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What Is Teacher Effectiveness? A Case Study Of Educator Perceptions In A Midwest Elementary School

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WHAT IS TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS?
A CASE STUDY OF EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS
IN A MIDWEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that teacher effectiveness is the most significant school-level factor impacting student achievement (McCaffrey, Koretz, Lockwood, & Hamilton, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004), and yet little is known about teacher and administrator perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Through this qualitative case study, I explored the perceptions of elementary school teachers and their principal regarding teacher effectiveness. I examined the extent to which there was a shared understanding of teacher effectiveness, if teachers and their principal perceptions were the same or different, and how teacher perceptions aligned to the teacher evaluation system used at this school. Semi-structured interviews, observations of classrooms and team meetings, and an analysis of authentic school documents were used in this in-depth study of one single. Shared and divergent perceptions between classroom teachers, their principal, and the teacher evaluation system were revealed.

The perceptions of teacher effectiveness are critical in supporting teacher growth. Our ever-changing classrooms and the students within them require that we continually update what effective and successful teaching looks like. This research will impact education by enabling teachers and administrators to reflect on their own understanding and vision of teacher effectiveness and plan for successful school improvement. This study is vital for educators striving to become more effective in increasing student achievement and for the school systems supporting this effort.

Keywords: teacher effectiveness, teacher evaluation, teacher improvement, school improvement

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teacher effectiveness has never been a more important or controversial topic. Teachers are crucial to the education system, and schools are only as good as the teachers within them (Darling-Hammond, 2015). For this study, teacher effectiveness was defined as a teacher's ability to utilize approaches, strategies, connections to students, and a particular set of attitudes that lead to improved student learning and achievement (Strong, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Evaluating the effectiveness of teachers has changed over time due to increasing state and federal attention to school-level and classroom-level accountability for student learning (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008). Most recently, under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015, school districts are allowed to innovate, develop, and implement their own teacher evaluation systems. According to Carrero (2016), these evaluation systems are only as good as their potential to increase teacher effectiveness.

Interest in the question of what distinguishes effective and ineffective teachers has increased since the early 1920s (Rockoff & Speroni, 2011) and has stimulated an impressive number of research studies (Aslam & Kingdom, 2011; Carrero, 2015; Dilworth & Arguerrebere, 2007). In the 1950s, with the formation of the American Education Research Association which published the *Handbook of Research on Teaching,* the search for teacher effectiveness was more public than ever (Doyle, 1977). Over time, the field of education shifted its focus to the search

for teacher effectiveness indicators. These studies have led to more in-depth teacher evaluation systems.

Historically, teacher evaluation systems focused on observable teaching practices, leading to the use of teacher observation checklists as a way to evaluate teacher performance (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). In most schools classroom observation continues to be a way for principals to help teachers reflect on their practice and evaluate teacher growth, in many cases, this takes place too infrequently to make a difference in student achievement (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2000). A yearly observation and follow-up conversation is still used in some schools, but is not nearly enough to support teacher reflection and growth. The "combination of factors–more rigorous procedures for teacher evaluation, and higher standards for student learning–created a need for improved teaching practice" (Danielson, 2016, p. ix). This, along with a changing political climate that emphasized holding teachers accountable for the performance of their students, led to additional legislation to closely tie teacher evaluation to student performance (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013). It is not clear whether student achievement scores should be considered when evaluating teachers.

Scholars have developed multifaceted teaching assessments related to various aspects of teaching practice. But these also appear to stop short of offering a view of accomplished teaching that directly connects student learning outcomes with teachers' actions (Norman, 2010). With or without student achievement indicators, teacher evaluation is used with the intent of improving teacher quality. In recent years teacher evaluation has come under increased scrutiny as a promising lever for increasing teacher effectiveness (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006). The focus on teacher effectiveness, what it is and how it impacts student achievement, is an important conversation in education today.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher effectiveness has multiple definitions within the current research. Studies of teacher effectiveness indicate principals' use of evaluation frameworks create a common understanding of teacher effectiveness (Hobbs, 2012). It is not clear, however, that this conclusion applies to the daily experiences of teachers striving to become more effective. We need to examine principal and teacher perceptions of teacher effectiveness to determine if there is a lack of alignment between research about teacher effectiveness and practice in the classroom. For districts, schools, and teachers to become more effective, it is critical to understand what educators believe effective teaching is. The beliefs teachers hold are the foundation of the instructional decisions they make every day, and therefore, these beliefs impact student learning in powerful ways.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explain what educators perceive to be teaching effectiveness in an effort to gain better understanding of the relationship between educational research and the perceptions held by practitioners in the field. Through an exploration of teachers' and principals' perceptions of teacher effectiveness, we will more clearly understand what teachers believe and practice within their classrooms. How do teachers and principals define teacher effectiveness? Do teachers hold common understandings of teacher effectiveness? Are teacher and principal perceptions of teacher effectiveness the same or different? How do the perceptions of teachers and principals align with the teacher evaluation system they use? In answering these questions within a single in-depth case study school, this study gained valuable knowledge of how educators perceive teacher effectiveness.

Importance of the Study

The quality of a school as a whole cannot exceed the effectiveness of its teachers. Programs that schools adopt do not create effective schools. Teachers create effective classrooms and schools (Wong, Wong, Jondahl, & Ferguson, 2014). Although there is much research on effective teaching, limited research has been done exploring the perceptions of practicing teachers about how they define teacher effectiveness. To do this, we must explore what we believe the most effective teachers do to improve student achievement. Studies of teacher observation have been conducted which give us important visible data that explains what could be seen in an effective teacher's classroom. Another important aspect to consider is our perceptions about teacher effectiveness. Clarifying the beliefs and perceptions of teachers and principals will enable districts, school, administrators, and teachers to plan school reform and targeted improvement. There are possible implications for all levels of education, preschool through higher education. The perceptions teachers hold on teacher effectiveness are the foundation that guides their practice in the classroom. Discovering these perceptions can enable school leaders to develop curriculum and professional development which takes into account existing teacher perceptions of effectiveness. It could also inform policy makers, teachers' unions, and the public who are invested in improving student achievement.

The desire for a clearer understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and what aspects are most likely to make a positive impact on student learning has not diminished in recent years (Norman, 2010). The current focus on standards and accountability has caused some teachers and school leaders to define effective teaching solely as the ability to increase student achievement on standardized tests. This narrow view of effectiveness can create some

school cultures focused only on student achievement data (Goe et al., 2008, Wechsler & Shield, 2008). The current view of teacher effectiveness ignores the goals of developing deeper student knowledge, improved skills, greater understanding, and a love of learning. Teaching is complex and involves a dynamic interplay among content, pedagogical methods, characteristics of learners, and the contexts in which the learning occurs (Schalock, Schalock, Cowart, & Myton, 1993).

Current research on teacher effectiveness argues that student achievement scores may not be the only or best measure of teacher effectiveness. There is another avenue in which teacher effectiveness is being studied. According to Lehman (2012):

> Effective teachers have dispositions of enthusiasm, of compassion, and of valuing hard work. A purposeful, focused enthusiasm for one's students, a belief in their potential, along with a heartfelt compassion and the perseverance to work until students succeed are essential qualities necessary for students and teachers to thrive. They have a work ethic that bears an unrelenting commitment to be conscientious about the quality of their work. (p. 53)

Definitions in the field of education may be widely varied. It is important to explore this central concept if we are to improve education. What perception do teachers and principals have of effectiveness? Is it based on data and student test scores or something not as easily measured such as tenacity, compassion, and enthusiasm? Who is defining teacher effectiveness and why?

Teacher evaluation and measurement systems have shifted from "teacher quality" to "teacher effectiveness." The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) required a "highly qualified teacher" in all classrooms. We have fallen short of this goal. Due to teacher shortages, districts have lowered teacher standards and offered emergency credentials in order to staff schools. This

has led to widespread use of under-prepared teachers for disadvantaged children in schools that suffer from poor conditions and high teacher turnover (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Initial teacher quality factors such as teacher certification, degrees held, or teaching experience have been brought into question in more recent research. Kane, Rockoff & Staiger (2008) contend that teacher certification has only small impacts on student test performance and teacher effectiveness is quite varied. The movement away from "teacher quality" to "teacher effectiveness" reflects the rigorous standards and accountability in school today. It is no longer enough to be highly qualified, we need to ensure teachers are highly skilled in providing meaningful learning opportunities and guaranteeing students learn at high levels.

As an instructional coach, I see that teachers are struggling to improve student outcomes. The methods that may have been used in the past, such as memorization through repetition, whole class instruction, and the use of worksheets are not improving the scores of their students. It is even worse for student motivation and engagement. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills Framework (2011), "students must learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration" (p. 34). Our students are changing, the expectations are changing, and our assessments are changing. Therefore, our perception of teacher effectiveness must change. Within the schools I work, teacher expectations and pressures are so high it takes a team of teachers and school leaders to meet the needs of all students.

> Teachers are among those professionals that face the greatest amount of pressure in their work. At present, teachers are being pressured mainly by their work, role conflict, role ambiguity, relationships with students, relationships with colleagues, work overload, long working hours, and high work intensity. (Yu, Wang, Zhai, & Dai, 2014, p. 708)

Educators can learn from each other if they are willing to share their beliefs and perceptions about teacher effectiveness. Who is an effective teacher? How do we know? What do effective teachers do? Having this shared understanding will help educators move forward as they strive to increase student learning. If we are serious about transforming education, we will not be successful unless we can define, communicate, and hold educators accountable for the practice of excellent teaching (King & Watson, 2010). This is not an easy task, but it is worthy of our diligence.

"Teacher salary and benefits represent the nation's single largest educational expenditure" (Winters, Dixon, & Greene, 2012, p. 19). Investing in a better understanding of what constitutes teacher effectiveness can have significant and long-lasting implications for schools. Preparation, recruitment, compensation, professional development, and teacher evaluation would benefit from a clearer understanding of teacher effectiveness. Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) agreed that if an administrator seeks to hire effective, or at least, promising teachers, she or he needs to understand what characterizes them. Any effort to improve the quality of teachers should begin with an understanding of who those teachers are (Johnson, 2012). This effort should also include understanding what teachers and principals believe about teacher effectiveness.

Research Questions

In this qualitative case study I took an in-depth look at one school in rural North Dakota. This study was conducted to increase educators' understanding of teacher effectiveness. To do this I gathered data within this school and answered these questions:

1. Do teachers at this school hold common understandings of teacher effectiveness?

2. Are the teachers' and principal's perceptions of teacher effectiveness the same or different?
3. How do the perceptions of the teachers and their principal align with the teacher evaluation system they use?

These questions are critical for teachers and school leaders who wish to improve teaching and student learning.

Assumptions

As an educator with more than 25 years of experience, as a classroom teacher, interventionist, and now instructional coach, I continually strive to be the best teacher and school leader I can be. I want to provide optimal learning experiences for the students and teachers with whom I work. Seeing students learn and improve is an important motivator in my continued interest and investment in my growth as an educator. The foundation of my argument for greater understanding of our perceptions of teacher effectiveness rests on these core beliefs:

1. Teacher effectiveness positively impacts student learning and outcomes.
2. Schools cannot control some factors that affect student achievement, but we can increase the effectiveness of teachers.
3. Improving teacher effectiveness requires some common understandings among principals and teachers of teacher effectiveness.
4. It is our moral imperative, as educators, to provide the best instruction possible for our students.

With technology today, knowledge is at the fingertips of our students. Constructivist theories of learning and teaching by Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner are the foundation of learning theories that are being explored and applied today to help student learn

how to learn (Goodwin & Webb, 2014). These theorists are reshaping students' experiences in the classroom as they apply their knowledge to real-world problems. In these classrooms, according to Goodwin and Webb (2014):

> The teacher designs the classroom activities, such as problem-solving, and in-depth inquiry, to guide the students to discover knowledge rather than memorize facts. Constructivism transforms the students' role from a passive recipient of knowledge to an active participant in the learning process (p. 4).

It is through the lens of constructivist theories that I seek to uncover the perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Regardless of the approach, the researcher brings assumptions to the topic being studied. The assumptions I hold have developed over many years in education and inform my daily work with teachers and students.

Organization of the Study

An overview of the background and significance of the problem regarding the perceptions of teacher effectiveness was provided in Chapter I. This chapter provided the purpose of the study, its importance, and the research questions. The assumptions of the researcher were presented.

Chapter II explores the literature on teacher effectiveness. The literature is organized into the following themes: (a) Definitions of Teacher Effectiveness; (b) Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement; (c) School Improvement Efforts; (d) Teacher Hiring and Retention; (e) Mentoring Teachers; (f) Professional Development; (g) Measuring and Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness; (h) Teacher Effectiveness and the Learning Environment; and (i) Vision, Collaboration, and Professionalism.

The design of this qualitative study is presented in Chapter III. Researcher's subjectivity and background as well as case selection, data collection, data analysis, delimitations, verification, and ethical consideration are included.

Chapter IV includes the data findings obtained from the individual interviews, observations, and school documents. Findings are summarized in narrative form according to the themes identified in the coding and analysis process.

The final chapter, Chapter V, is a discussion and summary of the findings according to the research questions followed by conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research on raising achievement consistently points to an effective teacher as the most crucial element in a student's success (Goldhaber, Cowan, & Walch, 2013; King & Watson, 2010; Rockoff & Speroni, 2011; Routman, 2012). It is one of the few factors impacting student achievement over which educators have some direct control. Researchers and school leaders have grappled with how to define, measure, and evaluate teacher effectiveness. Recent research has led to more comprehensive methods of evaluating the quality of teaching in our schools. Our understanding of teacher effectiveness has increased through access to this research.

Introduction

The next step to increase teacher effectiveness is to study the perceptions of principals and teachers about what constitutes an effective teacher. This is a critical step. Norman (2010) contends that, "Few studies, if any, have helped us identify the specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions that distinguish more effective from less effective teachers" (p. 207). By examining perceptions, this study will help to further our understanding of teacher effectiveness. The knowledge gained has the potential to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Changing educators' beliefs about teaching effectiveness underpins efforts to improve teaching practice. This is the foundation of school improvement (Malmberg, Hagger, Burn, Mutton, & Colls, 2010). A clearer understanding of how teachers conceive of excellent teaching will contribute to improved teaching and learning and educational reforms (Chen, Brown, Hattie,

& Millward, 2012). Often times, schools try and move forward with school improvement without first understanding the beliefs and practices of teachers. It is important to understand teachers' current conceptions of teaching excellence (Chen et al., 2012). What makes an effective or ineffective teacher? Are the perceptions of principals and teachers alike or very different? Hanushek (2011) believes research addressing this question has found little that consistently distinguishes teacher effectiveness in classrooms. This supports the importance of continued study on the topic of teacher effectiveness.

Further research about teacher and principal perceptions of teacher effectiveness will help us to clarify our beliefs. If principal and teacher beliefs are not aligned, it is important to know. Teachers and principals who hold different beliefs may be striving to increase teacher effectiveness is very different ways. This misalignment in beliefs can result in conflicting efforts, frustration, and limited professional growth. A common understanding of teacher effectiveness is vital for successful school and teacher improvement. According to Routman (2012), "Without coherence in beliefs–and in the practices that support those beliefs–there can be no consistent academic rigor" (p. 58). School leaders and districts can use this information to plan improvement at educational levels including state, district, building, and teacher development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' and teachers' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. A clearer understanding of the perceptions teachers and principals hold about teacher effectiveness is critical to school improvement. Finding what beliefs are commonly held will increase our understanding of teacher effectiveness perceptions. Looking closely at the alignment of teacher and principal perceptions and the evaluation system use will give us insight

to the impact this system has on developing teacher perceptions of teacher effectiveness. This information is vital in accurately evaluating teacher effectiveness, planning professional development, and therefore, building teacher capacity. It is essential for teachers who are striving to improve instruction and student outcomes. According to King and Watson (2010):

> Education has the power to change the world. The opportunity to truly transform the educational experience of thousands of children across this country appears well within our grasp. Children may have the access they need to world-class academic standards, curricula that fosters critical thinking, problem solving, and the innovative use of knowledge; post-secondary study or gainful employment; and most important to the accomplished teachers and excellent teaching needed to make this possible. (p. 176)

In this chapter, I will explore the following themes found in the research on teacher effectiveness: (a) Definitions of Teacher Effectiveness; (b) Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement; (c) Measuring and Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness; (d) School Improvement Efforts; (e) Teacher Hiring and Retention; (f) Mentoring Teachers; (g) Professional Development; (h) Climate and Culture; and (i) Teacher Effectiveness and the Learning Environment.

Definitions of Teacher Effectiveness

Recent research leads me to believe a clear understanding of teacher effectiveness, although studied for many years, still eludes educators. A common and shared definition of teacher effectiveness is needed to begin to understand and implement all it encompasses.

> The best of what we know about excellent teaching and the work of highly effective, accomplished teachers does not reach or has not fully penetrated into the schools and

school communities with the students who need the most, students who have traditionally been underserved by schools. (King & Watson, 2010, p. 177)

Throughout the literature, very different definitions are supported by research. To begin with, a variety of terms have been used: 'good' (Watkins & Zhang, 2006), 'effective' (Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001), 'highly accomplished' (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1987), 'excellent' (Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2002), and 'qualified' (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Although various terms have been used, I will refer to this concept as *teacher effectiveness*. Norman (2010) stated, "One persistent challenge researchers and policymakers face when contemplating an assessment of accomplished teaching is deciding on its definition" (p. 204). One conclusive definition has not been presented in educational literature, but several ways of understanding the concept have been explored in multiple studies.

The literature leads educators in three main directions when defining teacher effectiveness. The first is an emphasis on student achievement, mainly standardized test scores (Carrero, 2016; Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2012; Martineau, 2010). Other studies on teacher effectiveness identify the skills and actions of highly effective teachers (Gallagher, 2012; Stronge et al., 2011). In addition to these findings, some other studies go beyond test scores and skills to identify the mindset and attitudes needed to increase teaching effectiveness (Gurol & Kerimgil, 2010; Hobbs, 2012; Lewis, Perry, Friedkin, & Roth, 2012). This chapter will delve into all three of these definitions.

As educators strive to improve student learning, we must continue to ask ourselves, 'What evidence do we have that children have learned?' Student achievement scores on standardized tests are one way to measure of our effectiveness as teachers. Research has focused

on identifying teachers who were successful in the product of teaching, namely, student achievement (Stronge et al., 2011). Educators analyze test scores to determine where students are at compared to learning standards and benchmarks and the scores of other students. Often times, student performance is checked mid-year to determine if they are on their way to achieving the specific standards and benchmarks. One measure that is used is student proficiency. This is often a cut score a student is expected to achieve at a specific time during the year. "By successful teaching we mean that the learner actually acquires, to some reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency" (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010, p. 1598). This is one method of measuring student learning and possibly teacher effectiveness. Policies such as No Child Left Behind have created school policy which relies on standardized test scores of proficiency to measure teacher effectiveness.

Another way student achievement scores are used to define and evaluate teacher effectiveness is through determining the level of student growth from the beginning of the year until the end of the year, or value-added measures. Aslam and Kingdon (2011) stated, "A good teacher is one who consistently produces high achievement growth for pupils" (p. 560). When asked how teaching practices differ between effective and less effective teachers, Stronge et al. (2011) responded that students of effective teachers experience high academic growth in a single year. Stronge et al. also reported, "Effective teachers were defined as those who had student learning gains in the top quartile; less effective teachers were defined as those with student learning gains in the bottom quartile" (p. 345). Whether schools rely on proficiency or growth indicators, teachers reflect on the achievement scores of their students. This practice which causes teachers to refine their instruction as they see their students responding to learning opportunities can help educators to ensure students are learning. "Successful identification of

effective teacher behavior requires that we have some ideas where to search" (Bonesronning, 2004, p. 237). Some educators use student achievement data as a starting point when addressing teacher effectiveness. Norman (2010) put teacher effectiveness into perspective with:

> Most studies suggest we are getting closer to understanding how best to manipulate data in order to tease out, more precisely, the relationship between accomplished teaching and student learning. Yet, few, if any, have helped us identify the specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions that distinguish more effective from less effective teachers (p. 211).

This lack of identification and understanding is a concern. Even if student achievement scores help us to identify effective teachers, we still do not understand why or how they are effective. It is only when we understand effectiveness at a deeper level that we will be able to help teachers become more effective. Some research studies have attempted to define teacher effectiveness in concrete ways that will enable educators to increase their effectiveness.

Researchers on teacher effectiveness have striven to identify specific teacher skills and behaviors that lead to increased teacher effectiveness. Dilworth and Aguerrebere (2007) emphasized that assessment of teaching must move beyond compliance measures toward capturing improved teacher behavior and performance as well as evidence of deeper student knowledge, improved skills, and greater understanding. Stronge et al. (2011) stated, "Student achievement is just one educational outcome measure. It measures the outcome, a crucial consideration in effective teaching, but does not measure the process, or instructional practices that result in increased student achievement" (p. 348). Teachers who are effective have a set of attitudes, approaches, strategies, and connections with students that express themselves in nonacademic ways and lead to higher student achievement (Stronge et al., 2011). Several studies found these teacher characteristics include: knowledgeable, purposeful, critical, creative,

committed, open-minded, flexible, patient, tolerant, adaptive, responsive, and eager and willing to learn (Carrero, 2015; Hobbs, 2012; Malmberg et al., 2010). In addition, King and Watson (2010) provided these principles that help to define teacher effectiveness:

> Excellent teaching for all students is guided by five principles: (a) accountability for student achievement and empowerment; (b) a belief in the power and the intersection of accomplished teaching and unlimited potential of each student; (c) the use of a theory of learning to guide accomplished teaching practice and student learning; (d) content expertise and the ability to connect to students' lived experiences in and out of school and expertise in pedagogy that builds confidence, affirms effort, and uses data to guide a step-by-step, personalized teaching and learning process (p. 177).

Teacher practices or teacher behaviors that could potentially increase student learning have been explored further. Chen et al. (2012) stated, "The Western teaching excellence literature has identified the following main categories of excellent teachers: personal and professional characteristics, sound subject and pedagogical knowledge, classroom climate and management, student-teacher relationships, and professionalism" (p. 937). Many of these teacher behaviors or practices have been used in current teacher evaluation models. These models have broken down the teacher practices into specific "look fors" in the classroom during teacher observations. Not all characteristics of teacher effectiveness are that easy to notice and measure.

Some studies indicate that teacher effectiveness may be more than student scores and a list of look-fors principals use during walk-throughs. King & Watson (2010) found, "Accomplished teaching is an art and a science, requiring commitment, persistence, consistency, creativity, support, as well as effective and collective effort" (p. 177). If this is the case,

measurement of teacher effectiveness and improving teacher effectiveness just got much more difficult. Schalock et al. (1993) acknowledged that effective teaching involves a dynamic interaction between content, pedagogical methods, characteristics of learners, and the contexts in which the learning occurs. Additional studies agreed that teacher effectiveness is more than student scores on standardized tests. According to Dweck (1999), "Accomplished teachers believe in the growth of the intellect and talent (their students' and their own) and they are fascinated with the process of learning" (p. 83). This indicates a specific mindset is needed to be an effective teacher.

> A purposeful, focused enthusiasm for one's students, a belief in their potential, along with heartfelt compassion and the perseverance to work until students succeed are not extras that make a good teacher great. They're the essential qualities necessary for students to thrive (Lehman, 2012, p. 53).

Lehman (2012) also added that children sense this investment by teachers and rise to be worthy of the teacher's belief in them and the most significant education occurs when a teacher nurtures a child's spirit as much as his mind. Hobbs (2012) also viewed a teacher's mindset as contributing to effectiveness. He stated:

> All effective teachers have a passion for the subject, passion for their pupils, and a passionate belief that who they are and how they teach can make a difference in their pupils' lives, both in the moment of teaching and the days, weeks, months, and even years afterwards. Passion is associated with enthusiasm, caring, commitment, and hope which are themselves key characteristics of effectiveness in teaching (p. 720).

This passion drives the decisions teachers make every day and can lead to increased teacher effectiveness. Routman (2012) found, "Effective teachers make every minute of instructional

time count and teach with the commitment that there's not a moment to lose" (p. 58). Whether research studies define teacher effectiveness as student achievement scores, teacher skills and behaviors, or the mindset teachers hold, it is clear that more work needs to be done to understand what teachers themselves perceive to be effective teaching.

In the following sections, I will further investigate factors of teacher effectiveness, including measurements and characteristics of highly effective teachers. Teacher effectiveness continues to be an elusive concept to define when we consider the complex task of teaching, the diversity of educators who bring different experiences and beliefs, and the multitude of contexts in which teachers work.

Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement

What compels us in education to continue to study teacher effectiveness? The greatest argument for continuing to talk about teacher effectiveness is the impact it has on student learning. Konstantopoulos & Chung (2010) reported, "A popular belief in the United States educational system is that highly effective teachers can make a difference in promoting student achievement" (p. 362). Several convincing studies have confirmed this by identifying the teacher as the most important school-level factor in students' achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). Hanushek (2011) found, "No other attribute of schools comes close to having this much influence on student achievement" (p. 467). Slater, Davies, and Burgess (2012) added:

> We have shown that teachers matter a great deal. Having a one-standard deviation better teacher raises the test scores by 27% of a standard deviation. Having a good teacher as opposed to a mediocre or poor teacher makes a big difference (p. 630).

The effectiveness of each teacher matters. Teacher effectiveness varies widely and the variation has educationally meaningful consequences for student achievement (Goldhaber et al., 2013).

One way researchers have demonstrated the impact of teacher effectiveness is through the analysis of student achievement data. This can be determining if students have met proficiency levels or if they have made one year of academic growth. According to Konstantopoulos and Chung (2010), "A common way of estimating teacher effects is via value-added models. The underlying idea of value-added models is to examine the effects of teachers on students' learning gains" (p. 364). Research shows that teacher effectiveness varies widely and that this has educationally meaningful consequences for student achievement (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Many factors can influence student learning, but the research has confirmed that teacher effectiveness does impact student achievement. Value-added student achievement data has shown that teacher assignment and teacher effectiveness matter more than class size, class composition, or any other student-related factor (Shernoff, Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, & Atkins, 2011; Schmidt, Houang, & McKnight, 2005). The research not only shows that teacher effectiveness matters, but also provided statistical evidence of this. The difference between the best and worst teachers are substantial for students. In examining state assessment data, Leigh (2010) found:

> A 75th percentile teacher can achieve in three-quarters of a year what a 25th percentile teacher can achieve in a full year, while a 90th percentile teacher can achieve in half a year what a 10th percentile teacher can achieve in a full year (p. 481).

Furthermore, Leigh (2010) discovered that replacing a teacher at the 25th percentile with a teacher at the 75th percentile would raise test scores by one-seventh of a standard deviation. Chetty et al. (2012) found, "A 1 standard-deviation increase in teacher value-added corresponds to increases in student math and English scores of 12 and 8 percent of a standard deviation, respectively. This difference is equivalent to approximately three months of additional

instruction" (p. 61). Students do not have additional time to give to make up for the learning that is lost. Every moment of class time is important for student learning. The power of teacher effectiveness is not short lived. Palardy and Rumberger (2008) concluded that a string of highly effective or ineffective teachers will have an enormous impact on students' learning trajectories over the course of grades K-12. According to Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern & Keeling (2009):

> A student assigned to a very good teacher for a single school year may gain up to a full year's worth of additional academic growth compared to a student assigned to a very poor teacher. Having a series of strong or weak teachers in consecutive years compounds the impact. Give high-need students three highly effective teachers in a row and they may outperform students taught by three ineffective teachers in a row by as much as 50 percentile points (p. 9).

Using random assignment of teachers and students to classrooms, researchers have firmly established the advantage for students of having a high-quality teacher over a number of years (Hanushek, 2011; Sanders & Horn, 1994). In addition Hanushek (2011) stated, "If a bad year is compounded by other bad years, it may not be possible for the student to recover" (p. 467). Teacher effectiveness matters. Not just for the learning each student gains in a year, but for their futures. Chetty et al. (2012) further stated:

> We find that teacher value-added measures both work and matter. First, we find that value-added measures accurately predict teachers' impact on test scores once we control for the student characteristics that are typically accounted for when creating value-added measures. Second, we find that students assigned to high value-added teachers are more likely to attend college, attend higher-quality colleges, earn more, live in higher

socioeconomic status neighborhoods, and save more for retirement. They are also less likely to have children during their teenage years (p. 59).

The research clearly lays out the impact of teacher effectiveness for students in a single year and the potential impact over several years of schooling. Konstantopoulos and Chung (2010) argued that the cumulative teacher effects are so large and the meaningful that it significantly impacts educational policy.

As we continue to examine student achievement data to inform classroom instruction, school improvement, and measure teacher effectiveness, voices within the educational community have voiced their concerns. "Value-added models may resolve some of the issues in accountability models, but they bring their own set of challenges to the table" (Martineau, 2010, p. 64). Goldhaber et al. (2013) added:

> While there appear to be important complementarities in teacher effectiveness in math and reading at the elementary level, dimensions of teacher productivity that are not well captured by standardized tests may not be closely related to effectiveness in teaching math and reading. Indeed, one criticism of using value-added for high-stakes personnel decisions is that measures of teacher effectiveness based standardized tests may not capture important components of teaching (p. 227).

Test validity is a foundational concept that ensures that an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure. Following this notion, Knight et al. (2012) asserted:

> A valid test measures what it purports to measure. If we follow this logic, should tests of teaching ability and effectiveness look like teaching and measure teaching performance, skills, and understandings? Can valid tests of reading and math administered to K-12

students actually measure how well their teachers are prepared to teach these skills and abilities (p. 302)?

This question has been both ignored and taken into serious consideration by policymakers and school leaders when determining teacher effectiveness. Using standardized tests to measure teacher quality is controversial, because these tests are only able to capture a slice of the contributions that teachers make toward student learning (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007). Gitmore (2007) added, "Schools that do not use any outcome measures other than student standardized achievement scores are driven as much by convenience as by any factor of intellectual merit" (p. 30). Regardless of the debate about value-added measures of teacher effectiveness, it seems clear that policymakers are likely to accelerate the use of student achievement data to inform high-stakes decisions (Goldhaber et al., 2013). Teachers look closely at student achievement data and consider those scores as a personal reflection of their ability and effectiveness. Many teachers seek ways to improve based on their student test scores.

Slater et al. (2012) noted the strong potential for improving educational standards and student learning by improving teacher quality. This is true in each individual classroom and for schools as a whole. "The key element defining a school's impact on student achievement is teacher quality" (Hanushek, 2011, p. 467). The demand for higher teacher quality is derived from the profound impact of teacher effectiveness on student outcomes. If student success depends on the effectiveness of the teacher, the success of individual schools and districts rests in the combined effectiveness of its teachers. It is important for schools then to measure and support increased teacher effectiveness. Knight et al. (2012) believed, "Not only do teachers make a difference but their effectiveness can potentially be assessed, rewarded, and improved through recruitment, incentives, and professional development" (p. 301). Accurate and

meaningful assessment of teacher effectiveness is of vital importance both within and beyond the educational community.

Measuring and Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness

What do effective teachers do that increases student learning? This question is critical to teacher growth and student achievement. Leading voices in professional education argue that assessments of effective teaching must move beyond compliance measures toward capturing improved teacher behavior and performance (Dilworth & Aguerrebere, 2007). The ultimate goal of measuring accomplished teaching is not distinguishing good from bad teachers, but instead to help all teachers improve. According to Norman (2010), "Only as we identify what matters most in impacting student learning will we know how better to prepare new teachers and support veteran teachers toward becoming accomplished teachers" (p. 203). If research tells us that teachers are the most important school factor in determining student achievement, then we need to be able to measure that effectiveness and guide teachers towards improvement.

In the past, studies about teacher effectiveness have focused on measuring teacher quality. Within the literature there are multiple opinions and research supporting these various views. About measuring teacher effectiveness, Weisberg et al. (2009) stated:

> We face a fundamental crisis—the inability of our schools to assess instructional performance accurately or to act on this information in meaningful ways. This inability not only keeps schools from dismissing consistently poor performers, but also prevents them from recognizing excellence among top-performers or supporting growth among the broad plurality of hard-working teachers who operate in the middle of the performance spectrum (p. 2).

When schools fail to produce meaningful measurement of teacher effectiveness, teacher evaluation systems are limited in their ability to increase teacher effectiveness and make strategic decisions about hiring and retention. Weisberg et al. (2009) shared that all school districts evaluate teachers, but these evaluation policies are not typically based on high quality empirical research and in many cases produce little differentiation among teachers.

Schools often "fail to distinguish great teaching from good, good from fair, and fair from poor: A teacher's effectiveness is not truly measured, recorded, or used to inform decision-making in any meaningful ways" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 2). This reality of not clearly defining and measuring teacher effectiveness and then using it to inform our decisions are conflicting with the goal of providing a quality education to all students. The act of accurately measuring teacher effectiveness is the first step. Once we are able to measure the effectiveness of teachers, the more important step is helping all teachers to improve their practice. Hart, Healey, & Sporte, (2014) stated, "Teachers and those evaluating them need training and support to understand the system and its goals and to move beyond reviewing ratings and evidence to engage in deep discussions that promote instructional improvement" (p. 63). This improvement will enable teachers and schools to reach their ultimate goal of increasing student learning.

School leaders have used teacher evaluation frameworks to measure teacher effectiveness. Danielson (2007) stated, "Frameworks for professional practice are the public's guarantee that the members of a profession hold themselves and their colleagues to high standards of practice" (p. 2). These frameworks have been developed in an effort to evaluate teacher performance and inform discussions about what teachers do and know, what drives them, and how they see themselves (Hobbs, 2012). Carrero (2015) further added:

> Frameworks are important because they give you a background and a structure to follow that acts as support, yet you can tailor them to fit your instructional style. They are essential because they give educators a guide to measuring their teaching practice. Frameworks identify elements that are benchmarks of how capable educators make a mark on their students through instruction and improve student achievement. Our profession is an evolving one and the frameworks can help guide you as you grow into a more experienced educator (p. 13).

The literature on frameworks for evaluating teaching guide both the school leader in helping teachers to set goals, observations, and feedback. Frameworks are helpful for teachers to have clear expectations and self-reflect on their own teaching. Hart et al. (2014) extend the importance of frameworks by adding:

> The common language of the framework and evidence-based ratings are a great foundation, but they do not automatically result in the kind of reflective and constructive dialogue that supports instructional improvement. Such conversations rely not only on participants understanding the framework but on having them effectively engaging in the conference process. Quality conversations that enable all participants to grow depend on both sides coming to the table knowing the framework and how to use it in a collaborative, constructive dialogue (p. 65).

This is supported by other researchers, like Tan (2012) who shared, "Evaluation in addition to being developmental, must now be dynamic" (p.79) and Lehman (2012) who asserted, "We need candidates who have a passion to teach, but in preparing teachers, we must commit to inculcate enthusiasm, a strong and conscientious work ethic, and a depth of

compassion (p. 53). It is our responsibility as school leaders to not only know the framework, but also how to use it successfully to increase teacher effectiveness.

Although frameworks are widely used, concerns still remain. Delandshere and Petrosky (2004) questioned whether it is possible to have a common set of teaching principles for all teachers, suggesting that a standardized measure of teaching may take away intellectual autonomy. "Teacher assessment must move away from a notion of good teaching that is linked to one particular style of teaching–even if it is a style we like" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 219). It is difficult to increase teacher effectiveness. We do not want teachers and teaching to look the same for each student because each student has different needs. Norman (2010) stated, "Most assessment efforts have focused on broad teaching skills that theoretically contribute to student learning, without necessarily demonstrating empirically that they actually do" (p. 204). The challenges that remain fall into two main categories: (a) the validity of instruments as measures of accomplished teaching, and (b) connecting accomplished teaching to student learning (Norman, 2010). These concerns are very real in the work place for teachers and school leaders. How much do our students' scores reflect our ability and effectiveness? Staiger & Rockoff (2010) acknowledged, "Estimates of teacher effectiveness based on student achievement data are noisy measures and can be thought of as having reliability in the range of 30 to 50 percent" (p. 98). Goldhaber et al. (2002) stated that there is not a universally accepted method for calculating a teacher's impact on student learning, and research shows that the methodology used for this task can sometimes greatly influence the measure. Student achievement scores are often used in combination with teacher evaluation frameworks to measure teacher effectiveness. Another way school leaders and teachers are attempting to measure teacher effectiveness is through examination of authentic student work and frequent classroom observations.

Norman (2010) claimed, "Regarding teacher's impact on student learning, no assessments directly measure this, but rather rely on teacher-provided evidence of student learning or samples of student work" (p. 203). In education, teachers hear the word "authentic" quite often. Usually it is in the context of wanting students to do meaningful, relevant, and authentic work. If there truly is a shift in teaching and learning, then the observation of these must shift too. Shouldn't then the measurement of effective teaching and student learning be more authentic? Observing teachers and students as they work together enables school leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers. School leaders are in need of observable characteristics that they can use to identify teachers who will be successful (Winters et al., 2012). The combination of quality frameworks that outline these characteristics and frequent observations of teaching can be tools used to measure teacher effectiveness. Rockoff and Speroni (2010) stated, "With few exceptions, classroom observations have been found to have significant power to predict student achievement" (p. 687). Classroom observation and feedback will be explored further in this chapter. If teaching has enduring, meaningful, and positive effects on student achievement, then identifying effective teachers and the factors that cause teachers to be more effective is important (Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2010). Weisberg (2009) stated, "The school district would ask you (a parent) to trust that it can provide your child a quality education, even though it cannot honestly tell you whether it is providing a quality teacher" (p. 3). If teacher effectiveness has the greatest impact on student achievement, we should absolutely know if our teachers are effective.

School Improvement Efforts

School improvement begins with understanding where teachers are in their teaching and learning journey (Norman, 2010). Only then can we move forward in improving their practice. Too often school leaders, with the best intentions, do not take the time to do this. "Reform efforts, which are frequently combined with accountability measures, and high-stakes testing, have tended to be prescriptive, often disempowering teachers" (Kennedy, 2010, p. 384). School improvement and the perceptions educators hold about teacher effectiveness cannot be separated. Weisberg et al. (2009) reminded us, "We know that improving teacher quality is one of the most powerful ways–if not *the* most powerful way–to create better schools" (p. 9). To improve schools, school leaders need to understand how teachers view effectiveness and empower them to continue to improve. Stronge et al (2011) argued, "Although various educational policy initiatives may offer the promise of improving education, nothing is more fundamentally important to improving our schools than improving the teaching that occurs every day in every classroom" (p. 351). Johnson (2012) further emphasized:

> I urge investing in individual teachers and assessing their effectiveness while also improving the organizations in which those teachers work. This dual approach would greatly increase the likelihood that all teachers can be effective and, therefore, that all students will be served well (p. 108).

Improving the effectiveness of each teacher is the heart of school improvement. Often sweeping initiatives and changes are attempted and fail. I believe this is because we have not taken the time to understand teachers, what they value, and how they learn best. Smylie (1995) added to this, "We will fail to improve schooling for children until we acknowledge the importance of schools not only as places for teachers to work, but also as places for teachers to

learn" (p. 92). Routman (2012) adds that creating a self-sustaining school full of highly effective teachers is challenging, because it's a long-term, whole-school commitment, but we must strive for this if we are to break the cycle of underachievement. In previous sections, examined research suggests the potential impact effective and ineffective teachers on student achievement. As we think about school improvement, that impact seems more important than ever. It is imperative that we understand how we define and improve teacher effectiveness. Johnson (2012) found:

> Advocates for change promote very different approaches to improving instruction. Some recommend directing new resources and rulemaking to recruiting strong teachers and assessing their qualifications, performance in the classroom, and demonstrated success in raising students' test scores. Others call for expanding attention beyond the individual teacher to address the school context in which teachers work. This might include ensuring that teachers have better access to expert colleagues and instructional coaching, more time to work with grade-level specific teams, meaningful supervision by principals or peer coaches who understand instruction, and support from a school culture that encourages effective teaching and learning (p. 107).

Principals can have great impact in shaping the culture of a school and driving school improvement. Principal leadership is crucial to facilitate school improvement and interpret and respond to school accountability policies as well as design a path for improvement (Finnigan, 2012). Principals help to create a vision that is a "web of shared assumptions, beliefs, and values that unites the group in mutual solidarity" (Finnigan, 2012, p. 186). Having a strong sense of vision for a school and transforming it are two different things. To move forward, principals need to be able to implement change. Leadership primarily manifests itself during times of

change, and the nature of this change determines the direction of leadership (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Research in school leadership concludes that principals, focused on curriculum and instruction, are essential for effective schools. They are characterized as "hands-on leaders, engaged with curriculum and instruction issues, unafraid to work directly with teachers, and often present in classrooms" (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 66). Routman (2012) added to this with:

> Without strong principal leadership, whole school achievement is rarely possible or sustainable. When the principal has built a solid foundation of trust and is highly knowledgeable, teachers welcome principals into their classrooms as an extra pair of eyes and hands to strengthen their teaching (p. 58).

School improvement is most often led by principals in an effort to improve teacher effectiveness. Since improving teacher effectiveness leads to increased student achievement, this goal is worthy of the effort to change.

Lampert (2012) found that in addition to developing teaching, we must also develop teachers' collective *will* to enact changes that "engage them and their students in more difficult and challenging work than they might otherwise chose to undertake" (p. 364). School leaders must support teachers' learning from each other and publicly encourage and share the practices of teachers who increase student improvement and engagement (King & Watson, 2010). Top-down, mandated changes do not have lasting impact on teachers' practice. School improvement must be grounded in the learning and lives of teachers to be sustained (Fullan, 2001). Lampert (2012) found:

> In communities of practice, teacher members not only work on common teaching problems, but in doing so, they also develop common definitions of what counts as a problem and what counts as an appropriate solution. It is not only knowledge that

> develops in these ways but also the tools that scaffold the skills individuals need to get their work done productively, and the commitment to use those tools on what have been identified as important problems (p. 363).

This shared work toward common goals brings teachers together by building relationships and sharing the work of teaching and learning. Shared values, a focus on student learning, collaboration, de-privatized practice, and reflective dialogue as five elements of professional communities are important components in school improvement (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Kennedy and Smith (2013) added to this idea, "Research has recognized that in order for teachers to construct new meaning from their environment, they must be given social opportunities to collectively reflect and learn from each other within the context of their personal organization and experience" (p. 137). It is important what teachers are able to do, but more importantly, what they are *willing to do* that matters most. Social connections can support and initiate efforts towards teacher improvement.

Uncovering teachers' conceptions, both individually and collectively, of excellent teaching may help teachers to reflect and discover how these beliefs shape their daily teaching. "Through a critical self-evaluation, teachers may try to dispense with their ineffective routines and be willing to take up the challenges entailed in the renewal endeavor to achieve professional improvement" (Chen et al., 2012, p. 937). Teachers must be provided with learning opportunities that will build their confidence in their ability to teach in a wide range of schools and classrooms. According to King and Watson (2010), teachers "must be equipped with the will and the skill to teach students in communities with whom they have little in common and/or limited experience" (p. 181). Understanding teacher and principal beliefs about teaching effectiveness is necessary to build teacher capacity and improve education. In an effort to

improve schools, principals and other school leaders rely on their understanding of teacher effectiveness when hiring, placing, retaining, and dismissing teachers.

Teacher Hiring and Retention

Many principals believe their best possibility of increasing teacher effectiveness in their schools is through hiring people with the "right" mindset and then shaping their skills through professional development (Donaldson, 2013). To successfully staff a school building, principals need to have a clear understanding of teacher effectiveness, be able to identify potential effectiveness, and retain teachers who are most effective. According to Staiger and Rockoff (2010):

> The current system, which focuses on credentials at the time of hire and grants tenure as a matter of course, is at odds with decades of research on teacher effectiveness. Instead, teacher recruitment and retention policies should focus on improving our methods of teacher evaluation and use admittedly imperfect measures of teacher effectiveness to identify and retain only the best teachers early in their teaching careers (p. 115).

Granting tenure to teachers just because they have been observed a few times and deemed to be minimally proficient may not be the best way to ensure all students have high quality teachers.

The perceptions principals hold about teacher effectiveness will undoubtedly impact their choices in hiring, placing, and retaining teachers. It is no longer enough to rely on credentials or experience to make these critical decisions. If an administrator seeks to hire effective teachers he or she needs to understand what characterizes them (Stronge et al., 2011).

To support increased student learning, principals have "sought to align teacher recruitment, hiring, professional development, and evaluation to a larger vision" of effective teaching (Donaldson, 2013, p. 839). These school leaders influence overall school effectiveness

by hiring more skilled teachers and assigning them to classrooms where they will be most successful (Donaldson, 2013). School and teacher assignment is a powerful factor in preventing unequal outcomes in student achievement (Slater et al., 2012). In some cases, private schools have the advantage. Because of greater flexibility, they can "retain better teachers by renewing their contracts and firing less effective teachers" (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011, p. 524). In the end, we are in the business of educating children and we need to make decisions that are in their best interest.

If schools believe their systems of evaluation are accurate and valuable, they can rely on these measures of teacher effectiveness when making decisions about offering tenure to new teachers. Rockoff and Speroni (2011) found that teachers who received a better evaluation of teaching ability in their first year of teaching also produced greater gains in achievement with their future students. These are the highly effective teachers schools should be identifying and retaining.

Teacher turnover is staggering, both in the numbers and the impact on student learning. Zheng & Zeller (2016) found teacher turnover rates of 9.5 % after the first year in the classroom and 46% after five years. In low-income schools, teacher turnover rates are as much as 50% higher than in higher-income schools (Ingersoll, 2011). Johnson et al. (2012) stated, "High turnover rates of teachers in schools with substantial populations of low-income and minority students are driven largely by teachers fleeing the dysfunctional and unsupportive work environments" (p. 26). The conditions teachers work in and the support they receive matters a great deal.

Teachers who work in favorable environments reported that they were more satisfied and less likely to transfer or leave the profession (Johnson et al., 2012). Johnson (2012) found,

teachers chose teaching rather than some other (often higher paying) line of work because they expected to make a difference in students' lives. When schools enable them to do that, they continued to teach. New teachers were also more likely to remain in teaching when they experienced frequent interactions with faculty and shared in the responsibility for student learning and school improvement. According to Shernoff et al. (2011), "Chronic discontinuity in staffing at the school level can create organizational instability, in that teachers who remain begin to view their workplace as undesirable and can experience weak organizational commitment" (p. 466). The research has shown that the inability of schools to retain effective teachers impacts student achievement and staff morale. It also is financially costly.

Differences in teacher effectiveness are large and persistent. Staiger and Rockoff (2010) found, "For every five new hires, one will be identified as a highly effective teacher and provide many years of valuable service" (p. 108). These odds are not good for schools or our students. Chronic turnover creates financial hard-ships for districts because scarce resources must be diverted to recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers (Barnes, Crow, & Schaefer, 2007). The results of hiring effective teachers and retaining them and is cost-saving. In addition, and more importantly, it can lead to learning gains for students. "Removing low value-added teachers (bottom 5 percent) and retaining high value-added teachers (top 5 percent) improves the academic achievement of students" (Chetty et al., 2012, p. 62). Hiring, retention, and the dismissal of teachers is in the hands of school leaders. How they define teacher effectiveness is critical to making these decisions. Staiger & Rockoff (2010) suggested, "The primary cost of teacher turnover is not the direct cost of hiring and firing, but rather is the loss to students who will be taught by a novice teacher rather than one with several years of experience" (p. 98). The impact of these decisions is too great to ignore.

Mentoring Teachers

School leaders can have a tremendous effect on student learning through the teachers they hire, how they assign those teachers to classrooms, how they retain teachers, and how they create opportunities for teachers to improve (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Once hired, good or even great teachers need continual professional development. Valentine and Prater (2011) found:

> Transformational leaders invest significantly in the development of individuals. They build capacity throughout the school and develop a culture of collaborative problem solving. They inspire through their personal efforts and their support and encouragement of others. Their daily behaviors communicate respect of others and expectations for success (p. 23).

Common sense dictates that administrators help teachers to become more effective. Research by Weisberg et al. (2009) found that, "Even though teachers and administrators report that poor performance is commonplace, intervention appears to be extremely rare when compared to the score of the problem" (p. 17). They also discovered that principals do not spend more time observing or giving feedback to teachers identified as mediocre or poor performers than they do with highly rated teachers (Weisberg et al., 2009). Principals need to invest significant time mentoring struggling teachers to help improve their effectiveness and increase student achievement.

As our students change, we should too. New research and instructional strategies should continue to inform our instruction. King and Watson (2010) stated:

> Teachers must be provided with learning opportunities that will build their confidence in their ability to teach in a wide range of schools and classrooms. They must be equipped

with the will and the skill to teach students in communities with whom they have little in common and/or limited experience (p. 181).

Mentoring professionals and seeking to offer opportunities for continued growth is not easy, but necessary. The classroom is a place of learning for teachers who want to succeed at their job but who may differ in the ways they define success, in the goals they strive to attain, and in their readiness to change (Butler, 2012). As school leaders mentor teachers, it is important to keep in mind that teachers' needs, experiences, and knowledge levels are quite different. Taking the time to listen to teachers and respond to each of them individually is critical to helping them to improve.

> Renewing professionals in search of "becoming" the type of teachers who not only engage in ways congruent with their beliefs, but also teachers working to make their classrooms and school communities places where students and teachers alike engage in their own development; where the thoughts, beliefs, and questions of each are valued and drive learning endeavors; and where more individuals relate in active care, jointly investing and participating in the authentic growth and learning of all (Flint, Zisook, & Fisher, 2011, p. 1168).

Creating this culture of learning and valuing teacher learning is essential in increasing teacher effectiveness. Instructional materials by themselves, even excellent quality, are insufficient in improving instruction (Remillard & Bryans, 2004). When principals lead this learning and act as true mentors to teachers, shifts in understanding and practice can occur.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) found, if schools want to produce more powerful learning for their students, they need to offer more powerful learning opportunities to their teachers. This is especially true when teachers are asked to change their instruction, curriculum, or beliefs about

how students learn. Successful reform efforts require new learning regardless of the career stage or skill level of the teachers (Taylor, Yates, Meyer, & Kinsella, 2011). According to Lewis et al. (2012), "Many U.S. educators lack three very basic supports needed to implement any program well: high-quality instructional resources, practice-based opportunities to learn, and collegial learning that enables development of shared knowledge and commitment among teachers" (p. 368). Supporting teacher learning and effectiveness takes more than just the principal. Schools need to invest in setting up a culture of collaboration where teacher learning is valued and encouraged. Rigelman and Ruben (2012) acknowledged:

> By learning with and from one another, we build the kind of community in which we learn deeper and grow stronger in our abilities as teachers. Most importantly, we build a support system in which we can feel safe to take risks, to learn from both our successes and our failures (p. 988).

Collaborative learning opportunities have two potential outcomes: a change in understanding and a change in teacher behavior (Doppenberg, Brok, & Bakx, 2012). Mandated changes often cause a change in behavior or teacher practice, but rarely do they cause a change in beliefs. To create this type of learning takes time and collaboration. According to King & Watson (2010), "Excellent teachers must share their work. Teachers must open their classrooms and invite their colleagues to observe quality teaching in action" (p. 183). As school leaders, we need to recognize excellence and find ways for teachers to learn from each other. Often this is the most powerful professional development for teachers.

Professional Development

The importance of professional development for improving teacher quality and student achievement has been accepted worldwide (Bayar, 2014). As we strive to increase teacher

effectiveness and student achievement, professional development needs to evolve to offer more relevant, differentiated, and extended learning opportunities for teachers. Hill (2013) states, "Most teachers receive uninspired and often poor-quality professional development and learning opportunities" (p. 470). In addition, DeMonte adds (2013), "What teachers receive as professional opportunities to learn are thin, sporadic, and of little use when it comes to improving teaching" (p. 1). A shift from passive and intermittent professional development to active, consistent, based in the teaching environment, and supported by peers in a professional learning community can cause a changes in teaching practice (Stewart, 2014). A job-embedded approach can be powerful because it helps teacher envision what learning and teaching could look like with their own students. It gives them an opportunity to try new ideas with the support of their colleagues and sometimes an instructional coach. Even when the professional learning is within the learning environment, it should not look the same for all teachers.

According to Taylor, Yates et al. (2011), "Professional development has not acknowledged that teachers are not a homogeneous population but represent diverse perspectives, experience, expertise, and receptiveness to new ideas" (p. 85). The diversity in teachers, is a reflection of the diversity in students and their learning styles. Professional development needs to respond to both of these. Bringing experts from outside into the school to improve teacher quality using one-size-fits-all models fail to distinguish between the needs of different teachers, their teaching styles, levels of experience, and classroom and school contexts (Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010). Teachers often view this as the district trying to "fix" them. This can cause teachers to feel misunderstood and unappreciated.

> Professional development models that focus on transmitting pre-defined knowledge continue to be the dominant mode of professional development in many countries. The

> investment in time, money, and resources fails to provide the expected dividend in teacher learning or increase student achievement outcomes. Professional development models that are collaborative, learning centered, and related to practice are more meaningful to teachers (Flint et al., 2011, p. 1164).

The most meaningful professional development is accomplished through differentiated opportunities for teachers to build leadership capacity that utilizes and enhances teacher strengths and classroom expertise (Taylor, Yates et al., 2011). One size does not fit all teachers when it comes to improvement through teacher professional development. High quality professional development uses what teachers already know and builds upon this expertise to improve teaching. This requires that teachers are aware of how their beliefs drive their practices and lead to effective or ineffective teaching (Routman, 2012). Understanding and embracing what teachers know and believe takes time.

A sustained investment, at least 14 hours of professional development, is needed to change instruction and improve outcomes (DeMonte, 2013). Teachers need time to learn, practice, study student outcomes, and refine their teaching. There is a greater chance that teachers will improve instruction if the professional learning has a long-term design (Hill, 2009). Therefore, "many school districts have initiated extensive professional development projects to improve student learning to help both novice and experienced teachers in developing existing skills and in acquiring new ones" (Bayar, 2014, p. 321). Effective professional development is characterized by this need for high-quality, relevant, and job-embedded and lengthy opportunities for teachers to learn.

High levels of trust and collaboration are needed for this type of learning to occur. This dynamic and responsive professional development starts with true mentorship by school leaders.

It can be in the form of one-to-one conversations, classroom observations, meaningful feedback, teachers observing teachers, collective opportunities to learn, and thoughtful design of professional development. High quality professional development is the link between the design and implementation of school reform and improvements in teachers' knowledge, instruction and eventually student learning outcomes. If educators are engaging in professional development then it should be high quality, differentiated, and job-embedded.

School Climate and Culture

Teaching takes tremendous energy and focus. The climate and culture of the school you work in can set the tone for the work you do with students. According to Johnson et al. (2012), "Together, principals and teachers create a school climate that ensures order, engages parents, and supports student learning" (p. 27). Both the climate and the culture of a school impact teacher effectiveness. School climate represents most aspects within schools, including the quality of teaching and learning, relationships, organization, and the school environment. It shapes the quality of the interactions of all students, teachers, and parents. According to the National School Climate Council (2007), the climate of a school reflects the norms, values, and goals that represent the educational and social missions of the school. School culture refers to the way teachers and other staff members work together and the set of beliefs, values, and assumptions they share. If schools are to provide effective teachers for all students, then these schools must become places that support effective teaching and learning in all classrooms (Johnson et al., 2012).

Educational research has shown that school climate and culture contribute to outcomes in student achievement. Gurol and Kerimgil (2010) stated that collective teacher efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust have strong associations with academic achievement. Even when

studies control for demographics and past performance, schools with better work environments for teachers show greater student achievement growth (Johnson et al., 2012). Johnson (2012) added to this by finding, "students had larger achievement gains in math and reading, both initially and over time, when their teachers worked with more effective colleagues at the same grade level" (p. 118). The environment educators work in matters to them and the students they serve. Creating a thriving school climate and culture is not easy. If effective teaching is defined as the ability to increase student achievement on standardized tests, this narrow mindset can lead principals to create school cultures "myopically focused" on student achievement data (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; Wechsler & Shield, 2008). This can create feelings of competitiveness and distrust among teachers.

We must create schools where teachers as well as students flourish. According to Johnson (2012), "Teams of teachers, rather than collections of teachers, build instructional capacity within a school over time" (p. 116). Commitment to teaching and schools are strengthened if teachers believe they are working in supporting and nurturing environments that stimulate their professional growth and development (Bogler & Somech, 2004). In the past, and unfortunately for some schools today, teachers do not feel supported and nurtured. "Feeling ineffective in the classroom is exacerbated by the alienation and isolation that often characterize teaching" (Shernoff et al., 2011, p. 467). Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, & Geist (2011) added:

> Typically teachers close their doors and pursue their work in isolation. They feel comfortable ensconced in their private worlds and, as the recent drive to "sell" lesson plans on the Internet indicates, teachers have a proprietary sense of their work. This stance blocks the possibility that teachers can learn from one another and, consequently, that continuous improvement of practice can be part of school life (p. 927).

All teachers can benefit from collaboration intended to increase teacher effectiveness, no matter the level of experience or skill. Research suggested that even an ineffective teacher's chances for success would be enhanced by a supportive school context (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007). "Individuals cannot be supported or their talents sufficiently nurtured if the school itself does not change from a collection of independent classrooms to an interdependent organization in which individuals routinely contribute to others' improvement" (Johnson, 2012, p. 119).

As it has been said, collaboration is key. According to Lee, Zhang, and Yin (2011) innovation and knowledge gains are supported when teachers collaboratively and critically share their instructional practices in ongoing, reflective, inclusive, learning-oriented and growth-promoting ways. Clark (2012) stated:

> Collaboration builds the unity, security, and confidence needed to handle demanding teaching tasks. Being able to discuss and collaborate with more experienced teachers about the challenges inherent in teaching enables novice teachers to learn valuable skills and build instructional strategies and capabilities necessary to strengthen teaching ability and grow in competence (p. 197).

Teachers working in this type of setting described feeling a sense of collaboration and valued the participation with their colleagues (Gabriel, Day, & Allington, 2011). In schools where the climate and culture is strong and healthy, teachers really know each other, both professionally and personally. "As teachers participate in authentic and meaningful professional development opportunities in communities of practice, they draw upon their cultural resources, values, attitudes, and understandings of the world" (Flint et al., 2011, p. 1164). According to Johnson et al. (2012), teaching is a social career where relationships are central and the work

teachers do is influenced heavily by their relationships with their principals and colleagues in the school. For students and teachers to succeed, a supportive school climate and culture is necessary.

Routman (2012) suggested, "In the best-case scenario, expert educators rely on each other's talents and knowledge and willingly collaborate, coach, and mentor each other" (p. 60). Fullan (2001) described successful schools as having high-trust cultures that make the extraordinary possible, by energizing people and giving them the skill and will to be successful under enormously demanding conditions–and the confidence that staying the course will pay off. Teachers can find motivation from these highly effective school climates and cultures. According to Gabriel et al., (2011), many teachers reported being drawn into the contagious enthusiasm of those around them and benefiting from the exchange of ideas. Teachers who work closely together empower, transform, and create strong professional learning communities that lead to increased effectiveness.

Teacher Effectiveness and the Learning Environment

The environment that teachers create within their own classrooms can have a tremendous influence on student achievement. Teachers' skills in creating successful learning environments are related to student achievement through their impact on effective instruction and opportunities to learn (Shernoff et al., 2011). King and Watson (2010) found, some teachers are capable of creating learning environments in which students are highly motivated and feel supported in learning new concepts and ideas. Additionally, according to King and Watson (2010):

> The best learning environments are inclusive, offer relevant academic tasks and learning experiences, engage students in challenging work and supportive relationships, and

> ensure competency–by providing students with the skills, abilities, and requisite feedback on their planning for successful learning outcomes (p. 179).

Purposefully creating and maintaining this type of learning environment is not easy. Highly effective teachers know this is a priority and are able to accomplish it.

Hard work is not enough. I believe all teachers work hard, but truly effective teachers have a vision of what they want for their students and how to get there. Shernoff et al. (2011) found that teachers' beliefs about student engagement and learning are connected to student achievement, motivation, and teacher commitment. According to Malmberg et al. (2010), high-quality classrooms include an emotional/affective component, with warm, caring, positive, enthusiastic, and involved teacher-student relationships. In forming this close relationship with students, teachers gain greater understanding of students' interests, strengths, and needs. This helps guide their instruction so it is individualized for each student. In a supportive learning environment, students are then often more willing to take risks and work harder. "Student persistence, deep conceptual understanding and self-regulation are developed in high effective classrooms and lead to greater student achievement" (Bruce et al., 2010, p. 1600). Teacher efficacy, relationships with students, and classroom management all contribute to successful classroom environments, greater teacher effectiveness, and increased student learning.

Classroom management is essential for students and teachers to focus on learning. Beard, Hoy, and Hoy (2010) stated, "Academic learning time for students is essential because the time students spend successfully and actively engaged in an academic task related positively to student learning" (p. 1137). The concept of classroom management is no longer simply thought of in terms of rules and consequences. According to Stronge et al. (2011):

> Top quartile teachers scored significantly higher in managing the classroom: establishing routines, monitoring student behavior, and using time efficiently and effectively. They also scored higher in classroom organization; ensuring availability of necessary materials for students, physical layout of the classroom, and using space effectively (p. 348).

This connection between classroom management and student achievement is clear. This positive climate is cultivated and maintained when the management of students is based on respect, fairness, and trust (Stronge et al., 2011). Although studies on teacher effectiveness have added to our knowledge of what it means to be effective, we still need to understand what this means to teachers and principals.

If public education is to provide effective teachers for all students, then the schools those students attend must become places that support effective teaching and learning across all classrooms (Johnson et al., 2012). This study will go beyond previous research that defines teacher effectiveness to reach into the hearts and minds of teachers and principals. It will give us a view of how teacher effectiveness is perceived. This new knowledge will empower schools in their efforts to increase student achievement through improved teacher effectiveness.

Description of Next Chapter

Chapter III includes an explanation of the research methods utilized for this qualitative case study. It includes a description of the research design, case selection, site selection, participant criteria, data collection, data analysis, the researcher's background and subjectivities, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

At the core of the work of evaluation and professional development are the beliefs teachers and administrators hold about teacher effectiveness. The current educational climate demands a focus on improving teacher effectiveness as the pressure to increase student achievement continues to grow.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain greater understanding of the perceptions that teachers and their principal hold about teacher effectiveness. I sought to answer the following questions in this case study of one small school:

1. Do teachers at this school hold common understandings of teacher effectiveness?
2. Are the teachers' and principal's perceptions of teacher effectiveness the same or different?
3. How do the perceptions of the teachers and their principal align with the teacher evaluation system they use?

Understanding teacher effectiveness is essential for teachers and school leaders who are striving to improve instruction and student outcomes. Research has shown that teacher effectiveness is strongly linked to student achievement (Johnson et al., 2012; Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011; Norman, 2010; Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). Exploring the perceptions about teacher effectiveness is crucial for school districts and school leaders who wish to accurately

evaluate teacher effectiveness, plan professional development, and build teacher capacity in efforts to increase student learning. This work has the potential to guide educational policy and lead to improved teacher evaluation. This may include more specific definitions of teacher effectiveness, specific goal setting, design of professional development, evaluation of the progress made toward meeting school-wide and teacher goals, and shaping school climate and culture.

Teaching has enduring, meaningful, and positive effects on student achievement, therefore identifying effective teachers as well as factors that cause teachers to be more effective is important for educational research and reform (Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011). This importance is even greater at the classroom level, where educators are striving towards greater effectiveness in teaching every day. A good teacher makes an observable difference, but what is not clear is what makes a good teacher (Goldhaber, 2002). In this study I compared the perceptions of teacher effectiveness through the eyes of teachers and their principal at the elementary school level. I sought to find whether an understanding of teacher effectiveness is shared by all teachers and by the principal and classroom teachers within one particular school. I also wanted to discover if this shared understanding was in alignment with the teacher evaluation system they used. A clearer understanding of how teachers conceive of excellent teaching will contribute to improved teaching and learning and educational reforms (Chen et al., 2012). Our ever-changing students and classrooms demand that we continually examine and revise what effective teaching looks like.

This chapter provides an overview of my research process. It includes the theoretical framework and methodology as well as the specific methods used. It explains the research questions, case and participant selection process, and how the data was collected. Data analysis,

the researcher's background and subjectivity, and validation strategies are clarified. Lastly, possible ethical issues are explored.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods of inquiry lead researchers to discover the "why" of an identified phenomenon. The use of qualitative research methods in educational research has a long and distinguished history (Torrence, 2010). A qualitative study enabled me to better understand the perceptions of teachers and their principal within a specific school. This approach had several basic characteristics that informed the design of this study. The lived experiences of teachers and principals told the story of how educators view teacher effectiveness. The participants' words were examined to understand the perceptions they have constructed.

Research Design

My background as an educator for more than 25 years has greatly shaped my approach to this study. I believe that children and adults actively learn through experiences within their environment. Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) stated that to ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about reality. The tradition of qualitative inquiry selected by a researcher can shape the design of the study (Creswell, 1998).

Table 1

Overview of Research Options (Adapted from Crotty, 1998)

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspectives	Methodology	Methods
• Objectivism • Constructivism • Subjectivism	• Positivism • Interpretivism Symbolic Interactionism Phenomenology • Critical inquiry • Feminism • Postmodernism etc.	• Experimental • Survey • Ethnography • Phenomenological • Grounded theory • Heuristic inquiry • Action research • Discourse analysis etc.	• Sampling • Statistical analysis • Questionnaire • Observation • Interview • Focus group • Document analysis • Content analysis etc.

After I considered all of the options in Table 1, the decision to adopt a specific approach this topic enabled me to uncover teacher and principal perceptions of teacher effectiveness. I took a constructivist approach to this research. We construct understanding through our past and present interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices (Charmaz, 2014). My experience with students and teachers has strengthened my confidence in the constructivist point of view. In classrooms, I often use Socratic seminars to help students process content and learn from one another. After the seminar, where students have shared their understandings and heard the opinions of others, students reflect on their learning by writing in a journal. When I have compared their writing samples both without participating in a Socratic seminar and after participating in the seminar, the quality of student writing is better and students write more. Constructivism views knowledge as being constructed between humans and the world, and developed and transmitted within a social context (Crotty, 1998). I believe when we connect with others we learn and retain knowledge more effectively. When considering constructivism Crotty (1998) further suggested:

> Such research invites us to approach the object in a "radical spirit of openness" to gain new or richer meaning. This stance is the best match to a research topic which looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world. (p. 67)

Because the research focused on the perceptions of teachers and their principal, this approach allowed the perceptions of teachers and their principal unfold naturally reflecting their beliefs and experiences as educators.

An ethnographic case study approach enabled me to gain an understanding of the perceptions educators hold concerning teacher effectiveness. Ethnography is guided by an explicit educational theory about the ways things work within a specific culture or group of people in a particular setting (Mertler, 2016). An ethnographic case study approach provided a path to better understand how educators view teacher effectiveness and give me a real-world view of the beliefs held at this school. Mertler (2016) stated, "Ethnography involves in-depth description and interpretation of the shared or common practices and beliefs of a culture, social group or other community" (p. 92). To gain a greater understanding of the perceptions teachers and their administrator about teacher effectiveness I gathered contextual data from multiple sources. I explored perceptions within this school through the use of semi-structured interviews of teachers and their current principal, classroom and team meeting observations, and official school documents. "The distinctive need for case study research arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Teaching is complex work and the beliefs teachers and principals hold about effectiveness shapes and guides this work.

Case Selection

Site Selection

Providing an accurate reflection of the views and perspectives of the participants in their natural setting was the goal of this ethnographic case study. I purposefully selected a school site to compare principal and teacher perceptions of teacher effectiveness. The district chosen was one that is currently implementing a framework for evaluating teachers, therefore it offered me an opportunity to see teacher effectiveness discussed in process. The data collected were used for comparison of perceptions to the framework used for teacher evaluation in this district. The school district and specific school selected were chosen from school districts in North Dakota. Professional relationships with the principal and superintendent helped with access to this school. This case study took place in a district with a total population of 338 students in grades Kindergarten through Grade 12. The elementary school had a population of 190 students. There were 12 classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. The ethnic population of the students who attended this elementary school included 180 Caucasian students, 1 African-American student, 7 Hispanic students, and 2 students who registered as "Other." Within this school, 20% of its students received free or reduced lunches. The site was chosen because it represents many typical schools within the mid-west which are neither large urban schools nor one-room school houses.

Participant Selection

This study included teachers and their principal from a single school in North Dakota. I purposefully asked all teachers within this school to participate to gain a better understanding their perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

Participants	Grade Level	Years of Experience in Education
1	Kindergarten	10
2	Kindergarten	3
3	1	10
4	1	2
5	2	20
6	3	4
7	3	unknown
8	4	2
9	4	2
10	5	10
11	6	unknown
12	Principal	9

Figure 1. Participants in this Case Study

The participants represented a range of teaching experience in both years in the classroom and levels of expertise. Purposefully, classroom teachers only participated in the study, not specialists. The principal also participated which enabled the researcher to gather needed data to compare responses and perceptions of teachers and their principal. Potential candidates were contacted through email once the superintendent had given his consent to participate in the study. In this school, all twelve teachers and their principal gave written consent to participate in this study. Ten of the teachers gave consent to interviews and classroom observations. The other two teachers agreed to be observed during team meetings. This study was approved through the IRB approval process at the University of North Dakota. The proposed IRB approval was granted on December 1, 2016 and extended through November 1, 2017.

Data Collection

In a case study approach, a study of a population in their natural setting offered an in-depth look at a specific culture. The gathering of data from multiple sources provided a richness of data to compare perceptions of teachers and their principal. Yin (2009) argued, "A case study uses multiple sources of data which converge in triangulated evidence" (p. 3). This process of triangulation helped to eliminate biases that might result from over reliance on one data-collection method. To this end, the study involved three distinct methods of data collection:

1. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and their principal
2. Observation of team meetings and classroom settings
3. A systematic review of school documents

Interviews

Creating a safe, trusting environment for the participants in this study was critical. The quality of the data obtained was impacted by the nature of the relationship developed during this initial meeting and later interviews. Prior to conducting interviews, confidentiality procedures were explained. I assured participants that I would uphold confidentiality and anonymity of all participants and the data collected. After giving written consent to participate in the study, teacher and principal confidentially was strictly adhered to. These interviews were designed to allow for deeper exploration of the perceptions about teacher effectiveness. I interviewed ten classroom teachers. Eight of the teachers participated in a single in-depth interview. Two of the classroom teachers were interviewed a second time to gather more data. The principal was also interviewed twice. I chose to ask these specific classroom teachers and their principal for second interviews after I transcribed the data and found some ideas that were not fully explored. I wanted to be sure to capture the depth of their perceptions about teacher effectiveness.

Interviews in qualitative research go beyond fact gathering and attempt to construct meanings and interpretation in the context of conversation (Kvale, 1996). In-depth interviews provided a rich source of data to seek answers to the questions in this specific school about teacher effectiveness.

Through in-depth interviews, I was able to record each participant's lived story and through analysis and interpretation of the data, combine these to tell their story. The interviews involved one-to-one conversations that were semi-structured, but open enough to allow for depth of discussion and exploration. The questions were designed for teachers to explore their perceptions without undue influence from me. I built rapport and trust with the participants by posing questions and listening generously.

In preparation for the interviews, I wrote open-ended questions that would allowed for greater understanding around the topic of teacher effectiveness. The statements and underlying beliefs shared by the participants influenced my choice of questions during each interview. I wanted to allow for flexibility in the questions as I gathered the unfolding beliefs about teacher effectiveness. The following questions were asked:

For teachers:

1. Tell me about your role? How long have you been a teacher?
2. What is your educational background? How did your career in education begin?
3. What is important for you to achieve each day in the classroom? What is important for your students to achieve?
4. Describe the type of classroom in which children thrive? What would you see, hear, and feel in this classroom?

5. Think of a time you felt your students were learning at high levels. What were your students doing? What were you doing?
6. How do you know when your instruction is effective?
7. Tell me about a teacher you worked with that you thought was an exceptional teacher. What did he or she do that made you believe they were highly effective? What do you know about your colleagues who are great teachers?

For the principal:

1. Tell me about your role? How long have you been a principal?
2. What is your educational background? How did your career begin?
3. What is important for you to achieve each day in your school? What is important for students to achieve?
4. Describe the type of classroom in which children thrive? What would you see, hear, and feel in this classroom?
5. Think of a time you felt students were learning at high levels. What were the students doing? What was the teacher doing?
6. How do you know when classroom instruction is effective?
7. Tell me about the best teacher in your building. What did he or she do that made you believe they were highly effective? What do you know about teachers who are great?

I presented the same questions to each participant. Follow-up or probing questions were the only deviation from the questions above. I approached each interview and participant in the same manner so the validity of the data would be intact. During the interview, I took notes that helped me to modify and enrich my questioning to gain greater understanding of the participants'

perceptions. Each interview was audio recorded with written permission from the participant. Following each interview, I transcribed the data verbatim, took notes, and reflected on the data collected.

Table 2

Example of Transcribed Data

	Transcribed Data
ME:	So what I'm wondering is if you'll describe the type of classroom you think students really thrive in.
INTERVIEWEE:	Um, one that has trust. Where they feel safe. The environment is welcoming and they feel free to take risks in learning. Consistency I believe to be extremely important. Expectations are set so that they know it's going to be a day. Something dependable they can count on. Just really one that has that relationship value in the forefront before all else.

I conducted these interviews over a three-month period. The audio-recordings, field notes, and transcription led to greater reliability within the data by offering a means for me to cross check the accuracy of the data collected. The data from interviews, field notes, recordings, transcripts, and consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet to be viewed only by me for data analysis and by a select few who checked its validity. This was to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and the validity of the data. These interviews combined with observations and documents gave me a broader view and a way to better understand the participants' experiences and beliefs.

Observations

In qualitative research observation is one data collection method and the field notes are then the data (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). To increase the accuracy of the data collected

and my own understanding of the topic being studied the observation notes taken served as a way to further investigate perceptions of teacher effectiveness. According to Mertler (2016), "Observations, as a means of collecting qualitative data, involve carefully watching and systematically recording of what you see and hear in a particular setting" (p. 200). After asking for and obtaining permission to observe in all classrooms, I observed as many classrooms as possible while in the school. During the study I observed in 10 different classrooms from kindergarten through 6th grade. In total, there were 22 classroom observations done. Classroom observations occurred two or three times in each of these classrooms at random times throughout the day. With permission, I also observed team meetings or professional learning communities. During these observations, I was taking notes on the setting, what students and teachers were doing, the interactions, and the conversations being had.

To avoid interference with the natural setting, I sat in the back of the classroom or off to the side. I observed and took extensive, descriptive notes to accurately describe the physical setting, the people involved in that setting, the interactions observed, the reconstruction of dialogue, and the behaviors of the participants in the setting (Emerson et al, 2011). These field notes contained both descriptive information from what I directly observed and reflective information gathered from my interpretation of the observation.

A total of 203 minutes of classroom observation data were collected. In addition to these classroom observations, three team meetings were observed. The team meetings included a leadership team meeting, a 1st grade professional learning community meeting, and a combined 5th and 6th grade professional learning community meeting. During this study, 120 minutes of team meeting data were collected. Field notes were taken during all observations. These totaled 40 pages of field notes recorded by me, the researcher. The notes taken were intended to guide

me as a researcher. These field notes helped me to reflect on the information being gathered, ask questions when needed, and focus my observations on evidence of perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Taking field notes also helped me to be aware of my own thoughts on the topic so I could set these thoughts aside and focus on the data. These data were coded, and analyzed along with the interview data.

Documents

Official documents can provide greater depth of understanding of the topic by providing another source of information. Documents that were available included the district's mission statement, student handbook, a principal letter of introduction, teacher observation and reflection forms, the daily school-wide schedule, and *Kim Marshall Teacher Evaluation* documents. These documents, collected and analyzed, gave me another method of data collection that led to greater understanding of the participants and their perceptions of teacher effectiveness in this specific case study. These documents were collected with the permission of the principal during the course of the study. As I collected, coded, and analyzed the data a deeper understanding of the topic was gained. Gubrium (2012) stated:

> Research is an inductive, comparative, iterative, and interactive method. Researchers subject their data to rigorous comparative analysis that successively moves from studying concrete realities to rendering a conceptual understanding from these data. (p. 347)

For each document, I read thoroughly and reflected on the content. I coded the documents with words or phrases that held the meaning intact. These codes were then combined with the codes from the interviews and observations to provide greater depth and accuracy to this case study. This continuous loop from analysis to data collection enabled me to decide what data needed to be collected next.

Data Analysis

In this ethnographic case study, I borrowed methods from grounded theory to analyze the data collected. In this way, I studied the topic in-depth without being limited by predetermined categories. This approach was needed to accurately uncover the perceptions of teachers and their principal about the topic of teacher effectiveness. Through a series of carefully planned steps, constant comparative methods have the potential to develop theoretical ideas directly from the data. According to Glaser (1965), "The constant comparative method is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon" (p. 438). This method allowed me to make direct links from the theories that emerge back to the original participants' words and experiences. In a systematic approach, I sought to develop a theory that explains the perceptions of teachers and principals about the concept of teacher effectiveness.

Throughout the research process, I used specific steps to analyze and interpret the qualitative data: organizing and preparing the data; coding the data; building themes through description; interpreting the findings; and validating accuracy (Creswell, 2007).

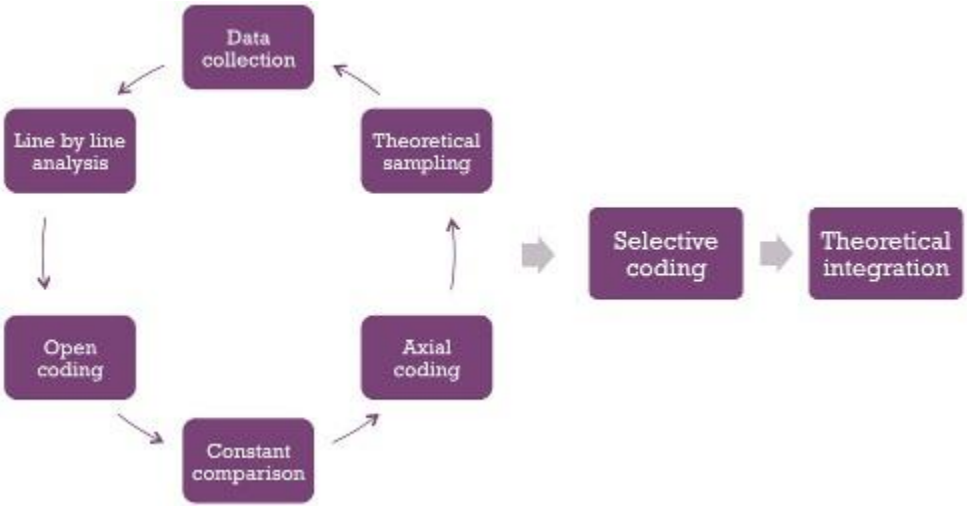

Figure 2. Data Analysis Procedure of Grounded Theory Method

My data collection and analysis were guided by these steps in order to maintain the accuracy of the data and validity of the study. Through strong research design and implementation, the topic of teacher effectiveness was explored in-depth within this case study. I was very careful to follow research protocols to ensure validity of the results.

Organizing and Preparing the Data

After interviewing the participants, I transcribed the recorded interviews myself to ensure accuracy, validity, and to immerse myself in the data. I listened to the recordings several times and read the transcription over for accuracy. Samplings of the interview recordings and transcribed data were checked by my advisor and a peer in UND's Educational Leadership doctoral program to ensure accuracy. I prepared and organized my classroom and team observations, interviews, documents, and field notes by creating documents and spreadsheets to easily refer back to the data. These were also checked by my advisor and a peer for accuracy of information. Each interview was member checked by the participant for accuracy. The transcribed data, observation, and field notes were easily accessible and were the firm foundation the analysis was built on. During this process, I tried very hard to keep an open mind and let the data guide my learning about the participants' values, beliefs, and perceptions.

Coding the Data

During this initial phase of coding, I took the transcribed interview data and reduced them to significant statements. The purpose of coding was to narrow the bulk of the data into specific categories to make analysis manageable. In this initial reduction, I was very careful to hold on to the meaning of the data as they were reduced. To ensure the meaning was retained, I reduced the data by taking out words that did not contain the meaning in each statement. An

inductive process that is used to uncover common themes and patterns across the data provides an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Ary, Jacobs, Razavich, & Sorensen, 2006; Glesne, 2011). This first step of analysis was done in a word documents with highlighting and commenting. The comments were then copied and pasted into an excel spreadsheet for ease of further analysis. The numbered comments enabled me to easily move from raw data to significant statements.

Table 3

Example of Significant Statements

Significant Statements from Interview Data
[CJ16]no distractions, in tune, present, true learning
[CJ17]who is leading, students themselves or adult
[CJ18]driven by kids, ones in charge
[CJ19]building relationship, take risks
[CJ20]differentiation, show learning different ways
[CJ21]growth mindset, takes charge, attempt after attempt, failures become learn
[CJ22]active with students, in and out of student conversation
[CJ23]conversation needs to go, never in the way
[CJ24]extra assistance, pushed to excel
[CJ25]different things happening, different activities
[CJ26]want to be in classroom
[CJ27]sharing happenings, getting feedback from parents

Because I was the one collecting and transcribing all of the data, I knew the information very well. This helped me to use inductive coding to move towards analysis. These codes emerged from the qualitative data collected by labeling reduced statements with descriptive words or phrases. These significant statements were then reduced again to capture the essential meaning of the raw data. In total, I identified 860 codes in all data sources. There were 371

codes identified in the interview data, 244 codes in the observation data, and 245 codes in the school documents. These codes were kept organized to enable me to move from raw data to statements to codes and back again within a spreadsheet. In this way, the codes could clearly be linked back to the original interviews, observations, and documents.

Table 4

Example of Moving from Interview Data to Codes

Raw data	Significant Statements	Secondary reduction	Codes
I think they have to be active with the students. I mean, a classroom teacher is most effective I think when they are in and out of student conversation.	Teacher active with students, teacher most effective, in and out of student conversations	T active, T most effective, S conversations	Active Effective Conversations Facilitation

Emerging Categories and Themes

After the review of the data through member-checking and peer reviewing to ensure the validity of the data, I sought to find categories and eventually themes that emerged from the data. To do this, I wanted to work closely with the data in a hands-on method. I printed and cut out all of the codes so I could physically manipulate them to enable the categories and themes to emerge directly from the data.

Figure 3. *The Many Codes*

The first step I took was to organize the codes alphabetically. This allowed me to see the frequency of each code. After I organized the data alphabetically, I then began to look for patterns. I combined similar codes into categories. A category represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Straus & Corbin, 1998). The constant comparative method was applied to continue to compare data being gathered to the emerging categories. In this way, I could see the relationships among and between the codes. My background as an educator helped tremendously at this point.

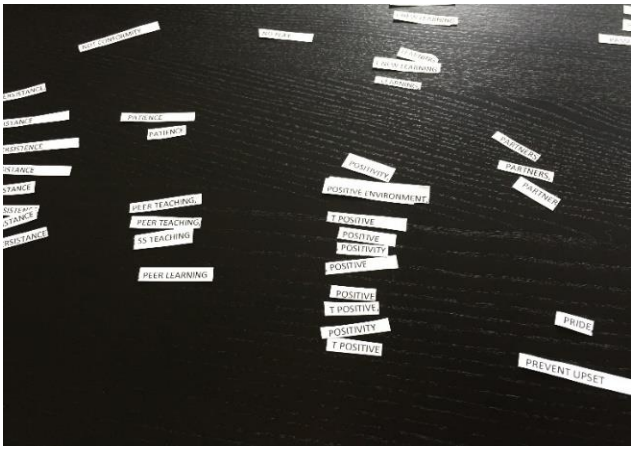

Figure 4. *Categories Begin to Develop*

Through this process, I found many common categories and some contrasting ideas within the interview data. From these multiple categories, I could then see commonalities. I then began to put common categories together under several universal themes that emerged from the codes and categories. The relationships between and within the emerging categories allowed me to find relevant themes (Creswell, 2007). The observation, field notes, and school documents were used to further validate or refute the interview data. In this way, the data collected was used to check for accuracy of emergent themes.

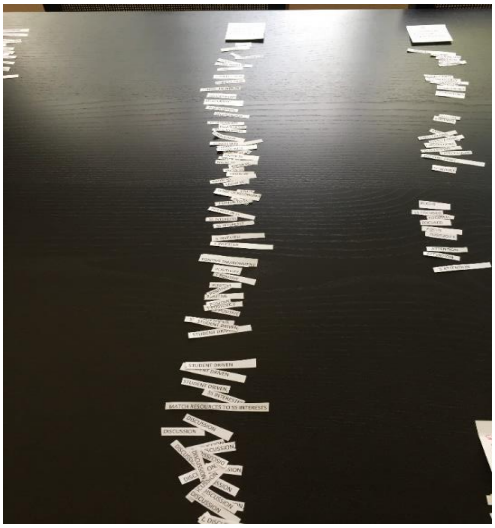

Figure 5. *Emerging Themes*

One example was the theme "Desire to Improve." It contained the categories of growth mindset, continuous learning, desire to learn, and risk taking. This systematic cognitive process of combining codes and then categories enabled me to see more abstract ideas and eventually themes. This continual comparison and grouping and regrouping codes and categories was an exciting endeavor. After many days of moving hundreds of tiny slips of paper, reflecting, and then regrouping them again, I was finally satisfied that the themes truly reflected the data that was gathered. In doing this hands-on building of themes, I gained a clearer sense of what the

data were revealing about the perceptions the teachers and their principal held about teacher effectiveness. The final step occurred as I developed assertions based on the themes and sub-themes. At each stage in data analysis, the codes, categories, themes, and the eventual assertions were tied directly to the raw data collected during the interviews, observations, and documents. The voices and lived stories of educators were told through this process.

Table 5

Sample of Codes Across All Sources of Data

	Interview Codes	Observation Codes	Document Codes
Themes	Active Student Engagement Building Relationships and Community Providing Expectations, Structure, and Routines Teacher Facilitation and Differentiation The Desire to Improve Teacher Reflection, Collaboration, and Support		
Codes	active environment active attention engage action retention active learning active engagement active assessment authentic assessment research active learning fun active facilitating communicating student focus focus T effort planning T effort mentor S invested support colleagues planning communicate with S S invested supporting colleagues supporting colleagues collaboration T improvement support colleagues T reflection persistence T reflection T improvement	small group collaboration questioning problem solving questioning explicit directions quiet T modeling S questioning S asking questions problem solve questioning T persistence relationship S unsure questioning small groups technology technology small groups T learning engagement T modeling S testing engagement testing learning retention questioning T needs pacing challenge S fun S collaboration challenge S T learning differentiation	community T continual growth community S centered T dedicated individualized positive experience practice respectful responsible safe T love job T excitement T challenge community T share life T experience T education T collaboration content S focus T doing S doing feedback T support analysis reflection respect belief expectations communication involving homework responsiveness reporting outreach resource

Interpreting the Findings

The work up to this point created the opportunity for me to now interpret the data. The continual process of collecting, managing, reading, interpreting, and visualizing the data is defined as an "analytic circle" (Creswell, 2007). In a case study approach, it is critical to continually gather data from multiple sources to ensure an in-depth study. I used multiple interviews, observation notes, field notes, and an analysis of school documents to describe the perceptions about teacher effectiveness. This analysis process helped me to be prepared to accurately interpret the emergent codes, categories, and themes and then answer the research questions posed in this ethnographic case study. Interpretation of the findings from this case study will be discussed in detail in Chapter V of this dissertation.

Delimitations

All research has parameters chosen by the researcher and inherent to the study. This qualitative case study was limited to the teachers and the principal working together within a specific elementary school setting. It was also limited to studying the perceptions of educators within a rural community in mid-western North Dakota. These parameters were in place to gain greater depth of understanding in the area in which I live and the population with whom I work. This study included data collected from in-depth interviews, classroom and team meeting observations, field notes, and authentic school documents. In this way, I achieved greater understanding of teachers' and principals' perceptions and beliefs about teacher effectiveness within this school. The participants included 11 classroom teachers and the principal they work in one specific school. I collaborated with the superintendent to gain access to the principal and teachers who were interested in participating in this study. This study may serve as the

foundation for future research on perceptions of teacher effectiveness, including greater numbers of teachers and principals and districts outside of North Dakota.

Validity

To capture accurate perceptions of both the teachers and their principal of what teacher effectiveness is, I followed specific steps in the collection of data, analysis, and checking for accuracy. Validity in research process is the pursuit of truth. Truth cannot be separated from knowing, this is expressed in perspectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While conducting the interviews, I audio-recorded the conversation and took detailed notes. The rich, thick descriptions gathered provided extensive data to work with and may allow for transferability to future studies (Creswell, 2007). I conducted member-checking with the participants to ensure I correctly documented my participants' perceptions. To do this, I asked the participants to read through the transcripts and observation notes for accuracy. Each participant's data was labeled with a pseudonym for anonymity and organization.

To further ensure validity, I constantly reviewed my observation notes, transcribed interviews, field notes, and documents. After coding and analyzing the data, I could trace the themes back to the raw data. The themes that emerged can be seen across multiple sources of data including the interviews, observations, and documents. This triangulation of data established internal validity (Slavin, 2007). Follow-up interviews of several teachers and the principal offered greater depth of data collection and further validated the results. These rich, thick descriptions through interviews and observation notes provided a clearer picture of the case study setting and perceptions of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Finally, I was able to conduct an external audit for validity. My advisor and a dissertation student reviewed my codes and themes and the process in which I obtained them at several times during the research and analysis process.

Researcher Background and Subjectivity

Researchers must keep in mind their own experiences and beliefs about their topic throughout the research process. Because researchers approach topics with their own experiences and beliefs, it is important for researchers to be aware of their beliefs and possible biases. As the researcher, I attempted to consciously set aside my own beliefs and feelings about teacher effectiveness to gain a greater understanding the perceptions of the practicing teachers and the principal in this case study.

The years I have been in education, and especially in the classroom working closely with students, has shaped my understanding of teacher effectiveness. I strongly believe that each teacher's knowledge of content, student development and the learning process, ability to engage students actively in learning, and their unwavering commitment to their students' learning have a profound impact on student achievement. To better understand the perceptions of principals and teachers, I approached each interview and observation with an open mind with the intent to hear their voices, lived experiences, and beliefs. In addition to gathering data, my experience as an educator also influenced my research design and interpretation. "Behind the theory, method, analysis, epistemology, and methodology of the researcher is the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 18). Throughout this study, I used a notebook to record my own thoughts as I was processing the information gathered. In this way, I tried to be aware of my biases. At every point in our research—observing, interpreting, and reporting—we inject

a host of assumptions (Crotty, 1998). As an educator with more than 25 years of experience, I needed to be very cautious that my own views, about the teacher effectiveness and the tremendous impact it makes, did not affect the conclusions that emerged from this study.

My current role as an instructional coach for a large school district in North Dakota, has increased my understanding of teacher effectiveness. It has also revealed the struggles of teachers and school leaders in finding shared understandings and goals around improving teacher effectiveness. It seems that each teacher and principal I work with has his or her own view of effectiveness. This makes the critical work of increasing teacher effectiveness very difficult. I have spent much of my last five years talking with teachers and principals about their knowledge, goals, and practices in the classroom. I attempted to keep in mind my own biases as I gathered and analyzed the data within this case study.

I maintained sensitivity and reflexivity toward my interpretation of participants' perspectives during interviews to try and hear their voices and see through their eyes (Glesne, 2011). Within the interview process, I listened carefully to participants' responses without injecting my own thoughts or beliefs. I asked probing questions intended to clarify or extend the understanding of the participants' perception about teacher effectiveness. These included "restatement probes" that rephrase participants' responses; "reflective probes" that clarify participants' responses; and "mirror probes" that summarize participants' responses (Steward & Cash, 2003). These probes helped me to construct an in-depth understanding of how teachers and administrators perceive teacher effectiveness while staying true to the perceptions of the teachers and principals interviewed.

Our beliefs shape for us the meaning of research questions, the purposiveness of research methodologies, and the interpretability of research findings (Crotty, 1998). I worked diligently

to set aside my beliefs about what teacher effectiveness looks like. I also tried to put aside my beliefs about measuring effectiveness. A focused effort on my part to collect and analyze the data with clear objectivity was in place. My personal experiences as an instructional coach and teacher enabled me to build connections and relationships with the participants. I realized that these may impact the data, so I was careful to not let them get in the way of collecting valid data. The validity of the emerging theories was held intact by my openness and acceptance of my own biases, constant reflection, and resolve to put them aside.

Ethical Considerations

I attempted to maintain a non-threatening environment that put the participants at ease. The time and place of each interview was decided upon by the participant to create greater comfort and control for the participants. Teacher interviews took place in the participants' classrooms when no students were present. Team meetings were held in a common meeting space. The principal interviews took place in her office and at a coffee shop. Interactions with my participants were professional, relaxed, and conversational (Slavin, 2007). Two participants in this case study were former students I had taught in college level courses. When I became aware of this, I had to be very careful that my previous knowledge of these teachers did not interfere with the collection of accurate data. I purposefully tried to set aside my preconceived perceptions of their beliefs and teaching practices so that I could look and listen with an open mind.

I informed my participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time or for any reason. No participants withdrew from the study. For the privacy of my participants, pseudonyms were used to protect confidentiality. The transcribed interviews, recordings, field notes, observation notes, and school documents were kept in a locked cabinet so they were

assessable only by me. These data were not shared with anyone other than my advisor and my peer reviewers during the research process. This study was conducted with strict ethical considerations, which are reflected in the validity of the research.

Summary

This chapter was a review of the research design. It provided details including qualitative case study methods, epistemology and theoretical perspectives, and the methodology used. Site and participant selection was explained. Specific research aspects such as data collection through in-depth interviews, observations, field notes, and documents using an ethnographic case study approach were presented. Reflections concerning researcher background, subjectivity, and ethical considerations were provided.

Description of Next Chapter

In Chapter IV, the findings from this case study will be interpreted. The themes which emerged from the data collected will be discussed. The data is summarized in narrative form according to the six themes identified in the coding and analysis process.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The intent of this case study was to explore and define the perceptions of teacher effectiveness. After a thorough data analysis and continual reflection I captured the thoughts and understandings of the participants in this small elementary school in central North Dakota. This section is organized by six broad themes which emerged from the analysis process: (a) active student engagement; (b) building relationships and classroom community; (c) providing expectations, structure, and routines; (d) teacher facilitation and differentiation; (e) the desire to improve; and (f) teacher reflection, collaboration, and support.

Thematic Findings

The findings from in-depth interviews of teachers and their principal consistently pointed to these six themes. These findings were further validated through the analysis of observation data and authentic school documents. The table below summarizes the data found in one-to-one interviews across all classroom teachers and the principal.

Table 6

Common Themes Referenced Among Participants' Interviews

Participant	Active Student Engagement	Building Relationships and Community	Providing Expectations, Structure, and Routines	Teacher Facilitation and Differentiation	The Desire to Improve	Teacher Reflection, Collaboration, and Support
Teacher 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 2	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 4	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 10	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Principal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

These themes were found in one-to-one interviews, but were also apparent in classroom and team meeting observations. During these observations I took careful notes about what students and their teacher were doing and saying in the classrooms. Team meetings provided further evidence of the emerging themes as teachers worked together in grade levels to improve student learning.

Table 7

Common Themes Referenced Among Classroom and Team Meeting Observations

Participant	Active Student Engagement	Building Relationships and Community	Providing Expectations, Structure, and Routines	Teacher Facilitation and Differentiation	The Desire to Improve	Teacher Reflection, Collaboration, and Support
Teacher 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Teacher 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Teacher 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 7	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Teacher 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher 10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Principal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

These findings reflect the perceptions about teacher effectiveness held by the classroom teachers and their principal at this school. To triangulate the data I also used authentic school documents as evidence of the perceptions of teacher effectiveness at this case study school. These documents were analyzed for content by reducing text to significant statements and then codes were applied. In this case study, the documents contained evidence of the themes found in interviews and observations.

Table 8

Common Themes Referenced in Authentic School Documents

Document	Active Student Engagement	Building Relationships and Community	Providing Expectations, Structure, and Routines	Teacher Facilitation and Differentiation	The Desire to Improve	Teacher Reflection, Collaboration, and Support
Principal Letter of Introduction	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Elementary School Student Handbook	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kim Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The themes are explained in greater depth with evidence from each source in the following sections.

Theme 1: Active Student Engagement

The overarching theme of active student engagement emerged from the data early on in the analysis of the data collected. All teachers and their principal reported that student achievement is greatest when children are actively engaged in their learning. One teacher stated, "In my opinion students thrive in an environment that is active, more often than not students sit in their desks too long. When you can engage them in any type of activity they're going to retain it better." Another teacher added to this that classroom environments need to be very engaging and fun for students and that "if you don't have their attention, they're not going to learn as

well." Within this theme, codes such as; *engaged, active, movement, excitement, hands-on, energy, fun,* and *play* were found across interviews, observations, and school documents.

In this theme of active student engagement, movements was mentioned explicitly twelve times as being beneficial to student learning during one-to-one interviews. This was also evident in classroom observations and mentioned a few times in school documents. Teachers believed that students should not be "stuck behind a desk" or "staring at a computer all day." Several teachers shared that students benefit from moving during and in between lessons. For example, one teacher explained, "I think you should see kids walking around" and "engaging in conversations with each other." Another teacher further stated, "I think a little commotion is kind of natural for kids." This was also evident in classroom observations where students chose where to work and had the freedom to move when needed. In kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, students stood as they worked or moved from center to center as they learned.

Teachers also expressed the belief that students should have hands-on experiences with the content they are studying. One teacher stated, "We did many experiments that were very hands-on." These hands-on experiences enabled students to get involved with the content at a deeper level. This was especially evident during observations of kindergarten classrooms where students worked with materials such as building blocks, sand tables, and magnets. Students actively built and manipulated materials. Their facial expressions and asking others to "watch this" or "look what I can do" as they showed other students wheat they had accomplished were evidence of student engagement and learning. Teachers stated that students "really enjoyed this rather than sitting at desks and doing paperwork." Teachers felt these hands-on experiences helped students enjoy and remember their learning.

When teachers talked about active student engagement, they shared stories about students having fun in their classrooms. One teacher expressed how she felt more effective when her students were having fun while they were learning. "You can tell they're engaged in what they're doing. They think it is fun." Nine out of the ten teachers stated that they felt when students were actively engaged that their learning increased. "I feel like when they are playing and having fun they are going to get more out of it, retain more, and remember it." A teacher said that some of her students tell her that they are having fun.

When students were actively engaged in their learning, teachers believed they were more effective. Through active engagement, teachers believed there would be increased opportunities for students to learn, increased motivation, and increased retention of the content. There were indications that students were having fun and being engaged in their learning in several classrooms. In both kindergarten classrooms I observed students working collaboratively in centers around the room. Some students were moving throughout the room "writing the room" by copying words they found on a page. The students were working together to point out words and read to each other as they recorded the words on their papers. In the kindergarten classroom next door, one student was highly engaged in exploring how magnets work. He chose different items in that center to see if the large magnet would stick to them. He said to another child, "Watch this! It's a magnet and it sticks to the pan". In other classrooms I observed students smiling and engaging with other students and their teacher. The sound of laughter was common in the classrooms observed.

Active student engagement was also found to be perceived as effective by the principal in this case study. In response to the question of the type of classroom children thrive in, the principal stated:

> There is always a little buzz. Kids are up doing something. The teacher is active, but the kids are really taking the forefront in learning. You know the students are comfortable because they are free to share out in class. They are engaging in conversation with one another.

She added to this concept of active engagement by sharing that the teacher should also be actively engaged. "A classroom teacher has to be active with the students and is most effective when they are in and out of student conversations." Both classroom teachers and their principal share the perception that teachers who are effective give students opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning.

The classroom observations and school documents analyzed also reflect this theme of active student engagement. Within several classrooms, students were engaged in lessons which required them to move around the room and collaborate with other students. They were actively involved with their classmates as they searched for answers and shared their thinking. In one classroom I observed, students were having a friendly spelling competition. Students were in four teams with four students in each team. When the teacher said the spelling word aloud, students helped their team to write the word correctly on the white board. It was apparent that students were highly engaged by their active participation in helping the student who was recording the word. I could see that students were listening to each other and learning from each other. The *Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics* this school used also mentioned active engagement as a teacher competency. Under "delivery of instruction" teachers were rated highly effective if they "hook all students in units and lessons by activating knowledge, experience, reading, and vocabulary." It also stated teachers were highly effective if they "get virtually all students involved in focused activities, actively learning and problem-solving" and provides

lessons that "motivate and engage all students in active learning." It is clear that in this school teachers and their principal valued and worked toward students being actively engaged in their learning.

On rare occasions during interviews, teachers mentioned beliefs or practices that may seem contrary to the shared perception of active engagement. Under this theme, some teachers shared their beliefs about engagement being fun and exciting with plenty of movement. A few other teachers mentioned that student engagement should take place in a calm environment where students are relaxed and focused on their work. I felt this was important to mention and possibly something to explore more in the future. Whether a teacher envisions an active engaged environment as one with plenty of movement, energy, and play or one that is calm and relaxed, it requires thoughtfulness and effort by the teacher to set up and maintain the type of environment that supports deep engaging learning.

Theme 2: Building Relationships and Classroom Community

Throughout the interviews and observations, creating positive relationships and a close classroom community were constant elements in this case study about teacher effectiveness. Teachers and their principal shared their thoughts on connecting to students, listening closely to them, and knowing their interests. This theme of building relationships and community emerged from codes which included positive relationships, connecting to students, caring, knowing students, knowing student interests, and building community. Teachers consistently reported the need to develop positive caring relationships with students.

This desire to build a close classroom community was evident during several one-to-one interviews. One classroom teacher stated:

> I think students need a positive, loving environment. One in which they're not afraid to make mistakes, and to know mistakes are part of the learning process. They need to know that you care about them and you have their best interest in mind.

Another teacher shared that she keeps encouraging her students and says, "I know you can" and "Wow! You got this." She does this because "they need it." One teacher was very concerned with how students view their ability to succeed. "It breaks your heart as a teacher. When students think they are stupid or bad. It's hard to get that out of their heads. I just try to keep encouraging them." One teacher shared that when students know you care and they trust you, they start to take risks in their learning. "You can have all the books and you can know your lessons, but if the kids don't trust you, they are not going to do anything for you."

The teachers in this case study felt strongly that effective teachers build positive relationships with students and a strong sense of community. They believed this classroom community was formed through trust. According to one classroom teacher, "Forming a relationships with students is the most important aspect of teacher effectiveness. If you don't have a relationship they're not going to trust you or learn anything from you." This trust must be established early on and cultivated throughout the entire school year. Teachers and their principal spoke of their efforts to carefully and thoughtfully build trust with students throughout the year. A teacher shared that she spends a lot of time "building that trust and letting them know that ultimately, I care about you and my job is to help you be successful." She believes that creating positive relationships and community was so important and stated, "If my kids learn nothing else this year, I hope they learn that." In this rural school, there was a strong sense that community is built when people know each other.

This desire for a close community was found to be true for adults and children too. During an interview, one classroom teacher acknowledged the importance of "knowing your students outside of school as well as within the classroom" setting. She asserted that teachers should take an interest in students' lives outside of school to learn what they are interested in. Having lunch with students to get to know who they are was mentioned as a way to accomplish this. She went on to share how important it is for students to know their teachers and stated, "I think sharing yourself is important too, letting kids know you are human and that you have a life. And letting them into your life too." One teacher made building trust sound so easy. She shared that to build good relationships teachers should "visit with them, chat with them, and get down on their level." Participants reported that as teachers got to know their students, caring trusting relationships were formed. Because of these relationship, students may experience a sense of belonging which extended to their classroom as a whole.

The teachers in this study reported that to be effective they need to create a sense of community and unity within their classrooms. One teacher shared the expertise of her colleague by stating, "She had the best behaved class year after year because she was so focused on students as individuals and they felt a sense of belonging." In a fifth- and sixth-grade professional learning community meeting, teachers referred back to the book, *The Daily Five*, they had been studying and read aloud about the importance of building community within their classrooms. They mentioned learning celebrations, where students share what they have learned with others and are recognized for their efforts and learning outcomes, as a way to build confidence and community. The principal shared this perception of the importance of building classroom community and good relationships with students.

In this case study, participants shared the belief that the environment students spend most of their day in has great impact on their motivation to learn and the actual learning that can take place. The principal in this case study shared her belief that students thrive in a classroom where they feel safe. She stated, "The environment should be welcoming and a place where students feel free to take risks in learning." She believes in this so strongly her goal is for teachers to work towards a stronger more coherent school community. She stated, "She would like the school to work together, for every student, every day."

The importance of building community and positive relationships with students was also apparent in the observations of classrooms and meetings. Several teachers took time to speak one-to-one with students. In larger groups, teachers asked students to make connections between the content and their personal lives. One teacher used humor quite often to connect with students. In grade level meetings, teachers spoke often of their students in a professional manner. Concerns about how students were doing academically and socially were discussed as teachers sought ways to better support students and their learning. Teachers showed concern and caring as they spoke of each student. In a weekly team meeting teachers spoke of the importance of students having choice in their independent reading. They shared the interests of specific students. Teachers shared how motivating is was for students to have books based on what really like.

An analysis of school documents also uncovered language which supports the importance of positive relationships and building community with students. In the *Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics*, teachers were considered highly effective if they "show warmth, caring, respect, and fairness for students and build strong relationships." These documents went further to clarify the need for teachers to build relationships outside of the school. This includes

families and the community as a whole. Highly effective teachers were expected to "Successfully contact and work with virtually all parents, including those who are hard to reach" and "Successfully enlist classroom volunteers and extra resources from home and the community to enrich the curriculum."

Interview and classroom observations did not suggest the efforts to develop a strong sense of community extended beyond the classroom. In fact, when teachers discussed community, they referred only to the community within their own classroom. The principal was the only participant who referred to community at the school level. I was surprised to find the perception of school community was not expressed by teachers.

Teachers in this study perceived there to be a strong connection between teacher effectiveness and classrooms where teachers and students have positive relationships and classroom community is strong. They believed this is the type of classroom students thrive in and are successful learners. Because of the close relationships with students and a classroom community of learners, one teacher stated, "They're growing, they're learning, and their scores are improving."

Theme 3: Providing Expectations, Structure, and Routines

It was clear throughout interviews, classroom and meeting observations, and the analysis of school documents that teachers perceived providing expectations, structure, and routines for students led to greater teacher effectiveness. The codes within this theme included; expectations, structure, routines, schedule, prevent upset, student attention, student focus, and consistency. This reflects the current understandings in educational literature where the concept of classroom management has been linked to higher teacher quality and greater student achievement.

The expectations teachers hold and share with their students shape the learning that will occur in classrooms. The teachers in this case study believed that teacher effectiveness was increased through successful classroom management. One teacher shared that she "spent a lot of my time in the beginning of the year setting up routines so that they know what I expect." She felt as though this was very successful for her and her students. These expectations can include simple routines like lining up or sharpening pencils or they may include more complex tasks like how to work with partners or how to work independently on a task. One teacher shared, that after classroom expectation were taught, "you just have to remind them what their job is and they will start doing what they need to be doing." Along with expectations, classroom structures were considered important.

Classroom structures such as learning spaces, desk arrangement, movement options within the classroom, and even where the teacher is located impact student learning. One teacher said, students "want structure and support and I feel like they respond well to that." In classroom observations, I noticed that teachers were using many types of learning spaces; individual desks, pods of desks, and community rugs as places where students worked. Some structures allowed students to sit, stand, or lay down as they worked. Along with expectations and structures, procedures were perceived to be highly important for teacher effectiveness.

Teachers in this case study believed procedures and routines helped students anticipate and use opportunities to learn. One teacher felt that students thrive in classrooms where "the same routines" help students "know what to expect." She further stated, "I feel like sometimes when I loosen up and try to give them space, it doesn't work well for some of them" because they need clear routines and structures. I observed some of these routines as students took turns answering questions, working together, and moving around the classroom. One teacher stated

that symbols help her students to know and follow procedures. Another teacher believed her student learned more "because we have a system worked out" for that particular student.

These expectations and routines as well as keeping students focused on their learning, also kept students safe. This was mentioned by one teacher during an interview. It was also mentioned in the principal's letter of introduction, which stated that "our students practice and live by" their three expectations of "being respectful, responsible, and safe." *Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubric* used in this district also contained these ideas. The rubric stated that a highly effective teacher "is direct, specific, consistent, and tenacious in communicating and enforcing very high expectations" and "successfully inculcates class routines up front so that students maintain them throughout the year." This was evident in many classroom where anchor charts were created and used to guide student routines. Specifically, charts for Read to Self, Read to Someone, Listen to Reading, Work on Writing, and Word Work were displayed. These clear expectations, structure, and routines help students learn and feel safe. They can also prevent issues within the classroom.

The idea of prevention was found in one interview and within the teacher evaluation rubrics. The rubric stated that a teacher who "is alert, poised, dynamic, and self-assured" can "prevent discipline problems." Throughout the classroom observations, structures and routines were very apparent.

Students knew the procedures as they entered their classroom as the morning bell rang. Each child had a place to hang their backpack and jacket. They went directly to their desks and began to get out their work. Some students talked with their classmates as others began to read. The teacher walked around the room checking work in their folders. The teacher then read the answers aloud as the students checked their work. These observed routines seemed a part of

their daily schedule. In one classroom a teacher raised her hand with fingers extended and asked students to "give me five". The students responded by quickly raising their hands, stopping conversations, and looking up at the teacher. Routines like this were observed over several days, as students completed their work, collaborated with classmates, and moved to and from their classrooms.

When teachers shared their perceptions about expectations, structures, and routines they mentioned consistency in all of these areas. They felt it was important not only to hold high expectations, provide structures, and teach procedures, but also to be consistent with these. The principal supported this view by stating, "Expectations and procedures are something dependable that students can count on. Consistency, I believe to be extremely important." She further stated, "Right now we are really working with consistency and behavior expectations. What we expect from children is really what I believe they will live up to or exceed." During an early morning classroom observation, the principal's voice came on the loud speaker. She was giving her daily announcements. The importance of expectations, structures, and routines was apparent when she stated that she was proud of the students' behavior in the gym that morning. She also reminded them to be active listeners and use positive self-talk throughout the day.

The interviews, classroom and team meeting observations, and school documents all supported this theme of providing expectations, structure, and routines. Throughout the data there was a consistent emphasis on these ideas.

Theme 4: Teacher Facilitation and Differentiation

The theme of teacher facilitation and differentiation was apparent in all aspects of this case study. Interviews, classroom and meeting observations, and school documents all included the shared perception that teacher facilitation and differentiation increased student learning and

teacher effectiveness. The codes within this theme were guidance, teacher facilitation, teacher help, differentiation, group work, partners, peer teaching, and student collaboration. These codes came together to form the theme of teacher facilitation and differentiation as a way to improve student learning.

Teachers shared during interviews and showed in classroom observations how they provide opportunities for students to learn. These teachers not only wanted their students to learn but to learn at a level where they can perform independently. One classroom teacher said about learning, "My goal is for them to do it independently and not have to be relying on me for everything." Another teacher shared the importance of student independence by sharing, "I am monitoring what they are doing, because all of my effort has gone into the preparing part so they are teaching themselves right at that moment." She shared her job was to bring the learning together for them through facilitation.

Many teachers mentioned they facilitate learning by moving around the classroom to help students. One teacher added, "I like to walk around and if there are any problems that come up, I can address it then." When asked to describe teacher effectiveness, a teacher shared her belief that she should be interacting with students to offer differentiation and increase learning. She added, teachers should be "going around to different groups and getting their reactions as they're learning, what they are doing, and the things that didn't work, and the things they can try differently." In many cases they described their role as a facilitator for learning in whole groups, small groups, or with individual students.

Within this theme of teacher facilitation and differentiation, it was very clear that working with students in small groups was important to teachers. This was another way teachers felt they could effectively facilitate student learning and differentiate instruction. When asked

what really outstanding teachers do, one teacher responded that she has seen a colleague use daily group work. She stated, "A lot of the time the kids are working together and the teacher has created an environment where groups work well together." Another teacher shared that students "want to work together" and "I think that if they're collaborating with each other you can get more out of them." During a very candid interview, one teacher shared:

> I actually think as a teacher one thing I want to do more is group work. I've tried to do more of that this year. Last week in a small group I heard some really good discussions going on and I was really surprised. Their papers were more detailed than they usually were if I just let them go and do it independently.

Small groups can be of various sizes within the classroom. In this case study, teachers also communicated the perception that students working in pairs was effective.

Teachers shared the perception that student partnerships created opportunities for students to increase learning. They believed this is one way to "differentiate for different learning types." One teacher shared, "You can tell that they're engaged in what they are doing" and they get excited about who their partner might be and the work they will be doing together." She further added, "Since I have been having students work with partners our test scores have gone up because they've had a chance to talk about what they're actually doing." Another teacher shared her belief that when students work together they are showing their thinking which can help other students. In this way, "they can hear from a peer that understands it." Designing and facilitating student partnerships can help the teacher differentiate learning by purposefully changing the instruction given. One teacher admitted that she "was always scared that the higher one would do everything" but she soon realized "that is not the case." She shared that student partners worked well together and that the learning of both students improved regardless of their

beginning level of understanding. It is through these small group, student partnership, and one-to-one learning that teachers could differentiate instruction and increase learning for students.

In classroom and team meeting observations it was evident that teachers used facilitation and differentiation to increase student learning. In many classrooms the teacher was working with small groups of students gathered around one table. I witnessed teachers asking their students, "Tell me your thinking" and asking, "Is there another way to solve that?" as students were working closely with the teacher to solve math problems. In another classroom a teacher was sitting around a kidney shaped table with a group of four students as she guided in reading a new book. She prompted them to look at the pictures and point to the words with their finger. When they were done reading she asked each student questions about the story. In classrooms where students were doing independent work at their desks, teachers were still facilitating and differentiating learning with students. This was evident when I witnessed several teachers walking around the classroom, looking at students' work and then leaning down to talk quietly with students about their work. One teacher said to the class, "Take your time. If you have questions I will be there with you in a moment". I did observe one classroom where the teacher was speaking to students while standing behind a podium. This type of teaching did not support what teachers said during interviews about increasing student learning through facilitation of learning and differentiation based on students' needs.

Kim Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics mentioned teacher facilitation by stating highly effective teachers "get virtually all students to be self-disciplined, take responsibility for their actions, and have a strong sense of efficacy." The rubrics specifically refer to facilitation and differentiation by classifying highly effective teachers as those who "design lessons that break down complex tasks and address students' learning needs, styles, and interests" and

"relentlessly follow up with struggling students with personal attention so that virtually all reach proficiency." These school documents support the teachers' perceptions of the importance of teacher facilitation and differentiation to meet the needs of their students.

In this case study, the principal shared the teachers' perceptions that teacher facilitation and differentiation led to teacher effectiveness. She stated, "We're diving head-first into MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) and concentrating on every child at every level." Schools using this model offer students support based on their specific academic and behavioral needs. She shared that she truly believes that instruction should be done with small groups of kids at their own level, especially in reading. When students are learning at high levels, the principal stated, students "are so in tune and present in what is going on that you know true learning is happening." She expanded on the idea of teacher facilitation with:

> I think even a step beyond that is—who is leading? Is it the students themselves or is it the adult in the room? What is happening in that room to allow that to occur? (It is most effective when learning) is being driven by the kids and they're the ones really in charge of what's happening.

In addition to students leading their learning, she added, "A classroom teacher is most effective when they are in and out of student conversations, helping them to pin-point where the conversation needs to go, but never standing in the way of allowing it to go different places." As I looked at this data, I felt the principal's vision of teacher facilitation reflected the teachers' perception of teachers guiding and differentiating student learning with the ultimate goal of student independence.

In this case study, the data told the story of educators' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. There were some codes that I believed were related to the theme of teacher

facilitation and differentiation. These were; *student struggle, student problem solving,* and *student independence.* At first glance, these could be thought to be in contrast with the theme, but after closer analysis of the raw data, these codes were connected to teacher facilitation and differentiation because they were described as the processes students go through when teachers lead student learning through facilitation and differentiation.

Theme 5: The Desire to Improve

The theme that was mentioned most frequently in this case study was teacher improvement. Overwhelmingly, teachers believed that to be more effective, they needed to be not only open and willing to improve but have a strong desire to do so. This included seeking knowledge and new learning, taking risks, being vulnerable, attempting and failing, teacher creativity and flexibility, having a desire to grow, and a passion for learning. The reason they believed this was so important was the perception that their own learning would lead to increased student learning.

This desire was shared by many teachers in interviews and it was also evident in classroom observations and school documents. The district mission statement is: *The Mission of _____ Public Schools is to ensure that each child achieves his/her full potential through student centered practice.* In this statement, the public can see the underlying desire of the district as a whole to support the growth of each learner. When asked to describe a colleague who is highly effective, one teacher shared, "It is really refreshing, her eagerness to help and never give up". Another teacher also reflected on her belief that it is important for teachers to "be open to new ideas." Staying positive was also mentioned as being essential when teachers are putting forth the effort to grow and learn. One teacher stated, "Staying positive and realizing these kids all come from different backgrounds, different home lives and have their issues so you

have to kind of stop and consider all of that to be effective." She further added, teachers need to "just try to be the best you can with that child."

Several teachers mentioned "growth mindset" when describing the attitude teachers must have as they search and acquire knowledge and skills to become more effective. A growth mindset is when people believe that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Teachers with this mindset believe their teaching effectiveness can improve through their personal or collective dedication and hard work. A love of learning and resilience is also part of having a growth mindset. When sharing her growth in science, one teacher described her efforts as, "I'm trying to figure out how to do more hands-on teaching. I also need to figure out how to do more of that in other classes." Having a growth mindset can create motivation and productivity.

Participants in this case study believed that regardless of teacher experience, new learning is essential. Our students are changing, therefore we, as teachers, need to change. In response to being asked about how to be more effective, one teacher said, "Just making sure you yourself learn things and brush up on the things that you are weak at." Another teacher who was talking about learning new teaching strategies shared, "I didn't learn that in college. It is totally new for me." The teachers showed in their interviews and observations that they are motivated and eager to learn.

One element that came to the surface in this case study was teacher vulnerability in learning. Teachers shared that they believed being vulnerable was important in teacher effectiveness. Teachers shared times they were uncomfortable being observed, but volunteered because they knew it would help them. In team meetings, teachers had open conversations, asked for help from their colleagues, and gave feedback to each other. When describing new

learning one teacher shared, that she wants to improve and stated, "Reading is an area where I know I need to improve on." It was refreshing to hear from teachers who are open to and actively seeking new learning.

This perception of teacher effectiveness linked to teachers' desire to improve was also apparent in the teacher effectiveness documents. As part of a teacher's professional responsibilities highly effective teachers "actively seek out feedback and suggestions from students, parents, and colleagues and uses them to improve performance" and "actively reach out for new ideas and engage in action research with colleagues to figure out what works best." There was a strong connection between the language used in this portion of the teacher evaluation rubric and the teachers' reflections on the need for their own growth.

Within this case study, the one-to-one interviews, meeting observations, and school documents all led me to believe teachers embraced the idea that teachers should seek opportunities to grow and learn. It was difficult for me to know if that theme carried through in classroom observations. In several classrooms I did see evidence of recent teacher learning from their book study on *The Daily Five.* I saw anchor charts that teachers had developed to support students' independent work in reading. If this case study was conducted over an entire school year or longer, data could be gathered to show if teachers are consistently implementing new learning.

The principal also shared many thoughts about the desire to improve. She felt strongly that this is an indicator of teacher effectiveness. In a one-to-one interview, she stated, "That desire to become better is what I'm really striving for when I look at a teacher who is really effective." She specified ways this desire to improve might be evident in teachers. According to her, teachers who demonstrate the "willingness to share successes about the positive things that

are happening" are more effective in their classrooms and in the school setting. The principal further shared that teachers are viewed as effective if they are "not afraid to take risks with kids" and are "willing to redo (lessons) especially when it comes to trying new things with students in their curriculum or new lessons and ways to reach them creatively." As the school leader, developing a growth mindset was important for teachers and students as well. She wondered, "How do we get to the point where that growth mindset really takes charge and (teachers and students) almost look forward to attempt after attempt after attempt, so that those failures become learning and steps for them to learn rather than becoming a roadblock or something that deters them." It was best said by a classroom teacher, "You can always improve. And even now, I'm still improving."

Theme 6: Teacher Reflection, Collaboration, and Support

Along with the desire to improve and having a growth mindset, teachers felt they were more successful when they were reflective, collaborative, and supported. The educators in this case study believed in the importance of a working environment that supports their own learning and growth. The codes that emerged within this theme were *teacher reflection, supporting colleagues, sharing ideas, teacher preparation and planning, trust,* and *patience.* In one-to-one interviews many teachers shared how important reflection, collaboration and support for continued growth are to them. This was also evident in team meetings and school documents.

Teachers shared the perception that they were more effective when they had opportunities to reflect on classroom instruction. One teacher shared, "I think if you can just self-reflect" and realize "not everything is going to work. I've had lessons that I've thrown away and said I'm never doing this again. I think that's good." Reflection for teachers can occur prior to instruction, during instruction, and following instruction. Several teachers shared that they

believed this critical reflection helped them to become more effective. One teacher stated, "I am monitoring what (students) are doing because all of my effort has gone into the preparing part." About planning and reflecting, another teacher added, "I have to break it down into smaller steps and that takes some time." Often teacher reflection takes place in their own classrooms as they are looking over lesson plans, student data, or thinking about specific students. In this case study, teachers also talked about the advantages of working together.

Many of the teachers felt collaboration was an integral part of teaching effectiveness. They mentioned that when teachers work together they feel more supported, are able to share resources, and problem solve when needed. Part of this collaboration was the emotional support they also received from their colleagues. One teachers shared that when working with others, "I think one thing is just to stay positive and reflect back and that makes you effective" when working as a team. Working together helped teachers do their difficult job. A teacher explained, "A couple of teachers are always really positive and calm, even if it's a bad situation. They're not trying to take it seriously." This lightheartedness helped teachers to feel as though they worked in a fun, collaborative environment.

The teachers in this case study recognized the support they got from other teachers at their school. During an interview, a teacher said of another teacher, "She does support me as a colleague. She is an open ear to listen if I am having a bad day or if I have something to improve on or if I can do something different." Another teacher added to the idea of teacher collaboration, "As long as you can grow and change, that will make you effective." In this study, there was agreement between the teachers and the principal about the importance of teacher reflection, collaboration, and support.

It was very evident that teachers sought out support from their colleagues during team and leadership meetings. They asked several questions of each other and leaned in and took detailed notes about the ideas of other teachers and their principal. Teachers willingly shared ideas and asked to observe each other. They reflected aloud about their teaching practices and the learning of their students. One teacher spoke of how she was trying small group work in math. The struggle she shared was the difficulty of finding differentiated independent work for students. Her grade level teaching partner suggested some math games and technology she was using in her math rotations. During another team meeting a teacher shared how she is explicitly teaching students how to choose books that were the right level for them. One of the teachers at the table said she would try doing that with her students. Another teacher also spoke of a recent classroom observation she participated in. She visited a school outside of their district to learn about reading workshop. She shared that she "was amazed how the teacher created a sense of urgency in the classroom, was able to push students out of their comfort zones, and had a great impact on student learning." The grade level and leadership meetings were focused on sharing and problem solving. Nonverbal cues such as smiling and nodding led me to believe teachers felt supported by their colleagues.

The data collected and the codes identified through interviews, observations, and school documents did not conflict with this theme. In *Kim Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics*, it was stated that teachers should "work with colleagues to immediately use interim assessment data to fine-tune teaching, re-teach, and help struggling students" and "work with colleagues to reflect on what worked and what didn't and continuously improve instruction." It further explained that highly effective teachers are expected to "meet at least weekly with colleagues to plan units, share ideas, and analyze interim assessments; frequently contribute valuable ideas and

expertise and instill in others a desire to improve student results; and actively reach out for new ideas and engages in action research with colleagues to figure out what works best." These professional responsibilities around collaboration, reflection, and supporting colleagues were clearly outlined for teachers.

The principal also conveyed the importance of teachers engaging in reflection about their practice together. She said she liked to see, "that willingness to share successes about the positive things that are happening" in our classrooms. She added that one teacher who was very reflective, "is not afraid to take risks with kids, especially when it comes to trying new things in the curriculum or new lessons and ways to reach them creatively." The principal felt this risk taking and collaboration made her school more effective. About the staff as a whole, she shared:

> They came from leadership that probably was not very strong. There just wasn't great communication between the teachers and leadership and they were all basically surviving as islands and doing what they felt they needed to do that was best for kids, which was great. They were great teachers coming in. But now I am trying to unite us and get us more uniform so that we have consistency between grade levels. I don't want cookie cutters, but I want us to be all using best teaching practices that have been proved to be effective.

Her hope of creating unity among teachers was aligned with the desire of her teachers to be part a collaborative team. "Someone that is invested in students even when they're not in their classroom is someone that I can tell that is exceptional" was shared by one of the teachers.

Description of the Next Chapter

Chapter V includes a summary of the findings and conclusions from this case study according to the research questions which guided the study. Research limitations and

recommendations for educators and future research are explored. A few final thoughts are also shared.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative case study explored teacher and principal perceptions of teacher effectiveness in a single elementary school within a Midwestern rural school district. The purpose of this study was to explain what educators perceive to be teaching effectiveness in an effort to gain better understanding of the relationship between educational research and the perceptions held by practitioners in the field.

The following research questions developed to pursue this purpose include:

1. Do teachers at this school hold common understandings of teacher effectiveness?
2. Are the teachers' and principal's perceptions of teacher effectiveness the same or different?
3. How do the perceptions of the teachers and their principal align with the teacher evaluation system they use?

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Research Question 1

Do teachers hold common understandings of teacher effectiveness?

Throughout this case study, similar perceptions of teacher effectiveness emerged. In interview, classroom and team observations, and in school documents, teachers continually shared their views on teacher effectiveness and what contributed to it. Teachers felt that active student engagement; building positive relationships and classroom community; providing

expectations, structure, and routines; teacher facilitation and differentiation; and teacher reflection, collaboration, and support led to greater teacher effectiveness.

This case study took place in a small school in a rural setting. The evidence found suggests teachers openly shared their beliefs with each other. This was evident in grade level team meetings and in the interviews as teachers shared their respect for each other. When talking about her colleague, a teacher said, "You have somebody to go to" when you need to talk about what to do to help students or need ideas to try. The teachers shared how they relied on each other for ideas and to grow and learn. In chapter IV, Tables 6 summarizes the commonalities found in teacher perceptions of teaching effectiveness.

The teachers in this study mentioned that they observed each other. Observation of others is a powerful practice for teachers to engage in. One teacher said, "I've been in their room several times" and another said, "One teacher I observed, was calm and patient." The close relationships these teachers shared, the conversations they engaged in, and the opportunities they had to observe and learn from each other has created more than a bond. It has created a common understanding of what teacher effectiveness is.

Research Question 2

Are the teachers' and principal's perceptions of teacher effectiveness the same or different?

Two in-depth interviews, observation of team meetings, and school documents created by the principal were used to compare the data between her perception of teacher effectiveness and those of the teachers in this case study. The principal shared many of the same ideas as the teachers she works with. Both groups confirmed the importance of having students actively engaged in their learning. The difference that emerged in the interviews was that the principal

felt it was very important for the learning to be student driven. She reflected that she is beginning to "think even a step beyond (student engagement) I am really starting to look for who is leading. Is it the students themselves or it is the adult in the room?" She went on to share she believed the classroom content should be driven by the kids and they should be the ones really in charge of what's happening. In the area of student driven learning, the principal seemed to have a slightly different view than the teachers. This may be due to professional learning or her own experiences in her own classroom. The teachers mentioned knowing students and finding out their interests, but did not share the concept of student driven learning.

Both the principal and the teachers who participated expressed the view that building positive relationships with students and a classroom community increased teacher effectiveness. In this case study, the principal was the only participant who said that the school community was important to improving teacher effectiveness. She talked of trying to "unite us." She shared the desire for teacher to come together as a community to support student learning. In interviews, teachers spoke of creating classroom communities in which students can thrive in. They did not speak of the importance of a school community to support student learning. It was only the principal who spoke of community at this level. I did see evidence of the importance of a school community in school documents, especially in posters hanging in the hallways which stated their school-wide expectations and procedures. I also found data in a specific book study the school participated in called "The Energy Bus" which is written to bring staff members together to work toward common goals.

The perception that teacher effectiveness is greatest when teachers have a strong desire to learn and grow as professionals was common between the teachers and their principal. The principal took this understanding a bit further by stating:

> How do we get to the point where that growth mindset really takes change and they almost look forward to attempt after attempt after attempt, so that those failures become learning and steps for them to learn rather than becoming a roadblock or something that deters them?

She believed this growth mindset was important for students and teachers too. About the staff she said, "I am really trying to instill into my staff that we're the start of change and that growth mindset." She then added these thoughts about the teachers at this school, "Yes, you're doing good and we're really proud of you for that. But what else can you do and how can you do it? Where really are your limits and where can you exceed those?" It was not only about learning new things, but also questioning your teaching practices and making changes for improvement.

Overall, the principal and teachers in this study held common perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Some of the common codes found in interviews with teachers and their principal were; trust, consistency, expectations, active, engagement, focused, relationships, differentiation, facilitation, feedback, collaboration, academics. Table 6 in Chapter IV summarizes the data that was collected in one to one interviews as themes. This figure also shows the comparison of perceptions of teacher effectiveness between teachers and their principal. A few codes only emerged from the principal interviews. These were; student driven, attempts and failures, whole child, and every child. I believe the differences found were due to the level of professional development the principal has had and the scope of her thinking. The data gathered showed she was thinking about teacher effectiveness at a school-wide level as well as the classroom level.

Research Question 3

How do the perceptions of teachers and their principal align with the teacher evaluation system they use?

As I interviewed teachers and observed in their classroom, I wondered if their perceptions of teacher effectiveness and their practices were developed over time through the use of a teacher evaluation system. Had the principal, in using this system, referred to the performance goals and competencies to improve teacher effectiveness? *Kim Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics* are used district wide to evaluate teacher performance. For the last seven years this district has utilized this system to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom teachers. The rubrics were designed to frame principal assessment of teacher effectiveness in all performance areas and detailed guidance for improvement. The rubrics are used as principals frequently observe in classrooms and give formative feedback. Analyzing the *Kim Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics* helped me to gain greater understanding of the similarities and differences between what teachers said and did and the language of the teacher evaluation system. The rubrics contained six domains covering all aspects of a teacher's job performance (Marshall, 2013). These were: a) Planning and Preparation for Learning; b) Classroom Management; c) Delivery of Instruction; d) Monitoring, Assessment, and Follow-Up; e) Family and Community Outreach; and f) Professional responsibilities. The rubrics used a four-level rating scale: 4) Highly Effective–Master performance that meets very demanding criteria; 3) Effective–Solid, expected professional performance; 2) Improvement Necessary–Performance is mediocre; 1) Does Not Meet Standards–Unacceptable performance leading to an improvement plan, intensive support, and, if improvement isn't made within a reasonable amount of time, dismissal (Marshall, 2013). Marshall (2013) further explained why the rubrics are used:

> These rubrics aim to provide a shared definition of the work teachers do with students and colleagues. They should inform teachers' work and supervisors' observations throughout the year and serve as a memory prompt and structuring protocol when it's time to evaluate the year's work.

Marshall stated that the rubrics are based on extensive research on classroom and professional practices and that the higher the teachers' ratings the better the students will do. Further, the rubrics can be used as a road-map for schoolwide professional development. Closely analyzing the teacher evaluation rubrics and comparing them to what teachers had said in the interviews and shown in their classrooms helped me to determine if teacher perceptions of teaching effectiveness were aligned to the system they use for evaluation.

The first domain in Marshall's teacher evaluation rubrics was *Planning and Preparing for Learning*. I found connections in two areas out of the 10 in this domain. Under the descriptor *Engagement* the rubric states: *Designs highly relevant lessons that will motivate virtually all students and engage them in active learning*. In interviews, many teachers shared how important it was for students to be engaged and active learners. They believed this type of learning increased student motivation to learn. Another connection was under the area of *Differentiation* that stated, *Designs lessons that break down complex tasks and address students' learning needs, styles, and interests*. In interviews, teachers spoke of the need to know their students well and differentiate to help all of their students succeed. They shared the belief that students learn best in small groups that are designed for their learning needs. This was also apparent in many classroom observations where students were seated around a table with their teacher who was focused on the students in front of her. One teacher taught math concepts that students were struggling with. The students listened and asked questions and received immediate feedback.

Within the rubric the domains are followed by a description. The descriptions that were different from teacher perceptions were knowledge, standards, units, assessments, lessons, materials, and environment. It is not that the teachers did not mention these, but the descriptions were very different from what they described in interviews.

Within the domain of *Classroom Management* in *Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics*, there was a much higher degree of alignment between the rubric and teacher perceptions about teacher effectiveness. The seven areas that aligned with teacher perceptions were; *Expectations, Relationships, Respect, Social-emotional, Routines, Responsibility,* and *Repertoire.* Teacher perceptions such as having clear and consistent expectations and routines for students and the importance of building strong relationships with students based on caring and respect was evident in both the rubrics and the interviews as well as in classroom observations. Also the importance of capturing and holding students' attention to increase learning was evident in the data collected.

By far, the greatest degree of alignment was in the area of *Delivery of Instruction* within the *Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics*. The language of the rubrics aligned with teacher perceptions in nine out of the ten descriptors. These were; *Expectations, Mindset, Goals, Connections, Repertoire, Engagement, Differentiation, Nimbleness,* and *Closure*. Teachers expressed their beliefs that effective teachers are those who are persistent in meeting high expectations, set goals for themselves and their students, are willing to take risks, and have a growth mindset. They also shared the belief that teachers group students to improve learning and get students actively involved in problem solving. Effective teachers were thought to differentiate learning for students, facilitate learning in many ways, and provide real-life situations for their students whenever possible.

Interestingly, teachers did not mention assessment very often. In the teacher evaluation rubrics there are 10 areas in the domain of *Monitoring, Assessment, and Follow-Up*. The teachers only discussed assessment which aligned with two of the areas. These were *Tenacity* and *Reflection*. Teachers shared the belief that they should be aware of struggling students and provide direct support to improve the learning of students who are struggling. They also stated the importance of working with colleagues to reflect on what is working and how to improve their teaching. What teachers did not mention, but the rubric did, was that teachers should post and review clear criteria for good work, give diagnostic assessments that are used to inform instruction, use a variety of effective methods to check for understanding, have students set ambitious goals, and work with colleagues to analyze student data. In classroom observations, I did see teachers using a variety of methods to check for understanding. These included teacher made assessments, conferring with students, asking questions and listening for student understanding. *Monitoring, Assessment, and Follow-Up* was not an area with strong alignment between the teacher evaluation rubrics and teacher perceptions.

The area within the evaluation rubrics with no alignment was *Family and Community Outreach*. The teachers in this study spoke often about the importance of having a strong classroom community, but they did not share the belief that teachers should build relationships outside the classroom. The rubric stated that highly effective teachers should show sensitivity and respect for family and community culture, values, and beliefs. It also stated that teachers should use student led conferences with each parent providing in-depth knowledge of their child, share positive news, and learning and behavior expectations. It stated that teachers should involve parents and classroom volunteers in supporting and enriching the curriculum. The rubric also explained that teachers should successfully work with all parents and make them feel

welcome at all times. None of these things were mentioned during the interviews with teachers. I wonder if it is assumed that teachers will confer with parents and build relationships with them to support students throughout the year. This is common practice and possibly not spoken of because teachers consider it as foundational to student success. It was difficult to observe any of these behaviors in classroom or team observations because they did not arise.

The final domain in Marshall's rubrics was *Professional Responsibilities*. In this domain four areas were aligned with teacher perceptions in this case study. These were: *Leadership, Openness, Collaboration, and Growth*. Teachers reported they believe effective teachers contribute ideas, seek feedback and suggestions for growth, plan lessons and units collaboratively, and try new ideas in order to improve their instruction and students learning. The areas that were not mentioned were teacher attendance, communicating professionally, keeping meticulous records, being honest and ethical, respecting confidentiality, and volunteering for extra activities.

As I reflected on the alignment of the teacher evaluation system this school used and the perceptions teachers held about teacher effectiveness, it is not clear to me that the evaluation tool has contributed to their understanding of teacher effectiveness. I could see some strong correlations and shared language, but there were many areas in the rubrics that were not mentioned by teachers. At best, I believed these rubrics had a limited influence on teacher perceptions of teacher effectiveness within this school. As I asked questions in the interviews about effective teaching and learning, teachers did not mention these rubrics, compare themselves to them, or discuss past evaluations. Neither the teachers nor their principal referred to the *Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics* in team meetings. I wonder if this was because teacher evaluations are confidential. The rubrics could provide a starting point for conversations

and guide decisions about professional development. They could give the principal the big picture if he or she looked for patterns of strengths and needs among the teachers working within a school. I strongly believe in the potential of teacher evaluation systems to elevate teacher understanding about effectiveness if used often to help teachers individually and collectively reflect on their growth and student growth.

Limitations of the Study

This case study shed light on the topic of teacher effectiveness and the perceptions that teachers and their principal hold. This new knowledge has the potential of impacting teacher professional development, goal setting, and creating and implementing school-wide visions. There are limitations to this small case study.

Limitations to this study include the setting, scope, and diversity of the study. Research was conducted in a single rural school in central North Dakota. For this school, the findings can have tremendous impact in increasing teacher effectiveness. These findings apply to this setting only and cannot be assumed to hold true as the perceptions of other teachers and principals in other schools, even similar ones. The smaller population of this town (approximately 900) and the size of this school (12 classrooms in K-6) may have affected the data gathered. It would be of interest to replicate this same study in similar size towns and schools to compare the results obtained.

Due to my own personal and professional time constraints, the scope of this case study was limited to the perceptions of teachers and their principal within this school. Outside of this particular setting, the results may be different. Replication of this study in larger schools in other parts of the country would be very impactful for the field of education, especially for educators seeking to increase teacher effectiveness. Although the sample size is too small for generalizing

to larger populations, there is still much we can learn about the perceptions of teacher effectiveness gathered in this study.

Within this study, there was limited diversity both within the student population of the school and within the participants themselves. The perceptions held about teacher effectiveness were limited to those included in this study. Increased participant diversity would improve the generalizability of this case study.

Qualitative studies often enable researchers to dig deeply into a topic. During the interviews, the participants responded in a positive manner. They were open to the questions and often elaborated to provide more information. Conceivably participants may have attempted to state the answer that they felt I was seeking. Also, in classroom observations, teachers may have changed their behavior because they were participating in this case study. The school documents obtained were either found on the district website or shared with me by the principal. The selection of these documents may have impacted the type of data collected. Although these limitations have impacted this study, the findings still have relevance for educators today.

Recommendations

Recommendations to Improve Teacher Effectiveness

This study provided insights into the perceptions teachers and their principal held about teacher effectiveness. In the end, I learned as much about myself and the type of work I want to do as a school leader as I did about this school and the participants. There are three recommendations I would like to propose: (a) seek to understand the perceptions school staff members have about teacher effectiveness, (b) create a collaborative vision based on this knowledge, and (c) share this vision often and in many different ways. A vision that is built on shared beliefs and values can unite a group and enable them to move forward (Finnigan, 2012).

Although common themes were found in the data, the participants did not hold identical understandings about teacher effectiveness. It is important for school leaders is to know and understand the perceptions the teachers hold and value within a school. If we want teachers to improve in their effectiveness, to ultimately increase student learning, we need to listen to teachers. The knowledge, skills, and values teachers have impact every aspect of their work. The most important recommendation I have to give is to meet individually with every staff member. Ask them what they believe makes a teacher effective and how they go about achieving that. Ask them what barriers they face and what help they need. As I listened to teachers and observed them, I felt they were glad someone was there to witness the work they do and hear who they are as educators. This recommendation is given to all levels of school administration from superintendents to principals to instructional coaches. It is also given to teachers. We have much to learn from each other. Listen to your colleagues, talk to them about teacher effectiveness, and observe them as they work with students.

Creating a collaborative vision is a not new idea in school improvement research. According to Finnigan (2011), principals help to create a vision that is a "web of shared assumptions, beliefs, and values that unites the group in mutual solidarity" (p. 186). Following an analysis of the results from this case study, I further suggest that staff members should take the time to explore their perceptions, values, and beliefs prior to creating a vision. Often times, schools adopt the district vision or the vision is given to them by the school district. If we want true investment, teachers must be heard and feel as though their perceptions are understood and valued. Only then will teachers be invested in creating a vision and working diligently toward it. Change is hard, especially when so much of our effort is expanded in the moment by moment

teaching we engage in. Teachers and school leaders need to have a clear vision, understand why it is essential, and feel invested in it.

Once this vision is created, then the real work begins. Teachers and school leaders need to keep this vision in the forefront on their daily work. It is helpful if the vision is posted where all staff members and the community can see it. Staff meetings and professional learning community meetings should focus on the work of realizing this vision. This will require attention, determination, and vulnerability. Sharing their efforts, attempts, and sometimes failures will help teachers as they work to improve and increase student learning.

Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this case study was to better understand the perceptions educators hold about teacher effectiveness. During the research process, several areas were identified for further investigation: (a) student engagement as active or calm, (b) teacher buy-in to testing outcomes as evidence of teacher effectiveness, and (c) the impact of common or diverse views in improving student achievement.

Active student engagement emerged as a theme in this case study. All teachers and the principal agreed that students need to be engaged to learn the content and especially to retain it. What was interesting is that some of these educators described active engagement as fun, play, movement, games, and with some noise. Other teachers described it as calm, quiet, and focused engagement. If teachers believe active engagement increases student learning, then what type of active engagement is best? How do teachers plan and implement learning opportunities so this type of student engagement is present? This topic is of high interest to me, as an instructional coach and has the potential to greatly impact student learning. It would be interesting to study this topic more in-depth.

Although research on teacher effectiveness has consistently pointed toward student test scores as a measurement of effectiveness, teachers and their principal in this case study did not mention this in interviews. School documents and classroom and team meeting observations did not reveal much more about standardized test scores. Weisberg et al. (2009) stated that student achievement scores show that a student assigned to a highly effective teacher may gain up to a full year's worth of additional academic growth when compared to a student with a poor teacher. If the research is clear on this connection, why did teachers not perceive student test scores as evidence of teacher effectiveness? How did their school setting impact this? Do other teachers have similar perceptions?

The last recommendation I would like to make for future research is to dig into the conflicting ideas of developing a common vision or embracing teacher differences for school improvement. The reason I began this research was because, in coaching teachers, I began to notice that teachers' classroom practices looked very different from each other. I had assumed that teachers would share some the same perceptions about teacher effectiveness and work towards becoming more effective in similar ways. As I formed closer relationships with teachers, I began to ask them why they taught in specific ways and how they thought it would impact student learning. The lasting question I keep considering is this – Will schools improve by creating and embracing a common vision or will they improve more by embracing teacher differences? Or can we do both – embrace a shared vision and carry it out by acknowledging and valuing teacher differences? What will serve our students best? It would be of great interest and highly relevant to school improvement efforts to compare these very different approaches.

Final Thoughts

This qualitative study was designed to better understand the perceptions educators hold about teacher effectiveness. Exploring this topic using an in-depth case study method allowed me to gather rich data from which teacher effectiveness themes emerged. These findings have the potential to impact teacher professional development, school improvement, and most importantly student learning. This study made the beliefs and work of classroom teachers and their principal visible. It will now be part of the important research on improving schools. I feel honored and grateful for the trust given to me by the participants within this study. Their words and work will continue to inspire me to seek knowledge and skills for improving student learning and teacher practice.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Example of Coding Process from Significant Statements to Codes

Significant Statements	Initial Reeducation	Codes
[CJ36]manipulatives, professional development to become better **[CJ37](T shares) concerns about family life** **[CJ38]willingness to share successes good things happening** **[CJ39]take risks, trying new things, reach S with creativity** **[CJ40]consistency, behavior expectations, S live up to or not** **[CJ41]consistency in knowing, know what you can do, expect you to do** **[CJ42]MTSS, PBIS, cultural community,(T are) doing good, (T is) good enough** **[CJ43]P trying to instill start of change, growth mindset** **[CJ44](T) Doing good, we're proud, what else can you do?, how can do it?, where limits? Where can you exceed them?** **[CJ45]Message trying to get across, kids and families in community** **[CJ46]Comfort, step outside norm, been doing for years, try something new** **[CJ47]Uncomfortable, good thing, pushing them, T do same for me** **[CJ48]Open communication validate ok uncomfortable** **[CJ49]Where we're at, came from leadership not strong** **[CJ50]Not great communication, surviving as islands, doing best for kids** **[CJ51]Great teachers, trying to unite, uniform, consistency between grade levels** **[CJ52]Not cookie cutters, using best practices, proven effective** **[CJ53]Look differently in rooms, same across** **[CJ54]MTSS, whole child, every child, every level**	**T ACTIONS, BEFORE SCHOOL, HELPING** **SS MANIPULATIVE, PD TO IMPROVE** **T SHARES CONCERNS** **T WILLING TO SHARE SUCCESS,** **TAKE RISKS, TRY NEW THINGS, CREATIVITY** **CONSISTENCY, EXPECTATIONS, SS LIVE UP TO OR NOT** **CONSISTENCY KNOWING, CAN DO, EXPECT TO DO** **CULTURAL COMMUNITY, T DOING GOOD, T GOOD ENOUGH** **START OF CHANGE, GROWTH MINDSET** **DOING GOOD, PROUD, WHAT ELSE, LIMITS, EXCEED** **MESSAGE, FAMILIES** **OUTSIDE NORM, TRY NEW** **UNCOMFORTABLE GOOD, PUSH T AND P** **OPEN COMMUNICATION, OK UNCOMFORTABLE** **LEADERSHIP NOT STRONG** **SURVIVING AS ISLANDS, DOING BEST** **GREAT T, UNITE, UNIFORM, CONSISTENCY** **BEST PRACTICE, PROVEN EFFECTIVE** **LOOK DIFFERENTLY, SAME ACROSS** **WHOLE CHILD, EVERY CHILD**	**EFFORT, COMMUNITY** **ACTIVE, IMPROVEMENT** **DESIRE** **CARE** **SHARE** **RISKS, CREATIVITY,** **VULNERABLE** **CONSISTENCY,** **EXPECTATIONS** **CONSISTENCY** **COMMUNITY** **GROWTH MINDSET,** **CHANGE** **GROWTH MINDSET,** **PRAISE** **FAMILIES** **GROWTH MINDSET** **UNCOMFORTABLE** **UNCOMFORTABLE,** **COMMUNICATION** **COLLABORATION,** **COMMUNITY** **UNITY, CONSISTENCY** **BEST PRACTICES** **CONSISTENCY, NOT CONFORMITY** **WHOLE CHILD, EVERY CHILD**

Appendix B

Survey Questions

How Do We Define Teacher Effectiveness?
Exploring Teacher Perceptions at the Elementary School Level

Teachers:

1. Tell me about your role? How long have you been a teacher? What is your educational background?

2. Describe the type of classrooms children thrive in? What would you see, hear, and feel in this classroom?

3. Think of a time you felt your students were learning at high levels. What were your students doing? What were you doing?

4. How do you know when your instruction is outstanding?

5. Tell me about the best teacher at your school. What did he or she do that made you believe they were exceptional? What do you know about your colleagues who are great teachers?

Principal:

1. Tell me about your role? How long have you been a principal? What is your educational background?

2. Describe the type of classrooms children thrive in? What would you see, hear, and feel in this classroom?

3. Think of a time you felt students were learning at high levels. What were the students doing? What was the teacher doing?

4. How do you know when instruction is outstanding?

5. Tell me about the best teacher in your building. What did he or she do that made you believe they were exceptional? What do you know about other staff members who are great teachers?

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