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# Characteristics of Effective Teachers: A Comparison of the Perceptions of Upper Level Secondary School Students and Secondary School Administrators

Dawn Howell Hadley  
*Georgia Southern University*

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CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS: A COMPARISON OF THE  
PERCEPTIONS OF UPPER LEVEL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS  
AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

by

DAWN HOWELL HADLEY

(Under the Direction of Dr. Paul “Mac” Brinson)

ABSTRACT

The following cross-sectional quantitative study examined the characteristics of effective teachers based on the perceptions of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators. The researcher created a 25 statement Likert like survey developed as a result of the literature and modified using Charlotte Danielsons’ *Framework for Teaching* as a basis. Five domains were established and five statements covered each of the five domains. The surveys were completed by 461 upper level secondary school students and 54 secondary school administrators, and descriptive statistics provided the top five characteristics of effective teachers as perceived by upper level secondary school students, and the top six characteristics of effective teachers as perceived by secondary school administrators. The perceptions of the two groups were compared using a two group MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) to determine if significant differences existed between the two groups.

The conclusions of this quantitative study showed that students and administrators have much in common with regards to their overall perceptions of the characteristics of effective teaching. The results showed share perceptions on Domain I: Planning and Preparation, Domain IV: Professional Responsibilities, and Domain V: Personal

Characteristics; however there was a statistically significant difference between their perceptions on Domain II: The Classroom Environment and Domain III: Instruction.

INDEX WORDS: A nation at risk, No child left behind, Effective teaching, Standardized testing, Descriptive statistics, HOUSSE, INTASC Standards, Highly qualified teachers, Framework for teaching, MANOVA

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DAWN HOWELL HADLEY

B.S., Troy State University, 1992

M.Ed., Georgia Southern University, 1996

Ed.S., Georgia Southern University, 1998

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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2011

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DAWN HOWELL HADLEY

Major Professor: Dr. Paul “Mac” Brinson  
Committee: Dr. Stephen Jenkins  
Dr. Linda Arthur

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## DEDICATION

To my mother, Teresa Lee, who taught me that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to and that once I started something, quitting was not an option. That has been a most valuable lesson on this journey. She also prepared me well for my most important role in life—being a mom.

To Keith, for supporting me as I worked full-time and pursued the role of perpetual student. I promise not to seek any more degrees. Also, thanks for making me laugh. Who knew you were so darn funny?

To Hunter and Jake, who taught me the true meaning of having my heart beat outside my chest. The two of you are my world!

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I am eternally grateful to all of those who participated in my study. For the students and administrators who did, I appreciate your willingness to help me better understand the characteristics of effective teachers from your unique perspectives. It is my sincere hope that we provide all students the benefits only an effective classroom teacher can provide.

I am thankful to my friends and colleagues for their support as I completed this study—some of you fit into both categories, you know who you are. Some of you proofread, some of you took time out of your busy schedule to help where you could, some of you let me bounce ideas off of you, and still others just offered a kind word,



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My biggest thanks are reserved for those closest to me. My grandparents instilled in me the value of education, hard work, and the love of family. I miss each one of you. My mother taught me about the kind of person I want to be. She's the sole reason I believe I can do anything I set my mind to. My father taught me the value of laughter. I inherited his sense of humor and sarcasm, both of which have served me well over the years. Typically, older siblings teach younger siblings life lessons, but my younger brother, Shawn, has taught me many lessons through his example. I am so proud of the Godly man he has become.

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## CHAPTER 1

### FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

In 1981, Secretary of Education, T.H. Bell, convened a group of professionals and charged them with the task of researching the quality of education in America (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983). As a result, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) deemed the United States a nation at risk. This was a widely publicized criticism that noted the American education system was not superior to others and that its students might not fare as well as those educated in other nations. It created nationwide concern for the American people, including politicians and educators. According to Ron Haskins and Susanna Loeb (2007), this report, “declared American public schools so bad that had a foreign enemy inflicted such schools on us, we would consider it an act of war” (p. 2).

Evidence of research on improving the quality of America’s schools dated back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when Horace Mann focused his attention on improving access to public schools for all students, regardless of class, and establishing teacher preparation institutes for those who would lead classrooms (“School,” 2001). Since then, one room school houses have transformed into neighborhood schools, all students have the right to a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, and teachers have attained degrees which focused on a specific population and/or subject area. *A Nation at Risk* served as a reminder that although significant improvements have been made in education since those humble beginnings, there was more to do if American students were to successfully compete with their counterparts from around the world. It also provided a catalyst for educational



researchers to identify the current problems within the American education system, and to offer possible solutions. As a result, a large portion of that research was focused on classroom teachers and the role they played in student achievement.

Early research on effective teachers dated back to the 1940's and attempted to ascertain the importance of classroom experience and personality traits of the classroom teacher. In the 1960's, researchers shifted their focus from qualities of the classroom teacher to the relationship between what the teacher did in the classroom and what the students learned. In the 1970's, research expanded the dimensions of effective teaching to include teacher preparation, planning activities, and professional development (Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa, 2006). Numerous research-based educational reform initiatives have been attempted in an effort to improve student achievement, with a majority of researchers concluding the most important variable in educating students effectively is the quality of the classroom teacher. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2006):

During the mid- to late 1990s, 'teacher quality' became the watchword of school reform. This term was used by policymakers and researchers of all stripes and by the public to emphasize that teachers were a critical influence — if not the single most important influence — on how, what, and how much students learned. (p. 670)

Berry, Johnson & Montgomery (2005) noted that much research has been dedicated to the correlation between teacher quality and student achievement. Rivers and Sanders (2002) conducted value-added research and concluded, "A teacher's effect on student achievement is measurable at least four years after the students have left the tutelage of that teacher" (p. 16). Eric Hanushek (2003) concurred based on studies of a large, urban school district where those students who had high quality teachers made gains 1.5 times greater in a single year than their

counterparts who had low quality teachers. The quality of the classroom teacher was not only important to the students currently enrolled in his or her classroom, but to those who had been there as well. The impact of effective teachers provided an advantage to those students fortunate enough to make their rosters; however, ineffective teachers served to handicap their students, even after students moved on in their educational experience. According to Linda Darling-Hammond (2000), when entire states disaggregate data, teacher quality is found to have a stronger influence on achievement than the number of students per class, expenditures per pupil, and what teachers are paid. In addition, Rivers and Sanders (2002) found that teacher quality also minimizes the effects of prior student achievement, heterogeneous grouping of students, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES).

With the increased focus on accountability as measured by standardized test scores, districts cannot afford to ignore the negative correlation that exists between those ineffective teachers and the scores of their students. Rivers and Sanders' longitudinal study of approximately six million students in Tennessee rendered the following results:

In the extreme, students testing between the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in the fourth grade who also experienced a series of highly effective teachers in grades five through eight could be expected to pass the high-stakes test with a probability of about 80 percent; their peers of comparable previous achievement unfortunate enough to have experienced four very ineffective teachers in the same grades could be expected to pass the same test with a probability of about 40 percent. A sequence of four teachers of average effectiveness offered students within this prior achievement level a probability of passing of about 60 percent. (p. 18).

Students who were consistently assigned to classrooms led by good teachers had a distinct advantage over those students who were assigned to weak teachers more than once in their educational experience.

Don Hooper (2002) stated, “Research demonstrates the greatest contributor to student success is the quality of the teacher in the classroom” (p. 42). Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) analyzed data from all 50 states and determined that what students learned was not dependent on the schools they attended, but the teachers in those schools. Recent research proved that the academic achievement of students relied heavily on the efficacy of their school district, which depended first and foremost on the quality of the district’s teachers (Rivers & Sanders, 1996). Regardless of how much money was spent per pupil in a district, or whether the school building was old and in need of constant repair or a brand new, state-of-the-art facility, when students entered the classroom, it was the quality of the teacher in front of that classroom that made the most difference in how much or how little those students learned.

According to Michael Allen (2002), “Policymakers and education leaders have become convinced that if they are going to make significant improvements in the quality of education, attention to the quality of teaching is of the very highest importance” (p.8). In 2001, 46 governors emphasized the quality of the classroom teacher as they spoke to their constituents (Allen, 2002). Hurwitz & Hurwitz (2005) suggested that there was a strong correlation between what students accomplish and the competence of their classroom teacher, which is keeping teacher quality at the forefront of debates on education, at the local and national levels. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation issued a statement on policy on behalf of prominent officials, analysts, and practitioners associated with education. Chief among their complaints was this:

U.S. schools aren't producing satisfactory results, and this problem is not likely to be solved until U.S. classrooms are filled with excellent teachers. About this, there seems to be a national consensus. How to get from here to there, however, is the subject of far less agreement. (para 1)

The most recent educational reform initiative, The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, required schools to certify that highly qualified core subject teachers lead every classroom after June 30, 2006 (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2005; Porter-Magee, 2004; Walsh, 2004; Blair, 2002). Prior to NCLB legislation, a secondary teacher certified in Science (Grades 7-12) could teach Chemistry, Biology and/or Physics. Highly qualified (HQ) for the purpose of this initiative required a classroom teacher to earn a bachelor's degree, acquire teaching credentials (licensure and/or certification) in the state(s) they taught, and demonstrate competence in their subject area(s) by earning passing scores on state approved standardized subject area tests for each specific subject area they planned to teach (Porter-Magee, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). NCLB's inclusion of highly qualified teachers was a direct result of "strong research evidence that teacher's general cognitive ability and subject matter knowledge (at the secondary level), do, in fact, contribute to greater student learning" (Walsh, 2004, p. 23). Walsh further explained that while teaching certificates provided proof of credentials for the purposes of being highly qualified (HQ), they did not guarantee effectiveness. There was not a set definition for highly effective, as that was left up to individual states to define, though researchers continued attempts to assign meaning to the term *effective teaching*. Hoerr (2006) suggested that "A school's quality depends in large part on its teachers. As a result, few things principals do are more important than hiring the right teachers" (p. 94). Kaplan and Owings (2004) agreed the

responsibility of this challenging task rests with school principals because they directly impact student achievement based on whom they hire to lead their students.

“Since the inception of teacher certification in the late nineteenth century, NCLB represents the first time that a federal or state statute has so clearly declared that teacher certification was an insufficient measure of a person’s qualifications to teach” (Walsh, 2004, p. 23). Certification did not equate to highly qualified to teach, or even equipped to teach. Certified teachers have earned credentials and secured a job in the classroom, only to discover they were either incapable of transferring what they knew about their respective subject areas to their students or of making a connection with them. This prompted teacher preparatory programs to increase the opportunities for potential teachers to engage in numerous field experiences prior to student teaching, but did not pinpoint why some were successful classroom teachers, while others were not. According to Kennedy (2006), “Societies have been arguing about why some people are better teachers than others since the days of Socrates. And we’re not much closer to finding an answer today” (p. 14). Much of the research on effective teachers avoids actually defining the term, due in part to the subjectivity involved and the numerous variables associated with leading a classroom. As noted by Berliner (2005), “Quality always requires value judgments about which disagreements abound” (p. 206). Blanton, Sindelar, and Correa (2006) added that there is a broad range that researchers focused on when looking at effective teaching, ranging from what teachers know, to what they do, to how they do it. We were so focused on these things, combined with what students learned, that we overlooked the actual people, teachers, who dedicate themselves to the overwhelming task of making a difference for our students (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006).

“Parents and teachers claim to know a good teacher when they see one, but educators and policymakers still can’t agree on what kind of training teachers should receive or how to define a ‘qualified’ teacher” (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2005, p.38). Stronge and Hindman (2003) agreed effective teachers cannot be identified through a magic formula, but there are traits they have in common. Mary Kennedy (2006) suggested that one of the problems is the way teachers are hired. Instead of identifying and looking for those traits effective teachers have in common, school districts require applications and resumes. Qualities of effective teachers seldom show up in paperwork or brief interviews. According to Colgan (2004), “In *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children*, an NCTAF (The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future) report that made quite an impression when it was released in 2003, a common sense question was posed: ‘If we know that high quality teaching makes a difference, why isn’t every child in America getting it?’” (p. 23).

## Research Study

### Statement of the Problem

Students need effective teachers in order to reach their maximum potential. There is not a “one size fits all” definition of effective teaching, just as there is no single method or approach that works in every classroom with every student. With the added emphasis on accountability, teachers are increasingly measured by the results of their students’ standardized test scores.

According to Cody Ding and Helene Sherman (2006):

Two decades after the report “A Nation at Risk” by National Commission on Excellence in Education (A Nation at Risk: The imperative of educational reform, 1983), education professionals are still struggling with the issue of improving

academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores. (p. 39)

The formula continues to be satisfactory test scores equal student achievement, which is a result of effective teaching, and it is obvious this formula is archaic. It makes very little sense to focus solely on test scores when looking at teacher effectiveness. Our dependency on test scores required teachers to forego being effective, and instead focus on teaching to the test. It also meant that academically weaker students received more individual attention than their peers who were not at-risk of failing those high-stakes tests. Furthermore, testing results were indicative of the current classroom teacher only, and in the worst of cases, the pressure to succeed forced some professionals to behave unethically (Haskins & Loeb).

School administrators are challenged with ensuring a highly qualified teacher leads every classroom to satisfy the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*, although Highly Qualified does not equate to Highly Effective; a teaching certificate merely represents that a candidate is eligible to teach. The vast majority of Americans who have experienced a traditional K-12 classroom can share personal experiences of a teacher who made a difference for them. Educational leaders have to ensure highly qualified teachers lead every classroom, but more importantly they need to be able to identify the characteristics of highly effective teachers, and then seek out candidates whom, with proper guidance and support, can enter the classroom and make a difference for students throughout their teaching careers. Research indicates that there are as many variations in the results on effective teaching, as there are studies trying to establish a definition of effective teaching. Stumbo and McWalters (2010) acknowledged the paradigm shift in federal policy from the quality of the teacher to his or her effectiveness. They concluded that quality had more to do with how much teachers learned about the content they taught, when what was really

important was how well those teachers were able to “perform with students” (p. 10). According to Roy Barnes and Joseph Aguerrebere (2006):

Evaluation of quality teaching must take into account how deeply teachers understand what they teach, how well they transform that knowledge into instruction for students of different ages and abilities, and how well teachers put it all together in the classroom. (¶ 9)

### Research Questions

Previous studies on effective teaching have included both quantitative and qualitative methods, with the most common studies focusing on measuring gains in student achievement by comparing scores on standardized tests. While test scores are very important, they are inconclusive due to the numerous variables that affect their interpretation. Expanding on the Sanders’ study, Dallas researchers looked at the nation’s 10<sup>th</sup> largest school district in Texas and discovered:

Teachers’ effectiveness was based on comparisons of their students’ test results at the end of the school year, with the test results of students with similar backgrounds who were in the previous grade the year before. Teachers whose students made the greatest gains on the assessments—which included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and state tests—were deemed most effective. (Archer, para 6)

Cases like this illustrate the problems associated with analyzing student achievement based on test scores. Using this approach, it is expected that the teachers who had a group of low-performing students one year, followed by a group of high-performing students the next, would be deemed effective teachers, when, in reality, the teaching may or may not have had anything to



do with the results. Furthermore, “Judgment based exclusively on scores from single administrations of achievement tests disadvantage teachers with large numbers of low-performing students” (Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa, p. 177).

In addition to test scores, researchers have also looked at teacher effectiveness holistically, without regards to differences based on grade levels and/or student populations. An effective elementary school teacher may not share the characteristics of an effective secondary school teacher, and post-secondary educators may or may not share similar traits with their K-12 counterparts, though no differentiation exists in *NCLB*. Educational leaders need to be versed in characteristics that are specific to the needs of the students they are accountable for educating, which means the definition of highly effective teachers needs to be addressed from various, specific angles. According to Arnon & Reichel (2007), “descriptions of the profile of good teachers as seen by their students have become a part of educational research” (p. 445). Since the first TEF (Teacher Evaluation Form) was administered at the University of Washington in the 1920’s, post-secondary students have been asked to consider how proficient their professors were in a number of areas associated with effective teaching and/or best practices (Onweugbuzie et al, 2007). However, those same stakeholders in secondary schools, the students, were rarely asked for their perspectives on whether or not a teacher was effective. They have typically been overlooked by researchers attempting to unlock what works in secondary school classrooms. The fact that secondary students can provide insight needed to fully understand effectiveness at the secondary level has been proven. In the February 2010 edition of *Educational Leadership*, students from the Howard Gardner School in Alexandria, Virginia were asked to explain “What should teachers know about students to help them learn?” (pp. 68-69). In addition, the Southern Accreditation for Colleges and Schools (SACS) process incorporates a piece for input from

stakeholders, which indicated input from secondary students was valued. Since students spend so much of their time at school, they experience teachers in and out of the classroom; it makes sense they would be able to communicate realistic perceptions of their personal experiences with individual teachers.

Considering these issues, a new research problem has emerged in the form of a gap in the literature. Efforts to identify characteristics of effective teachers have belonged primarily to researchers, not practitioners. Secondary students' input has been mostly overlooked. The researcher's purpose for this study is to analyze data on characteristics of effective secondary teachers based on the perspectives of the school administrators who hire them and the upper level secondary school students who must learn from them. The overarching question is this: What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? The following research questions guide this study:

1. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by upper level secondary school students?
2. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by secondary school administrators?
3. How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

### Significance of Study

The most important decision school leaders make is in selecting the teachers that enter the classrooms and directly impact student learning. Typically, principals interview teacher

candidates and call on pre-approved references, thus relying on instinct and minimal information to make a decision.

Previous quantitative studies determine teacher effectiveness based on standardized test scores. Not only are these scores inconclusive because they compare one group of students to another (apples to oranges), but they are also not readily accessible to school leaders who hire teachers, especially for those candidates who are applying from outside the school district.

A quantitative study that focuses on characteristics of effective teachers by comparing the perceptions of upper level secondary students and secondary school administrators will provide unprecedented information to assist administrators in hiring the teachers their students need.

#### Delimitations

The researcher delimited the scope of this study to upper level secondary school students in one school district in southeastern Georgia, and secondary school administrators in eighteen school districts in southeastern Georgia,. The student survey scales were piloted on secondary students classified as freshmen and sophomores, who have fewer overall classroom experiences than upper level secondary school students.

#### Limitations

The surveys were sent via school email to secondary school administrators in an effort to reduce turnaround time and costs. Most school districts tend to have safety features guarding computer usage, which meant that some of the surveys ended up as spam mail. This impacted the sample size of the secondary school administrators who participated. Information about these administrators was gathered from school websites. Inaccurate information on those

websites might have negatively impacted the number of administrators who received the request to participate.

The student participants completed a survey that required them to self-report. There were no incentives offered to them and the researcher cannot be certain that responses were truthful. All students had to consent to participate, as well as provide informed consent signed by a parent or guardian. Depending on students to acquire signatures granting them permission to participate decreased the number of student responses, thus reducing the amount of valuable data available to analyze.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The researcher conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study. All upper level secondary students in one southeastern Georgia school district and secondary school administrators employed by the eighteen school districts served by First District Regional Educational Service Agency (FDRESA) were asked to use their experiences to respond to 25 statements using a 4 point Likert like scale, where respondents rated each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) based on their perceptions of effective teachers.

### Population

For the portion dedicated to the perspectives of upper level secondary students, all juniors and seniors enrolled in one southeastern Georgia school district were asked to participate. All students were required to consent to participate, as well as to provide a signed parent consent form.

For the portion of this study dedicated to the perceptions of secondary school administrators, the population for this study consisted of the secondary school administrators employed in the 18 school districts serviced by FDRESA. An analysis of each school district's website revealed there were twenty nine high schools in the service area with approximately 130 school administrators. For the purpose of this study, only traditional secondary schools with students in grades 9-12 were considered.

### Sampling

The researcher utilized the entire sample of secondary school administrators. According to research on all secondary schools in the FDRESA service area, there were approximately 130 secondary school administrators employed in those districts. The researched included all 130 in the sample size.

The researcher utilized a purposive, convenience sample for the upper level secondary school students. All student participants who met the criteria to be classified as a junior or senior were invited to participate in this study. The researcher issued informed consent forms and parent consent forms to all students who met the criteria from the two high schools in the district where the researcher is employed.

### Instrumentation

The researcher created a 4 point Likert like scale containing 25 statements representing five domains associated with effective teaching, as derived and modified from the literature review. Respondents marked each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The instructions asked upper level secondary school students to consider their experiences in the classrooms of teachers they perceived to be highly effective for them. The instructions required secondary school administrators to respond based on their experiences in supervising teachers

they perceived to be highly effective. For the purpose of this study, a highly effective teacher was defined as one who made a positive impact on his or her students.

For the Likert like scale that was administered to upper level secondary school students, the researcher used statistical analysis known as Cronbach's Alpha to determine reliability based on the administration of the instrument with underclassmen enrolled in the district where the researcher is employed. Signed parent consent forms and signed informed consent were required for students to participate in this pilot study.

The researcher established validity and reliability data for the instrument by conducting a similar pilot study. For the Likert like scale that was administered to secondary school administrators, the researcher tested for internal consistency by entering the responses into SPSS and analyzing the data using Cronbach's Alpha to check for high reliability.

To insure validity for both instruments, each statement on the Likert like scale linked back to one of five domains representative of effective teaching, as established and modified from the literature review. The responses to like items were analyzed to determine internal consistency. The researcher asked all the participants in the pilot study for feedback about any portion of the instrument they found to be unclear. Their feedback resulted in some changes in wording for the final secondary students' perceptions survey.

#### Data Analysis, Tools, and Techniques

Statistical software (SPSS) was used to analyze all data associated with this research study. For research questions one and two, means, standard deviations, response frequencies and percentages, and variance were determined for each of the 25 Likert like scale survey items. This descriptive data identified which characteristics of effective teachers were deemed most important by upper level secondary school students, and which were deemed most important by

secondary school administrators . For research question three, a two-group MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) was conducted to determine if significant differences between the two groups existed.

### Summary

In summary, administrators play an important role as instructional leaders because in addition to the requirement that all classroom teachers be “highly qualified” as outlined in The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, the teacher is the most important factor affecting student learning. It is imperative that school leaders select the right teachers to meet the needs of their students. NCLB focuses primarily on degrees and certification. It is the opinion of Nina and Sol Hurwitz (2005) that “NCLB’s definition of ‘highly qualified’ focuses almost entirely on a teacher’s content knowledge, while downplaying the importance of studying child development and the art of teaching” (pp. 38-39).

What is the appropriate combination of factors, and who will determine those? Current research identifies some characteristics exhibited by effective teachers, but there is still work to do to establish what effective teaching looks like for individual groups of students. Most of the research conducted from the students’ perceptions was a result of student evaluation forms completed at the conclusion of a course. That information, while meaningful, was reflective of a single learning experience with a single instructor. For this study, research focused on what secondary school students and secondary school administrators perceived to be effective, based on their multiple experiences either learning from or supervising multiple instructors.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

#### Introduction

According to Ron Haskins and Susanna Loeb (2007):

For educators, researchers, and policymakers of a certain age who have suffered through wave after wave of ineffectual educational reform, the new research on teacher quality has finally created optimism that something can be done to boost student achievement. (p. 1)

Effective teaching is difficult to define because there is not one right way to meet the needs of all students. Access to K-12 education in America ensures that most citizens have experienced a traditional classroom setting, thus opinions about the characteristics of effective teachers abound. Robert J. Walker (2008) has studied characteristics of effective teachers for fifteen years and defines effective as “meaning that these teachers made the most significant impact on their [students] lives” (p. 61).

Researchers’ attempts to define effective teaching have provided a broad range of characteristics and traits most often found through various quantitative and qualitative means, and though some studies have taken the perspectives of stakeholders into consideration, most of those rely on post-secondary students evaluating college professors at the end of a semester. Methods in place for evaluating teachers typically require brief observations from a school administrator or other trained evaluators. In looking at an equation where the two variables in the classroom are the teacher and the students, it makes sense to ask students to identify their perceptions based on personal experiences. According to Mervyn Flecknoe (2005):



No one who set out to interrogate the ideas of pupils reported any negative consequences of doing so. Pupils are observers of lessons, they are witnesses in the playground, they see who writes on the toilet wall and who sets off the fire alarm, they experience the conflict between homework and television, and they know who pushes the drugs.

Ignoring their opinions and understanding about the process of education is not likely to lead to optimal learning conditions. There is such wealth of knowledge about the process of educating residing in the pupil that no business intent on success would ignore it. (p. 439)

In an effort to ensure every student has the benefit of highly effective teachers, it is important to know more about those characteristics that current literature has already associated with highly effective teaching.

## Highly Effective Teachers

### Teacher Preparation

If the primary goal of *No Child Left Behind* was to increase achievement levels of all students, then the implementation of HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation) emphasized the critical importance of both content area knowledge and best practices (Smith & Gorard, 2005). Though states were left to develop their own HOUSSE criteria, the inclusion of content mastery and pedagogy cemented their place in the discussions of what it takes to be an effective teacher.

Prior to entering the classroom for the first time, teachers must earn credentials. In Georgia, depending on the route to certification, whether traditional or alternative, teachers must earn a degree in education and/or a content area, depending on their intended grade level; then they

must pass a competency test designed specifically to address the level of students and/or mastery of the content area they plan to teach. Teachers who enter the classroom following the traditional route must pass courses in pedagogy and have experience student teaching, while those who take alternative routes to certification typically take a fast track to the classroom, and then complete additional requirements while on the job (“Routes to Certification”). While researchers have studied the advantages and disadvantages of both routes, there is not one right way to become an effective teacher. However, content mastery, pedagogy, and licensure/certification have all been linked to effective teaching.

### Content Mastery

One of the potential problems with teaching candidates is the entrance requirements for colleges of education. The saying “those who can’t, teach,” sheds a negative light on education as a career, but colleges are not recruiting the best and brightest to enter the classroom. More than a decade ago, Dr. Joseph M. Horn (1999) provided a critical look at the colleges of education in Texas. He condemned admission requirements for undergraduates who wished to teach. As a result of his research, he determined that academically weak potential teachers entered the teacher preparatory program and were not weeded out, though they continued to produce average work. This led to a mediocre candidate pool prepared to fill teaching vacancies. Horn insisted these teachers might actually impede their students’ academic achievement. Suffice it to say that content mastery is a potential area of weakness if the classroom teacher was formerly a struggling student. According to Stewart (2010):

We do know that some high-performing countries (such as Finland and Singapore) limit the number of candidates accepted into teacher education programs to get higher-quality

applicants and to secure better job placement rates, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the profession.” (p. 18)

Pillsbury (2005) noted “a great curriculum in the hands of a skilled and effective teacher is a highly effective curriculum” (p. 36). According to Porter-Magee (2004), research increasingly provided information that teachers with strong academic backgrounds in their subject area content have more influence on what their students learn, especially math and science teachers. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation noted:

Insofar as there are links between teacher characteristics and classroom effectiveness, the strongest of these involve verbal ability and subject matter knowledge. This has been known since the famed Coleman Report of 1966, when teacher scores on a verbal test were the only school “input” found to have a positive relationship to student achievement. In a recent study conducted in Texas, teacher literacy levels were more closely associated with student performance than other inputs. In an appraisal of Alabama schools, the ACT scores of future teachers were the strongest determinant of student gains. (p. 7)

NCLB leaned in this direction, as it excluded pedagogical training in the definition of “highly qualified” teachers, and emphasized instead the importance of proven competency in specific subject areas. Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) reviewed policies from all 50 states, and concluded that a “measures of course-taking in a subject area have more frequently been found to be related to teacher performance than have scores on tests of subject matter knowledge” (p. 4). Ashton and Crocker found significantly positive relationships between education coursework and teacher performance in four of seven studies they reviewed—a larger share than those showing subject matter relationships. Hawley and Zlotnik reported a consistent positive effect of

teachers' formal education training on supervisory ratings and student learning, with 11 of 13 studies showing greater effectiveness for fully prepared and certified vs. uncertified or provisionally certified teachers (as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2000, pp. 4-5).

## Pedagogy

According to Porter-Magee (2004), *No Child Left Behind* intentionally omitted pedagogy from teacher certification. Michael Allen (2002) raised doubts that content knowledge is enough. He noted "that subject-specific pedagogy is important...because it is a matter of understanding how students most effectively learn a subject and knowing how best to facilitate the process" (p. 9). According to Wright, Horn and Sanders (1997), effective teachers seemed to be able to make a positive impact on student achievement of all students in their classroom, even if there was a wide range of ability levels. This was a perfect example of how understanding the art of teaching affected all learners. Highly effective teachers differentiated instruction to reach all learners, and they did not learn how in a Science or Math class. According to Adams and Pierce, "the most effective instructors seem to be able to balance challenge and support. Challenge involves presenting learners with complexity and ambiguity; support is reflected in structure and discipline" (p. 105). Hill and Barth (2004) concluded that teachers entering the profession without the benefit of pedagogical training had difficulty finding ways to impart their knowledge to students. They simply did not have the repertoire of methods and materials found in classrooms of highly effective teachers. McDiarmid and Wilson (year) concurred an understanding of pedagogy was necessary. According to them, those teacher who seek alternative routes to certification had only knowledge of their content, had incorrect notions about proper methods of delivering instruction and experienced difficulty connecting what with how. Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) discovered that "education coursework is a stronger

predictor of teaching effectiveness than a teacher's grade point average in their majors or their test scores on content knowledge" (p. 36) and "teachers learn better if their training program is focused on content knowledge in a subject area, pedagogical coursework (including learning theories, developmental theories, theories of motivation, and issues of student assessment and practice teaching" (p. 5). Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) reviewed data on teacher quality from all 50 states and concluded there was a definitive correlation between teaching methods and student learning, and the common denominator was educational opportunities for teachers, to include training in matters in addition to content knowledge. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond concluded that teachers who knew their subject matter and who mastered the best way to present it to students enhanced classroom learning (p. 38). Allen expanded on what teacher preparation should focus on: "Aspiring teachers must have the maximum amount of well-structured, hands-on experience, if they are to be adequately prepared for the realities of teaching" (p. 9). According to Adams & Pierce (2004), "effective teachers assess needs, abilities and preparedness on a class-by-class basis and respond to these needs accordingly" (p. 102). Contrary to those points, Ding & Sherman proposed that relying too heavily on pedagogy in the learning process made it seem as if teachers assumed the role of leader in the learning process, when in fact, the students had to be partners in their own learning. In order for students to be actively engaged in learning, the classroom teacher had to rely on a balance between knowing what to teach, and how best to teach it.

Deborah Hill and Marlene Barth elaborated on the notion that because most people have been students, they know what it takes to teach. Their research determined:

For anyone who has attended school teaching seems to be the most transparent of occupations, with less mystique than many other walks of life. Most people, if asked,

would probably claim to understand what teachers do. But, while most are familiar with the daily pattern of teachers' work, far fewer understand the complexity of the pedagogy, and, as a result, underestimate the skills required. (p. 213)

### Licensure and Certification

Licensure and certification vary from state to state, but according to Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) there are some consistencies overall when looking at these two terms.

Certification or licensing status is a measure of teacher qualifications that combines aspects of knowledge about subject matter and about teaching and learning. Its meaning varies across the states because of differences in licensing requirements, but a standard certificate generally means that a teacher has been prepared in a state-approved teacher education program at the undergraduate or graduate level and has completed either a major or a minor in the field(s) to be taught plus anywhere from 18 to 40 education credits, depending on the state and the certificate areas, including between 8 and 18 weeks of student teaching. (p. 7)

For all intents and purposes, the two terms can be used interchangeably to support that a potential teaching candidate has met the requirements to be eligible to teach.

Haskins and Loeb referred to recent studies in New York and North Carolina which supported that certified teachers have an advantage over uncertified teachers when it comes to increasing achievement. Michael Podgursky (2005) noted that public schools in the United States equated quality with being licensed. In addition, he pointed out that *No Child Left Behind* required states to reduce the options for those who requested pre-teaching certificates, such as provisional or emergency certificates. According to Darling-Hammond (2000):

The strength of the “well-qualified teacher” variable may be partly due to the fact that it is a proxy for both strong disciplinary knowledge (a major in the field taught) and substantial knowledge of education (full certification). If the two kinds of knowledge are interdependent as suggested in much of the literature, it makes sense that this variable would be more powerful than either subject matter knowledge or teaching knowledge alone. (p. 7)

In addition to earning a degree, *No Child Left Behind* also stated that teachers must obtain state certification. Conclusions based on the research conducted by Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) showed:

The advantages of having a certified teacher is worth about two months on a grade-equivalent scale. The school year is 10 months long so the loss from having an undercertified teacher is 20 percent of an academic year. In other words, students pay a 20 percent penalty in academic growth for each year of placement with an undercertified teacher. (p. 6)

In addition, student achievement was more positively impacted by teachers who were fully certified and teaching in field (meaning teaching in the subject area(s) of their major(s)) than by those teachers who held advanced degrees (Darling-Hammond). Along the same lines, in her review of state policies on teacher quality and student achievement, Darling-Hammond identified a correlation between students staying in school as opposed to dropping out, when their classroom teachers were certified and teaching in field.

## Professional Development

“If you dare to teach, you must never cease to learn” (Wong, 2007, p. 52). The NCATE report, *What Makes a Teacher Effective?*, addresses the importance of continued professional development throughout a teachers’ career. With new information being constantly added to the knowledge base, and rapid changes in student populations, it is important to evolve. McArdle and Coutts (2003) added, “We recognized, however, that the body of knowledge is never static and that not simply updating but stretching, challenging, or moving beyond the traditional boundaries of a body of knowledge might be important” (p. 227). Highly effective teachers continue seeking new information in an effort to meet the needs of their students. Jackie Williams (2003) identified great teachers and a common theme emerged in her interviews with them. Those teachers enrolled in graduate level courses, and consistently engaged in activities that made them grow as people and as teachers. Nieto (2003) added that effective teachers are those who were dedicated to keeping current on content area knowledge and best practices. Nelson (2004) became a better teacher “not simply from gaining more experience. ‘I began to feel more competent by being very deliberate in my reading professional educational literature and by implementing new ideas I learned in conferences’” (p. 477). According to Intrator & Kutzman (2006), “teachers yearn for professional development experiences that not only advance their skills and knowledge base, but also simultaneously probe their sense of purpose and invite deliberation about what matters most in good teaching” (¶ 5). Darling-Hammond (2003) added experienced teachers needed consistent staff development opportunities if they were to continue to be stimulated and remain enthusiastic about their chosen profession.

John Holloway (2003) looked into sustaining experienced teachers and determined “a link between the amount of professional development in which teachers had participated and the



teachers' feelings of competence" (p. 87). He also noted that teachers' feelings of preparedness directly correlated with the number of professional development opportunities they received in specific enterprises. His research uncovered the fact that:

Teachers who participated in regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, networked with teachers outside the school, and mentored another teacher were more likely than those who did not participate in these activities to report feeling very well prepared for the overall demands of their classroom assignments. (p. 87)

According to Barnes & Aguerrebere, those who created policies underestimated the importance of professional development; however, based on research of teacher quality, professional development opportunities provided the most bang for school bucks, because it improved performance in the classroom while propelling those teachers to affect change amongst their colleagues, and to become teacher leaders in the process.

## Reflection

According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, self-actualization was what all humans strived for as they grew and developed. Self-actualization was equivalent to fulfilling ones' potential, and for those who achieved that level of fulfillment, it was the major culminating achievement in life. Effective teachers sought to reach this stage through the art of reflection or looking inward. According to Intrator and Kunzman (2006):

This inner exploration of teachers builds the foundation they need to engage with ongoing activities at the other end of Maslow's hierarchy—pedagogy, content and policy. This approach, which they call Multi-level Learning, invites teachers to think about specific events in their teaching and to engage in a process called core reflection. The idea behind core reflection is that a teacher's core personality—including his or her

identity and mission—profoundly influences the way that teacher practices. Teachers reflect on their core qualities by exploring such questions as, Why did you become a teacher? And What do you see as your calling in the world? (p. 4).

Teachers benefited from examining their role as teachers because that reflection caused changes in attitude, which promoted improvement in all aspects of teaching, from classroom management to grading procedures to personal demeanor.

Jessica Towbin (2010) taught Language Arts and Social Studies at a Seattle high school. Her article, “When Students Don’t Play the Game,” focused on the learners who did not come to class eager to learn. She depended on reflection to meet her students as individual learners on a daily basis. According to her, “I need to repeatedly ask the question, ‘Where are you?’ and be prepared to step back and listen” (p. 45). McArdle and Coutts (2003) actively considered what good teaching was to them by reflecting on the word “good,” then focusing on the activities and people they used good to describe. As they compared how they arrived at classifying things as good, they were able to reach a consensus about what good meant to them.

In her article, *Getting Personal about Teaching*, Carolyn Bunting stated it was important for teachers to spend time in reflection as they considered what kind of teacher they had become. “Teachers benefit from going back to their own beginning and thinking about why they wanted to teach. What goals did they expect to accomplish? What fulfillment did they anticipate?” (p. 77).

### Classroom experience

Classroom experience allowed teachers to put together all the necessary components of teaching, so they could meet the needs of a variety of learners and multi-task to stay ahead of the many aspects of teaching that occurred outside the classroom that were overwhelming. The

Thomas B. Fordham acknowledged according to teachers, actual experience was the most effective place to learn methods that worked, and it helped to rely on fellow good teachers in their buildings. According to Kaplan & Owings (2004):

New teachers can rarely integrate the curriculum, align it with high-stakes assessments, locate and secure the available resources, implement effective classroom management practices, know their students learning or social needs and how best to meet them, or understand the school culture well enough to be truly effective in increasing student learning” (p. 2).

Yet, highly effective teachers made this look easy. Hogan, Rabinowitz, & Craven (2003) outlined the differences between novice and veteran teachers based on individual experiences in the classroom. They discovered “when thinking about the classroom while planning instructional strategies (lesson planning), novice teachers tend to regard the class as a whole. Expert content specialists, on the other hand, perceived the classroom as comprising unique individuals” (p. 237). They also concluded that classroom experience itself taught flexibility. As teachers became confident in their expertise with the content, their flexibility increased and they were more likely to alter their initial plans to best reach the learners in those particular classrooms.

Brownwell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron and Vandover (2006) studied the effects of collaboration on new teachers. One of the teachers, Brenda, summed up her experience when asked what she learned as a first year teacher this way: “I realized there is a whole lot more to school than academics. [My first year] made me realize that while teaching academics, I had to teach social skills and manners” (p. 178).

Classroom experience also created an advantage for teachers as they applied what they learned about developmental psychology to real students in their charge. Lev Vygotsky studied cognitive development in the early twentieth century and developed the Social Development Theory. He noted that “learning is a dynamic process in which learners and instructors are highly interactive and connect new concepts to those previously understood” (as cited in Ding & Sherman, p. 45). In the September 2004 edition of *Education Week*, the article *Teacher Quality* looked at the research on the effects of teaching experience on student achievement and contended that seasoned teachers usually see larger learning gains in their students than those teachers with less classroom experience.

### Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as “intellectual ability by which one forges one’s beliefs about his or her ability to achieve a certain level of accomplishment.” It equated to that “I can do this” attitude. Cheryl Adams and Rebecca Pierce compiled a list of characteristics of effective teaching. One of the things they discovered was that good teachers employed high expectations for academic performance and conduct, and they held their students to those high standards because they were confident that the students could meet them (p.103). Whereas some teachers lowered the bar when students were struggling, effective teachers were able to convince those low achievers they could succeed, and much of that came from the teachers’ belief in them. Effective teachers never considered their students could not master the curriculum. Instead, they relied on their efforts, and those of their students. According to Gordon & Debus (2002), “highly effective teachers are those who have high self-efficacy beliefs...and are likely to engage in a wide range of more effective teaching practices than teachers with low self-efficacy” (p. 486). G.M. Sparks noted teachers who believed in their own abilities were more prone to

experiment with new ideas. Whereas new teachers relied heavily on scripted lessons and sticking to the plan, teachers with high-self efficacy were flexible and able to make adjustments that enhanced instruction. They incorporated student-centered lessons and encouraged ownership from their students. They were also able to stray from their plans to make the most of teachable moments. Weasmer & Woods (1998) equated efficacy with confidence and noted, higher levels of learning are demonstrated in classrooms where the teacher has demonstrated strong levels of teaching efficacy. Yost (2002) added teachers who believe in their ability to teach students also have the utmost confidence that their students can learn. Deeper approaches resulted in “behaviors that include the active integration of new information with old, or with information derived from other sources” (Gordon & Debus, 2002, p. 484). “Brophy demonstrated that teachers who believe strongly that their students are capable of learning new skills or subject matter are more likely to be successful in increasing students’ learning” (as cited in Cloer & Alexander, 1992, ¶ 2).

Howard Ebmeir also researched efficacy as it relates to teacher effectiveness and noted “Teachers’ sense of efficacy is thus related to a number of school-level variables such as climate, decision-making structures within the school, general school support systems, a sense of community within the staff, and several other factors” (p. 118).

#### Personal Characteristics

Tomlinson & Doubet (2005) interviewed four high school teachers who believe teaching is about more than just imparting knowledge of the curriculum. One of the teachers, Katie Carson, “embeds the required content standards in her instruction, but her students feel that she’s teaching them, not just covering material” (p. 2). According to Katie, “my job is to make sure the kids know that I care, that I appreciate their sharing the truth about

their lives, and that I value their opinions” (as cited in Tomlinson & Doughty, 2005, p. 3). These are the kinds of teachers who have always increased the prestige of teaching for themselves, which is something that needs to occur nationwide if quality people are going to be attracted to the challenges of the classroom (Allen, 2002). According to Stronge and Hindeman (2003), “Despite the difficulty in defining effectiveness precisely, nearly everyone can recall a special teacher in his or her life. Descriptions of these teachers frequently include such words as *caring, competent, humorous, knowledgeable, demanding and fair*” (p. 49).

Nieto (2003) researched the longevity of seven urban teachers in the Boston Public Schools. She concluded that the reasons these teachers stayed had little to do with content knowledge or pedagogy. Instead, “these teachers’ identities are deeply implicated in their teaching” (p. 16). These teachers developed love for their students. As a result, they found they were able to ask more of their students and get it. These teachers never lost hope for their students, so they always approached their students with many possibilities and the confidence that together, they could achieve anything. Mary Kennedy (2006) studied teacher quality and issued the following statement regarding a teacher’s personality and its’ effect on student achievement: “One of the most prominent hypotheses is that teaching depends on personality—that some people have a form of charisma that enables them to connect to kids, inspire them, and communicate with them” (p. 14).

Most people do not equate the classroom with fun, though effective teachers were far more likely to allow students to be themselves, and to make learning fun. Judy Pollak and Paul Freda (1997) looked into sense of humor as an important teacher quality since many students responded that this was important. Though their study focused on middle schoolers and emphasized positive humor, rather than sarcasm or cynicism, it made sense that their findings

could be generalized to other populations of students since humor helps people connect to one another. Becky Bobek (2002) looked at longevity in teachers and discovered that “effective teachers depend on high levels of competency, personal decision making, and appropriate humor for creating classroom environments that stimulate learning and emphasize achievement” (p. 204). Humor puts students and teachers at ease and was very effective in setting up a classroom environment conducive to learning. Carolyn Bunting (2006) believed it was about getting personal with students. In her experience, “the important work of teachers remains unchanged—the work of connecting personally and passionately, intimately and individually, with teaching real children in real time” (p. 76).

Morice & Murray (2003) discovered that the majority of teachers were attracted to the profession by the “intrinsic satisfaction of working with students” (p. 40). Michael Allen (2002) noted “teachers who have a personal connection with a school or the neighborhood where the school is located are more likely to be interested in teaching in that school and to remain there long-term” (p. 10). Pete Pillsbury (2005) researched what people had to say about effective teachers. “Their best teachers always made learning joyous and helped them achieve things that they did not know they were capable of. They knew their teacher loved working with them and helping them learn” (p. 37).

According to Bobek, “teachers thrive on time alone to reflect on who they are as teachers” (p. 78). Gordon, Meadows, Dyal & Williford (1995) researched perspectives of teachers and principals regarding performance evaluations. They report that teachers “frequently report that they desire and need feedback from their principal regarding their classroom performance” (p. 13). Haroontunian (2001) indicated that teachers “define their success in terms of other people and they define their task as successful when these others (usually students)

smile, praise or reward them in some way.” They desired feedback in the form of written evaluations or oral exchanges involving their performance in the classroom, especially when it was determined they needed to improve something that would better prepare their students. According to Sharon Neiman-Feiser (2003), “Good classroom teachers are effective because they can pull off a seamless performance, monitor student understanding, and engage students in important ideas” (p. 28).

Robert E. Glenn (2001) identified many admirable traits of effective teachers, such as being flexible, holding high expectations, and creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere, but what he determined about effective teaching in differing situations is most important. According to him, “Education is not an exact science and the qualities that are needed in teaching personnel will vary somewhat depending on different objectives and needs of schools.”

### A Consolidated Approach

Charlotte Danielson of the Danielson group documented research on evaluating effective teachers, which resulted in the creation of the *Framework for Teaching*. Information on The *Framework for Teaching* stated it was:

A research-based set of components of instruction, aligned to the INTASC [Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium] standards, and grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching. In this framework, the complex activity of teaching is divided into 22 components (and 76 smaller elements) clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility: planning and preparation (Domain 1), classroom environment (Domain 2), instruction (Domain 3), and professional responsibilities (Domain 4). (Charlotte Danielson, ¶ 1)



The information contained in this framework encompassed a vast majority of the characteristics of effective teachers as identified in a review of the literature, and presented them in an organized fashion. The exception to this framework was the exclusion of personal characteristics of the classroom teacher, which many researchers have prioritized as a crucial component. However, research suggested that classroom environment is seemingly dependent upon teacher personality traits.

Domain I: Planning and Preparation included elements of effective teaching that were typically laid as the foundation for teaching prior to entering the classroom, though continuing education and experience would enhance them. These elements covered knowledge of content and pedagogy, along with knowledge of students. In addition, setting instructional outcomes and designing sound instruction and assessments were part of this domain (Charlotte Danielson).

Domain II: The Classroom Environment, components of professional practice included establishing an environment of respect and rapport, and a culture for learning. In addition, managing classroom procedures and student behavior were part of this domain, along with organizing physical space (Charlotte Danielson).

Domain III: Instruction included communicating effectively with students. This domain detailed elements that provided for time well spent teaching students in the classroom, such as incorporating discussion and questioning, instructional techniques, and engaging students in learning. Instead of focusing on creating assessments, this domain emphasized the need to use the results of those assessments in instruction. It also covered flexibility and responsiveness (Charlotte Danielson).

Domain IV: Professional Responsibilities included components that took place outside the classroom. Reflecting on teaching was a component of professional practice for this domain, as

were maintaining accurate records and communicating with families. Participating in a professional community, demonstrating professionalism and growth rounded out the elements.

Domain V: Personal Characteristics consisted of elements such as teachers' self-efficacy and confidence, and the intrinsic satisfaction of being in a helping career. This domain also included sense of humor, enthusiasm for subject matter and students; in other words, a passion for teaching.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The role of school principal was most important because as the instructional leader of the school, it was through classroom observations and teacher evaluations that students were assured effective teachers. In Georgia, the majority of teacher evaluations were based on the GTEP (Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program) Instrument for classroom observations, though a shift to Teacher Keys is in the works. There were also components that addressed duties and responsibilities—the Georgia Teacher Duties and Responsibilities Instrument (GTDMI). Administrators and other school personnel responsible for teacher evaluations attended training to apply this instrument. They were taught to score teachers as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory on ten criteria under three different categories. While this instrument provided feedback to teachers, it was but a snapshot of what went on in the classroom with an administrator present. It did not lend itself to distinguish effective teaching from ineffective teaching, nor did it provide any information about teacher quality. So how do administrators identify highly effective teachers?

Some would say that effective teaching is determined by satisfactory scores on evaluation instruments, combined with adequate pass/fail percentages of students and consistently preparing students to meet or exceed expectations on standardized tests. Others would chime in that effective teachers were able to build rapport with their students or sponsored extra-curricular activities and kept students involved after hours. After all, involved students were usually better students. Researchers have identified various items that made a teacher highly effective. School leaders knew that the classroom teacher was the most important variable in educating students,

but there was no model to identify the kind of teacher needed to lead every classroom so that every student had the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## Methodology

### Research Questions

The researcher proposed to examine common characteristics of highly effective teachers based on the personal experiences of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators. The overarching question was this: What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? The following research questions guided this study:

1. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by upper level secondary school students?
2. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by secondary school administrators?
3. How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

### Population, Participants, and Sampling

Examining characteristics of effective teachers based on the perceptions of upper level secondary students in one southeastern Georgia school district, and secondary school administrators employed by high schools located in the service area of Georgia's First District RESA, the researcher conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study.

Sampling for this portion of the study was purposive, convenience sampling, because the researcher is currently employed by the school district that houses all student participants. All

1,015 students who met the criteria to be classified juniors or seniors in the two high schools within the southeastern Georgia school district were asked to participate in the study.

Participation was optional and students received no incentives to participate. All students were required to sign the Informed Consent Letter (Appendix A), as well as to provide a signed Parent Informed Consent Letter (Appendix B) to participate.

For the administrators' portion of this study, school administrators from 18 school districts serviced by First District RESA were invited to participate in this portion of the study. Of the 130 eligible secondary school administrators, an attempt was made to reach all of them via email to invite them to participate. This number represented the entire sample.

Included in the application to conduct research were two separate surveys, Effective Teaching Survey for Secondary School Students (Appendix C) and Effective Teaching Survey for Secondary School Administrators (Appendix D). The survey statements were the same for both groups of participants, with minimal changes in wording to ensure understanding as a result of feedback from the participating student population. The instructions also differed slightly to allow for the different roles students and administrators played in identifying effective teachers based on personal experiences. Following the Likert like scale format, the survey statements were based on information disclosed in the review of literature in Chapter 2. Five domains of effective teaching were identified as major themes based on an analysis of current literature and the modification of Danielson's *Frameworks for Teaching*. Each domain was represented by five statements on the surveys.

In an effort to maintain the available population of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators to participate in this study, the researcher piloted the student portion of this study with underclassmen, both freshmen and sophomores (N=29). Other school

administrators who work in the district where the researcher is employed were asked to participate in the pilot study for the school administrator portion of this study (N=12).

#### Instrumentation

The researcher created a 4 point Likert like scale containing 25 statements representing five domains associated with effective teaching, as derived and modified from the literature review. Respondents marked each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The instructions asked upper level secondary school students to consider their experiences in the classrooms of teachers they perceived to be highly effective for them. The instructions required secondary school administrators to respond based on their experiences in supervising teachers they perceived to be highly effective. For the purpose of this study, a highly effective teacher was defined as one who made a positive impact on his or her students.

For the Likert like scale that was administered to upper level secondary school students, the researcher used statistical analysis known as Cronbach's Alpha to determine reliability based on the administration of the instrument with underclassmen enrolled in the district where the researcher is employed. Signed parent consent forms and signed informed consent were required for students to participate in this pilot study.

The researcher established validity and reliability data for the instrument by conducting a similar pilot study. For the Likert like scale that was administered to secondary school administrators, the researcher tested for internal consistency by entering the responses into SPSS and analyzing the data using Cronbach's Alpha to to determine the level of reliability.

To insure validity for both instruments, each statement on the Likert like scale linked back to one of five domains representative of effective teaching, as established and modified from the literature review. The responses to like items were analyzed to determine internal consistency.

The researcher asked all the participants in the pilot study for feedback about any portion of the instrument they found to be unclear. Their feedback resulted in some changes in wording for the final secondary students' perceptions survey.

### Data Collection

Prior to introducing this study to the students and asking them to participate, the researcher secured permission via the Letter to Superintendent to Conduct Research (see Appendix E). Then the researcher submitted the research proposal along with a request to conduct research using the IRB Proposal (see Appendix F). The researcher met with both high school principals to seek permission to conduct this study on both campuses. Upon approval from the IRB and the school principals, the researcher began collecting data for the pilot study.

The researcher analyzed the master schedule at the high school where she is employed and randomly selected one ninth grade English class and one tenth grade English class to participate in the pilot study. The researcher provided students in those classes a written explanation of this study, and the reasons for conducting it, and explained the importance of the pilot study to be completed prior to the actual study, and the purpose for establishing reliability. In addition, the researcher provided students with participant informed consent and parent informed consent forms to be signed and returned prior to participation in the pilot study. All participants were assured their responses were anonymous.

Once this portion of the preparations was completed, the researcher provided approved participants with a Likert like scale to be completed. The researcher distributed the surveys to students, verbally read the instructions to them, emphasized the definition of effective teaching for the purposes of this research study and then collected the surveys upon completion. Upon

completion of the surveys, the researcher asked students to provide feedback about their comprehension of what each statement was asking. As a result of this, additional words were added to several of the statements to provide clarification.

The researcher then contacted all administrators on the south end of the county for their assistance in completing a pilot study for the school administrators' portion of the study. The researcher provided administrators who agreed to participate in the pilot study a written explanation of the study, the reasons for conducting it, and then explained the importance of the pilot study to be completed prior to the actual study. All participants were assured their responses were anonymous.

The researcher provided willing participants forms with a Likert like scale to be completed. The researcher distributed the surveys, and emphasized the definition of effective teaching for the purposes of this research study. The researcher read the instructions, allowed administrators ample time to carefully consider each statement and then collected the surveys upon completion. Upon completion of the surveys, the researcher asked administrators to make recommendations about the wording, content or administration of the survey. The administrators all indicated no changes in wording were required as they understood each statement. The researcher tested for internal consistency by entering the responses into SPSS, and analyzing the data to ensure that Cronbach's Alpha showed high reliability for the statements, which indicated the statements measured what they were intended to measure.

Once the pilot study was concluded, the researcher began collecting data for the research study with the purported participants. The researcher provided juniors and seniors at both high schools who returned informed consent and parent informed consent with a Likert like scale to be completed. The researcher distributed the surveys to students, verbally read the instructions



to them, emphasized the definition of effective teaching for the purposes of this research study and then collected the surveys upon completion. All participants were assured their responses would remain anonymous. The data was entered into SPSS, and means, standard deviations, response frequencies and percentages, and variance were determined for each of the twenty-five Likert like scale survey items.

The researcher then contacted the 130 secondary school administrators in the FDRESA service area via their school email accounts. The researcher invited all 130 secondary school administrators to participate in the study by clicking on the link and using the password provided to complete the Likert like scale (using Survey Monkey). The researcher provided a written explanation of this study, and the reasons for conducting it in the body of the email. The researcher used the email delivery notification system available in Microsoft Outlook to ensure the email was properly delivered. A follow-up email was sent 48 hours later to serve as a reminder. The data was entered into SPSS, and means, standard deviations, response frequencies and percentages, and variance were determined for each of the twenty-five Likert like scale survey items.

#### Response Rate

To ensure an adequate response rate, the researcher assured all participants their responses would remain anonymous. The researcher distributed surveys to students who provided signed informed consent and parent informed consent forms. The researcher distributed the surveys and provided adequate time for thoughtful responses; the researcher then collected the surveys from the students.

For the school administrators' surveys, the process was conducted by email, with a follow-up reminder 48 hours after initial contact.

## Data Analysis

The overarching question for the study is: What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? The following research questions will be analyzed:

1. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by upper level secondary school students?
2. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by secondary school administrators?
3. How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

Statistical software (SPSS) was used to analyze means, standard deviations, response frequencies and percentages, and variance for each of the 25 Likert like scale items to establish which characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important to upper level secondary school students, and which characteristics are perceived to be most important by secondary school administrators.

Once these results were available, SPSS was used to provide descriptive statistics for each of the 25 Likert like scale items. This information allowed the researcher to look at each individual group and determine which characteristics of effective teachers were most important to them.

## Reporting the Data

The results of this quantitative study were reported in narrative form, and supported by statistical tables and figures produced using SPSS software.

## Summary

School districts typically rely on potential teaching candidates to seek employment in their classrooms. With the exception of hiring student teachers who have had field experience within a particular school, which equates to a teaching audition, school administrators are forced to sift through resumes and applications in search of the right person to fill vacancies. Education is crucial to our students, yet educational administrators are typically forced to make hiring decisions with huge implications based on paperwork and instincts. According to Eamonn O'Donovan (2010), "Once you hire a teacher, in many cases, you are making a twenty- to thirty-year commitment" (p. 46).

Students need effective teachers if they are to reach their maximum potential. There is not a single "one size fits all" definition for effective teaching, which is why employing quantitative methods to assign meaning to the perceptions of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators should provide information that can be used to identify potential teaching candidates who will be effective with these particular stakeholders. Lee Iacocca, a former transformational business leader once said:

In a completely rational society, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have. (Lee Iacocca)

All students deserve the most effective teachers to lead their classrooms. Researchers have previously conducted studies to determine what characteristics of effective teachers are most important; however, those studies have largely produced results by outsiders looking in at data, rather than insiders taking a close look at themselves. School administrators must know their

own perceptions of effective teaching, and more importantly, what their students deem important of effective teachers. The results of this cross-sectional, quantitative study should provide a means to identify the characteristics of effective teaching that each group perceives to be important and to provide information about any gaps that exist between the perceptions of the two groups.

## CHAPTER 4

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to identify the characteristics of effective teachers from the perceptions of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators, and then compare the two groups. The information gleaned from the student surveys was intended to identify the characteristics of effective teachers based on the perceptions of upper level secondary school students in one school district in the southeastern Georgia. Similarly, the results from the secondary school administrators' surveys were based on the perceptions of those employed in secondary schools in the FDRESA service area. This study was not intended to generalize about the characteristics of effective teaching beyond this setting, but to provide additional research that focused on a gap in the literature: the exclusion of secondary school students' perceptions. Previous research studies on effective teaching included both qualitative and quantitative studies and overlooked this population. The students are direct beneficiaries of effective classroom teachers.

The students' perceptions were captured through the administration of a 4 point Likert like scale which consisted of 25 statements that students could respond strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree. The students were asked to consider teachers who had been effective for them as they considered each statement. Secondary school administrators provided information using an identical 4 point Likert like scale (only the instructions were different) directed at their experience supervising teachers who were effective for their students.

To convey the research findings for research questions #1 and #2, the researcher provided results in narrative form and created tables to illustrate descriptive statistics for the students' perceptions of the effective teachers student survey. For research question #3, the items on the survey were divided into the five domains modified from the Danielson Groups' *Framework for Teaching*. The two groups (students and administrators) were compared by applying MANOVA to the results of their surveys. These results were provided in narrative form and supported by tables created by the researcher using SPSS.

### Research Questions

The overarching question for this research study was this: What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? The following research questions guided this study:

1. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by upper level secondary school students?
2. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by secondary school administrators?
3. How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

### Respondents

Of 1015 upper level secondary school students enrolled as juniors and seniors in the school district in the southeastern United States, 473 students provided signed parental consent and informed consent forms for a 46.3% response rate. Of those 473 students, 461 students (or 45.7%) actually completed the survey. 130 secondary school administrators were invited to participate in the survey. There were 60 administrators who completed the informed consent, for a 46.9% response rate; however, 54 secondary school administrators (or 45.3%) completed the

survey. Respondents were not identified nor asked to provide any personal information, therefore no demographic information was available for either the student group or the administrator group.

## Research Findings

### Analysis of Student Surveys

The researcher analyzed student data from the student perception surveys to answer the following research question #1:

Which characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important to upper level secondary school students?

The researcher randomly selected two English classes from the master schedule to participate in the pilot study. All students enrolled in those two classes were provided with information about the study, a personal invitation to participate, and the required forms that had to be signed to participate. 37 students were provided parental informed consent and participant informed consent forms; of those 37 students, 29 students returned the signed forms and actually participated in the study. The researcher entered the data into SPSS and ran reliability analysis:

Table 1

*Reliability Statistics for Student Pilot Survey*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.577	25

Cronbach's Alpha revealed an acceptable internal consistency of .577, with all 29 students responding appropriately (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) to every item on the survey. The researcher did not eliminate any of the 25 statements when running statistical analysis for this data set.

Once the pilot study was completed, the researcher asked students if they understood each of the 25 statements on the Likert like scale. The students noted that Statement 9 and 11 appeared to ask the same thing. As a result the word "academic" was added to Statement 9, and the phrase "they do not have favorites" was added to Statement 11. Several students also noted they were unfamiliar with the hierarchy of advanced degrees in Statement 14 and with the term competency tests in Statement 1. As a result, the researcher considered ways to change the wording, but decided to explain that information to students prior to distributing the surveys in the actual study. During the actual study, all students were told that competency meant teachers had to pass exams in their content area(s). For example, a math teacher would take a competency test in mathematics. In addition, the researcher provided students with information about undergraduate and graduate degrees as they related to teachers in the particular southeastern state where the research was conducted. In this state, teachers were eligible to enter the classroom with a Bachelor's Degree which meant they earned a four year degree. Advanced degree options were provided using the following guidelines: Master's Degree (typically two additional years of study beyond the Bachelor's Degree; Education Specialist Degree (typically two additional years of study beyond the Master's Degree); Doctorate Degree (typically two additional years of study beyond the Education Specialist Degree).

The researcher entered data into SPSS using the following codes: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree, 4-strongly agree. Once the data for each of the 24 statements from all 461



respondents was entered into SPSS, the researcher ran descriptive statistics to include mean, standard deviation, response frequencies and percentages, and variance for each item. The following table illustrates descriptive statistics for the student survey results:

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Student Survey Results*

Survey Statement	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1. It is important for effective teachers to pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach.	461	13 2.8%	43 9.3%	222 48.2%	183 39.7%	3.25	.737	.543
2. The more experience a teacher has in the classroom, the more effective he or she becomes	461	10 2.2%	63 13.7%	185 40.1%	203 44.0%	3.26	.773	.597
3. Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the classroom	461	37 8.0%	120 26.0%	206 44.7%	98 21.3%	2.79	.867	.752
4. It is important for teachers to make learning fun	461	11 2.4%	20 4.3%	129 28.0%	301 65.3%	3.56	.691	.477
5. It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students	461	62 13.4%	162 35.1%	146 31.7%	91 19.7%	2.58	.954	.910
6. Effective teachers hold state certification in the subject areas they teach	461	17 3.7%	54 11.7%	196 42.5%	194 42.1%	3.23	.796	.634
7. It is important for teachers to share information about their personal lives so students can relate to them	461	46 10.0%	169 36.7%	194 42.1%	52 11.3%	2.55	.821	.674
8. It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students	461	178 38.6%	125 27.1%	92 20.0%	66 14.3%	2.10	1.073	1.151
9. Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standard	461	56 12.1%	143 31.0%	155 33.6%	107 23.2%	2.68	.963	.927
10. It is important for teachers to share information about their degrees and certifications with students	461	48 10.4%	187 40.6%	182 39.5%	44 9.5%	2.48	.806	.650
11. Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured	461	19 4.1%	67 14.5%	248 53.8%	127 27.5%	3.05	.765	.585
12. Effective teachers treat all students the same; they do not have favorites	458	31 6.7%	77 16.7%	142 30.8%	208 45.4%	3.15	.934	.872
13. Knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach	461	29 6.3%	92 20.0%	175 38.0%	165 35.8%	3.03	.900	.810
14. Teachers with advanced degrees (Master's, Ed.S.—5+ years of preparation) are more effective than those with Bachelor's degrees (4 years of preparation)	460	54 11.7%	220 47.7%	136 29.5%	50 10.8%	2.40	.832	.693

15. Effective teachers understand that lecture is the most effective way to reach students	461	124 26.9%	212 46.0%	83 18.0%	42 9.1%	2.09	.898	.806
16. How a teacher organized his/her physical spaced (desks, technology, etc.) does not impact a teachers' effectiveness	461	74 16.1%	177 38.4%	133 28.9%	77 16.7%	2.46	.952	.906
17. The most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren't successful in their class	461	17 3.7%	71 15.4%	249 54.0%	124 26.9%	3.04	.755	.570
18. It is not important for teachers to have a sense of humor	461	202 43.8%	131 28.4%	56 12.1%	72 15.6%	2.00	1.089	1.187
19. Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners	461	12 2.6%	44 9.5%	190 41.2%	215 46.6%	3.32	.752	.565
20. Effective teachers maintain up-to-date less plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary	461	15 3.3%	35 7.6%	235 51.0%	176 38.2%	3.24	.729	.531
21. Effective teachers are those who assign the most A's	461	142 30.8%	210 45.6%	69 15.0%	40 8.7%	2.02	.898	.806
22. The most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents	461	25 5.4%	79 17.1%	210 45.6%	147 31.9%	3.04	.841	.707
23. Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable	461	10 2.2%	41 8.9%	194 42.1%	216 46.9%	3.34	.730	.532
24. Effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc.)	461	13 2.8%	32 6.9%	135 29.3%	281 61.0%	3.48	.748	.559
25. Self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers	460	10 2.2%	40 8.7%	187 40.6%	223 48.4%	3.35	.731	.534

For Statement 1, “It is important for effective teachers to pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach,” the data suggest 48.2% of upper level secondary students agree, and 39.7% strongly agree. 12.1% of the students surveys either disagreed or strongly disagreed that passing these tests made teachers effective for them.

For Statement 2, “The more experience a teacher has in the classroom, the more effective he or she becomes,” the frequency percentages show 40.1% of students agree and 44.0% of students strongly agree. 2.2% of students surveyed strongly disagreed with this statement, while 13.7% felt that the number of years a teacher has taught did not affect their ability to be effective.

For Statement 3, “ Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the classroom,” the data suggest 44.7% of students agreed. 21.3% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while 8.0% strongly disagreed and 26.0% disagreed.

The data suggest that 65.3% of students strongly agreed with Statement 4, “It is important for teachers to make learning fun.” 28.0% of students agreed with this statement, while 2.4% of students surveyed strongly disagreed and 4.3% disagreed.

For Statement 5, “It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students,” 31.7% of students who completed the survey agreed. 19.7% strongly agreed with them; 13.4% strongly disagreed with their peers and 35.1% disagreed.

For Statement 6, “Effective teachers hold state certification in the subject areas they teach,” the data suggest that 42.5% of students who completed the survey agreed. Another 42.1% of students strongly agreed with that statement. 3.7% strongly disagreed that state certification was important and 11.7% disagreed.

The data suggest that 42.1% of students agreed with Statement 7, “It is important for teachers to share information about their personal lives so students can relate to them.” 11.3% of respondents strongly agreed. 10.0% of students strongly disagreed that teachers should share personal information, and 36.7% answered that they disagreed.

For Statement 8, “It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students,” 20.0% of students agreed. 14.3% of the students who completed the survey strongly agreed with their peers. The data also suggest that 38.6% of students strongly disagreed, which meant they felt it was important for teachers to ask students for feedback. 27.1% of students disagreed with the initial statement.

For Statement 9, “Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standards,” 33.6% of students agreed and 23.2% strongly agreed that was important. 12.1% of students strongly disagreed with statement 9, and 31% of students disagreed with holding all students to the same academic standard.

For Statement 10, “It is important for teachers to share information about their degrees and certifications with students,” the data suggest that 39.5% of students agreed. 9.5% strongly agreed this was important. 10.4% strongly disagreed that knowing information about teaching degrees and certification was important, while 40.6% disagreed with the original statement.

The data suggested that 53.8% of students agreed with Statement 11, “Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured.” 27.5% strongly agreed with their peers. 4.1% of students surveyed strongly disagreed, while 14.5% disagreed.

For Statement 12, “Effective teachers treat all students the same; they do not have favorites,” 30.8% of students agreed. 45.4% strongly agreed with this statement. 6.7% of students surveyed strongly disagreed with this statement, while 16.7% disagreed with treating all students the same.

For Statement 13, “Knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach.” 38% of students surveyed agreed that knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach. 35.8% strongly agreed with their peers when responding to this statement. 6.3% of students surveyed strongly disagreed and 20% of students disagreed.

The frequency percentage of Statement 14, “Teachers with advanced degrees (Master’s, Ed.S.—5+ years of preparation) are more effective than those with Bachelor’s Degrees (4 years of preparation)” indicated that 29.5% of students agreed. 10.8% of students strongly agreed with this statement. 11.7% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 47.7% disagreed.

For Statement 15, “Effective teachers understand the lecture is the most effective way to reach students,” the data suggest 18.0% of students agreed. 9.1% of students strongly agreed

with that statement. 26.9% of respondents strongly disagreed that lecture is the most effective way for teachers to reach students and 46.0% disagreed.

For Statement 16, “How a teacher organized his/her physical space (desks, technology, etc.) does not impact a teachers’ effectiveness,” 28.9% of students agreed. 16.7% of respondents strongly agreed the organization of physical space does not impact a teachers’ effectiveness, while 16.1% of students strongly disagreed and 38.4% of students disagreed.

The frequency percentages for Statement 17, “The most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren’t successful in their class,” suggest that 54.0% of students agree and 26.9% strongly agree. 3.7% of students strongly disagreed with the statement, while 15.4% disagreed.

For Statement 18, “It is not important for teachers to have a sense of humor,” the data suggest 12.1% of student surveyed, while 15.6% strongly agreed. 43.8% of students strongly disagreed with this statement, and 28.4% noted disagreement.

The data suggest for Statement 19, “Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners,” that 41.2% of students agreed. 46.6% strongly agreed with their peers, while 2.6% of respondents strongly disagreed and 9.5% of students disagreed.

For Statement 20, “Effective teachers maintain up-to-date lesson plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary”, 51.0% of students agreed. 38.2% strongly agreed with this statement, while 3.3% of students strongly disagreed and 7.6% disagreed.

The data suggest that 15.0% of respondents agreed with Statement 21, “Effective teachers are those who assign the most A’s”, while 8.7% of students strongly agreed. 30.8% of students

strongly disagreed with their peers, while 45.6% of students disagreed that effective teachers assign the most A's.

For Statement 22, "The most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents," the data suggest 45.6% of students agreed. 31.9% strongly agree with that statement, while 5.4% of students strongly disagree and 17.1% disagree.

For Statement 23, "Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable," the data suggest 42.1% of respondents agree. 46.9% of students strongly agreed with that statement. 2.2% of students strongly disagreed, and 8.9% disagreed.

The data suggest that 29.3% of students agree with Statement 24, "Effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc.)." 61.0% strongly agreed; 2.8% strongly disagreed that teachers needed to be fair in this case, and 6.9% disagreed.

For Statement 25, "Self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers," the data suggest 40.6% of students agree that, while 48.4% strongly agreed. 2.2% of respondents strongly disagreed and 8.7% disagreed with this statement.

### Analysis of Administrator Surveys

The researcher analyzed administrator data from the administrator perception surveys to answer the following research question #2:

Which characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important to secondary school administrators?

The researcher asked other administrators employed on the south end of the school district the researcher is employed by to participate in the administrator survey pilot study. 12 administrators were provided participant informed consent forms; of those 12, 12 administrators

returned the signed forms and actually participated in the study. The researcher entered the data into SPSS and ran reliability analysis:

Table 3

*Reliability Statistics for Administrator Pilot Survey*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.671	25

Cronbach's Alpha revealed internal consistency at .671, with all 12 administrators responding appropriately (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) to every item on the survey. The researcher did not eliminate any of the 25 statements when running statistical analysis for this data set.

Once the pilot study was completed, the researcher asked administrators if they understood each of the 25 statements on the Likert like scale. All administrators that items did not require any changes; the administrators understood the information contained in each statement.

The researcher entered data into SPSS using the following codes: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree, 4-strongly agree. Once the data for each of the 24 statements from all 461 respondents was entered into SPSS, the researcher ran descriptive statistics to include mean, standard deviation, response frequencies and percentages, and variance for each item. The following table illustrates descriptive statistics for the student survey results:

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Administrator Survey Results*

Survey Statement	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1. It is important for effective teachers to pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach.	54	1 1.9%	0 0.0%	16 29.6%	37 68.5%	3.65	.588	.346
2. The more experience a teacher has in the classroom, the more effective he or she becomes	54	5 9.3%	15 27.8%	19 35.2%	15 27.8%	2.81	.953	.908
3. Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the classroom	54	11 20.4%	25 46.3%	15 27.8%	3 5.6%	2.19	.826	.682
4. It is important for teachers to make learning fun	54	1 1.9%	5 9.3%	28 51.9%	20 37.0%	3.24	.699	.488
5. It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students	54	24 44.4%	28 51.9%	2 3.7%	0 0.0%	1.59	.567	.321
6. Effective teachers hold state certification in the subject areas they teach	54	3 5.6%	5 9.3%	27 50.0%	19 35.2%	3.15	.810	.657
7. It is important for teachers to share information about their personal lives so students can relate to them	54	5 9.3%	20 37.0%	26 48.1%	3 5.6%	2.50	.746	.557
8. It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students	54	21 38.9%	20 37.0%	4 7.4%	9 16.7%	2.02	1.073	1.151
9. Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standard	54	4 7.4%	23 42.6%	18 33.3%	9 16.7%	2.59	.858	.737
10. It is important for teachers to share information about their degrees and certifications with students	54	4 7.4%	23 42.6%	22 40.7%	5 9.3%	2.52	.771	.594
11. Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured	54	0 0.0%	1 1.9%	19 35.2%	34 63.0%	3.61	.529	.280
12. Effective teachers treat all students the same; they do not have favorites	54	0 0.0%	4 7.4%	24 44.4%	26 48.1%	3.41	.630	.397
13. Knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach	54	0 0.0%	9 16.7%	27 50.0%	18 33.3%	3.17	.694	.481
14. Teachers with advanced degrees (Master's, Ed.S.—5+ years of preparation) are more effective than those with Bachelor's degrees (4 years of preparation)	54	8 14.8%	34 63.0%	11 20.4%	1 1.9%	2.09	.652	.425
15. Effective teachers understand that lecture is the most effective way to reach students	54	27 50.0%	24 44.4%	2 3.7%	1 1.9%	1.57	.662	.438
16. How a teacher organized his/her physical spaced (desks, technology, etc.) does not impact a teachers' effectiveness	54	13 24.1%	30 55.6%	9 16.7%	2 3.7%	2.00	.752	.566
17. The most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren't successful in their class	54	0 0.0%	1 1.9%	18 33.3%	35 64.8%	3.63	.525	.275



18. It is important for teachers to have a sense of humor.	54	23 42.6%	21 38.9%	7 13.0%	3 5.6%	1.81	.870	.758
19. Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners	54	0 0.0%	3 5.6%	26 48.1%	25 46.3%	3.41	.599	.359
20. Effective teachers maintain up-to-date lesson plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary	54	0 0.0%	5 9.3%	18 33.3%	31 57.4%	3.48	.666	.443
21. Effective teachers are those who assign the most A's	54	28 51.9%	26 48.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1.48	.504	.254
22. The most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents	54	0 0.0%	1 1.9%	21 38.9%	32 59.3%	3.57	.536	.287
23. Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable	54	0 0.0%	6 11.1%	34 63.0%	14 25.9%	3.15	.596	.355
24. Effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc.)	54	1 1.9%	2 3.7%	24 44.4%	27 50.0%	3.43	.662	.438
25. Self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers	54	0 0.0%	1 1.9%	32 59.3%	21 38.9%	3.37	.525	.275

For Statement 1, “It is important for effective teachers to pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach,” the data suggest 29.6% of secondary school administrators agree, and 68.5% strongly agree. None of the respondents disagreed with this statement though 1.9% strongly disagreed that passing these tests made teachers effective.

For Statement 2, “The more experience a teacher has in the classroom, the more effective he or she becomes,” the percentages show 35.2% of administrators agree and 27.8% of administrators strongly agree. 9.3% of the secondary school administrators surveyed strongly disagreed with this statement, while 27.8% felt that the number of years a teacher has taught did not affect their ability to be effective.

For Statement 3, “Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the classroom,” the data suggest 27.8% of administrators agreed. 5.6% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while 20.4% strongly disagreed and 46.3% disagreed.

The data suggest that 51.9% of administrators strongly agreed with Statement 4, “It is important for teachers to make learning fun.”. 37.0% agreed with this statement, while 1.9% of administrators surveyed strongly disagreed and 9.3% disagreed.

For Statement 5, “It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students,” 3.7% of administrators who completed the survey agreed. None of the respondents strongly agreed with them; 44.4% strongly disagreed with their colleagues and 51.9% disagreed.

For Statement 6, “Effective teachers hold state certification in the subject areas they teach,” the data suggest that 50% of administrators who completed the survey agreed. Another 35.2% of students strongly agreed with that statement. 5.6% strongly disagreed that state certification was important and 9.3% disagreed.

The data suggest that 48.1% of administrators agreed with Statement 7, “It is important for teachers to share information about their personal lives so students can relate to them.” 5.6% of respondents strongly agreed. 9.3% of administrators strongly disagreed that teachers should share personal information, and 37.0% answered that they disagreed.

For Statement 8, “It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students,” 7.4% of administrators agreed. 16.7% of the administrators who completed the survey strongly agreed with their colleagues. The data also suggest that 38.9% of administrators strongly disagreed, which meant they felt it was important for teachers to ask students for feedback. 37.0% of administrators disagreed with the initial statement.

For Statement 9, “Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standard,” 33.3% of administrators agree. 16.7% strongly agreed that was important. 7.4% of administrators strongly disagreed with statement 9, and 42.6% of administrators disagreed with holding all students to the same academic standard.

For Statement 10, “It is important for teachers to share information about their degrees and certifications with students,” the data suggest that 40.7% of administrators agree. 9.3% strongly agreed this was important. 7.4% strongly disagreed that knowing information about teaching degrees and certification was important, while 42.6% disagreed with the original statement.

The data suggested that 35.2% of administrators agreed with Statement 11, “Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured.” 63.0% strongly agreed with their colleagues. None of the administrators surveyed strongly disagreed, but 1.9% disagreed.

For Statement 12, “Effective teachers treat all students the same; they do not have favorites,” 44.4% of administrators agreed. 48.1% strongly agreed with this statement. None of the administrators surveyed strongly disagreed with this statement, while 7.4% disagreed with treating all students the same.

For Statement 13, “Knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach,” 50.0% of administrators surveyed agreed. 33.3% strongly agreed with their colleagues when responding to this statement. None of the administrators surveyed strongly disagreed and 16.7% of administrators disagreed.

The frequency percentage of Statement 14, “Teachers with advanced degrees (Master’s, Ed.S.—5+ years of preparation) are more effective than those with Bachelor’s Degrees (4 years of preparation),” indicated that 20.4% of administrators agreed. 1.9% of administrators strongly agreed with this statement. 14.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 63.0% disagreed.

For Statement 15, “Effective teachers understand that lecture is the most effective way to reach students,” the data suggest 3.7% of administrators agreed. 1.9% of students strongly

agreed with this statement. 50.0% of respondents strongly disagreed that lecture is the most effective way for teachers to reach students and 44.4% disagreed.

For Statement 16, “How a teacher organized his/her physical space (desks, technology, etc.), does not impact a teachers’ effectiveness,” 16.7% of administrators agreed. 3.7% of respondents strongly agreed the organization of physical space does not impact a teachers’ effectiveness, while 24.1% of administrators strongly disagreed and 55.6% disagreed.

The frequency percentages for Statement 17, “The most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren’t successful in their class,” suggest that 33.3% of administrators agree and 64.8% strongly agree. None of the administrators strongly disagreed with the statement, and 1.9% disagreed.

For Statement 18, “It is not important for teachers to have a sense of humor,” the data suggest 13.0% of administrators surveyed agreed, while 5.6% strongly agreed. 42.6% strongly disagreed with this statement, and 38.9% noted disagreement.

The data suggest for Statement 19, “Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners,” 48.1% of administrators agreed. 46.3% strongly agreed with their colleagues, while none of the respondents strongly disagreed and 5.6% of disagreed.

For Statement 20, “Effective teachers maintain up-to-date lesson plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary,” 33.3% of administrators agreed. 57.4% strongly agreed with this statement, while none of the administrators strongly disagreed and 9.3% disagreed.

The data suggest that none of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with Statement 21, “Effective teachers are those who assign the most A’s.” 51.9% of administrators strongly disagreed, while 48.1% disagreed that effective teachers assign the most A’s.

For Statement 22, “The most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents,” the data suggest 38.9% of administrators agree. 59.3% strongly agree with that statement, while none of the administrators strongly disagree and 1.9% disagree.

For Statement 23, “Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable,” the data suggest 63.0% of respondents agree. 25.9% of administrators strongly agree with that statement. None of the administrators strongly disagreed, and 11.1% disagreed.

The data suggest that 44.4% of administrators surveyed agree with Statement 24, “Effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc.). 50.0% strongly agreed; 1.9% strongly disagreed that teachers needed to be fair in this case, and 3.7% disagreed.

For Statement 25, “Self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers”, the data suggest 59.3% of students agree, while 38.9% strongly agreed. None of the administrators strongly disagreed and 1.9% disagreed with this statement.

### Comparison of Student Surveys and Administrator Surveys

The data up to this point was analyzed using descriptive statistics, without any consideration given to the five domains that were modified by the researcher as part of this research study. However, the comparisons of the perceptions of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators required statistical analysis that allowed the groups to be compared on the five domains:

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation included elements of effective teaching that were typically laid as the foundation for teaching prior to entering the classroom, though continuing education and experience would enhance them. These elements covered knowledge of content

and pedagogy, along with knowledge of students. In addition, setting instructional outcomes and designing sound instruction and assessments were part of this domain (Charlotte Danielson). Survey statements 1, 6, 13, 20 and 21 were assigned to this domain in SPSS for both data groups (students and administrators).

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment contained components of professional practices included in establishing an environment of respect and rapport, and a culture for learning. In addition, managing classroom procedures and student behavior were part of this domain, along with organizing physical space (Charlotte Danielson). Survey statements 3, 9, 11, 16, and 23 were assigned to this domain in SPSS for both groups (students and administrators).

Domain 3: Instruction included communicating effectively with students. This domain detailed elements that provided for time well spent teaching students in the classroom, such as incorporating discussion and questioning, instructional techniques, and engaging students in learning. Instead of focusing on creating assessments, this domain emphasized the need to use the results of those assessments in instruction. It also covered flexibility and responsiveness (Charlotte Danielson). Survey statements 5, 8, 15, 19, and 24 were assigned to this domain in SPSS for both data groups (students and administrators).

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities included components that took place outside the classroom. Reflecting on teaching was a component of professional practice for this domain, as were maintaining accurate records and communicating with families. Participating in a professional community, demonstrating professionalism and growth rounded out the elements (Charlotte Danielson). Survey statements 2, 10, 14, 17, and 22 were assigned to this domain in SPSS for both data groups (students and administrators).

Domain 5: Personal Characteristics consisted of elements such as teachers' self-efficacy and confidence, and the intrinsic satisfaction of being in a helping career. This domain also included sense of humor, enthusiasm for subject matter and students; in other words, a passion for teaching. Survey statements 4, 7, 12, 18, and 25 were assigned to this domain in SPSS for both data groups (students and administrators).

The domains were calculated by adding the scores together and dividing by the number of items to return to the original scale. Cronbach's Alpha was analyzed for each group in each domain and produced the following results:

Table 5

*Comparison of Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Secondary Students and Administrators on All Domains*

Domain	Students	Administrators
Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	.709	.957
Domain 2: The Classroom Environment	.889	.657
Domain 3: Instruction	.393	.432
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities	.817	.337
Domain 5: Personal Characteristics	.844	.913

## Analysis of Combined Findings

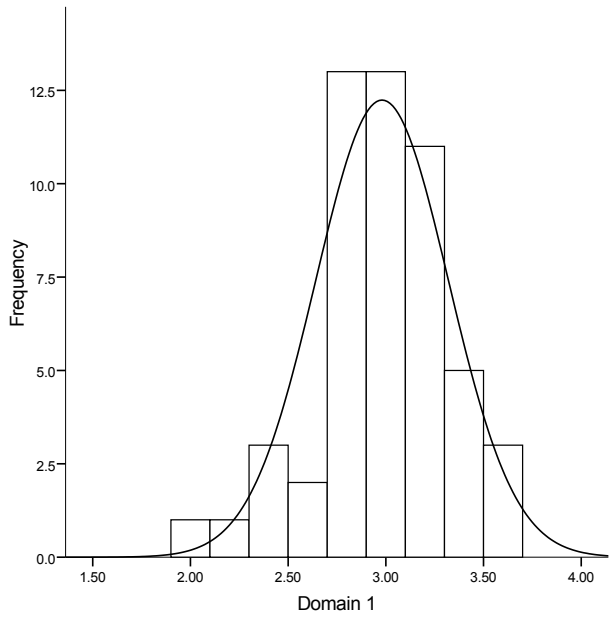
The researcher analyzed administrator data from the administrator perception surveys to answer the following research question #3:

How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

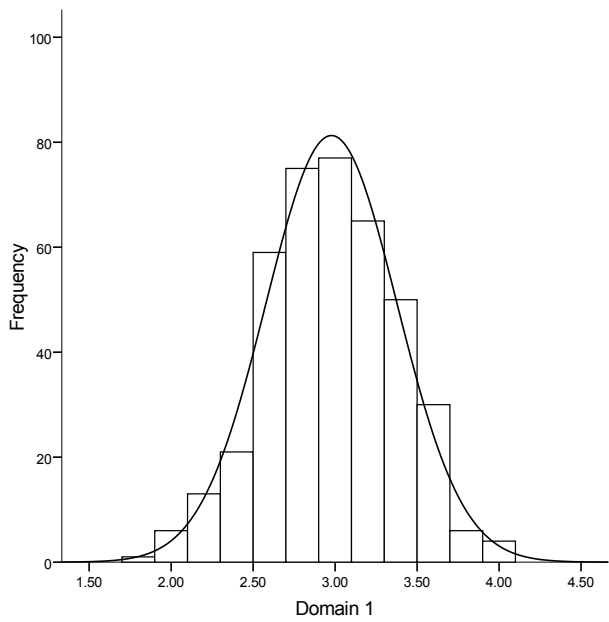
A two-group MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the secondary school students and school administrators on the five domains of the Effective Teacher Surveys. Group (administrator vs. student) was the between-subjects independent variable, and the 5 domains of the survey were the dependent variables. The data was screened for outliers prior to analysis. The participants' dependent variables scores were standardized by group, and the resulting z-scores were utilized to identify outliers in the data. A participant was considered an outlier when the |standardized z-score| is greater than 3. This process revealed 10 outliers in the data. The outliers were eliminated from the study.

The distributions of participants' domain scores for the administrators and students are displayed in Figures 1 – 10.

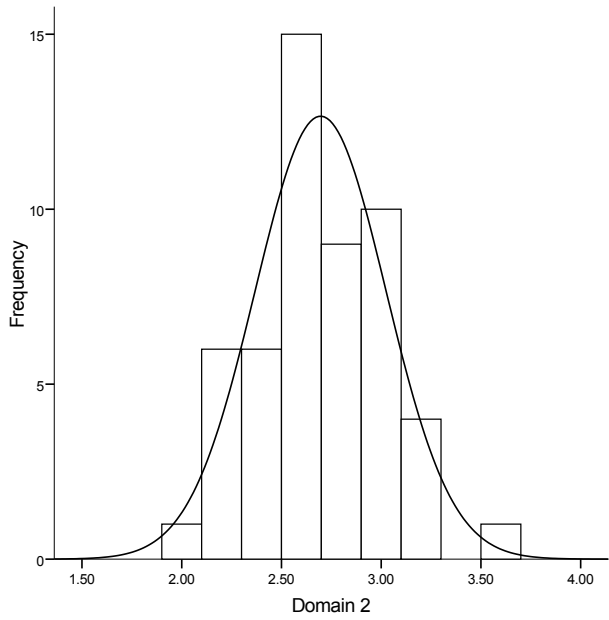




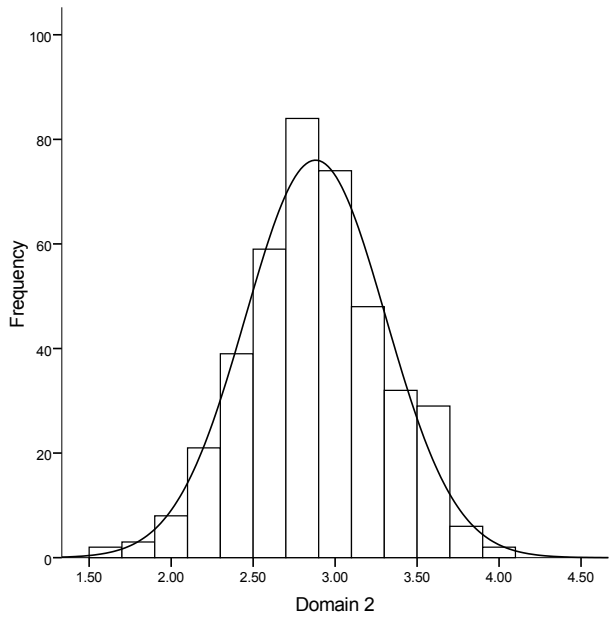
*Figure 1. Distribution of Domain 1: Planning and Preparation for Administrators*



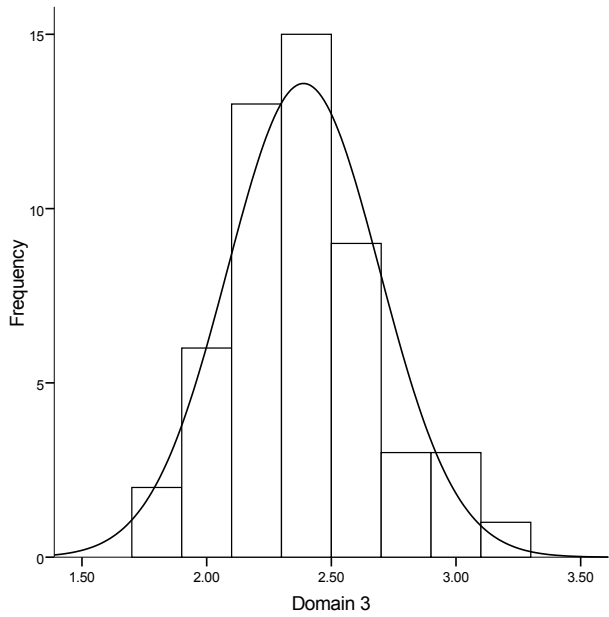
*Figure 2. Distribution of Domain 1: Planning and Preparation for Students*



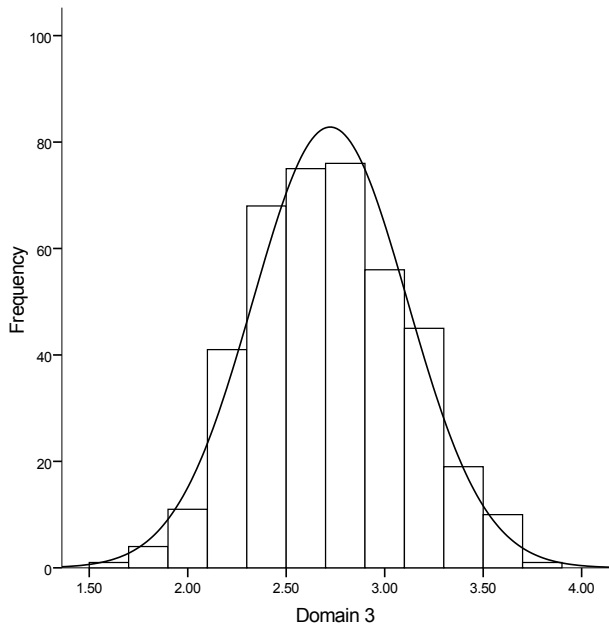
*Figure 3. Distribution of Domain 2: The Classroom Environment for Administrators*



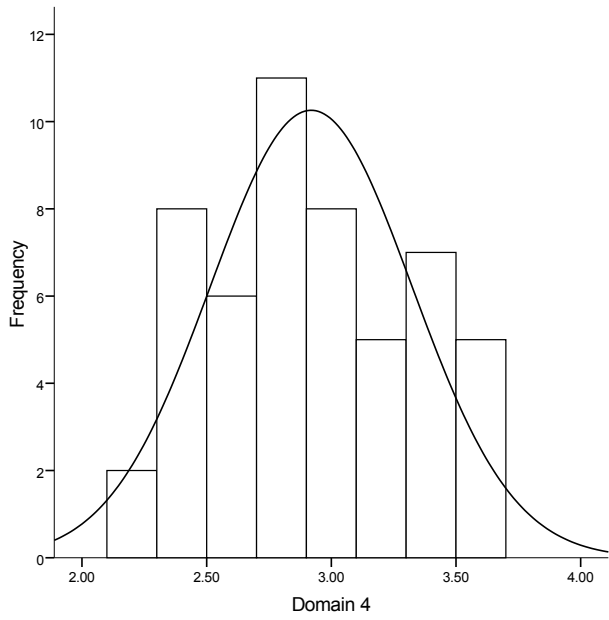
*Figure 4. Distribution of Domain 2: The Classroom Environment for Students*



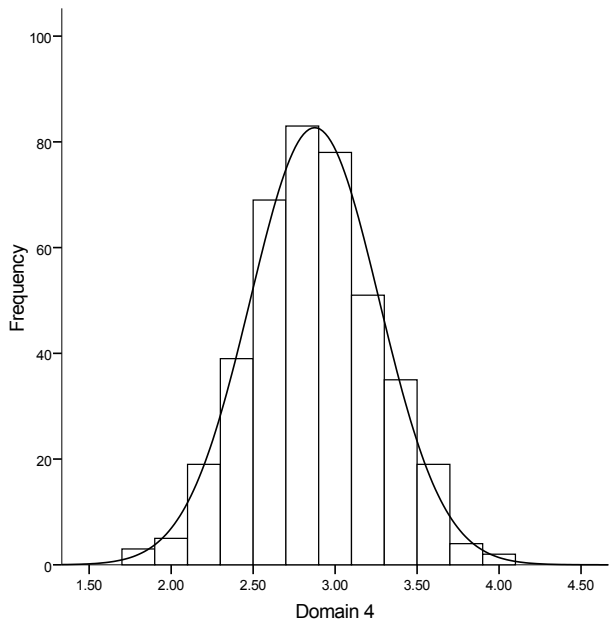
*Figure 5. Distribution of Domain 3: Instruction for Administrators*



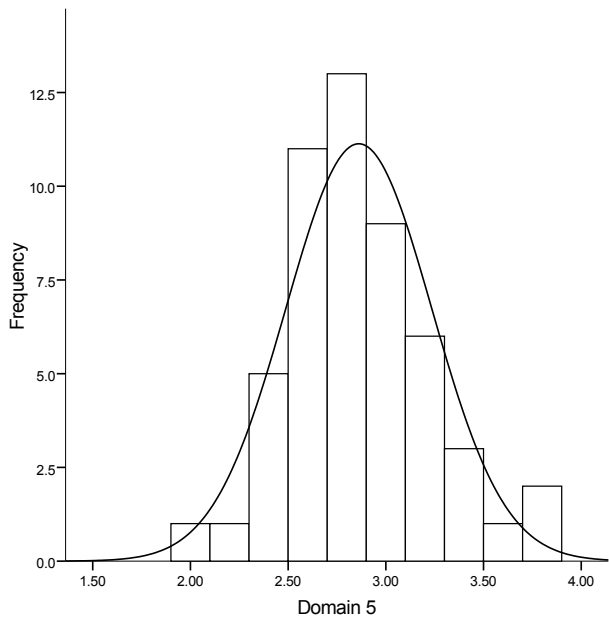
*Figure 6. Distribution of Domain 3: Instruction for Students*



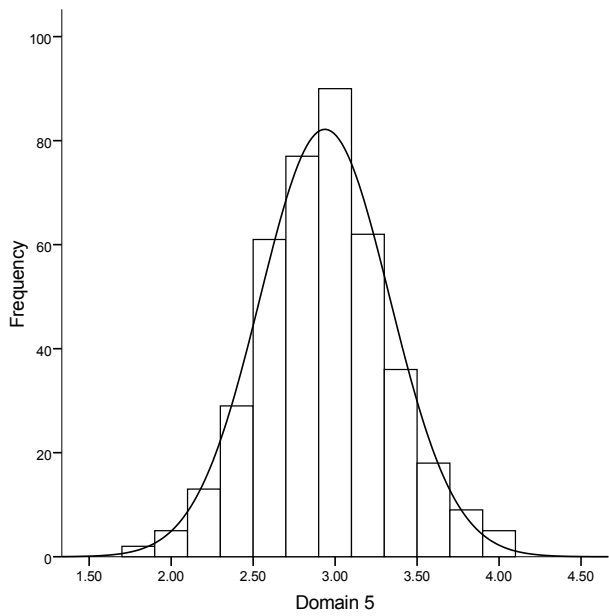
*Figure 7. Distribution of Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities for Administrators*



*Figure 8. Distribution of Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities for Students*



*Figure 9. Distribution of Domain 5: Personal Characteristics for Administrators*



*Figure 10. Distribution of Domain 5: Personal Characteristics for Students*

The histograms indicated that the distributions of domain scores were approximately normal for both groups. Levene's test was significant for Domain 2 and Domain 3. This indicates that the groups had unequal error variances on these variables. Box's test was also significant, indicating inequality of covariance matrices.

The means and standard deviations of each dependent variable by group are listed below:

Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviations of Survey Domains by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	n	M	SD
Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Administrator	54	2.98	0.34
	Student	461	2.98	0.40
	Total	515	2.98	0.39
Domain 2: The Classroom Environment	Administrator	54	2.70	0.33
	Student	461	2.88	0.43
	Total	515	2.86	0.42
Domain 3: Instruction	Administrator	54	2.39	0.31
	Student	461	2.72	0.39
	Total	515	2.69	0.40
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities	Administrator	54	2.92	0.40
	Student	461	2.88	0.39
	Total	515	2.88	0.39
Domain 5: Personal Characteristics	Administrator	54	2.86	0.37
	Student	461	2.94	0.40
	Total	515	2.93	0.39

The MANOVA revealed a significant global multivariate difference on the dependent variables by group,  $F(5, 454) = 9.49, p < .01$  ( $\eta^2 = .10$ , power = .1.00). This result is equivocal within the context of heterogeneous covariance matrices for Domain 2: The Classroom Environment and

Domain 3: Instruction. Univariate ANOVA post hoc tests (Table 6) were conducted to further examine the significant multivariate effect.

Table 7

*Univariate ANOVAs on Survey Domains by Group*

Dependent Variable	<i>F</i>	Sig.	$\eta^2$	Power
Domain 1	0.00 (0.16)	.960	.00	.05
Domain 2	9.06 (0.17)	.003	.02	.85
Domain 3	35.19 (0.15)	.000	.07	1.00
Domain 4	0.56 (0.16)	.453	.00	.12
Domain 5	1.75 (0.15)	.186	.00	.26

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses represents the mean square error for the corresponding term.

The post hoc tests revealed significant differences between the school administrators and students on Domains 2 and 3. The administrators ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ) scored significantly lower than the students ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) on Domain 2,  $F(1, 457) = 9.06$ ,  $p < .05$  ( $\eta^2 = .02$ , power = .85). The administrators ( $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) also scored significantly lower than the students ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ) on Domain 3,  $F(1, 457) = 35.19$ ,  $p < .01$  ( $\eta^2 = .07$ , power = 1.00). The remaining pairwise comparisons were not significant.



## Summary

What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? Students and administrators agree with one another for the most part, but there are instances where it depends on which group you ask. For example, the student group was more decisive in their agreement that classroom experience makes a teacher more effective. More than one-third of secondary school administrators disagreed with that statement. Additionally, whereas an overwhelming majority of secondary school administrators disagreed or strongly disagreed that it is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students, the secondary school student population was less certain.

In five of the 25 statements, there was variability in the responses. However, the two groups mimicked one another when their responses varied almost equally when compared on each of the four possible responses (strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed). This reinforced the value of secondary student perceptions as they relate to the more experienced secondary school administrators.

The data indicated students and administrators think similarly in most of their perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers. In Domain 1: Planning and Preparation, Domain 2: The Classroom Environment, and Domain 5: Personal Characteristics, there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of the two groups.

In Domain 3: Instruction and Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities, there was a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of the two groups, thus illustrating a disconnect between students and administrators based on collective responses of the two groups to the statements that represented these domains in the survey.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this research study was to identify characteristics of effective teachers based on the personal experiences of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators. The overarching question was this: What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? The following research questions guided this study:

1. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by upper level secondary school students?
2. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by secondary school administrators?
3. How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

Processing data to include measures of central tendency, specifically mean, standard deviation, response frequencies and percentages, and variance provided the researcher the opportunity to identify characteristics of effective teachers based on the perceptions of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators. Survey results for 461 upper level secondary school students and 54 secondary school administrators were included to arrive at the descriptive statistics.

Once the descriptive statistics were completed, the data was analyzed using a two-group MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) to determine if significant differences existed between the groups (upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators)

on the five domains of the survey (dependent variables). The results of this analysis provided the researcher with viable comparison information.

### Analysis of Findings for Research Questions

The data collected from the upper level secondary student and secondary school administrator surveys were used to attempt to answer this research study's overarching questions: What are the characteristics of effective secondary school teachers? Each individual research question relates to information necessary to understand the various perceptions of the groups most closely involved with secondary school teachers. The following research questions were posed to guide this study, and the data collection and subsequent analysis supplied explanations for each of the answers.

1. What characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important by upper level secondary school students?

For all students in this southeastern Georgia school district who shared their perceptions for this research study, there were characteristics of effective teachers that students have identified as important to them as signified in the analysis of response frequencies and percentages. For the purposes of this analysis, the researcher looked at the survey results where the frequency percentages for strongly disagreed and disagreed were added together to form one percentage, and the frequency percentages for strongly agreed and agreed were added together to form one percentage. The top five scores from these added percentages were considered significant for the upper level secondary student population. The students' responses indicated a majority of students felt most strongly about the following survey items: 93% of students agreed or strongly agreed it is important for teachers to make learning fun (statement 4); 90% of students agreed or strongly agreed that effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities

(tutorials, extra-credit, etc.) (statement 24); 90% of students also agreed or strongly agreed that self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers (statement 25); 89% of students agreed or strongly agreed that effective teachers maintain up-to-date lesson plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary (statement 20); 89% of students agreed or strongly agreed that effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable (statement 23); These five characteristics of effective teachers are most valued by this population of students. They represent items from four of the five domains, with Domain 5: Personal Characteristics the only domain to include two of the top five items.

2. Which characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important to secondary school administrators?

For all the secondary school administrators employed in secondary schools in FDRESA service area in southeastern Georgia who shared their perceptions for this research study, there are characteristics of effective teachers that administrators have identified as important to them, as signified in the analysis of response frequencies and percentages. For the purposes of this analysis, the researcher looked at the survey results where the frequency percentages for strongly disagreed and disagreed were added together to form one percentage, and the frequency percentages for strongly agreed and agreed were added together to form one percentage. The top six scores (percentages were the exact same for two survey statements) from these added percentages were considered significant for the secondary school administrators. The administrators' responses indicated a majority of administrators felt most strongly about the following survey items: 100% of administrators disagreed or strongly disagreed that effective teachers are those who assign the most A's (statement 21); 98% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure

class time is very structured (statement 11); 98% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that the most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents (statement 22); 98% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers (statement 25); 98% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed it is important for effective teachers to pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach (statement 1); 98% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that the most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren't successful in their class (statement 17). These five characteristics of effective teachers are most valued by this population of administrators. They represent items from all five domains, with Domain 1: Planning and Preparation the only domain to include two of the top six items.

3. How do the perceptions of upper level secondary school students compare to the perceptions of secondary school administrators?

Data collected from the surveys for both groups were analyzed across the domains from the Danielsons' *Framework for Teaching* that were modified by the researcher for this study. Students tended to agree slightly more than administrators on Domain 2: The Classroom Environment and Domain 3: Instruction. Results of the MANOVA analyses on the data indicated that the administrators scored at a statistically significant lower level than students on Domain 2: The Classroom Environment and Domain 3: Instruction, thus proving that there is a disconnect between what upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators perceive as effective for two of the five domains.

In reviewing the items contained in each of these two domains, there are varying reasons why this disconnect might have occurred. For Domain 2: The Classroom Environment contained the following items: Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the

classroom; Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standard; Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured; How a teacher organizes his/her physical space (desks, technology, etc.) does not impact a teachers' effectiveness; Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable. Administrators are keenly aware of curriculum and standards, and what constitutes good practice. They understand the need to differentiate instruction and assessment because of extensive training. In most cases, students are not privy to this information and may misinterpret structure and organization as an authoritarian style of teaching.

The same is true for Domain 3: Instruction. The items in this domain include: It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students; It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students; Effective teachers understand that lecture is the most effective way to reach students; Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners; Effective teachers are fair: they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc.). Several things stand out as possible reasons for the disconnect between students and administrators in this domain. First of all, students selected fairness as one of their top five characteristics of effective teaching. If teachers are giving some students additional assistance because of specific needs or different learning styles, students may perceive that as unfair. Because lecture is a predominant method of imparting knowledge, it is reasonable to assume some secondary school students have not experienced other methods of instruction. While administrators were decisive that lecture is not an effective way to reach students, student responses indicated more variability when looking across the four possible responses. One-fourth of students surveyed did not disagree with this statements, as compared to only 6% of administrators.

## Conclusions

Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter two combined with this research study, the researcher concludes that individuals define effective teaching based on their personal experiences and their point of reference. According to Christenbury (2010):

Effective teaching is contextual. It responds to individual students, school and classroom communities and societal needs. Effective teachers alter, adjust, and change their instruction depending on who is in the classroom and the extent to which students are achieving. Effective teachers are not so devoted to their practice that they ignore the students in front of them. (p. 48)

Based on the surveys completed by upper level secondary school students, the characteristics they selected as characteristics of effective teachers can be attributed to what they know from their own viewpoint of the student-teacher relationship and what occurs in the classroom based on their own interpretations. Their top five characteristics of effective teachers show students value the experience where learning is fun, and the teacher is fair, self-confident, flexible, and can create a relaxed learning environment.

Though the focus of this study was identifying characteristics of effective secondary school teachers based on the perceptions of what the students deemed important, and that task was completed by selecting the top five based on student response frequencies and percentages, there were other notable areas the majority of students identified as valuable. For example, the majority of students do believe their teachers should pass competency tests in their subject areas, and that they should hold state certification in the subject areas they teach. They also see the value of classroom experience in making teachers more effective.

Students value the role of pedagogy as they noted knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach. While sense of humor did not make the top five characteristics students value, most of them believe this factors into teachers' effectiveness. Also, students believe teachers should be skilled in engaging all learners, even those who are hard to reach. Finally, most students who participated in the study appreciate that effective teachers must communicate with students and their parents, and they do not believe effective teachers are those who assign the most A's.

For the purpose of this research study, knowing what the majority of students do not deem important might make as much a contribution to the literature. Students were split on the importance of teachers sharing information about their personal lives with their students. They were also divided on the point of teachers sharing information about their degrees and certificates with students, as well as on how important advanced degrees are to effective teaching.

Based on the surveys completed by secondary school administrators, the characteristics they selected as characteristics of effective teachers can be attributed to what they know from their own viewpoint of the student-teacher relationship and from their unique knowledge of all aspects of classroom teaching. Their top six characteristics of effective teachers show administrators value teachers who are structured and self-confident, and who communicate with students and parents, pass competency tests and engage in self-reflection.

Once again, the focus of this study was identifying characteristics of effective secondary school teachers based on the perceptions of what administrators perceived to be important. As a result, the top six characteristics were determined based on administrator response frequencies and percentages; however, there were other characteristics the majority of administrators selected



as valuable. For example, the majority of administrators also believe that classroom experience increases teacher effectiveness and that it is important for teachers to make learning fun. The administrators also placed value on a teachers' sense of humor. Administrators also hold state certification in high regard. Most of the administrators who shared their perceptions for this research study emphasized the importance of pedagogy—knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach. Furthermore, administrators believe effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even those who are unmotivated. Administrators believe effective teachers maintain lesson plans, but are willing to alter them to remediate, when necessary.

Again, knowing what administrators did not denote as important might provide just as much information on the characteristics of effective teaching as what they did. Administrators were split on the value of teachers sharing information about their personal lives with students. They were also divisive on the importance of sharing information about teaching degrees and certification with students.

Identifying the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspectives of secondary school students provides insight into what students' value, and lends credibility to the argument that students can only respond to what they know. Students are not versed in differentiated instruction and assessment or the intricacies of curriculum and standards, so though they know what works and does not work for them, what they value does not include the unknown. Perception is their reality.

As for administrators, their responses are based on their vantage point, which includes knowledge of every aspect of teaching and what is effective for most people—information unknown to students based not so much on maturity as experience and training. It should be

noted that students and administrators agreed on many of the characteristics of effective teaching, even when taking their varying roles into consideration.

### Implications

Several implications stem from this research study. Identifying the characteristics of effective secondary teachers from the perspectives of upper level secondary school students and secondary school administrators provided group specific information in the form of characteristics each group valued most. This will add to existing research where definitions of effective teaching are plentiful by researchers, but limited in scope of practitioners and the most important stakeholders, the students. Until now, the perceptions of secondary school students have been largely overlooked in this debate. It is worth noting that the students and administrators agreed on the majority of items in the survey scales on effective teaching. This lends credibility to the value of the perceptions of secondary school students in research relevant to them.

The data from the group comparisons produced information that can be used by administrators to identify reasons behind the disconnect between students and administrators. This research study identified two domains where significant differences between students and administrators exist. Furthermore, perhaps some of the characteristics that were deemed unimportant to both groups were deemed so because they are not current practice. Secondary teachers do not typically share information about degrees and/or certification with students. Perhaps that should change so that students are fully aware of the credentials of their classroom teacher, instead of relying on the assumption that administrators look after this.

Lastly, when researching information that relies on perceptions, it is important to consider the unique vantage point of particular groups. Perhaps students saw unfairness in the classroom

when teachers provided students with other instructional methods or remediation. Those students do not have working knowledge of various learning styles, nor are they equipped to understand differentiated instruction. Their unique vantage points affected how they responded to items on the survey. If all students are to receive a quality education and the key to that quality education is the classroom teacher, then all school administrators should know what works for their individual student populations.

### Limitations

This study was not without limitations. Several limitations were presented in Chapter 1, but were restricted to items the researcher could identify prior to conducting the actual study. The following limitations were identified as a result of the study and subsequent data analysis:

1. The instrument was created by the researcher. Every effort was made to construct a sound instrument, however, true validity and reliability is unknown. The instrument needs additional use and study in a variety of different contexts.
2. The MANOVA results were equivocal due to heterogeneity of covariance matrices. The resulting F value and corresponding significance level would undoubtedly be different if this assumption had been met.
3. Some univariate F tests exhibited low power, indicating a high likelihood of accepting a false null hypothesis.
4. Results from the sample populations used in this study could be different contingent on samples from other populations.
5. While some differences were statistically significant, the actual means were quite similar.

## Recommendations

More research is necessary in the area of effective teaching. Effective secondary school teachers may not share the same characteristics as effective elementary school teachers. Additional research in this area could ensure that all students enter classrooms led by teachers who are effective for their developmental stage.

Additional data to include the perceptions of students is also necessary. College students are often asked to participate in research studies on effective teaching, but the information that only specific stakeholders can provide is needed. Demographic information from students might also expand the results of the perceptions. Race, gender and academic status may lend additional information to the results of these studies. Low performing students have different needs than their high performing counterparts, and knowing what each group needs from their classroom teacher would expand what is currently known about effective teaching.

Administrators need training in identifying effective teachers for their specific student populations so that this information can factor into hiring decisions. Hiring ineffective teachers is costly both financially and academically for those students who are unfortunate enough to be placed in those classrooms.

## Dissemination

All students and administrators who participated in this study will have an opportunity to review the findings. As a result of reading this information, both groups could focus on the difference a quality classroom teacher can make. The researcher sincerely hopes both groups will focus on the importance of the classroom teacher, and identify those characteristics of effective teaching that are most important to them. Perhaps the information gleaned here will provide administrators with a renewed commitment to hiring teachers who exhibit the

characteristics of effective teachers, so that every student in every classroom can experience the advantage effective teachers provide.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

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**DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT**

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Dear Participant,

My name is Dawn Hadley, and I am a doctoral candidate at Georgia Southern University. I am currently working on my dissertation analyzing perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. My dissertation is titled “Characteristics of Effective Teachers: A Comparison of the Perceptions of Secondary School Administrators and Secondary School Students.” Previous studies on the characteristics of effective teaching have identified the classroom teacher as the most important factor in student achievement. Quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted, but none have considered the perceptions of the most important stakeholders—students. The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics of effective teachers based on the perceptions of secondary school administrators and secondary school students, and then compare them.

As a volunteer in this study, you will be given a Likert like survey which contains twenty-five statements about effective teachers. You will be asked to register your perceptions by circling a number one through four, based on your level of disagreement or agreement with each individual statement. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and no identifying information will be asked of you. Your results will be entered into a database and combined with the responses of all other student participants to determine the numbers of

responses for each level one through four. You may elect to withdraw from this study at any time prior to turning in your completed survey.

The benefits to participants include being part of a research study which may provide secondary school administrators much needed information to consider when hiring the effective teachers students need in their classrooms. This study will provide you the opportunity to voice your perceptions of the characteristics of teachers who have been effective for you. The benefits to society may extend beyond your school as a contribution to previous research and literature on effective teachers.

You have the right to ask questions and have them answered. If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact the Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0324.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may end your participation in this study at any time by telling the person in charge or by not participating in the survey. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in this study.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: Characteristics of Effective Teachers: A Comparison of the Perceptions of Secondary School Administrators and Secondary School Students

Principal Investigator: Dawn Howell Hadley  
1 Wildcat Drive  
Richmond Hill, GA 31324  
912.459.5162

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Paul Brinson  
P. O. Box 8131  
GSU  
Statesboro, GA 30460  
912.478.5324

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## APPENDIX B

### PARENT INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

#### **COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

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#### **DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

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#### **PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

A study will be conducted at your child's school in the next few weeks. Its purpose is to determine which characteristics of effective teachers are important to secondary school students, and to compare that information with the characteristics of effective teachers that are important to secondary school administrators.

If you give permission, your child will have the opportunity to participate in a survey, where he/she will be asked to register his/her perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers, by circling a number one through four, based on his/her level of disagreement or agreement with each individual statement. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes. All responses will be confidential and no identifying information will be asked of your child.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. The risks from participating in this study are no more than would be encountered in everyday life; however, your child will be told that he or she may stop participating at any time without any penalty. Your child may choose to not respond to any statements he/she does not wish to for any reason. Your child may refuse to participate even if you agree to her/his participation.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the child, his/her name will not be required, nor will any other identifying information. All information pertaining to the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researchers' home. No one other than the researcher will see the completed surveys.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study at any time, please feel free to contact Dawn Hadley, doctoral candidate in Educational Administration, at 459-5162, or Dr. Paul "Mac" Brinson, advisor, at (912)478-5324

To contact the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs for answers to questions about the rights of research participants, please email [IRB@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:IRB@georgiasouthern.edu) or call (912) 478-0843.

If you are giving permission for your child to participate in the survey, please sign the form below and have your child return it to his/her first block teacher. Thank you very much for your time.

Dawn Hadley  
Doctoral Candidate in Educational Administration  
Professor

Dr. Paul “Mac” Brinson  
Georgia Southern University  
Educational Administration

Investigator’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
EFFECTIVE TEACHING SURVEY  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Instructions**

The purpose of this survey is to determine upper level secondary school students' perceptions of effective classroom teachers. Your honest responses will provide an in-depth understanding of what makes a classroom teacher effective for his/her students.

The following 25 statements cover a variety of aspects of current literature that relate to effective teaching. Your responses are anonymous and will be used only for the purpose of research.

Use the scale below to respond to each statement. Consider the most effective instructor(s) you have learned from; for the purpose of this survey, effective teaching refers to those who have made a positive impact on you, the student. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle 4; if you strongly disagree, circle 1. If you more or less agree/disagree with the statement, circle the most appropriate number.

	<u>strongly disagree</u>		<u>strongly agree</u>	
1. Effective teachers pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach to show they know their material.	1	2	3	4
2. The more experience a teacher has in the classroom, the more effective he or she becomes.	1	2	3	4
3. Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the classroom.	1	2	3	4
4. It is important for teachers to make learning fun.	1	2	3	4
5. It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students.	1	2	3	4
6. Effective teachers hold state certification in the subject areas they teach.	1	2	3	4
7. It is important for teachers to share information about their personal lives so students can relate to them.	1	2	3	4
8. It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students.	1	2	3	4

9. Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standard.	1	2	3	4
10. It is important for teachers to share information about the their degrees and certifications with students.	1	2	3	4
11. Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured.	1	2	3	4
12. Effective teachers treat all students the same; they do not have favorites.	1	2	3	4
13. Knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach.	1	2	3	4
14. Teachers with advanced degrees (Master's, Ed.S.—5+ years of preparation) are more effective than those with Bachelor's degrees (4 years of preparation)	1	2	3	4
15. Effective teachers understand that lecture is the most effective way to reach students.	1	2	3	4
16. How a teacher organizes his/her physical space (desks, technology, etc.) does not impact a teachers' effectiveness.	1	2	3	4
17. The most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren't successful in their class.	1	2	3	4
18. It is not important for teachers to have a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4
19. Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners.	1	2	3	4
20. Effective teachers maintain up-to-date lesson plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary.	1	2	3	4
21. Effective teachers are those who assign the most A's.	1	2	3	4
22. The most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents.	1	2	3	4
23. Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable.	1	2	3	4

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 24. Effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

APPENDIX D

EFFECTIVE TEACHING SURVEY FOR

SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

**Instructions**

The purpose of this survey is to determine secondary school administrators' perceptions of effective classroom teachers. Your honest responses will provide an in-depth understanding of what makes a classroom teacher effective for his/her students.

The following 25 statements cover a variety of aspects of current literature that relate to effective teaching. Your responses are anonymous and will be used only for the purpose of research.

Use the scale below to respond to each statement. Consider the most effective instructor(s) you have worked with; for the purpose of this survey, effective teaching refers to those who have made a positive impact on their students. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle 4; if you strongly disagree, circle 1. If you more or less agree/disagree with the statement, circle the most appropriate number.

	<u>strongly disagree</u>		<u>strongly agree</u>	
1. It is important for effective teachers to pass competency tests in the subject areas they teach.	1	2	3	4
2. The more experience a teacher has in the classroom, the more effective he or she becomes.	1	2	3	4
3. Effective teachers write referrals on disruptive students to maintain order in the classroom.	1	2	3	4
4. It is important for teachers to make learning fun.	1	2	3	4
5. It is important for effective teachers to provide lessons the same way for all students.	1	2	3	4
6. Effective teachers hold state certification in the subject areas they teach.	1	2	3	4
7. It is important for teachers to share information about their personal lives so students can relate to them.	1	2	3	4
8. It is not important for effective teachers to seek feedback from their students.	1	2	3	4

9. Effective teachers hold all students to the same academic standard.	1	2	3	4
10. It is important for teachers to share information about the their degrees and certifications with students.	1	2	3	4
11. Effective teachers establish classroom procedures and routines to ensure class time is very structured.	1	2	3	4
12. Effective teachers treat all students the same; they do not have favorites.	1	2	3	4
13. Knowing how to teach is more important than knowing what to teach.	1	2	3	4
14. Teachers with advanced degrees (Master’s, Ed.S.—5+ years of preparation) are more effective than those with Bachelor’s degrees (4 years of preparation)	1	2	3	4
15. Effective teachers understand that lecture is the most effective way to reach students.	1	2	3	4
16. How a teacher organizes his/her physical space (desks, technology, etc.) does not impact a teachers’ effectiveness.	1	2	3	4
17. The most effective teachers evaluate themselves when students aren’t successful in their class.	1	2	3	4
18. It is not important for teachers to have a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4
19. Effective teachers are skilled in getting every student engaged in the lesson, even unmotivated learners.	1	2	3	4
20. Effective teachers maintain up-to-date lesson plans, but alter them to reteach material, when necessary.	1	2	3	4
21. Effective teachers are those who assign the most A’s.	1	2	3	4
22. The most effective teachers communicate with students and their parents.	1	2	3	4

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 23. Effective teachers create a relaxed environment so students can be comfortable.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. Effective teachers are fair; they give all students the same opportunities (tutorials, extra-credit, etc). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Self-confidence is a personality trait of effective teachers.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |



## APPENDIX E

### LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

15 Bradley Drive  
Richmond Hill, GA 31324

February 14, 2011

Mr. John Oliver  
Bryan County Board of Education  
66 South Industrial Blvd.  
Pembroke, GA 31321

Dear Mr. Oliver,

As you already know, I am completing the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Administration through Georgia Southern University. In my dissertation, I am identifying the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspectives of upper-level secondary students and secondary school administrators and then comparing the two to determine if the characteristics school administrators seek in potential teacher match what students need. In addition to evidence provided from a comprehensive review of the literature on teacher effectiveness, I would like to survey underclassmen at Richmond Hill High School as part of the pilot study to determine validity and reliability of the survey instrument. In addition, I would also like to survey all juniors and seniors at both Bryan County High School and Richmond Hill High School. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous, and all students under the age of eighteen will require signed informed parental consent. I would also like to survey Bryan County administrators as part of the pilot study for the school administrators' portion of this study.

As part of this study, I would like to report the data results from the surveys. My reporting of data will not provide the name of the school system or the schools, nor will I use any identifying information that would lead to the identification of Bryan County Schools. I will simply provide the results of the student surveys and communicate the findings as they pertain to my research. The surveys will be anonymous to ensure no names or other distinguishing information is revealed.

I believe this research study will lead to valuable information that will assist us in providing Bryan County Students with the teachers they need to be successful.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Dawn Howell Hadley

## APPENDIX F

### IRB PROPOSAL

#### **Application for: Dawn Hadley**

**Personnel.** Only my dissertation committee and I will be participating in the research portion of this study. I will solely conduct the research and have access to the data, but I will consult with members of my committee with any questions that arise when analyzing the data.

**Purpose.** 1. The researcher's purpose is to examine common characteristics of effective teachers based on the personal experiences of secondary school administrators and upper level secondary school students. 2. The following research questions guide the study:

Which characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important to secondary school administrators?

Which characteristics of effective teachers are perceived to be most important to upper level secondary school students?

How do the perceptions of school administrators compare to the perceptions of upper level secondary school students?

The analysis of the data collected may assist secondary school administrators with information that will ensure that what students perceive as characteristics of effective teachers match those of what the administrators who hire classroom teachers perceive as characteristics of effective teachers. 3. Current literature repeatedly emphasizes the most important factor in determining student achievement is the teacher in the classroom. However, there is a gap in the literature with regards to the stakeholders who are most affected by the quality of the classroom teacher: the students.

**Outcome.** The researcher anticipates discovering what upper level secondary school students perceive as characteristics of effective teachers, and what secondary school administrators perceive as characteristics of effective teachers, then comparing the two. Administrators, teachers, and most importantly, students, may benefit from the final analysis of this study. Hiring the most effective teachers to lead classrooms and improve student achievement is the best result of educational research.

**Describe your subjects.** This quantitative study is to be conducted using Likert like surveys with all students who qualify as juniors and seniors at Richmond Hill High School and Bryan County High School, although the identity of both schools will remain confidential and anonymous in the final dissertation. No identifying information will be asked of the students who participate in an effort to protect their identities. Currently, I serve as an Assistant Principal at Richmond Hill High School. The researcher has obtained permission from the school's administration to conduct student surveys. The students will be given informed consent and informed parental consent forms to take home; they must return signed consent forms from parents to participate and must be willing to participate. There are approximately 1015 total students enrolled in both high schools who are juniors and seniors. Required consent forms may limit the number of actual students who complete the survey, and participation will be voluntary.

Students with completed consent forms will be asked to participate in the survey during the school day as part of their normal daily activities. It is expected to take approximately 20 minutes.

In addition, all secondary school administrators in the service area of the First District Regional Educational Service Agency (FDRESA) will be given a similar Likert like survey to be completed electronically. The identity of this agency and the individual participants will be kept confidential and anonymous. There are approximately 130 secondary school administrators who are employed at high schools in the FDRESA area. They will receive a request to participate in the study via email through their work related email addresses several days before they actually receive the survey, as a courtesy notification. Follow up phone calls will be used in an attempt to get the maximum number of responses. Risks will be minimized as no identifying information will be associated with individual responses for either students or administrators.

**Methodology (Procedures).** The researcher will conduct a cross-sectional quantitative study. Secondary school administrators employed by districts served by First District Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) and all upper level secondary students in one southeastern Georgia school district will be asked to use their experiences to respond to 25 statements using a 4 point Likert like scale, where respondents rate each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) based on their perceptions of effective teachers. Participation will be voluntary and students will be required to return a signed parental consent form to participate. Statistical software (SPSS) will be used to analyze all data associated with this research study. For research questions one and two, means and standard deviations will be provided for each of the 25 Likert like scale survey items. This descriptive data will identify which characteristics of effective teachers are deemed most important by secondary school administrators, and which are deemed most important by upper level secondary school students. For research question three, the data will be analyzed using a 2 group MANOVA to compare the responses of the two groups, with a level of statistical significance at  $p < .01$ . This will determine if there are significant differences between the two groups on their perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers.

### **Special Conditions:**

**Research involving minors.** The upper level secondary students will be given the informed consent explaining details of the study and the parental informed consent. Both forms must be returned in order for a student to participate in the study; participation is voluntary. Students will be given the 4 point Likert like surveys and asked to respond to 25 statements based on their perceptions of effective teachers. The students will not be asked for any demographic information, nor will their names be associated in any way with their individual survey responses.

No additional risks are involved in this study.

