have to pick deodorant for my husband I can pick you some up, I have no problem doing that, you can keep it in your locker or wherever you want to" but these kids that are sitting there and trying so hard and they get teased and bullied about that kind of thing just broke my heart, because if there is a child that needs something then we will bend over backwards to get it. I had a girl a couple of years ago that was pre-k, not my class because I've never taught that little, but her mom came in and said that she didn't have the money to buy her the uniform pants, so I found out what her size was and I went to good will and bought her 4 pairs of pants for under \$20 and brought it to the school and gave it to her so she had what she needed and you've never seen a more grateful parent and the kid was so excited, I even got her a little sweater to because that was just on top of because if they don't have money for the pants they don't have money for the extras.

Special ed teacher: if were not spending our money on school supplies then we can do things like that and not feel like we're stealing from our family. We have bars of soap now and you don't think about that kind of stuff, but we can do science experiments and put soap in the microwave to blow it up. I don't know if you know this but paper towel tubes and toilet roll tubes, some schools collect them and bring them here because that's a huge art thing

Nkem: Do you think that there are any limitations to the pencil box program?

Special Ed Teacher: Some things are limited by school level, certain markers and composition books are only available for high school unless its special circumstances like art teachers. Even though elementary school and middle school use these products, it still gets limited. There are

limitations to products, sometimes you may have to come on a Wednesday and a Thursday to get stuff.

Art teacher: This week I came Tuesday and Thursday to get crayons because there is a limit of 5, like I have 20 children per hour in a 6-period day every day, so that's about 120 kids using those crayons every single day. So, they get used and it's worth my while.

Special Ed teacher: One time they had the Texas instruments TR-35 it's not a real expensive calculator but it's the calculator the school uses and the calculator they use on the state test. So, it's good to have the calculator for the kids to practice on, so I have some in my room, so kids can come in and get used to working on a calculator because you could give them the calculator on the day of the test and hope that they know how to use it. The school provides some but it's not their biggest priority.

Nkem: How about the over side of the room, how do you feel about the limitations?

Math and Science Teacher: I feel the same way, they have the supply that they have and they have to make sure that everyone gets equal opportunities, but sometimes like last year I had 51 boys in my science class and some limitations like the glue for projects, I had to go to the store and buy some because you were only allowed 12, but when you have 51 kids those small glue sticks only go so far.

Pre-K Teacher: There are just some things that we use far more frequently so I know whenever I'm coming that those things I will need to get them when I go in or if I got in the next time.

Sometimes during the summer before schools starts they have more space to put out more things, so you can get a classroom set of 20-25 crayons, it really gets you started. I know my class will use a lot of crayons and a lot of glue sticks, so sometimes that's why she has the chalkboard up there, so they can promote certain items but ask if you don't see what you're looking for.

Special Ed Teacher: They're looking to buy land and build a bigger place because this is kind of small if you think about that not all Tulsa schools are involved in it yet but eventually they will be and there are 80 public sites for public schools.

Zachary: Do you have any particular stories about a student or group of students where they improved their engagement to class through the pencil box?

Special Ed Teacher: I think it's mainly about equality because everyone is on equal footing, they feel like they can do it.

Other teacher: I had a student last year and I noticed that her backpack was ripped, and she hadn't asked for a new one, but I mentioned if she needed a new backpack that she could come and ask, and she said, "are you sure?" so I gave her a new backpack, and she said thank you over and over again. The next day she asked me "do you have a spiral?" so I said yes, I have a spiral and she was very thankful and wrote me three or four thank you notes. She had nothing at home and that's something that's very important.

Art teacher: what is important to me is when you receive the donations that we write thank you notes back to the pencil box, its important when were given things that we say thank you. A lot of them get the mentality that we have to give them the products, but we don't, they're entitled. They have to be able to say thank you no matter what.

Appendix C

Pencil Box Interview #1

- Which grade do you teach?
- High school, 10-12, science
- Do you share your classroom?
- Shared chemical supply closet
- Do you share the supplies that you get here?
- Not a lot, generally everyone gets their own supplies
- Impact of Pencil Box
- “I guess in terms of both students and teachers it has made things a lot easier. In terms of writing utensils, pencils cost about 10 cents each, so it’s not super expensive but it adds up and it creates tension when you’re like ‘those are my pencils!’ and they’re always walking out of the room, so I started more systems to stop the taking or using of pencils. But because of this I don’t have to do that and it makes the flow of the classroom a lot better.”
- Best way to prepare for a shopping trip?
- Go over what you need before, only make a list when you need odd things. Otherwise you generally know your staples.
- Do you still provide supplies from your budget?
- Mostly science supplies, anything uncommon that you need to conduct an experiment.
- Advertising?
- Pretty much only word of mouth advertising.
- Are most teachers aware?

- Large turnover at the school, most new teachers don't know about the Pencil Box. They need it for the beginning of the year shopping trip, but they don't always know that it's a resource.
- Do you know of any teachers that don't use Pencil Box?
- Yes, but they primarily use Chromebooks so they don't need it.
- Story
- “The biggest takeaway is just how much it has made it a better environment for me and my students, because I don't have to worry and have an emotional connection to supplies. There shouldn't be an emotional connection to pencils in your classroom, but when you're paying for it yourself there is. I don't have the money to go spend 10-20 dollars on supplies at Staples. it really does fundamentally change how that classroom dynamic works.”
- How could Pencil Box improve?
- “It would be nice maybe if you expanded some of the donor base into some more esoteric supplies, like some small containers and odd supplies—organizational, random supplies, not necessarily always just the staples.”
- especially oriented toward science teachers with containers
- Comments
- “I enjoy the idea of students writing thank you letters, it will help connect the students to the supplies as much as it helps connect the donors to the students.”

Appendix D

Pencil Box Interview #2

- What grade do you teach?
- Seventh grade math
- Do you share a classroom?
- I have my own classroom with a shared supply closet
- What made you want to come to pencil box?
- “Just because the students don’t have all the supplies they need when they come to school, so they’re set up to not really succeed. I mean they sell little binder packets at the beginning for like \$20 and the kids with resources get them and then the kids without resources don’t, so I just wanted to start off and have some choices. Some of them don’t even know what to get because in elementary they’ve been given their supplies, and so they don’t know.”
- Preparation?
- I’m not a planner
- Are you still planning on providing supplies from your own budget?
- Probably not—if so it will be minimal
- How did you find out about Pencil Box?
- “Word of mouth and advertisement. I always try not to spend money out of pocket, I usually try to find my own ways. I didn’t use it because I didn’t want to have to spend money out of my own budget, it was kind of like \$35 I don’t really even want to spend that. And I felt like I should still try to have the kids supply it, but when they just continue to come and come without supplies, you know?”

- Do most of the teachers at your school use the Pencil Box?
- “I see my coworkers and it’s like ‘Oh, I’ve gotta go to Pencil Box’, ‘I got this from the Pencil Box’, and then the students would come through and I’d see the little supplies that they’d give the kids.”
- How did you prepare for your shopping trip today?
- “I just based supplies off the need from last year.”
- Comments?
- “My concern is that I might get a little obsessive with this!”

Appendix E

Pencil Box Interview #3

- Which grade do you teach?
- Eighth grade
- Do you have your own classroom?
- Own classroom
- Describe the impact of the Pencil Box on your classroom:
- “It helps with supplies because teachers have to purchase a lot of out of their own pocket. This will be my fifth year to teach, and I’ve had to add a lot of my own supplies and decorations because you want your room to look welcoming to your students. I don’t think middle school teachers have to purchase as much as elementary school teachers. A lot of my students can’t even purchase the simple things, so I try to provide everything for them. A lot of my work is done on the computer, but a lot of my work is still done on pencil and paper, so I still provide paper and pencil for them, even the two pocket folder, I provide that for them. So I use the Pencil Box for a lot of those items, and it’s great. And tissue. Middle schoolers are great to use tissue and hand sanitizer, so it really helps to supply those, because they use a lot of tissue.”
- “I think last year was the first year they offered paper towels, and they’re soft paper towels. I use them to wipe down the keyboard. We have a lot of illness throughout the year and it seems to help. It’s nice that they have the soft paper towels, especially for the desktops.”
- How do you prepare for a shopping trip?

- “Make a list, keep a list until shopping time—I try not to get more than what I need. Copy paper is a big thing, so I always grab what they allow us to get.”
- Are you still providing supplies from your own budget?
- “Some, not as much. This will be my fifth year so i have pretty much everything that I need. I use the Pencil Box so pencils, erasers—unless I run out of tissue. That’s about the only time I have to purchase anything. They provide the folders that I use here, so very seldom do I run out of—I try to recycle the folders if I can, and keep a supply for incoming students.”
- Do you know of any advertising around your school?
- “Word of mouth advertising, I don’t know of any.”
- Do most teachers that you know use this resource?
- “We have a lot of new teachers coming in this year and I just saw it on the email from our principal, and we have about 10, so I don’t know if they’re new to teaching or to the district. But I always try to reach out and remind teachers if it is a shopping day because it is only from 3:30 to 6, we don’t get out of school until 4:30. so we have to run over here really fast. It’s word of mouth really, but I think Nancy came one year to one of our faculty meetings. She brought membership forms and we could sign up for it then. I think that’s how I got started.”
- Do you know of any teachers that don’t use this resource?
- New teachers possibly don’t use it
- Comments?
- “I think it just helps the students because they’re low income. It helps them with supplies that they need. I remember one student from last year would always say, ‘Ms. P do you

have an extra pen?’ He wanted a pen, not a pencil. I don’t normally use pens in my class because we’re writing sentences and stuff, and I don’t like the scratch out I prefer the erase, but I did have some pens and in fact I was going to get a pack of pens today because I thought of him. Once this year gets started I’ll know what I fully need.”

- “The Pencil Box likes for us to do thank you cards, and I haven’t done that yet but I am going to that this year because I think that middle school students would be able to—see if we can get some thank you cards written this year.”
- Do you think that the Pencil Box could improve in any way?
- “I enjoy shopping, I enjoy volunteering and helping, I don’t really know how. It’s wonderful as it is—it could use some disinfectant wipes.”
- “I think it’s wonderful, and everyone here is so nice and helpful and everything. I just think it needs to be more advertised—share and maybe if they had a poster we could put it up at the school or in the faculty lounge.”
- “I’ll be back to volunteer and definitely shop, because it’s fun. And I think all of the teachers really appreciate it and I know I do, I mean it helps a lot.”

Appendix F

Pencil Box Interview #4

- Which grade do you teach?
- Sixth to eighth grade, special ed. math
- Do you have a shared classroom?
- Self-contained classroom
- Can you describe the impact that the Pencil Box has on your classroom?
- “When i first came to Tulsa last year and got into teaching I didn’t realize the impact that the Pencil Box would have on my teaching because I was like, ‘Oh, the student are going to come with their own supplies’, but I still stocked up but I realized throughout the year that basic things, or things that I saw as basic, were in such high need. Every single day all the pencils would be gone, and even notebooks. I assumed they would come with their own notebooks, their own binders, but that wasn’t the case and you know those things get easily displaced and so I had to come up with a system to keep track of these supplies. That’s how I realized how important they really are. Pencils, notebooks; I wrote my name on the pencils so it’s like ‘Hey, i know you have my pencil, it says my name.’ Even things like, when I first came I was surprised like, why are they giving away things like toothbrushes and toothpaste? And that’s just from my ignorance and not realizing the needs of some of my students, and when the time came to it, they don’t have deodorant here, but that’s a big issue in middle school with hormones, so sometime out of my own pocket—or I would have to refer them to the nurse to get deodorant, so it’s stuff like that where’s its just basic necessities, where when I first came here I was somewhat surprised, but over time I was like no, this is essential and I’m so thankful that the Pencil Box is

here because I was thinking, if I decide to teach somewhere else, is there another organization like the Pencil Box out there?”

- How do you prepare for a trip to Pencil Box?
- “I don’t take more than I need, sometimes I run out really quickly, but it’s not that organized. I have an idea what I’m coming for and then sometimes I come here and they restock and they have something new and something different then I’ll be like, ‘Do I need this, do i not?’.”
- Do you still provide supplies from your own personal budget?
- “Last year I provided from my personal budget, but I’m not sure about this year, we will see.”
- How did you find out about Pencil Box?
- “I heard about the Pencil Box because I’m part of Teach for America, so in that avenue they told us about this organization. I didn’t hear about it from my school team until a lot later in the school year when it was already established that I was going here. Then it was like, ‘Oh you go there? I go there too.’”
- Do most of the teachers at your school use the Pencil Box?
- “I’m not sure about most of them but the ones that I’ve spoken to do. We recognize some of the supplies it’s like ‘Oh, did you get that at the Pencil Box?’ But I’m not sure about all of the teachers. I know the ones I’ve talked to and interacted with come here.”
- Is there any way that you think the Pencil Box could improve?
- “I think that it’s great that they have some hygienic stuff, maybe some more of that. Like I said for middle school, or even just for all ages, if there’s not access to showers, or hot water, having deodorant and more home essentials. I didn’t realize that I would need to

reach out to my students in that way until the school year rolled out and just the change of family situation and life circumstances, so I think that in that respect, if potentially they could get more supplies in that way. I think overall they have a wide, comprehensive range, so I'm pretty content."

Appendix G

Pencil Box Email 1

- Which grade/s do you teach?
- Special Ed 3rd (this year)
- Please briefly describe your classroom setup situation. (ex: shared classroom, shared supply closet, etc.)
- I am getting a new room this year and there is very few supplies. I have a handful of games, some construction paper and about a dozen spirals. Everything else will be coming out of me.
- Please briefly describe the impact that Pencil Box has had in your classroom.
- Last year my students were extremely thankful to Pencil Box, I was able to supply students with supplies in the classroom but also have enough that they could take some home, allowing them to complete their homework. All my students were able to have supplies needed without the guilt or embarrassment they would normally feel due to family finances lacking. These supplies made planning easier, because I knew the supplies were available at school.
- What do you find is the most effective way to prepare for a shopping trip to Pencil Box
- Making a list of most needed supplies.
- What kinds of supplies are you still providing from your own budget, if any?
- Zipper pouches, dry erase markers, hand held pencil sharpeners, Clorox wipes, Kleenex, paper, paint and art supplies, baggies, snacks, and much more.
- Do you think that most teachers at your school are aware of this resource?
- Seem to be aware

- Do you think the majority of the teachers at your school who have the ability to use this resource do in fact utilize it?
- No
- Are there ways which you think that Pencil Box could improve its usefulness for teachers like you?
- They seem to be doing a good job.

Appendix H

Pencil Box Email Interview 2

- Which grade/s do you teach?
- 1st grade
- Please briefly describe your classroom setup situation. (ex: shared classroom, shared supply closet, etc.)
- I have a contained classroom with my own supplies in cabinets in my room.
- Please briefly describe the impact that Pencil Box has had in your classroom.
- Impact on specific students?
- I am able to provide materials that I don't think of for my students. Toothbrush and toothpaste have been very valuable to give my students this year.
- Impact on overall classroom experience?
- The students can enjoy the projects/work that we are doing in class because they have all of the materials that they need, and they are of good quality.
- Impact on your job as a teacher?
- I don't have to worry about getting most of my materials for my students.
- What do you find is the most effective way to prepare for a shopping trip to Pencil Box?
- Brainstorm projects that I have done in the past that I may need supplies for, or write a list of supplies needed for future projects.
- What kinds of supplies are you still providing from your own budget, if any?
- Food/candy that goes along with lessons. Pasta, marshmallows, cards, card-stock, paint, electronics (copper, batteries, soldering tools), gloves, hats, lunch boxes, Kleenex, plates, Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer,

- Are you aware of advertising for Pencil Box around your school?
- Our principal forwards all pencil box emails to the whole staff, and staff talk about it to each other.
- Do you think that most teachers at your school are aware of this resource?
- Yes
- Do you think the majority of the teachers at your school who have the ability to use this resource do in fact utilize it?
- No
- If you know of any teachers who do not use Pencil Box, do you know why they don't use it?
- No, I don't know why they don't use it.
- Please note any other comments, questions, or concerns that you have regarding Pencil Box.
- It is not open to all teachers in Tulsa Public Schools. It has always been available to me, but I have many friends that teach in alternative schools and they cannot access it.

Appendix I

Pencil Box Email 3

- Which grade do you teach?
- 9th-12th
- Please briefly describe your classroom setup situation. (ex: shared classroom, shared supply closet, etc.)
- I have my own classroom. I am the Math Team Lead and have a huge closet/storage area ... so I store math team manipulative, extra calculators, textbooks, and other things that are not used on a regular basis in other math classrooms. Because of this I end up with A LOT of graph paper, folders, etc. that other teachers give me to store and they come get as they need them.
- Please briefly describe the impact that Pencil Box has had in your classroom.
- Because I have extra supplies and make them readily available with no questions asked/no pressure, students do not feel awkward or hesitate to ask if they have a need ... I had several students last year who had started journaling, when they ran out of paper in their first 'journal' (notebook) they came to me and asked if I had an extra notebook they could have
- Impact on overall classroom experience?
- By having basic supplies readily available my students have no excuses for not getting to work and meeting my expectations ... I do try hard to create accountability and responsibility but at the end of the day if a particular student gets a new pencil from the pencil cup every day I am thankful I can be generous because that student gets to work at

the beginning of class rather than not working because they don't have a pencil and don't want to ask for one or borrow one from a friend

- Before the Pencil Box was available any extra supplies that I had were purchased by me sometimes I could not afford to buy more pencils or we would have to share the rulers and compasses that we had; having the Pencil Box supplies available has relieved a great deal of my stress and let me spend less of my own money on student supplies
- What kinds of supplies are you still providing from your own budget, if any?
- I use about 150+ composition books a year ... students create their own textbook with guided notes etc. ... before the Pencil Box I bought these myself when they went on sale (50 cents each, limit 30 ... so I would make multiple trips until I had enough), then the Pencil Box had them and it was WONDERFUL ... now the Pencil Box does not carry them but when they are donated Susanna saves them for me so I buy about half as many as I used to
- Do you think that most teachers at your school are aware of this resource?
- Yes
- Do you think the majority of the teachers at your school who have the ability to use this resource do in fact utilize it?
- Not sure ... I know several teachers from my site that regularly use the Pencil Box

Appendix J

Pencil Box Email 4

- Which grade/s do you teach?
- I teach PreK in a Public School that has grades PreK through 6th grade.
- Please briefly describe your classroom setup situation. (ex: shared classroom, shared supply closet, etc.)
- I am 1 of 4 PreK teachers at our school. 2 classes are on one side of hallway & 2 are across the hall. Each set of 2 classrooms are connected by a shared children's bathroom as well as a Teacher workroom with sink, built in cabinets and 2 individual walk-in storage closets (1 per teacher.) In addition we each have a door that opens to an outside covered patio. 4 PreK Teachers share a fenced in playground with the 4 Kindergarten Teachers.
- Please briefly describe the impact that Pencil Box has had in your classroom.
- Because of The Pencil Box each child has their very own quality supplies to complete their work in class. Their creative ability has been expanded because of all the wonderful donations of art supplies, (papers, texture materials, art clay, scissors, glues, paints, variety of tape, sequins, beads, stickers etc.) So many materials that allow for open ended possibilities! There are also hygiene materials for children such as soap, toothpaste/toothbrushes, boxes of tissue, paper towels. antibacterial liquid along with individual backpack for children.
- The impact on overall classroom experiences is endless...There are offerings of science, art, math, language, writing, fine & gross motor materials as well as classroom decorations and resource books...(There are even some donations of games, toys, and puzzles.

- The impact it has had on me as a teacher is that it has challenged me to be more creative in my activities and keep an open mind to the many different ways to teach/meet the needs of individual students and the class as a whole.
- What do you find is the most effective way to prepare for a shopping trip to Pencil Box?
- To check classroom materials to see what we are running low on, and then prepare to have an open mind and heart (much like going on a Christmas or birthday shopping spree for someone extra special.)
- What kinds of supplies are you still providing from your own budget, if any?
- Food materials, laminating materials, treasure box supplies, classroom/small group sets of manipulative, thematic materials and displays, color cartridges for printer (printing pictures and game pieces), dress up materials, etc...
- Are you aware of advertising for Pencil Box around your school?
- Yes.
- Do you think that most teachers at your school are aware of this resource?
- Yes, however, we do have many new teachers at our school this upcoming school year. Our principal has sent out an email to all our teachers as well as on our staff page too.
- If you know of any teachers who do not use Pencil Box, do you know why they don't use it? Many do utilize it...definitely! I know of a few of teachers that have 2nd jobs, family responsibilities and some tight budget restraints this past year.
- Please tell the story of a specific instance where you can recall Pencil Box's resources having an impact in your classroom.
- Quite honestly, everything they are doing have made an impact on my classroom...For example Susanna was talking with me and discovered I needed some laminating sleeves,

she had a few packages and asked if I wanted a pack...I said Yes! and she gave me 2 packages of laminating sleeves! (I must have grinned from ear to ear!)

- Are there ways which you think that Pencil Box could improve its usefulness for teachers like you?
- Oh WoW...I'd have to think about that! Because of the cooperation of partners, businesses, fund raising and working to expand all this benefiting Education they are always on meeting the needs. In an ideal world, I would have access to many different kinds of manipulatives...hands on materials to meet/create many hands on learning experiences. (Many are considered "toys" and it can become quite expensive. (The Pencil Box serves a wide range of children (PreK-12th grade.)
- Please note any other comments, questions, or concerns that you have regarding Pencil Box.
- Thanks to the donations from other teachers, and partners of The Pencil Box, it is taking steps in the right direction. The only concern is that I think the Pencil Box needs a larger building...AND access to a bigger parking lot!