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Secondary Students' Perceptions of Teacher Quality

Catherine P. Sutcliff

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SECONDARY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER QUALITY

by

CATHERINE P. SUTCLIFF

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of secondary students and teacher quality during their years in high school. The study sought to compare responses among males and females and among ethnicities to determine if there were differences in perceptions of teacher quality with respect to student-teacher relationships, instructional methods, and justice and fairness.

Surveys were given to students from eight public high schools in a southeastern region of Georgia. Demographic questions were included in the survey to delineate responses by gender and ethnicity.

This study generated data from 663 students to determine student perceptions of teacher quality in the areas of justice and fairness, instructional methods, and teacher-student relationships. Data were organized and evaluated using statistical software to produce the written results.

The results for student and teacher relationships and justice and fairness indicated there were no significant differences among ethnicities or genders; however, when Instructional Strategies were evaluated for ethnicity and gender differences, ANOVA results for ethnicity revealed significant differences among the four ethnic groups. High agreement was found on the items in which students indicated that they had adequate

time for questions and note-taking in class, teachers provided strategies to help them retain information, teachers expected students to use a variety of resources to complete class projects, and teachers provided detailed rubrics for specific grade requirements. These findings lead one to believe that students want to know the expectations for success in the classroom and value the teachers that provide them with concrete details.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher quality, Secondary students, Student perceptions

SECONDARY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER QUALITIES

by

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Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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2011

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SECONDARY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER QUALITIES

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who have been supportive during this journey. To my husband, Ed, for taking care of dinner, laundry, school functions, homework and all of the extras so I could attend classes and write in a quiet room, this accomplishment is ours.

To my children, Cameron, Joshua, Mitchell, and Tyler, I dedicate this work to you to show you that one never stops learning. Your father and I have great faith in you to be successful in all you do, and expect you to support those important people in your lives as they continue reaching for their goals. You have given me the greatest gift of your love and support to complete a goal that took time away from being your mom.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the importance of finding new ways to teach and connect with every student presents a never ending challenge to administrators and teachers across the country. Federal and state standards demand evidence of improvement among all groups of learners that guarantee all students have access to highly qualified teachers. By having a better understanding of teacher quality, administrators will be better equipped to hire teachers with attributes that engage students and encourage learning. Studies have been conducted on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that exemplify quality teaching, including content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management. Also, in response to NCLB, considerable attention has been given by researchers to classroom strategies that prove effective at raising test scores. In recent years, studies have been expanded to evaluate students' perceptions of effective teaching within the college environment. In spite of this, few studies exist that examine secondary students' observations of quality teaching. This study will seek to determine traits of effective teachers as perceived by secondary students in the state of Georgia.

Background

“Teachers are the single most important resource to a child’s learning” (The White House, 2010). Research on teacher quality over the past thirty years has provided data that suggest schools have an impact on student learning, but more importantly, that the largest influence on student learning can be traced to teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ferguson, 1991; Haycock, 1998). Studies of teacher effects and educational equity have

been conducted throughout the United States to determine the impact on student achievement, as well as the relationship between teacher licensure/certification and educational attainment on student test scores. Results of these studies have provided documentation that supports the value of teacher content knowledge, content-specific pedagogy, and professional learning tied to the content taught by teachers (Allen, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000). According to Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (1998), the variability in teacher quality accounts for at least 7.5% of the dissimilarities in student achievement.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) defines a highly qualified teacher as one who meets three general requirements – completion of a bachelor’s degree, licensure or certification by the state, and demonstration of subject matter competence in each academic subject they teach. Despite the provisions of NCLB, gaps still exist among poor and minority children in urban, suburban and rural settings (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009) as well as students with varying levels of English proficiency (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). Vaanneman et al. examined the results of the mathematics and reading scores from the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and found that significant increases occurred among black students in both reading and math, and the gap narrowed in Georgia between 1992 and 2007. In spite of this good news, the narrowing of the gap was not found to be significant because the scores of white students remained stagnant with no statistically significant growth.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended in 2001, established the definition of highly qualified teachers as those who hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, have achieved state certification, and have

demonstrated mastery of the subject matter they teach (ESEA, 2001). NCLB established the baseline of requirements for state and local boards of education to provide competent, licensed teachers in the classroom, yet there is little evidence of improvement of teacher quality (NCATE, 2010). Even though the gap among student groups is narrowing, the gap still exists. If states are working to improve curriculum by focusing on standards, and institutions of higher learning are improving the quality of their teacher education programs, there is an unknown variable in the mix that has yet to be explained.

According to the U.S. Secretary's Sixth Annual Report on Teacher Quality, schools of education must file reports to the states providing the pass rates of their graduates on state certification assessments under Title II of the Higher Education Act. The states then file reports to the Department of Education that includes state certification and license requirements for graduates who have completed regular and alternate teacher preparation programs. Additional information in the annual reports include pass rates on state assessments of teacher preparation program graduates as well as quarterly rankings of their institutions of higher education "based on their pass rates, number of teachers on waivers or emergency/temporary permits, information on teacher standards and their alignment with student standards, and criteria for identifying low-performing schools of education." (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the professional teacher preparation accrediting body, requires the "parallel development of teaching knowledge that is specific to the content being taught, as well as general pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of child and adolescent development as applied to teaching" (NCATE, 2010).

Research by Golhaber and Brewer (2000) found that licensure of mathematics teachers was a more reliable indicator of student achievement when compared with teachers holding a degree in their content area. Their findings implied that teachers with pedagogy or methods coursework in their preparation program were more likely to have a greater effect on student achievement than teachers who were not certified in their subject.

The question that has been raised among stakeholders in recent years has now become, “What is an effective teacher?” The Center for Public Education (2009) noted five key characteristics of qualified teachers: High SAT or qualifying entrance exams, a degree from a demanding college program, high scores on the licensing exam, more than four years of teaching experience, and strong subject matter knowledge. The article raised the following questions for school board members as they seek to hire qualified and effective teachers: 1. What is the current distribution of teachers who have the characteristics most associated with effectiveness? 2. How can we attract more teachers with higher academic qualifications? 3. How can we retain teachers who have more than four years of experience? 4. What is our current rate of certification? What are we doing to reduce emergency certification? 5. Would we consider a policy of placing best-qualified teachers in schools with a majority of low-income or minority students? 6. Do we have the data tools in place to measure teachers’ effectiveness with students? 7. Do we currently pay more for advanced degrees? Should we continue this practice? If so, how do we align this practice with research on effective teachers? These questions are supported by the NCATE decision in January 2010 to form the “NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation, Partnerships, and Improved Student learning” (NCATE,

2010). The panel will establish a set of guiding principles for the clinical preparation of teachers so that preparation focuses more on building the expertise necessary for effective practice as professionals. This includes the development of candidates' ability to understand and relate to their students and their needs, development of practical and evidence-based pedagogical skills, and the use of research evidence and judgment in practice.

The teaching profession has evolved over the past 50 years, requiring that teachers rely on a different array of skills to meet the needs of their students. With a more diverse student population, instruction must be personalized to meet the needs of students with special needs as they are mainstreamed into the general student population. Students with individual learning plans (IEPs) as well as English language learners require adapted lessons to assist their learning of required academic disciplines. In a nation where the minority students are now the new majority, the portrait of U.S. classrooms has changed dramatically. One of the biggest challenges facing teachers today is teaching classrooms with highly motivated students while trying to engage others who openly demonstrate their dislike for school, increasing their risk of failure. The challenges facing teachers today are more demanding with the increased accountability requirements at the federal, state, and local levels (NCATE, 2010).

The debate over the importance of teacher quality is no longer the focus of educational experts because that importance is firmly established. A renewed focus on teaching practices is replacing the licensure vs. content knowledge issue and is now zeroing in on the ways teachers perform in the classroom. Teachers and teacher candidates should be able to understand and relate to students, know which pedagogical

skills are best suited for their students' learning, and have an awareness of current research that informs practice. NCATE has recognized the importance of a solid foundation in academia, but also the need for more practice in the clinical aspects of teaching, with the appropriate supports in place for teacher induction and ongoing professional learning. Within the sphere of additional clinical practice resides the opportunity for teachers and teacher candidates to understand how to relate to students.

Although teachers and teacher candidates are observed and evaluated by administrators, mentor teachers, and clinical supervisors, there is a key factor missing in the evaluative process: the voice of the student. Within this frame of investigation, a review of the literature will consider teacher effectiveness and student learning, characteristics of effective teachers, and student perspectives of effective teaching.

Teacher Effectiveness and Student Learning

Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff and Wyckoff (2007) discovered a narrowing of the achievement gap in New York City schools when policy makers placed teachers with greater credentials into high-poverty schools. The gaps between student groups is supported by the findings in the work of Darling-Hammond (2000), Good and Brophy (1994), and Goldhaber (2000), as well as in the more recent research on effective teaching. Effective teachers are grounded in their content knowledge, but also set high expectations for their students and themselves (Demmon-Berger, 1986). Effective teachers have the ability to set achievable goals and present content so that students can learn (Good & Brophy, 1994) while building strong relationships with their students in a caring and supportive classroom environment (Cotton, 1995; Wubbels, Levy, & Brekelmans, 1997). In a survey on effective teaching (Babbage, 2002), effective teachers

were identified as those who knew how to challenge and encourage their students, and demonstrate enthusiasm for the content. The teachers were willing to try new teaching methods and make connections between the content and the lives of their students.

Gloria Ladson-Billings, in an online interview with Au (2005), stated the following:

“Part of being highly qualified as a teacher is that you actually understand kids, you understand community, you understand context — so that you go into a setting and you're able to understand enough about the setting, enough about yourself, to be able to be effective... If the kids aren't really learning anything, how can you be highly qualified? That has got to be an ultimate goal of the enterprise — that students come out able to solve problems, able to make decisions, able to critically analyze their environments. Highly qualified teaching is intimately tied to results, but I'm not talking about results as standardized tests.”

Early research into teacher evaluation began in the late 1800s. Page (1885) in *Theory and Practice of Teaching* stated that it was easy to infer “all who learned could teach”, yet some scholars had higher degrees of skill than others. Teacher effectiveness research began in earnest in the early 1920s with the spotlight on the perspectives of administrators (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Gage, 1965). Further studies from the 1930s and 1940s concentrated on examining the relationship between teacher effectiveness and student achievement, classroom activities of teachers and students, and investigation of teaching style. These studies continued to add to the knowledge base of what constituted

effective teaching (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2003; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Mitzel, 1979) and led to the studies beginning in the 1960s that centered attention on teacher knowledge and beliefs about student learning.

Medley and Mitzel (1963) stated that an essential component of student learning is the teacher. This same finding has been supported in research conducted by Darling-Hammond (1991, 2000), Ferguson (1991), Haycock (1998), Sanders and Horn (1998), and Webster and Munro (1997). Researchers who support effective teaching as the predictor of student success support the use of value-added evaluation systems assessing student progress (Webster & Munro, 1997). Questions regarding the value-added connection between teaching and learning have been at the forefront of studies as boards of education attempt to find the magic combination of quality teaching practices and teacher content knowledge. “Value-added” is defined as how much value has been added to student learning (Carter, 2008). As student learning progresses from grade to grade, student scores from previous achievement tests are compared with later scores to measure growth rather than evaluation of one score at a particular point in time.

in time.

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment model, developed by Dr. William Sanders in the 1980s, is a well-known model used in education that indicates effective teachers are necessary for student success. In a three year study by Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997), children who had been placed with highly effective teachers for three years (3rd through 5th) scored in the 96th percentile on the statewide mathematics test in Tennessee at the end of their fifth grade year, whereas children who had been placed in classrooms with low-performing teachers for that same time period scored an average in the 44th

percentile. A more recent study conducted by Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) supported the findings of the Wright et al. 1997 study. They found that sizeable differences exist in teachers' aptitude to produce gains in student achievement.

Mendro (1998) reviewed data from Dallas Independent Schools and noted that teacher quality has a residual effect on student learning. Students placed with highly effective teachers for one year realized gains for several years following; however, students placed with ineffective teachers fell behind and needed up to three years to catch up with their peers. Considering the fact that teachers have the capacity to add to or lessen the value of student learning, an examination of effective teaching practices must be considered in order to maximize increases in student learning.

Results of a study of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Studies of 1988 (NELS) showed high school students' performance in mathematics and science were positively impacted by teachers with certification in their subject area (including teachers with a degree in their subject area) when compared with teachers without subject area certification (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999). The work of Goldhaber and Brewer is supported by the earlier work of Ferguson and Womack (1993). They determined that the quantity of teacher education coursework accounted for more than four times the variance in teacher performance than measures of content knowledge (college GPA and licensure exams). Content knowledge provides teachers with an assurance that they are capable of delivering content, but does not guarantee that the teacher is effective in the delivery of that content. Knowledge of subject matter does not guarantee high student achievement.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

In a recent study by Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2008), the researchers studied the instructional behaviors and practices of teachers and sought to determine the best practices that would foster increases in student learning. Their research centered on identifying characteristics of successful teacher traits over four levels of effectiveness (high to low) within four domains: instruction, student assessment, classroom management, and personal qualities. A sample of data from 1,936 students (85 classrooms) were selected from the school district's student population of 23,000 students to review gains in the students' achievement. Actual achievement was compared with expected achievement for teachers using two models for analysis, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLN). Findings from the Stronge et al. study indicated that effective teachers had greater organizational skills, behavioral expectations of their students' were higher, there was a greater degree of respect and fairness exhibited by effective teachers, and more higher-level questions were asked in the effective teachers' classrooms. An analysis of off-task behavior was also included in this study. In the effective teacher-rated classrooms, disruptions were minimal (.5 of an event) compared to the Ineffective- rated classroom, where observers recorded an average of five disruptive behaviors in a one hour observation.

The overall benefit of the Stronge et al. study was the recognition of the instructional characteristics and behaviors of teachers that correlated with increased gains in student learning. Three succinct themes came from the results of the analyses: effective teachers understand that a one size fits all approach does not promote student learning; effective teachers ask more higher-level questions than ineffective teachers; and in the effective

teacher's classroom, disruptive behaviors occur on an average of one per every 2 hours when compared with one every 12 minutes in an ineffective teacher's classroom. The findings from Stronge et al. (2008), Wright et al. (1997), Mendro (1998), Nye et al.(2004), and Darling-Hammond (2000) reinforce the importance of teacher quality and effectiveness as the common denominator in student learning.

Research into teacher effectiveness has also included the study of teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning. Work by Brighton (2003) found that teachers' dispositions about teaching had a direct effect on their eagerness to participate in professional development and implement new ideas gained in these learning experiences. The beliefs teachers have about learning are often difficult to change; many enter the practice of teaching with preconceived ideas about what is, and is not, effective teaching. Effective teachers are those willing to consider new ideas and methods that will improve their practice. Tobin and Fraser (1989) found that teacher beliefs had a major effect on the methods used to implement curriculum, directly impacting student learning, motivation to learn, and engagement in the classroom.

Teacher and Student Perspectives of the Classroom

In an ideal world, administrators, parents, teachers and students would all have a clear idea of what constitutes an effective teacher. There would be many similarities among the groups, but there would also be a divergence among the parties when different aspects of teaching are considered. Adherence to local and state school district policies, federal and state standards, and monitoring achievement through the use of multiple assessments/standardized tests would create differences among all of the stakeholders in the educational process.

Research measuring effective teaching practices and teacher quality has also included measurements of student preferences for classroom learning environments and experiences as well as assessments of student goals, motivation, self-esteem and self-efficacy. With much of the focus centered on teacher practices, very few studies have considered teaching effectiveness strictly from the students' perspective.

A study by Springer, Morganfield, and Diffily (2007) investigated constructivist teaching practices of 11 secondary teachers in Texas based on the educator standards developed by the Texas State Board of Educator Certification. The researchers were interested in three questions; 1) What similarities exist between secondary students' and teachers' preferences for classroom environments based on state-defined educator standards; 2) How different are the preferences in classroom environments between students and teachers; and 3) How are student preferences and classroom experiences influenced by grade level, gender, and socioeconomic status? The results indicated that the teachers and students differed considerably with respect to adherence to state standards (q.1); the students and teachers both felt that actual teaching practice did not match their expectations and preferences (q. 2), and third, girls preferred an adherence to effective teaching practices more than the boys in the study, yet the older boys in the study anticipated higher grades than the girls. These findings point out the differences between teacher and student perceptions as well as a difference in expectations between boys and girls. Males and females have opposing viewpoints of their self-esteem and self-concept. Males tend to over exaggerate their abilities, while females tend to underestimate their academic skills, which can influence achievement and test scores (Slavin, 2006). Differences in student perceptions of teaching are not limited to gender

differences. Students from varied ethnic backgrounds and economic status have diverse beliefs and expectations about learning and engagement in the classroom.

A 2006 article by Garcia, Agbemakplido, Abdella, Lopez, and Registe recorded the personal stories of high school students enrolled in a social justice course. The students were asked to analyze their high school experiences with teachers and describe what they believed to be the critical qualities of teachers. The framework for the assignment was based on the purpose of education with respect to history, social justice, research, and community organization. Requirements of the project included research into NCLB, a review of education literature, an analysis of the students' own learning experiences, and gaining an understanding of their school district's criteria and expectations for teachers to know and exhibit within the scope of their teaching positions. Student responses indicated that being a highly qualified teacher did not mean that teachers taught in a highly qualified manner. This long-term classroom exercise revealed the nature of student thinking, especially for students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.

Additional support for understanding cultural differences can be found in the study by Noguera (2007). This study described the results of a project called Pathways to Student Success conducted in ten Boston high schools. Students presented their ideas on how to improve teaching in their schools by offering suggestions about effective teacher practices: Teachers should be organized, patient, have a strong understanding of their content and be passionate about their subject matter; teachers should be firm but still show respect to their students. Another study supported these practices in an examination of African American students' perceptions of their learning environments. Howard (2002) examined the findings from a study of African American students in urban

schools seeking their interpretations of effective teaching. According to Howard, African American students indicated that teachers did not care about their academic success and demonstrated apathy towards these students in the classroom. Furthermore, he suggested that the attitude of the teacher affects the way students' perceive their learning experiences. The study focused on five urban schools with a sample of 30 middle and secondary students. Although the sample size was small, the interviews with students shed light on how African American students define effective teaching. One such outcome was the phrase "culturally connected caring", where a student feels cared for in such a way that they do not have to abandon their ethnic integrity. Another outcome of student responses was the need for students to have personal connections with their teachers and evidence of caring outside of the classroom. Students revealed that they were more motivated to learn when their teachers used familiar patterns of interactions with students, similar to the types of interactions that were used at home.

Worrell and Kuterbach (2001) noted that another group of students has been ignored with respect to teacher effectiveness: gifted students in university-based summer programs. The researchers suggested that low-inference teacher behaviors can be used to conduct teacher evaluations in high school population groups. Low inference behaviors refer to specific classroom behaviors easily identified as opposed to general or vague accounts. In the Worrell and Kuterbach study, two groups of academically talented high school students were asked to rate their six-week summer program with respect to instructor attributes and course and program quality. Findings indicated that students provided valid ratings of teaching and that the use of student ratings could be used as a tool to provide formative feedback to teachers in a limited capacity. Additional support

for student ratings can be found in the Glover and Law study (2004). They analyzed student ratings to determine the link between learning experience and school culture. An investigation was conducted to collect data on student perceptions of teaching and learning policies, to gather results based on gender, age, and subject for reflection, and to determine if relationships existed between the students' learning experiences and school successes based on national measures. Statements about the learning experience were grouped into five categories: physical environment of the school, challenge of teacher expectations, learning experience and teaching styles, nature of relationships between teachers and students, and student understanding of school curriculum. The findings from this study indicated that schools deemed to be successful are those whose leadership strategies and leader roles are clear, their staff members participate in shared-decision making processes, the schools have a vision with policies in place for improvement, and the atmosphere promotes a meaningful understanding of teaching and learning practices.

Hubbard (2001) criticized current research for a lack of focus on student perceptions of teacher practices and behaviors, noting that educators and researchers were "reluctant to ask students what they think." Good and Weinstein (1986) paved the way for student contributions regarding classroom practice, suggesting that more notice be paid to the ideas and interests of students. Good (1981) stated that high school students are unaware of their ability to affect change in the classroom, yet students in classrooms today may not be willing to provide their input, especially if the classroom environment is not conducive to discussing options for improvement. Findings from the Walker and Greene (2009) study suggest that "high school students who report a sense of belonging are more likely to focus on the development of understanding and then use cognitive effort to make

that understanding possible (p.470).” Teachers are in a position to foster this sense of belonging in the classroom, which equates to more positive learning outcomes for their students. Students show increased efforts to regulate their learning and seek help willingly when needed. An important outcome of these positive changes in student behaviors is the students’ ability to understand how learning is relevant to their future. Relevance of course content is directly related to students’ motivation to learn new material. As noted by Hubbard (2001), students are most affected by teacher practices in the classroom, yet few studies target the perceptions of students in their learning environments.

The statement by Gloria Ladson-Billings, in the interview with Au (2005), reinforced the importance of student participation in school improvement: “Part of being highly qualified as a teacher is that you actually understand kids, you understand community, you understand context — so that you go into a setting and you're able to understand enough about the setting, enough about yourself, to be able to be effective.”

Educational reform has been addressed at federal, state and school district levels for decades. At the district level, school leaders work with their leadership teams, departments, special education staff, and support staff to monitor student progress and adjust curriculum, scheduling, and testing as issues arise. Unfortunately, reform efforts have failed to recognize the value of the most important stakeholder in education – the student. This study will examine student perceptions of effective teachers in the secondary classroom to identify the behaviors, methods, and qualities of teaching that promote student learning and engagement.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

An important predictor of student achievement is engagement in learning activities within the school environment (Finn & Rock, 1997). There is an inclination to drift away from classroom engagement as students move from elementary to high school (Lumsden, 1994).

Newmann (1992) identified three critical factors that may increase student achievement: (1) students' perceptions of fairness and justice in the classroom, (2) relationships between teachers and students, and (3) effective use of instructional strategies. Schools with diverse student populations and low socio-economic status must find ways to increase student achievement by examining the issues that affect the student. Although research has been conducted to determine secondary students' perceptions of teacher quality, very little is known about the perceptions of teacher quality based on gender or race. Students from diverse populations may have different ideas and beliefs of what constitutes teacher quality in spite of being assigned to classrooms taught by highly qualified teachers. In order to discover new insights about student engagement in the secondary classroom, it is important to examine high school students' perceptions of teacher quality to better inform school leaders as they seek teachers who are highly qualified in their subject areas and exhibit the traits deemed important by students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Ash and Persall (1999) stated that student learning had to be the central goal in educating students, and that school leaders are the key in bringing about universal change to increase student achievement. In order to discover new ways of reaching students, it makes sense to ask those most affected by teachers, the students, to weigh in with their

perceptions of teacher quality. The researcher will consider the following overarching question in this study: With respect to student and teacher relationships, instructional strategies, and justice and fairness, what do secondary students perceive about teacher quality? The following sub-questions will be used to answer the overarching question:

RQ₁ What are perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to student and teacher relationships?

RQ₂ What are perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to instructional strategies?

RQ₃ What are perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to justice and fairness?

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine student perceptions of effective teachers in the secondary classroom to determine the behaviors, teaching methods, and qualities of teaching that promote student learning and engagement. A quantitative approach was utilized to study high school students' responses through surveys identifying student responses.

A purposive sample of Georgia public high schools was used to gather cluster samples of student data from nine schools. The selected schools were chosen based on school superintendents who gave permission for their high schools to participate. After securing permission from the superintendents, the respective high school principals were contacted to introduce the researcher and elements of the study.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were high school seniors attending public high schools in the state of Georgia. The sample was selected by utilizing a purposive sample from all Georgia public high schools reported in the Georgia Report Card for the 2009-2010 school year. In each school selected for this study, two classes of seniors were asked to participate in the survey. From each selected high school, student participants were selected using cluster sampling of all senior classes at the high schools selected. The targeted population group was high school seniors taking all of their classes on campus in their high schools. The total number of schools selected was nine public high schools. Within each school a minimum of two senior classes were cluster sampled for participation in the study. Assuming a minimum class size of twenty students, the targeted sample for the study was 360 high school seniors.

INSTRUMENTATION

A survey instrument was distributed to all participants. The instrument, Student Perceptions of Teacher Quality was adapted from a survey conducted by Semmel (2007). Semmel sought to measure lack of engagement in high school classrooms through an examination of four teacher-influenced variables: students' sense of justice in the classroom, appropriate use of power in the classroom, teacher-student relationships, and the use of effective instructional strategies. Furthermore, he sought to ascertain the degree to which these factors were associated with self-reported levels of student engagement with respect to student ethnicity, socio-economic status, and self-efficacy. Three of these constructs, Student-Teacher Relationships, Instructional Strategies, and

Justice and Fairness, form the theoretical foundation for the survey document used in this study.

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher made contact with all superintendents to secure permission for their schools to participate; permission was obtained from the administrators of each high school two months prior to data collection. Copies of the Institutional Review Board approval and an abstract of the study were made available to all participating schools and their review personnel upon request. Students participating in the quantitative portion of the study were given informed consent letters to be signed by parents and/or guardians. The informed consent letters were sent home with students one month prior to student participation in the survey.

Surveys were mailed or hand-delivered based on the geographic location of participating schools. Surveys were given to randomly selected homeroom or first period classes of high school seniors who voluntarily participated. Surveys were collected and placed in a mailing envelope with prepaid postage, pre-addressed to the researcher, and mailed with out-going school mail or hand-delivered to the researcher by a designated representative from the participating schools. The survey consisted of questions that measured students' perceptions of the teacher-student relationships, teachers' instructional strategies, fairness towards all students, and teacher traits that promote student engagement in the classroom. The students were to apply their survey questions to teachers they deemed to have been effective teachers from all four years of high school, not necessarily one teacher's classroom that they were currently taking while completing the survey.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the surveys was entered into a spreadsheet and exported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Each question was labeled as variable 1, 2, 3, etc. Descriptive statistics were tabulated for each of the variables observed by the survey instrument by gender and race. One-way Analysis of Variance was used to identify differences among the race and gender of the students in the survey and independent t-tests were used to analyze differences among for each dimension: student-teacher relationships, instructional strategies, and justice and fairness.

DELIMITATIONS

The study concentrated on eighteen public high schools in Georgia. Participants included high school seniors who attended nine of the eighteen public high schools in selected school districts within the First District RESA. High schools were selected by a purposive sample from the schools in this region based on permission by their superintendents to participate in the study. Students from the participating high schools were selected from two classes per schools participating in the study. Since only nine schools with a minimum of 360 students were selected for the study, the findings may not be generalizable to other students in the state or nation.

SUMMARY

Teacher quality is an important part of a student's success in school. Research shows that teacher quality has the largest effect on student achievement and determines the success of a student in subsequent years of schooling. In order to add to the current knowledge of hiring quality teachers, principals must understand what students perceive to be quality instruction in the classroom and consider students' perceptions of excellent

teaching and the ability of teachers to engage learners in the content. An analysis of data collected from high school seniors will help school leaders identify the characteristics of quality teachers that encourage students to be active participants in the classroom, which may lead to greater numbers of high school graduates. By studying the responses based on gender and ethnicity, new information regarding what works among diverse student population groups may help principals make better choices as they hire new teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Given the nature of high-stakes accountability in the United States, school districts and state boards of education are focused on the practices that directly influence student learning. Methods of evaluation are changing from the historical practice of administrative observation of teacher tasks, knowledge, and ability to teacher practices that produce observable and measureable student academic achievement. A historical review of literature provides a multitude of data that supports a common belief: teacher effectiveness is the greatest determinant of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2001; Hanusek, Kain, & Rivkin 1998). “Even if teachers were randomly distributed among schools and all of the between school variation in achievement were to result from other school inputs, differences in teacher quality would swamp all other school inputs (Hanusek, Kain & Rivkin, 1998, pp. 30-31).

Teacher Effectiveness

Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff and Wyckoff (2007) discovered a narrowing of the achievement gap in New York City schools when policy makers placed teachers with greater credentials into high-poverty schools. The gaps between student groups is supported by the findings in the work of Darling-Hammond (2000), Good and Brophy (1994), and Goldhaber (2000), as well as in the more recent research on effective teaching. Effective teachers are grounded in their content knowledge, but also set high expectations for their students and themselves (Demmon-Berger, 1986). Effective teachers have the ability to set achievable goals and present content so that students can learn (Good & Brophy, 1994) while building strong relationships with their students in a

caring and supportive classroom environment (Cotton, 1995; Wubbels, Levy, & Brekelmans, 1997). In a survey on effective teaching (Babbage, 2002), effective teachers were identified as those who knew how to challenge and encourage their students, and demonstrate enthusiasm for the content. The teachers were willing to try new teaching methods and make connections between the content and the lives of their students.

Gloria Ladson-Billings, in an online interview with Au (2005), stated the following:

“Part of being highly qualified as a teacher is that you actually understand kids, you understand community, you understand context — so that you go into a setting and you're able to understand enough about the setting, enough about yourself, to be able to be effective... If the kids aren't really learning anything, how can you be highly qualified? That has got to be an ultimate goal of the enterprise — that students come out able to solve problems, able to make decisions, able to critically analyze their environments. Highly qualified teaching is intimately tied to results, but I'm not talking about results as standardized tests.”

Early research into teacher evaluation began in the late 1800s. Page (1885) in *Theory and Practice of Teaching* stated that it was easy to infer “all who learned could teach”, yet some scholars had higher degrees of skill than others. Teacher effectiveness research began in earnest in the early 1920s with the spotlight on the perspectives of administrators (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Gage, 1965). Further studies from the 1930s and 1940s concentrated on examining the relationship between teacher effectiveness and

student achievement, classroom activities of teachers and students, and investigation of teaching style. These studies continued to add to the knowledge base of what constituted effective teaching (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2003; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Mitzel, 1979) and led to the studies beginning in the 1960s that centered attention on teacher knowledge and beliefs about student learning.

Medley and Mitzel (1963) stated that an essential component of student learning is the teacher. This same finding has been supported in research conducted by Darling-Hammond (1991, 2000), Ferguson (1991), Haycock (1998), Sanders and Horn (1998), and Webster and Munro (1997). Researchers who support effective teaching as the predictor of student success support the use of value-added evaluation systems assessing student progress (Webster & Munro, 1997). Questions regarding the value-added connection between teaching and learning have been at the forefront of studies as boards of education attempt to find the magic combination of quality teaching practices and teacher content knowledge. “Value-added” is defined as how much value has been added to student learning (Carter, 2008). As student learning progresses from grade to grade, student scores from previous achievement tests are compared with later scores to measure growth rather than evaluation of one score at a particular point in time.

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment model, developed by Dr. William Sanders in the 1980s, is a well-known model used in education that indicates effective teachers are necessary for student success. In a three year study by Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997), children who had been placed with highly effective teachers for three years (3rd through 5th) scored in the 96th percentile on the statewide mathematics test in Tennessee at the end of their fifth grade year, whereas children who had been placed in classrooms

with low-performing teachers for that same time period scored an average in the 44th percentile. A more recent study conducted by Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) supported the findings of the Wright et al. 1997 study. They found that sizeable differences exist in teachers' aptitude to produce gains in student achievement. Mendro (1998) reviewed data from Dallas Independent Schools and noted that teacher quality has a residual effect on student learning. Students placed with highly effective teachers for one year realized gains for several years following; however, students placed with ineffective teachers fell behind and needed up to three years to catch up with their peers. Considering the fact that teachers have the capacity to add to or lessen the value of student learning, an examination of effective teaching practices must be considered in order to maximize increases in student learning.

Results of a study of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Studies of 1988 (NELS) showed high school students' performance in mathematics and science were positively impacted by teachers with certification in their subject area (including teachers with a degree in their subject area) when compared with teachers without subject area certification (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999). The work of Goldhaber and Brewer is supported by the earlier work of Ferguson and Womack (1993). They determined that the quantity of teacher education coursework accounted for more than four times the variance in teacher performance than measures of content knowledge (college GPA and licensure exams). Content knowledge provides teachers with an assurance that they are capable of delivering content, but does not guarantee that the teacher is effective in the delivery of that content. Knowledge of subject matter does not guarantee high student achievement.

Initial findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project (MET), funded by the Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation (2010) were reported in the first of four analyses of teacher effectiveness. The first of these reports focused on mathematics and English language arts teachers in grades 4 through 8. The researchers looked at the relationships throughout diverse methods of effective teaching. The goal of the project is to identify effective teaching and the practices associated with affective teachers. Early findings from the project indicated four outcomes. First, in all of the grades and subjects evaluated, the researchers noted the “teacher’s past track record of value-added” was one of the most convincing predictors of future student achievement gains. Second, the value added benefit promoted deeper understanding of concepts. A third finding indicated that teachers had a greater influence on math achievement than English Language Arts on state tests, and a final finding showed that students’ perceptions of teacher strengths and weaknesses were consistent – students were able to discern a teacher’s ability to control their classrooms and to provide rigorous, challenging work.

Within the scope of this project, researchers in the MET project included confidential student evaluations as a means to provide supplemental feedback to teachers. The student perceptions survey was based on The Tripod Project for Student Improvement, founded by Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University. Students answered questions from the Tripod survey based on seven constructs: care, control, clarify, challenge, captivate, confer, and consolidate. Student perception data was analyzed for 2,519 classrooms using a 5 point scale. Means for each question were calculated and standardized and correlation statistics between sections were performed for students taught by the same teacher in different class sections. The overall composite correlation

over all of the constructs was .67, and the correlations for each of the seven constructs ranged from .58 to .68. The findings in this first report indicate that student perceptions may assist principals when evaluating teachers beyond the use of classroom observations and student test scores.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

In a recent study by Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2008), the researchers studied the instructional behaviors and practices of teachers and sought to determine the best practices that would foster increases in student learning. Their research centered on identifying characteristics of successful teacher traits over four levels of effectiveness (high to low) within four domains: instruction, student assessment, classroom management, and personal qualities. A sample of data from 1,936 students (85 classrooms) were selected from the school district's student population of 23,000 students to review gains in the students' achievement. Actual achievement was compared with expected achievement for teachers using two models for analysis, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLN). Findings from the Stronge et al. study indicated that effective teachers had greater organizational skills, behavioral expectations of their students' were higher, there was a greater degree of respect and fairness exhibited by effective teachers, and more higher-level questions were asked in the effective teachers' classrooms. An analysis of off-task behavior was also included in this study. In the effective teacher-rated classrooms, disruptions were minimal (.5 of an event) compared to the Ineffective- rated classroom, where observers recorded an average of five disruptive behaviors in a one hour observation.

The overall benefit of the Stronge et al. study was the recognition of the instructional characteristics and behaviors of teachers that correlated with increased gains in student learning. Three succinct themes came from the results of the analyses: effective teachers understand that a one size fits all approach does not promote student learning; effective teachers ask more higher-level questions than ineffective teachers; and in the effective teacher's classroom, disruptive behaviors occur on an average of one per every 2 hours when compared with one every 12 minutes in an ineffective teacher's classroom. The researchers believe that "effective" teachers, when considering student achievement, possess a set of attributes that produces positive teacher-student relationships and student encouragement (p. 208). The findings from Stronge et al. (2008), Wright et al. (1997), Mendro (1998), Nye et al.(2004), and Darling-Hammond (2000) reinforce the importance of teacher quality and effectiveness as the common denominator in student learning.

Research into teacher effectiveness has also included the study of teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning. Work by Brighton (2003) found that teachers' dispositions about teaching had a direct effect on their eagerness to participate in professional development and implement new ideas gained in these learning experiences. The beliefs teachers have about learning are often difficult to change; many enter the practice of teaching with preconceived ideas about what is, and is not, effective teaching. These beliefs are supported by the earlier work of Tobin and Fraser (1989), who found that teacher beliefs had a major effect on the methods used to implement curriculum, directly impacting student learning, motivation to learn, and engagement in the classroom.

Effective teachers are those willing to consider new ideas and methods that will improve their practice. Gentry and Hu (in press) conducted a study to identify top quality teachers based on student ratings. Using two instruments, My Class Activities (MCA, Gentry & Gable, 2001) and Student Perceptions of Classroom Quality (SPOCQ, Gentry & Owen, 2004), the authors sampled 49 schools from urban, rural, and suburban schools with a diverse population of students. Data from the MCA was obtained from 23 schools and included 3,744 students from 7 states. From the SPOCQ sample, there were 7,411 students also from 7 states. Data collected from the students covered a range of teachers, not just those identified as exemplary. The MCA was given to students in grades three through eight and the SPOCQ was given to students in grades seven through twelve. The SPOCQ assessed student perceptions based on challenge, choice, appeal, meaningfulness, and self-efficacy. Scores were totaled and rank-ordered to identify teachers in the top 5 to 10% of the sample. Scores above .75 standard deviations were used to determine the highest ranking scores and the average rating for secondary teachers was 1.04 standard deviations higher than other teachers. Utilizing a mixed method design, the researchers used the quantitative data obtained from the students surveys to identify the exemplary teachers, then obtained qualitative data from surveys, interviews, and observations. Qualitative analysis of the data generated four themes: “1, These teachers know and show a personal interest in their students; 2, These teachers set high expectations for themselves and their students; 3, These teachers make content learning meaningful and relevant to the future and respect students’ choices; and 4, These students have a clear passion for their students, teaching, and for their content.” This study provided evidence of how teachers can relate to their students and build stronger teacher/student

relationships. The students in the study were able to recognize quality teaching and voiced the importance of teachers showing a genuine interest in their lives and a dedication to content knowledge. A noteworthy finding in this study was that “not all of the administrators believed or recognized them as exemplary teachers.” The findings in this study raise two important questions as administrators consider future hiring decisions and developers of teacher education programs seek to improve curriculum. How can the qualities of the exemplary teachers be used to improve the skills and development of pre-service and in-service teachers? How can administrators identify teachers who are passionate about their content, students and teaching to recruit and retain excellent teachers?

Teacher and Student Perspectives of the Classroom

In an ideal world, administrators, parents, teachers and students would all have a clear idea of what constitutes an effective teacher. There would be many similarities among the groups, but there would also be a divergence among the parties when different aspects of teaching are considered. Adherence to local and state school district policies, federal and state standards, and monitoring achievement through the use of multiple assessments/standardized tests would create differences among all of the stakeholders in the educational process.

Research measuring effective teaching practices and teacher quality has also included measurements of student preferences for classroom learning environments and experiences as well as assessments of student goals, motivation, self-esteem and self-efficacy. With much of the focus centered on teacher practices, very few studies have considered teaching effectiveness strictly from the students’ perspective.

A study by Springer, Morganfield, and Diffily (2007) investigated constructivist teaching practices of 11 secondary teachers in Texas based on the educator standards developed by the Texas State Board of Educator Certification and 254 secondary students that came from one classroom of each of the participating teachers. The researchers used a 2 x 2 ANOVA to analyze three questions; 1) What similarities exist between secondary students' and teachers' preferences for classroom environments based on state-defined educator standards; 2) How different are the preferences in classroom environments between students and teachers; and 3) How are student preferences and classroom experiences influenced by grade level, gender, and socioeconomic status? The results indicated that the teachers and students differed considerably with respect to adherence to state standards (q.1); the students and teachers both felt that actual teaching practice did not match their expectations and preferences (q. 2), and girls preferred an adherence to effective teaching practices more than the boys in the study, yet the older boys in the study anticipated higher grades than the girls (q. 3). These findings point out the differences between teacher and student perceptions as well as a difference in expectations between boys and girls. Males and females have opposing viewpoints of their self-esteem and self-concept. Males tend to over exaggerate their abilities, while females tend to underestimate their academic skills, which can influence achievement and test scores (Slavin, 2006). Differences in student perceptions of teaching are not limited to gender differences. Students from varied ethnic backgrounds and economic status have diverse beliefs and expectations about learning and engagement in the classroom.

A 2006 article by Garcia, Agbemakplido, Abdella, Lopez, and Registe recorded the personal stories of high school students enrolled in a social justice course. The students

were asked to analyze their high school experiences with teachers and describe what they believed to be the critical qualities of teachers. The framework for the assignment was based on the purpose of education with respect to history, social justice, research, and community organization. Requirements of the project included research into NCLB, a review of education literature, an analysis of the students' own learning experiences, and gaining an understanding of their school district's criteria and expectations for teachers to know and exhibit within the scope of their teaching positions. Student responses indicated that being a highly qualified teacher did not mean that teachers taught in a highly qualified manner. This long-term classroom exercise revealed the nature of student thinking, especially for students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.

Additional support for understanding cultural differences can be found in the study by Noguera (2007). This study described the results of a project called Pathways to Student Success conducted in ten Boston high schools. Students presented their ideas on how to improve teaching in their schools by offering suggestions about effective teacher practices: Teachers should be organized, patient, have a strong understanding of their content and be passionate about their subject matter; teachers should be firm but still show respect to their students. Another study supported these practices in an examination of African American students' perceptions of their learning environments. Howard (2002) conducted a qualitative case study of African American students in urban schools seeking their interpretations of effective teaching. According to Howard, African American students indicated that teachers did not care about their academic success and demonstrated apathy towards these students in the classroom. Furthermore, he suggested that the attitude of the teacher affects the way students' perceive their learning

experiences. The study focused on five urban schools with a sample of 30 elementary and secondary students. Although the sample size was small, the interviews with students shed light on how African American students define effective teaching. One such outcome was the phrase “culturally connected caring”, where a student feels cared for in such a way that they do not have to abandon their ethnic integrity. Another outcome of student responses was the need for students to have personal connections with their teachers and evidence of caring outside of the classroom. Students revealed that they were more motivated to learn when their teachers used familiar patterns of interactions with students, similar to the types of interactions that were used at home.

Worrell and Kuterbach (2001) noted that another group of students has been ignored with respect to teacher effectiveness: gifted students in university-based summer programs. The researchers suggested that low-inference teacher behaviors can be used to conduct teacher evaluations in high school population groups. Low inference behaviors refer to specific classroom behaviors easily identified as opposed to general or vague accounts. In the Worrell and Kuterbach study, two groups of academically talented high school students were asked to rate their six-week summer program with respect to instructor attributes and course and program quality. Findings indicated that students provided valid ratings of teaching and that the use of student ratings could be used as a tool to provide formative feedback to teachers in a limited capacity.

Additional support for student ratings can be found in the Glover and Law study (2004). The researchers analyzed student ratings to determine the link between learning experience and school culture. An investigation was conducted to collect data on student perceptions of teaching and learning policies, to gather results based on gender, age, and

subject for reflection, and to determine if relationships existed between the students' learning experiences and school successes based on national measures. Statements about the learning experience were grouped into five categories: physical environment of the school, challenge of teacher expectations, learning experience and teaching styles, nature of relationships between teachers and students, and student understanding of school curriculum. The findings from this study indicated that schools deemed to be successful are those whose leadership strategies and leader roles are clear, their staff members participate in shared-decision making processes, the schools have a vision with policies in place for improvement, and the atmosphere promotes a meaningful understanding of teaching and learning practices.

Hubbard (2001) criticized current research for a lack of focus on student perceptions of teacher practices and behaviors, noting that educators and researchers were "reluctant to ask students what they think." Good and Weinstein (1986) paved the way for student contributions regarding classroom practice, suggesting that more notice be paid to the ideas and interests of students. Good (1981) stated that high school students are unaware of their ability to affect change in the classroom, yet students in classrooms today may not be willing to provide their input, especially if the classroom environment is not conducive to discussing options for improvement. In recent years, researchers are beginning to include the student voice in evaluation of teachers and schools. In 2004, Den Brok, Brekelmans, and Wubbels examined students' perceptions of their teachers' interpersonal behaviors through surveys in Physics and English as a Foreign Language classes. The researchers made four arguments to support the use of student ratings: first, students have a psychological response to teachers based on what a teacher does in the

classroom; second, student perceptions are easily gathered (low expenses, readily available); third, students have many experiences with teachers and can provide data based on more than one observation; fourth, student perceptions that are averaged over a class aren't subject to the feelings or emotions that may take place in a single day; last, students have a unique perspective for describing the classroom environment because they have been subject to many different situations and settings. The researchers used the Dutch version of the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction, which included 77 questions on a 5-point Likert scale. There were 826 students in the Physics sample and 941 students in the EFL classes. Analysis of the study included three multilevel models to ascertain variation in achievement and pleasure, relevance, confidence, and effort. The results showed a higher degree of variation in the Physics sample for students' pleasure and confidence, but less bearing on achievement and application. Also noted was a strong relationship between proximity with student motivation based on subject content; however, proximity was not found to be associated with students' test score results.

Findings from the Walker and Greene (2009) study suggest that "high school students who report a sense of belonging are more likely to focus on the development of understanding and then use cognitive effort to make that understanding possible (p.470)." Teachers are in a position to foster this sense of belonging in the classroom, which equates to more positive learning outcomes for their students. Students show increased efforts to regulate their learning and seek help willingly when needed. An important outcome of these positive changes in student behaviors is the students' ability to understand how learning is relevant to their future. Relevance of course content is directly related to students' motivation to learn new material. As noted by Hubbard

(2001), students are most affected by teacher practices in the classroom, yet few studies target the perceptions of students in their learning environments.

The statement by Gloria Ladson-Billings, in the interview with Au (2005), reinforced the importance of student participation in school improvement: “Part of being highly qualified as a teacher is that you actually understand kids, you understand community, you understand context — so that you go into a setting and you're able to understand enough about the setting, enough about yourself, to be able to be effective.”

Educational reform has been addressed at federal, state and school district levels for decades. At the district level, school leaders work with their leadership teams, departments, special education staff, and support staff to monitor student progress and adjust curriculum, scheduling, and testing as issues arise. Unfortunately, reform efforts have failed to recognize the value of the most important stakeholder in education – the student. This study will examine student perceptions of effective teachers in the secondary classroom to identify the behaviors, methods, and qualities of teaching that promote student learning and engagement.

Problem Statement

An important predictor of student achievement is engagement in learning activities within the school environment (Finn & Rock, 1997). There is an inclination to drift away from classroom engagement as students move from elementary to high school (Lumsden, 1994).

Newmann (1992) identified three critical factors that may increase student achievement: (1) students’ perceptions of fairness and justice in the classroom, (2) relationships between teachers and students, and (3) effective use of instructional strategies. Schools with diverse student populations and low socio-economic status must

find ways to increase student achievement by examining the issues that affect the student. Although research has been conducted to determine secondary students' perceptions of teacher quality, very little is known about the perceptions of teacher quality based on gender or race. Students from diverse populations may have different ideas and beliefs of what constitutes teacher quality in spite of being assigned to classrooms taught by highly qualified teachers. In order to discover new insights about student engagement in the secondary classroom, it is important to examine high school students' perceptions of teacher quality to better inform school leaders as they seek teachers who are highly qualified in their subject areas and exhibit the traits deemed important by students.

Research Questions

Ash and Persall (1999) stated that student learning had to be the central goal in educating students, and that school leaders are the key in bringing about universal change to increase student achievement. In order to discover new ways of reaching students, it makes sense to ask those most affected by teachers, the students, to weigh in with their perceptions of teacher quality. The researcher will consider the following overarching question in this study: What do secondary students perceive about teacher quality with respect to student and teacher relationships, instructional strategies and justice and fairness to bring about active engagement in the secondary classroom? The following sub-questions will be used to answer the overarching question:

- RQ₁ What are the perceptions of secondary students' with respect to student and teacher relationships by race and gender?
- RQ₂ What are the perceptions of secondary students' with respect to instructional strategies by race and gender?

RQ₃ What are the perceptions of secondary students' with respect to justice and fairness by race and gender?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The ways that students learn differs due to many factors: subject matter, classroom environment, learning styles, and teacher and administrative styles, and societal differences. This study focused on three factors within the classroom: teacher-student relationships, instructional strategies, and justice and fairness. The contrasts in instruction among teachers may affect students differently based on their perceptions of what is happening in the classroom. Students' perceptions of different classroom environments and approaches to teaching may provide valuable insight as administrators and teachers seek new ways to motivate learners (Gentry & Springer, 2002).

The research questions that will guide this study are:

RQ₁ What are perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to student and teacher relationships?

RQ₂ What are perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender with respect to instructional strategies?

RQ₃ What are perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender with respect to justice and fairness?

The purpose of this study was to examine student perceptions of effective teachers in the secondary classroom to determine the behaviors, teaching methods, and qualities of teaching that promote student learning and engagement. A quantitative approach was utilized to study high school students' responses by utilizing surveys to identify student responses. The survey included thirty-nine questions on a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = unsure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) and a final open-ended

question, survey question forty, which invited participants to state any question that they would like to have seen on the survey that was not included. This question was asked to give students a forum to voice their opinion and provide insight for future research into student perceptions of teacher quality.

A purposive sample of Georgia public high schools was used to gather cluster samples of student data from eight high schools. The selected schools were chosen from a pool of high schools in eighteen counties in southeastern Georgia. Students from the senior English classes or senior advisory classes of the participating high schools were surveyed during spring semester 2011.

Participants

The participants in this study were high school seniors attending public high schools in the southeastern portion of the state of Georgia. Seniors were selected in order to allow the students to consider their high school experiences over all four years of high school with the maturity of a student on the verge of graduation. The sample was selected by utilizing a purposive sample from all of the Georgia public high schools in eighteen counties for the 2010-2011 school year. In each of the eight schools included in the study, all seniors taking a senior English class or participating in an advisory session during the day were asked to participate. From each selected high school, student participants were selected using cluster sampling of all senior English classes at the high school or senior advisory classes. Within each school a minimum of two senior classes were cluster sampled for participation in the study. Assuming a minimum class size of twenty students, the targeted sample for the study was 360 high school seniors. The actual sample size by the end of the study included 663 students. Principals from some

of the participating high schools requested to include more of their students in the survey to get a better picture of their students' opinions.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument was distributed to all participants by their classroom teachers. The student survey (Appendix A) consisted of forty items and measured students' perceptions of three separate variables: teacher-student relationships, instructional strategies, and justice and fairness in the classroom. Of the forty items on the survey, thirty-nine questions were on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and a final open-ended question asked participants to state any question that they would like to have seen on the survey that was not included. This question was asked to give students a forum to voice their opinion and provide insight for future research into student perceptions of teacher quality; it was not a part of the analysis.

At each collection site, parent consent forms were distributed two weeks in advance. Students who returned the parent consent forms were given surveys during their English classes or senior advisory/homeroom classes. Students were given the instructions printed on the survey and reminded that the survey was anonymous and that they were under no obligation to complete the survey. The school representative collected all of the completed surveys and placed them in a mailing envelope addressed to the researcher.

The survey questions were adapted from a doctoral study completed in 2007 by Martin J. Semmel. Semmel developed a survey for high school students using questions from the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) ($\alpha = .73$) (Moos & Trickett, 1974) and the

Classroom Learning Environment Inventory (CL & I) ($\alpha = .95$) (Rochelle & Furtwengler, 2004). Questions from these surveys pertained to teacher-student relationships.

To measure instructional strategies employed by teachers, Semmel (2007) adapted questions from the High School Survey of Student Engagement, developed at the University of Indiana. This survey was originally adapted from the National Survey of Student Engagement ($\alpha = .84$). Semmel conducted a pilot test to establish reliability for each of his survey questions, which resulted in reliability values of $\alpha = .6245$ for the justice questions, $\alpha = .8968$ for teacher-student relationship questions, and $\alpha = .7189$ for instructional strategies. Based on Semmel's reliability results, the researcher drew upon the Semmel survey to form the basis for the instrument used in this study.

The questions were drawn from the Semmel study but adjusted for students to rate their teachers over their high school years and did not ask students to rate a current teacher at the time the survey was completed. The Semmel study was focused on factors that related to student engagement and included six different scales, whereas this study focused solely on the student's perception of the classroom on three scales: Student-Teacher Relationships (STR) included ten items, Instructional Strategies (IS) included 18 items, and Justice and Fairness (JF) included 6 items. A reliability analysis was conducted for the three research scales in this survey (Table 1), producing moderate to strong reliability values.

Table 1

Reliability Scores for Each Subscale

<u>Subscale</u>	<u>α</u>
Student - Teacher Relationships	.756
Instructional Strategies	.827
Justice and Fairness	.510

Data Collection

Data collection took place during the spring semester of the 2010 – 2011 school years. Surveys were sent out on different time tables to the participating schools based on the school testing calendars and spring breaks for students. The researcher made contact with all superintendents to secure permission for their schools to participate in January, 2011, and submitted a letter of introduction to the principals in the participating counties one month prior to data collection.

Copies of the Institutional Review Board approval and an abstract of the study were made available to all participating schools and their review personnel upon request. Students participating in the study were given informed consent letters to be signed by parents and/or guardians. The informed consent letters were sent home with students two weeks prior to student participation in the survey and were returned to their English teachers and/or advisors one week prior to the survey distribution. Surveys were mailed or delivered based on the geographic location of participating schools and were given to all senior English classes or advisory classes who returned signed consent forms and

voluntarily participated. Surveys were collected and placed in a mailing envelope with prepaid postage, pre-addressed to the researcher, and mailed with out-going school mail or picked up by the researcher's designee.

The survey consisted of questions that measured students' perceptions of the teacher-student relationships, teachers' instructional strategies, and justice and fairness in the classroom to identify those traits exhibited by teachers that promote student relationships and engagement in the classroom. The students were asked to apply their survey questions to teachers they deem to have been effective teachers from their years in high school.

After the data collection process was finished, 670 surveys were returned; seven of the surveys were eliminated due to incorrect methods of response or incomplete responses. In these seven surveys, students selected multiple answers for many of the questions or skipped half of the survey. After elimination of these seven surveys, 663 surveys were found to be accurately completed by the participants and used in the analysis. Each school had a different number of completed surveys due to senior class size and student attendance on the day the surveys were completed (Table 2). One school had a low participation rate due to the modest return of parent consent forms. A total of 1040 surveys were sent to participating schools and 670 surveys were returned. The overall return rate based on the 663 surveys was 63.8% return.

The schools were asked to survey at least two classes per school with an anticipated student participation rate of twenty students per class, or forty students per school, which would have resulted in 320 completed surveys for the study. Each of the principals were interested in surveying as many of their seniors as possible and asked for

enough surveys to include a larger sample pool of students. In two schools (School A and G), there was a 96.7 % and 82.9% participation rate respectively due to the interest in this study among school leadership. Due to principal support for the study, a larger number of surveys were returned than expected.

The demographics of the study participants were representative of the demographics for the State of Georgia (U.S. Census Bureau) (Table 3). Based on the low percentages in two of the ethnic categories (5 students in American Indian/Native American group and 17 students in the Asian American/Pacific Islander group), students from these two ethnic groups were combined with the “other” category for the purposes of analyzing the scale data by ethnicity. Students who selected more than one response for ethnicity were included in “other”.

Table 2

Sample Size and Completion Rates for Each Data Collection Site

<u>School</u>	<u>Surveys Sent</u>	<u>Surveys Returned</u>	<u>Percent Completed</u>
A	210	203	96.7
B	100	73	73.0
C	200	74	37.0
D	70	6	8.6
E	150	103	68.7
F	90	51	56.7
G	140	116	82.9
H	80	37	46.3

Data from the U.S. Census (2010) were compared with the data from the students' responses for ethnicity on the survey. Students who did not respond to the demographics question were omitted. Out of the 670 returned surveys, seven were removed from the data set for incorrect responses. Out of the 663 surveys used in the analysis, sixty-two of these had no decipherable response to ethnicity,

Table 3

Demographics for Sample and Georgia demographics - Ethnicity

Demographics	Study (%)	GA (%)
Black	24.0	30.5
White	56.1	59.7
Hispanic	8.8	8.8
American Indian	.8	.3

Data Analysis

The data collected from the surveys was entered into a spreadsheet and exported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) by the researcher. The data was examined for missing values and rechecked by the researcher to avoid input error. Each question was labeled as question one, two, three through question thirty-nine.

Descriptive statistics were tabulated for each of the variables included in the survey instrument by gender and race. One-way Analysis of Variance was used to identify differences among each of the three scales. For any significant difference noted, a post hoc Tukey test was used to find differences among the groups. The independent t-test was used to analyze differences in gender.

The researcher included question forty, an open ended question, which asked students if there was any other question they would like to have answered. The purpose of this question was to give students one last opportunity to say what they thought in their own words and provide insight for future research/expansion of this study.

Delimitations

The study concentrated on public high schools in eighteen school districts in southeast Georgia. Participants included high school seniors who attended all of their classes on the high school campus. High schools participating in this study were selected based on a purposive selection of eight high schools in the selected school districts during the 2010-2011 school year. This sample of eight public high schools included students from senior English classes and/or advisory classes with a minimum of two classes per school selected for the study. Since only eight schools with a minimum of 663 students were selected for the study, the findings may not be generalizable to other students in the state or nation.

Summary

Teacher quality is an important part of a student's success in school. Research shows that teacher quality has the largest effect on student achievement and determines the success of a student in subsequent years of schooling (Darling-Hammond, . In order to add to the current knowledge of hiring quality teachers, principals must understand what students perceive to be quality instruction in the classroom and consider students' perceptions of excellent teaching and the ability of teachers to engage learners in the content.

An analysis of data collected from high school seniors will help school leaders identify the characteristics of quality teachers that encourage students to be active participants in the classroom, which may lead to greater numbers of high school graduates. By studying the responses based on gender and ethnicity, new information regarding what works among diverse student population groups may help principals make better choices as they hire new teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This study focused on the perceptions of teacher qualities by high school seniors and considered three scales for evaluation: student-teacher relationships, instructional methods, and justice and fairness. The researcher sought to determine if differences existed between gender and ethnicity for each of the three scales.

Findings and results of the survey are reported separately for overall responses and broken down into results by gender and ethnicity for each of the research questions. The demographic data from the survey are presented in categorical form and are included to provide an illustration of the participants in the survey. The results for each of the research questions are presented and discussed based on the results from one-way ANOVA and independent t-tests. All statistics were analyzed using SPSS software. Results for each question will be presented with descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for each of the survey questions and the associated analysis of variance results for the four ethnic group comparisons and independent t-tests for the gender analysis.

The three research questions were answered based on the three constructs discussed in the literature review: student-teacher relationships (STR), instructional strategies (IS), and justice and fairness (JF). The student responses from the Likert scale were associated with the three constructs in the research questions. The data were converted to scale scores by summing the scores in the Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) for each student and placing the summed values in a separate variable in SPSS. For the student- teacher relationship scale, there

were ten items from the survey identified in the student-teacher relationship category. Assuming a minimum response of one and the maximum response of five, a range of ten (1 X 10) to fifty (5 X 10) would be the possible scores for one student. Higher scores on STR are associated with positive student-teacher relationships. Each of these scores was summed for all participants for the questions in each category. A Cronbach's Alpha test was performed on the scaled score data to determine the reliability for the data and is reported in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of secondary students' with respect to student and teacher relationships by race and gender?

This research question examined secondary students' perceptions of teacher and student relationships. In order to determine significant differences among the ethnic groups, this study utilized the statistical procedures for analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc tests to determine any differences between groups when significant differences were found from the ANOVA.

Descriptive statistics for each of the four ethnic groups and the two gender groups are provided for every question in the Student-Teacher Relationship scale (Table 4). The categories for ethnicity were B (Black), W (White), H (Hispanic), O (Other). Students who selected American Indian/Native American, Asian American/Pacific Islander or selected more than one ethnic group were placed in "other" due to the small percentages of respondents for these categories.

Results for Student and Teacher Relationships are separated by ethnicity and gender. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data for the ethnic groups to ascertain differences among the means for each of the four groups.

Table 4

Scaled Scores Means and Standard Deviations for Student-Teacher Relationships

Student Teacher Relationships		Gender		Ethnicity			
		M	F	B	W	H	O
Good relationships exist between students and teachers	N	309	335	145	337	52	67
	M	3.96	4.08	4.05	4.05	4.17	4.03
	SD	.88	.80	.81	.82	.81	.83
Teachers care about students	N	311	335	145	338	53	67
	M	3.39	3.44	3.49	3.44	3.32	3.46
	SD	1.05	.93	.99	.97	1.02	.97
Teachers treat students politely	N	310	332	143	338	52	67
	M	3.82	3.91	3.95	3.83	4.00	4.00
	SD	.88	.87	.85	.89	.82	.74
Students work hard to please their teachers so they will be liked	N	308	335	143	337	53	67
	M	3.43	3.49	3.46	3.51	3.55	3.33
	SD	1.16	1.15	1.19	1.13	1.07	1.25
Friendly teachers	N	310	335	143	339	53	67
	M	3.93	3.95	4.00	3.94	4.02	3.97
	SD	.75	.74	.78	.73	.72	.70
Teachers and students get along well in class	N	307	335	143	337	53	67
	M	3.88	4.01	4.01	3.92	4.13	3.96
	SD	.78	.74	.85	.75	.68	.70
Students want good relationships with teachers	N	310	336	145	338	53	67
	M	3.75	3.98	3.93	3.86	4.04	3.85
	SD	.98	.96	.95	.96	.81	.99

Table 4 (continued)

Scaled Scores Means and Standard Deviations for Student-Teacher Relationships

		Gender		Ethnicity				
		M	F	B	W	H	O	
Students trust their teachers		N	311	335	145	338	53	67
		M	3.65	3.64	3.66	3.69	3.89	3.57
		SD	1.02	1.05	1.13	.97	.91	1.13
Students do not enjoy working with their teachers		N	309	336	144	338	53	67
		M	2.58	2.24	2.42	2.33	2.30	2.58
		SD	1.09	1.03	1.17	.99	1.09	1.10
Students discuss with teachers ways to improve		N	310	336	145	339	53	66
		M	3.65	3.79	3.86	3.73	3.83	3.59
		SD	.99	.94	.99	.90	.87	1.14

Ethnicity

In a review of the descriptive data (Table 4), the survey questions illustrate high levels of agreement among five of the items in the category for student teacher relationships. An examination of this data indicates that students seem to place high value on good relationships with teachers, teachers who are polite and friendly, students and teachers who get along well in class, and the desire on the part of students to have good relationships with teachers.

Descriptive statistics for ethnicity (Table 5) are provided for the scale Student Teacher Relationships. There were four ethnic groups in this study. Students who

selected more than one ethnicity or selected Asian-American or American Indian were placed into the “Other” group due to the small number of participants in these groups.

Table 5

Scale Score Means and Standard Deviations for Ethnicity – Student-Teacher Relationships

Ethnicity	N	Mean	SD
Black	138	39.91	4.97
White	326	39.53	5.02
Hispanic	51	40.45	4.92
Other	66	39.65	5.50

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to ascertain if differences existed among students with diverse ethnicities on the variables of teacher-student relationships. The ANOVA results are found in Table 6. The findings of the ANOVA test are important to help identify factors that teachers may be able to control in the classroom and further improve student learning.

Results of the analysis of variance indicated no significant differences among the ethnic groups for teacher-student relationships ($F = .81, p = .54$). The ANOVA tests the means for differences among the different ethnic groups to determine if one set of means stands out more than another. In this analysis, there was no similarity among the mean responses for Blacks, Hispanics, Whites or Other Race.

Table 6

Analysis of Variance Results for Student - Teacher Relationships

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	111.393	5	22.28	.81	.54 (ns)
Within Groups	15883.83	577	27.53		
Total	15995.23	582			

Gender

A glance at the descriptive data for gender showed similar levels of agreement for all of the questions in this scale. None of the means revealed high or low levels of agreement.

To determine if males or females differed in their perceptions of teacher-student relationships, means and standard deviations were calculated and are shown in Table 7. The means were very close and there was little difference at first glance in the deviations between the genders.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Student-Teacher Relationships - Gender

Gender	N	M	SD
M	296	36.03	5.51
F	328	36.61	5.03

An Independent t-test was calculated using SPSS to determine if significant differences existed between the genders. The results of the SPSS calculation (Table 8) indicated that the variances were equal and no significant differences were found between the genders ($t = -1.37$, $p = .170$). The independent t-test is used to evaluate the means of two groups that are independent of each other, in this case, male or female. Significance would be found at the .05 or .01 level, and the results for this test showed that the genders were not that different in their responses.

Table 8

Results of Independent Samples t-test for Gender – Student- Teacher Relationships

	t	Significance (2-tailed)
Teacher- Student Relationships	-1.37	.17 (non-sign.)

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of secondary students' with respect to instructional strategies by race and gender?

Overall means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questions in the scale for instructional strategies and are shown in Table 9. Descriptive statistics and results for ethnicity and gender are provided separately. A breakdown of each of the questions in the instructional scale allows for closer inspection of the student responses for each question in the scale and a review of the average responses based on gender and ethnicity. The range of the IS scales is 21 – 105.

Table 9

Scale Means and Standard Deviations for Instructional Strategies

Instructional Strategies		Gender		Ethnicity			
		M	F	B	W	H	O
Teachers possess technical knowledge of content	N	310	334	145	336	53	67
	M	3.78	3.74	3.86	3.75	3.81	3.79
	SD	.92	.92	.80	.95	.88	.96
Content is relevant to future	N	311	335	145	338	53	67
	M	3.08	2.88	2.94	2.87	2.96	3.40
	SD	1.23	1.27	1.27	1.22	1.19	1.39
Teachers are prepared to teach every day	N	309	336	144	338	53	67
	M	3.81	3.82	3.88	3.78	4.06	3.79
	SD	.94	.97	.94	.93	.82	1.04
Tests reflect content	N	311	332	143	337	53	67
	M	3.70	3.72	3.73	3.71	3.91	3.69
	SD	.99	.90	.97	.93	.74	.97
Teachers waste time in class by getting off subject	N	309	335	143	338	53	67
	M	3.02	3.13	2.93	3.11	2.68	3.28
	SD	1.16	1.19	1.22	1.12	1.16	1.20
Adequate time for questions	N	310	335	145	339	51	67
	M	3.93	3.96	4.03	3.97	4.00	3.85
	SD	.85	.81	.83	.78	.78	.91
Adequate time for note-taking	N	310	335	144	339	52	67
	M	3.84	3.82	3.87	3.83	3.96	3.75
	SD	.83	.89	.93	.84	.74	.98
Students contribute to class discussions	N	309	335	144	338	53	67
	M	3.43	3.63	3.85	3.55	3.34	3.25
	SD	1.13	1.06	.94	1.09	1.06	1.26
Students make class presentations	N	309	336	145	338	53	66
	M	3.28	3.45	3.48	3.37	3.42	3.18
	SD	1.13	1.11	1.10	1.12	1.10	1.21

Table 9 (continued)

Scale Means and Standard Deviations for Instructional Strategies

Instructional Strategies		Gender		Ethnicity			
		M	F	B	W	H	O
Teachers provide prompt feedback on assignments	N	307	335	143	338	53	65
	M	3.31	3.27	3.50	3.24	3.17	3.26
	SD	1.06	1.03	1.03	1.02	1.03	1.08
Teachers expect students to use a variety of informational resources	N	308	335	145	337	53	65
	M	3.94	4.09	4.10	4.04	3.94	3.97
	SD	.86	.76	.83	.78	.72	.88
Students learn from discussions that have no definitive answers	N	311	335	145	339	53	66
	M	3.59	3.55	3.76	3.51	3.74	3.50
	SD	.98	1.02	.90	1.05	.76	1.09
Students enjoy tasks that require mental effort	N	310	336	145	339	53	66
	M	3.31	3.15	3.43	3.10	3.32	3.52
	SD	1.21	1.14	1.12	1.17	1.17	1.21
Students discuss grades or assignments with teachers	N	311	335	145	338	53	67
	M	3.46	3.54	3.76	3.45	3.55	3.30
	SD	1.06	1.10	1.03	1.07	1.08	1.19
Teachers explain how content relates to the real world	N	307	335	143	337	53	66
	M	3.30	3.39	3.58	3.26	3.57	3.29
	SD	1.20	1.19	1.12	1.22	1.08	1.21
Students use hands-on materials or objects	N	308	335	144	336	53	67
	M	3.27	3.39	3.61	3.20	3.57	3.43
	SD	1.08	1.04	1.00	1.07	.80	1.05

Table 9 (continued)

Scale Means and Standard Deviations for Instructional Strategies

Instructional Strategies		Gender		Ethnicity			
		M	F	B	W	H	O
Teachers provide detailed rubrics for grade requirements	N	311	333	145	337	53	67
	M	3.94	4.03	4.05	3.99	4.13	3.93
	SD	.93	.94	.92	.91	.94	.96
Teachers have considerable professional experience to guide students	N	306	332	145	335	52	64
	M	3.82	3.74	3.77	3.81	3.77	3.72
	SD	.95	.94	.96	.95	.85	1.02

Ethnicity

The scale for instructional strategies included the largest number of questions on the survey. Among the items with high agreement, students indicated that they had adequate time for questions and note-taking in class, teachers provided strategies to help them retain information, teachers expected students to use a variety of resources to complete class projects, and teachers provided detailed rubrics for specific grade requirements. There were two items that received low values: student ratings showed disagreement with the statement “What I do in class has no relevance to what I’m going to be in the future” and “My teachers allow students to get them off the subject so that time was wasted in class”.

Means and standard deviations for instructional strategies are provided in Table 10 to further evaluate the student ratings. A look at the means shows slight differences

between “Whites” and “Other”, with the largest difference in “Blacks”. The standard deviations were not very dissimilar among Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics, but a larger deviation was found in the “Other” category.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations by Ethnicity – Instructional Strategies

Ethnicity	N	M	SD
Black	133	85.23	10.84
White	316	81.57	10.62
Hispanic	49	83.71	10.23
Other	60	80.77	13.12

The ANOVA results for ethnicity indicated that there were significant differences for the Instructional Strategy scale ($F = 4.25, p < .05$) (Table 11.) Results indicate that significant differences occurred among the ethnic groups, but do not indicate which groups account for the significance. To find the differences between the groups, the Tukey test was performed on the data for Instructional Strategies. This test compares the means among the groups and helps to establish where the significant differences exist by comparing two ethnic groups at a time.

Table 11

Analysis of Variance Results by Ethnicity – Instructional Strategies

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	1518.40	3	506.14	4.25	.02
Within Groups	66201.98	554	119.50		
Total	67720.38	557			

Results from this test (Table 12) indicated significant differences in the means between the ethnic groups “Black” and “White” ($p < .01$) and between “Black” and “Other” ($p < .05$).

The Tukey Ad Hoc test values are shown for “Black” and “White, and for “Black” and “Other”. “Blacks” ($M = 85.23$) scored significantly higher than “Whites” ($M = 81.57$) and “Other” ($M = 80.77$). The test does not break down the significance at the question level, only for overall means by category.

Table 12

Tukey HSD – Comparisons among Ethnic Groups for Instructional Strategies

Ethnic Groups	Mean Difference	Significance
“Black” and “White”	3.66	.01
“Black” and “Other”	4.47	.04

Gender

A review of the means for each of the items in this scale did not indicate any extreme high or low values of agreement between males and females. Independent t-tests were conducted to analyze gender responses for the Instructional Strategy scale. Means and standard deviations (Table 13) are given for each gender group.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations for Gender - Instructional Strategies

Gender	N	M	SD
M	286	81.55	11.26
F	310	82.84	10.79

An analysis of the means by gender for instructional strategies was conducted using the Independent t-test (Table 14). The variances for each gender were assumed to be equal and the t-test indicated there were no significant differences between males and females for instructional strategies.

Table 14

Independent t-test by Gender - Instructional Strategies

	t	Significance (2-tailed)
Teacher-Student Relationships	-1.438	.15 (non-sign.)

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of secondary students' with respect to justice and fairness by race and gender?

The third and final question was an analysis of justice and fairness in the classroom among the ethnic groups and between males and females. Means and Standard Deviations for each of the justice and fairness questions are shown in Table 15. The JF scale range is 6 to 30.

Table 15

Scale Means and Standard Deviations for Justice and Fairness

Justice and Fairness		Gender		Ethnicity			
		M	F	B	W	H	O
Teachers treat all students fairly	N	311	336	145	339	53	67
	M	3.57	3.62	3.68	3.58	3.79	3.78
	SD	1.02	.96	.91	1.00	.86	.91
Students are treated with dignity	N	310	336	145	338	53	67
	M	3.75	3.84	3.92	3.76	4.02	3.84
	SD	.86	.82	.80	.83	.75	.90
Students are treated with respect	N	311	333	143	338	53	67
	M	3.86	3.90	4.06	3.81	4.08	4.03
	SD	.87	.83	.81	.85	.81	.78
Teachers do not show favoritism	N	310	334	144	337	53	67
	M	3.25	3.17	3.06	3.20	3.04	3.45
	SD	1.18	1.25	1.24	1.21	1.16	1.23
Teachers refrain from improper comments	N	308	335	144	338	53	67
	M	3.27	3.41	3.49	3.32	3.45	3.24
	SD	1.10	1.01	1.00	1.06	1.03	1.12
Teachers value students	N	310	333	145	336	53	66
	M	3.31	3.44	3.48	3.35	3.53	3.45
	SD	.90	.91	.94	.86	.82	.90

Ethnicity

A look at the means and standard deviations reveals two questions with high level agreement: teachers treat students with dignity and with respect. None of the elements were particularly low in this scale.

Means and Standard Deviations were calculated for each of the four ethnic groups (Table 16) in the Justice and Fairness scale.

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations by Ethnicity - Justice and Fairness

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Black	142	18.65	3.20
White	333	17.80	3.41
Hispanic	53	18.87	2.80
Other	66	18.26	3.03

To determine if there were differences among ethnic groups for justice and fairness, the ANOVA test was conducted and results are provided in Table 17. The ANOVA test indicated that there were no significant differences between the ethnic groups ($F=1.88$, $p = .10$). The means were slightly difference among the groups, but not enough to cause one group to stand out from the others.

Table 17

Analysis of Variance results for Justice and Fairness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	86.10	5	17.22	1.88	.10 (ns)
Within Groups	5366.33	586	9.16		
Total	5452.43	591			

Gender

Means and Standard Deviations were calculated for males and females for the scale Justice and Fairness. Table 18 gives the descriptive statistics for this category of data. A look at the means for males and females showed fairly consistent levels across each of the items in this scale.

Table 18

Means and Standard Deviations by Gender - Justice and Fairness

Gender	N	M	SD
M	305	21.04	3.23
F	328	21.37	2.97

An Independent t-test was conducted to determine differences between males and females for the scale Justice and Fairness. Equal variances were assumed for this test and there were no significant differences found between males and females ($t = -1.312$,

$p = .19$). The results of the JF scale indicated scale values lower than for the STR and IS scale scores.

Summary of the Findings for the Constructs

Results from this study indicate no significant differences among ethnicities or gender for the scale student-teacher relationships. Looking at the means for each of the scales revealed that students felt good about their relationships with their teachers and that a friendly atmosphere was present, on the average, in the schools surveyed. Males and females showed consistency in their responses across all of the items in this scale.

Four of the items in the Instructional Strategies scale indicated high levels of agreement when questioned about adequate time for questions and note-taking, teaching strategies that helped students retain information, teachers' expectations for students to use a variety of resources, and detailed rubrics for grades on projects and assignments. Lower levels of agreement occurred among two survey items: relevance of content to the student's future and wasted time in the classroom (teachers allowing students to get them off subject). Analysis of Variance supported these differences in the scale by revealing significant differences within the ethnic groups. The Tukey test showed that the differences were observed between the ethnic groups "Black" ($M = 85.23$) and "White" ($M = 81.57$) and "Black" and "Other" ($M = 80.77$).

The final scale, justice and fairness, contained test results with significant differences between "Black" and "White" ethnic groups ($p < .05$). "Blacks" ($M = 18.65$) scored significantly higher than "Whites" ($M = 17.80$). The p -value for "Whites" and "Hispanics" was non-significant. The p -value was $.12$, a low value that warrants further investigation of these two ethnic groups.

The level of agreement for the IS scale indicated that the means were lower across the board than for student-teacher relationships. Within these means, the students' responses indicated an average overall of 3 – unsure, rather than an obvious leaning to the higher or lower end of the scale. Students did not seem to be overly positive or negative about the instructional strategies utilized by their teachers, but were more inclined to show strong opinions about their relationships with teachers in the classroom.

Student Responses to the Survey – Open Ended Portion

A final part of this study involved question 40, an open-ended question on the survey that was included to give students a voice in this study. Student comments were solicited to ask if there was any question not in this survey that they would like to have been asked. The questions/statements provided by the students were copied verbatim and covered a range of themes: care for students, value of school, fairness and respect, teacher professionalism, instructional strategies, and teacher responsiveness.

The question asked students to share a *question* that was not asked on the survey, not for an opinion. Many of the questions indicated common concerns among students: Do teachers care? Do students enjoy their classes? Do teachers treat all students equitably? Is there mutual respect between teachers and students? What kinds of instructional strategies work well in the classroom? Do teachers find ways to help students be successful? Some of these questions, generated by students, included the following: *Do you think teachers and faculty focus more on discipline than they do education? Why do teachers teach us things that we will not need in the real world? Why do students in sports usually get treated differently than those who don't as far as assignments being turned in? In some of the upper level honors and AP classes, in my*

experience, why do teachers only focus most of their attention on those at the top of the class? Does your teacher talk about others? Do teachers discriminate against certain students? Do your teachers enjoy what they do? Do you feel teachers just let you pass? Does your teacher use different teaching styles? Does your teacher work with people who learn in different ways? Are teachers willing to help me outside the classroom?

The largest number of comments was directed towards instructional strategies. Students took the opportunity to state their likes and dislikes, while others phrased their thoughts into a question format followed by their response. Several of the questions dealt specifically with learning styles, some with differentiated instruction, and one student just asked the central question.... “Can your teacher teach”?

Another insight into student thinking was based on the fairness and respect. Many of these comments illustrated the importance of equity in the treatment of all students by pointing out that some of their peers are singled out for special consideration. One of the comments indicated that students were aware of favoritism towards some of their peers, which was interesting when compared with the comment, “Teachers don’t treat you with respect- either they don’t like you or they are just worried about the students that not they color”. The words of these students lead one to believe that favoritism and respect are tied in with racism.

Clearly, students watch and are aware of the nuances present in the classroom. Responses indicated student concern about discrimination and racism, use of foul language by teachers when dealing with students, and unprofessional behavior that included texting, gossip, and an inability to separate problems at home from school.

Considering the results from the analysis of the scale question responses and open-ended responses from question forty, students showed a perceptiveness of the issues that matter the most in their learning environment. Chapter V discusses the inferences from the results in chapter IV and links the results with the literature from Chapter II. The results indicate a direction for principals and teachers to consider as they look for new ways to improve student engagement and achievement among ethnicities and genders.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine secondary students' perceptions of teacher quality in Georgia public high schools. Three frameworks were identified for the study: Teacher-student relationships, instructional strategies, and justice and fairness. The study was a quantitative design using surveys to ascertain the perceptions of high school seniors with respect to teacher quality. The key factor in this study was the students' perceptions of their learning experiences. Research on student input is limited with respect to how students perceive the learning environment.

There were eighteen school districts identified for the study; from these districts, there were twenty-seven high schools invited to participate in the study. A purposive sample of the twenty-seven high schools was used to select participating schools for the survey and eight public high schools agreed to participate.

Within the frame of studying student perceptions, three research questions were addressed: (1) What are the perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to student and teacher relationships? (2) What are the perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to justice and fairness? (3) What are the perceptions of secondary students' by race and gender about their teachers with respect to instructional strategies?

Findings from each of the research questions indicated the following:

1. Student – Teacher Relationships were evaluated for both ethnicity and gender differences. ANOVA results for ethnicity revealed no significant differences among the four ethnic groups. A t-test was performed to determine if differences existed between

male and female students. Results indicated no significant differences in these two groups. An examination of the means for the student-teacher relationship scale provided insight into how students value their teachers. Students seem to place high value on good relationships with teachers, teachers who are polite and friendly, students and teachers who get along well in class, and the desire on the part of students to have good relationships with teachers. When there is a high level of acceptance, it seems reasonable that students will respond in a positive manner. The researchers in the Stronge study believe that “effective” teachers, when considering student achievement, possess a set of attributes that produces positive teacher-student relationships and student encouragement (p. 208). In this study, the researcher sought to identify the components of teacher quality that students found to be successful to them. While there were individually some high ratings, on average, perceptions were still mediocre.

2. Instructional Strategies were evaluated for both ethnicity and gender differences. ANOVA results for ethnicity revealed significant differences among the four ethnic groups. Using the Tukey Ad Hoc test for further analysis indicated differences between “Blacks” and “Whites” and “Blacks” and “Other”. High agreement was found on the items in which students indicated that they had adequate time for questions and note-taking in class, teachers provided strategies to help them retain information, teachers expected students to use a variety of resources to complete class projects, and teachers provided detailed rubrics for specific grade requirements. These findings lead one to believe that students want to know the expectations for success in the classroom and value the teachers that provide them with concrete details. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Darling-Hammond (2000), in which teacher quality is the

highest predictor of student achievement. In this study, students did not rate teachers with agree or strongly agree scores for instruction. The Darling-Hammond research focused on predictors for student achievement, predictors the research had hoped to find in this study to point future study efforts in a specific direction. A more specific look at correlations between student grades and student expectations of quality would be an interesting method of review. Extending this idea into correlations between students' perceptions and their grade point averages might provide insight into the characteristics and actions of teachers that inspire students to perform and choose to excel in the classroom.

There were two items that received low values: student ratings showed disagreement with the statement "What I do in class has no relevance to what I'm going to be in the future" and "My teachers allow students to get them off the subject so that time was wasted in class". Making the connection between content and how students can apply this knowledge outside of the classroom was an important factor for the participants.

3. Justice and Fairness were evaluated for both ethnicity and gender differences and no significant differences were found between "Blacks" and "Whites", nor were there any significant differences found between male and female respondents. These findings are not supported in the research, namely in the Howard study (2002). This qualitative case study of African American students indicated that African American students felt their teachers did not care about their academic success and demonstrated apathy towards these students in the classroom. Furthermore, it was noted that the attitude of the teacher affects the way students' perceive their learning experiences. Perhaps the limited scope of

this study was not large enough to shed light onto the beliefs of Blacks with respect to their perception of fair treatment in the classroom. In this study, students across the board selected middle scale values (3-unsure) on average without regard for gender or ethnicity. Students did not rate justice and fairness at a low level, and interestingly enough, Blacks and Hispanics rated teachers at a higher average on the component “students are treated with respect”. The averages for this question were 4.06 and 4.08 respectively, which does not support the findings in the Howard study.

It is very telling in the means for the justice and fairness scale that student ratings were not very high in any of the questions. Equally revealing are some of the open-ended comments noted in question 40, with the question “*Are your teachers racist*”, and “*Do teachers discriminate against students*”. If students perceive that teachers do not like them or have tendencies towards discrimination, there is a likelihood that students will withdraw from the learning process. In the category for student-teacher relationships, it was obvious that the relationship between students and their teachers were very important. The value of fairness in the classroom seems to be tied in strongly with the relationship factor and cannot be ignored.

Discussion of Results

The results for each of these findings will be discussed in detail in this section. The central theme of this study was to look for key components of teacher quality as identified by secondary students. The goal of this study was to identify from the data the actions, behaviors, and disciplines used by teachers that promote increased student learning and engagement in the classroom.

The results for student and teacher relationships indicated there were no significant differences among ethnicities or genders. Further investigation of this scale could include more questions in an effort to dig deeper into understanding what kinds of relationships work best among different ethnic groups and between males and females. Additionally, follow up focus groups might shed light on what makes a relationship with teachers “good” or great.

The Gentry and Hu study (in press) included two instruments, My Class Activities (MCA, Gentry & Gable, 2001) and Student Perceptions of Classroom Quality (SPOCQ, Gentry & Owen, 2004) to identify exemplary teachers from student ratings followed by qualitative data from surveys, interviews, and observations.

Qualitative analysis of the data from the Gentry and Owen study generated four themes: teachers were personally interested in their students, teachers set high goals for themselves and their student, teachers made learning meaningful through the use of relevant course content, and teachers demonstrated passion for their students and their profession. The students in the study were able to recognize quality teaching and voiced the importance of teachers showing a genuine interest in their lives and a dedication to content knowledge. As stated earlier in this study, an important finding of the study showed “not all of the administrators believed or recognized them as exemplary teachers.” The findings in this study raise two important questions as administrators consider future hiring decisions and developers of teacher education programs seek to improve curriculum. How can the qualities of the exemplary teachers be used to improve the skills and development of pre-service and in-service teachers? How can administrators identify teachers who are passionate about their content, students and

teaching to recruit and retain excellent teachers? The information in the Gentry and Hu study guided the researcher to seek survey instruments that asked students to identify excellent teaching. Also, the questions from the SPOCQ provided a basis for the types of question that would be included in the current study.

Analysis of the ethnicities and genders revealed significant differences for the ethnicities, but not for gender. Results were significant between “Blacks” and “Whites” and “Blacks” and “Other”. The study did not include large numbers of ethnic groups and the results may not be representative of schools from urban school districts; however, the differences do indicate that the predominant ethnic groups view instructional strategies in a different light and further research is warranted. The Measures of Effective Teaching Project (MET), supported by the Gates Foundation (2010) issued initial reports and analyses of teacher effectiveness. The first of these reports focused on mathematics and English language arts teachers in grades 4 through 8 with the goal to identify methods of effective teaching and the practices associated with affective teachers. Early findings from the project indicated four outcomes. First, in all of the grades and subjects evaluated, the researchers noted the “teacher’s past track record of value-added” was one of the most convincing predictors of future student achievement gains; second, the value added benefit promoted deeper understanding of concepts; third, teachers had a greater influence on math achievement than English Language Arts on state tests, and finally, students’ perceptions of teacher strengths and weaknesses were consistent – students were able to discern a teacher’s ability to control their classrooms and to provide rigorous, challenging work. The findings from the MET study prompted the researcher to look for student perceptions of the teacher and classroom. While the results in the

MET study provided information about teacher ability, this study did not get the same kinds of results. Students did not overwhelmingly support or not support the items in each of the constructs.

Seven constructs were used in the student survey to evaluate teaching methods: care, control, clarify, challenge, captivate, confer, and consolidate. Student perception data was analyzed for 2,519 classrooms using a 5 point scale. The findings in this first report indicate that student perceptions may assist principals when evaluating teachers beyond the use of classroom observations and student test scores. Even though the findings in this study were average, that finding is important as well. There were sporadic values in the “4-agree” range, allowing adequate time for questions, providing detailed rubrics, and using a variety of informational resources. Unfortunately, there were some extremely low scores, one of which is a red flag – “content is relevant to future”. The students scored this question in the range of 2.87 – 3.40. A second question was rated 2.68 to 3.13, “teachers waste time in class by getting off subject”. These two ratings are of great concern when taking into account the focus on teaching the standards and high stakes testing. If students do not find a purpose in the work, do not relate well to their teachers, and do not believe they are treated fairly, it is no surprise to find that students lack engagement in their classes.

The final scale reviewed in this study was justice and fairness. Though the number of items in this scale was much smaller than the first and second scales (student teacher relationships and instructional strategies), the responses were fairly consistent among the ethnic groups and genders. Significant differences between “Blacks” and “Whites” ($p < .05$) occurred in this scale, but no differences were found among gender. Although the

values for “Whites” and “Hispanics” were non-significant, the p value, ($p = .12$), indicates a need for further research into these two groups.

When looking at the overall picture of the results, it is interesting to note that when one is looking for the significant differences, there are few differences when comparing genders and ethnicities. It appears that students across all spectrums in the study wanted similar things – to be respected and valued, liked by their teachers, and interested in quality instruction.

Conclusions

The findings in this study raised some questions for the researcher about the current state of teaching and the beliefs students hold about quality. The research in this study indicated a lukewarm response from the participants with regard to the three constructs of student-teacher relationships, instructional strategies, and justice and fairness. The means for each were just slightly above “unsure” in the student-teacher relationships questions, and below “unsure” for many of the instructional strategy questions. The researcher noted that student responses indicated good relationships existed between students and teachers (agree), but the results were contradictory when one looked at the responses for “students want good relationships with teachers”, an average just above “unsure” but not at the “agree” level. Students were consistent in their responses to “got along well in class with their teachers” and that their “teachers were friendly”, but the responses were scored in the low range for “agree”. These responses did not indicate a strong school climate that promoted student engagement and learning.

More points of interest were the responses for instructional strategies. Two of the questions, “relevance of content to the future” and “teachers wasting time in class by

getting off subject”, received scores in the “disagree to unsure” range. Students indicated that they are not seeing the relevance of the work required in school to their futures which may in turn explain a lack of engagement in the classroom. The means for this question are supported in a later question, “teachers explain how content relates to the real world”. The means for this question were slightly above “unsure”.

The responses from the justice and fairness questions raised additional uncertainties. Students reported in the “unsure to agree” range that they are treated with dignity and respect, but responses were firmly in the “unsure” range for fair treatment of students, very low “unsure” for showing favoritism, and “unsure” when responding to “teachers refrain from improper comments”. Some of the responses from the open-ended question (question 40) indicated that teachers used inappropriate language in the classroom, spoke negatively to some students and not others based on their race, and talked about others inappropriately.

The data from this study may indicate that there are issues to be resolved within the teaching profession if the words of the students are taken seriously. Across the board, regardless of gender or ethnicity, the responses indicated with a loud voice that students are not giving the teaching profession high scores in relationships, instruction, and fairness. Prior studies on student perceptions of effective teaching have indicated that students value relationships with their teachers, content is meaningful and relevant to the future, higher-level questions add value to their learning, minimal disruptions occur in the classroom, and teachers communicate that they care for their students. In the busyness of covering content to master standardized tests and meet the requirements for NCLB, have teachers lost their focus? Hubbard (2001) was critical of the lack of research on student

perceptions of teacher practices and behaviors, noting that educators and researchers are hesitant to engage students in a vigorous discussion about their perspectives of the classroom. Based on this study, students were not overwhelmingly convinced that their teachers cared about their learning nor that teachers were interested in using instructional strategies that promote learning; furthermore, student responses did not indicate that teachers were actively engaged in practices that exhibited a sense of fairness in the classroom. The findings indicated a sense of complacency among the respondents, which could be interpreted because seniors may be ambivalent about their perceptions of what should or should not be considered quality teaching.

Implications

Based on comments from students and their understanding of how they can be successful, the process of hiring new teachers should include interview questions that will assist principals in hiring teachers who are a good fit for the school. Questions that delve into a candidate's awareness and ability to develop appropriate student-teacher relationships may establish a strong foundation for a more responsive faculty. Additionally, candidates should be able to verbalize their skills in fostering positive relationships with students and share the techniques they use that bring about success in the classroom. In schools or school districts with diverse ethnicities, questionnaires that probe a teacher's belief system could be used to identify candidates with strengths in working with varied population groups.

The survey used in this study could be modified for use during each semester or year-long class to allow student assessment of the teacher and provide the results to the teacher for self-assessment. The results would not necessarily have to be shared with administration if the purpose is to encourage teachers to become more aware of how students perceive the learning environment. The surveys could be placed together by department/subject and used

in professional development discussions to enhance the learning process across subject disciplines. Administrators could use the data from anonymous surveys to highlight strengths and weaknesses as perceived by current student groups to foster a continuum of school improvement. If the goal is improved student learning, anything that adds to the existing knowledge of improving student engagement, behavior, and confidence in the classroom should be explored and revisited. The study by Springer, Morganfeld, and Diffily (2007) investigated the practices of teachers in secondary classrooms based on Texas educator standards the perceptions of 254 secondary students from the teachers' classrooms. They found differences in student and teacher perceptions about actual teaching practice and specifically that expectations did not match with their preferences. Furthermore, there were noticeable differences between males and females, whereas in this study, the differences were insignificant.

Research from the Stronge (2008) study identified three succinct themes: effective teachers understand that a one size fits all approach does not promote student learning; effective teachers ask more higher-level questions than ineffective teachers; and fewer disruptive behaviors when compared with an ineffective teacher's classroom. The researchers believe that "effective" teachers, when considering student achievement, possess a set of attributes that produces positive teacher-student relationships and student encouragement (p. 208). The findings from Stronge et al. (2008), Wright et al. (1997), Mendro (1998), Nye et al.(2004), and Darling-Hammond (2000) reinforce the importance of teacher quality and effectiveness as the common denominator in student learning. The findings from the Stronge, Wright, Mendro, and Darling-Hammond studies underscore the importance of teacher quality for students to be successful. The findings in this study, based on student perceptions, underline that we may be missing the mark in the

classroom. Across the board, students did not rate any construct at a high level of agreement. There is still work to be done.

Each of the scales could become a research focus that allows students to provide more insight into how they learn, cope, and achieve their best in the classroom. In larger schools that are struggling to meet the needs of diverse student populations, this survey could open the door to identifying the issues that keep students from reaching their full potential in the classroom.

Dissemination Information

The results of this study will be shared with each participating school. Principals will receive the means and standard deviations for each ethnic group and gender, as well as results from the entire study. Many of the schools participating in the study were about to begin the SACS accreditation process and indicated their need for the student data from this study to include in their district SACS report.

Implications for Further Research

Additional studies could spring from this study to further the investigation into student perceptions of quality teaching. First, each of the research questions could become stand-alone action research projects for schools and school districts. One particular topic that was not included in this study was the use of technology in the classroom, and the teacher's ability to use technology effectively to promote engagement. This study considered ethnicity but did not include socio-economic status as a variable. Correlational studies of ethnicity and socio-economic status could be significant in different population areas in Georgia, especially in counties with unstable economies.

Second, a larger number of schools could be surveyed to get a more accurate view of secondary students' perceptions throughout Georgia. This survey was limited to a specific geographical area in the southeast portion of the state; it would be interesting to sample students from larger and smaller population areas to get a truer picture of student thinking. The differences among the ethnic groups may be more significant in larger population areas with more diverse student groups than in southeast Georgia.

Third, it would be interesting to examine student groups from public, private, and charter schools to determine if there are different perceptions of learning across school environments. It would be interesting to compare student teacher relationships in a public school versus student teacher relationships in a private religious school. Do student expectations about relationships, instruction, and justice change from one type of learning institution to another?

Fourth, when conducting student surveys of individual teachers rather than overall perceptions of teacher quality, it would be interesting to compare student observations of teachers with those deemed as excellent or high quality by their administrators. The appeal to students in the classroom may not match with the relationships teachers hold with their administrators.

Fifth, if student-teacher relationships are important in the learning process, how could these classroom relationships be enhanced if there is the same expectation of relationships between teachers and administrators? It would be reasonable to expect that positive relationships between teachers and their leaders, quality leadership traits, and justice and fairness in the workplace could lead to a more well-balanced workforce that in turn promotes teachers who enjoy coming to work in a positive environment.

Finally, it is important to hear the voices of those most affected by the classroom: the students. Each of the items in this survey, as well as the supporting comments in the open-ended student responses, can be studied individually to improve the classroom environment and practices of educators.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
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To: Catherine Paige Sutcliff
Linda Arthur
Department of Education

CC: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Initial Approval Date: March 29, 2011

Expiration Date: August 31, 2011

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H11364** and titled "**Secondary Students' Perceptions of Teacher Quality**," it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to a maximum of **400** subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. Total project approval on this application may not exceed 36 months. If additional time is required, a new application may be submitted for continuing work. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,


Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer (sac)

APPENDIX B

The purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate student perceptions of teacher quality. This survey is completely anonymous – please do NOT put your name on this survey. You may stop answering questions at any time during this survey, and you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Completion and return of the questionnaire implies that you agree to participate and your data may be used in this research.

This survey asks questions about activities that you have done in the typical academic classroom, your interactions with your teachers and how engaged you were in your classes. You should answer each question according to your interactions with teachers most of the time during high school. Thank you for your thoughtful responses. Please circle the **best** response for each question.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 I have a good relationship with my teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
2 I admire my teachers because he/she treats every student fairly.	SD	D	U	A	SA
3 My teachers care how I feel.	SD	D	U	A	SA
4 My teachers treat me in a polite manner.	SD	D	U	A	SA
5 When a tough part of the content to be learned comes up, my teachers have the technical “know how” to help me learn in that class.	SD	D	U	A	SA
6 I want to keep my teachers pleased with my work because I want them to like me.	SD	D	U	A	SA
7 My teachers are friendly to me.	SD	D	U	A	SA
8 My teachers treat me with dignity.	SD	D	U	A	SA
9 My teachers treat me with respect.	SD	D	U	A	SA
10 The teachers treat some students better than me.	SD	D	U	A	SA
11 My teachers refrain from improper comments or remarks.	SD	D	U	A	SA
12 My teachers and I get along well together in class.	SD	D	U	A	SA
13 I want to develop good relationships with my teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
14 I trust my teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
15 My teachers are <i>not</i> the kind of people I enjoy working with.	SD	D	U	A	SA
16 I feel comfortable talking to my teachers about how I can improve in class.	SD	D	U	A	SA
17 My teachers value me.	SD	D	U	A	SA
18 What I do in class has no relevance to what I’m going to be in the	SD	D	U	A	SA

future.

19	My teachers come to class prepared to teach every day.	SD	D	U	A	SA
20	My tests reflect the material taught in class.	SD	D	U	A	SA
21	My teachers allow students to get them off the subject so that time was wasted in class.	SD	D	U	A	SA
22	My teachers allow time to ask questions during class.	SD	D	U	A	SA
23	My teachers provide enough time to record class notes during instruction.	SD	D	U	A	SA
24	My teachers demonstrate strategies to remember information presented in class and in textbooks.	SD	D	U	A	SA
25	My teachers encourage me to ask questions.	SD	D	U	A	SA
26	I often contribute to class discussions.	SD	D	U	A	SA
27	I often make class presentations.	SD	D	U	A	SA
28	I often receive prompt feedback from my teachers on assignments before turning them in.	SD	D	U	A	SA
29	My teachers expect me to work on a paper or project using information from general types of sources (books, interviews, internet, etc.).	SD	D	U	A	SA
30	I often work with other students on in-class projects.	SD	D	U	A	SA
31	I often put together ideas or concepts from different subjects when completing assignments or participating in discussions.	SD	D	U	A	SA
32	I often learn something from discussing questions that have no clear answers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
33	I enjoy completing a task that requires a lot of thinking and mental effort.	SD	D	U	A	SA
34	I often discuss grades or assignments with my teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
35	My teachers often explain how what I learn in class relates to the real world.	SD	D	U	A	SA
36	I am often allowed to evaluate my own work or the work of another student.	SD	D	U	A	SA
37	I often use hands-on materials or objects.	SD	D	U	A	SA
38	When projects are assigned, my teachers give detailed rubrics that give the requirements for a specific grade.	SD	D	U	A	SA
39	My teachers have considerable professional experience to draw from in helping me do my work.	SD	D	U	A	SA

40 What question was not asked in this survey that you would like to have answered with respect to justice/fairness, student/teacher relationships, and instructional strategies?

Circle the best response for each question

A. What gender are you? *male* *female*

B. What is your racial or ethnic identification?

Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin

American Indian or other Native American

Asian American or Pacific Islander

Black/African American

White

Other, specify: _____

Prefer not to respond