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Principals' Perceptions of Incompetent Teachers: Incidence Rates, Characteristics, and Barriers to Dismissal in Missouri

Christopher A. Grauf
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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by

Christopher A. Grauf
Oklahoma Christian University
Bachelor of Science in Education, 2000
Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Master of Education in School Counseling, 2005
University of Missouri
Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, 2008

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University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for the recommendation to the Graduate Council

_____
Dr. Ed Bengtson
Dissertation Committee Chair

_____
Dr. John Pijanowski
Dissertation Committee Member

_____
Dr. Kara Lasater
Dissertation Committee Member

Abstract

Research suggests that hiring and retaining high quality teachers is probably the most important school related factor in providing a quality education for students, as well as improving student achievement. Because of the importance of providing all students with highly capable and qualified teachers, this study explored characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal to help school leaders better understand, and hopefully reverse, the negative impact caused by incompetent teachers. The three goals of this study were to develop a more complete understanding of: 1) characteristics that cause teachers to be identified as incompetent; 2) barriers to removing incompetent teachers and replacing them with quality educators; and 3) to determine effective practices for working with and dismissing incompetent teachers. Incidence rates, characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and effective practices in overcoming barriers to dismissal were examined through the eyes of public school principals in the state of Missouri. Findings were broken down to determine how a principal's gender, level of experience, grade level and size of the school in which the principal serves, and location of the school affect how a principal views teacher incompetence. Findings indicate the most prominent characteristics to be ineffective instructional practices, lack of classroom management, poor relational skills. The most significant barriers to dismissal were reported to be time, laws protecting teachers, and potential litigation. Effective practices for working with or dismissing incompetent teachers included frequent observation and communication, consultation with key stakeholders, meticulous documentation, and the development of effective hiring practices. Results from this study may be used as a catalyst for conversations on changing policies related to teacher tenure. Schools may use results from this study to guide professional development for current administrators on

the topic of working with incompetent teachers. Administrator preparation programs may use

results to guide learning processes about incompetent teachers for future administrators.

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I am thankful to my wife, Julie, who challenged me to continue on when it seemed that one obstacle after another stood in the way of the completion of this study. Thank you for always being my solid foundation, encouragement, sounding board, and therapist during this challenging endeavor. Most importantly, I would like to thank God for providing me with strength, perseverance, and reminders to keep my priorities in order while working on this dissertation.

Dedication

      This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who has been an amazing source of support throughout this challenging endeavor. Julie, thank you for your help, love, encouragement, patience, and support over the past three years. Without you I would not have made it this far. To my beautiful little girls, Holly and Brenna, thank you for all the hugs, kisses, and artwork I've received to encourage me to keep going. Thank you all for picking up the slack when I have needed to spend countless hours reading, writing, and researching in my office at home. You are the best family anyone could ever hope for.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Public education in America is continually changing as the student population grows

more culturally and economically diverse. In the midst of these challenges, schools continue

working diligently to make sure all students receive a quality education. Research suggests that

hiring and retaining high quality teachers is probably the most important school related factor in

providing a quality education for students, as well as improving student achievement (Hanushek,

2008; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Hanushek (2010) claimed that

quality teachers are an integral component to a successful school and to high student

achievement. Just how much difference can a quality teacher make? According to Slater,

Davies, and Burgess (2009), students who had a high quality teacher for a year had almost a

year's advantage over peers in a low quality teacher's class. Hanushek (2010) stated, "a good

teacher will get a gain of one and a half grade-level equivalents, while a bad teacher will get a

gain equivalent to just a half a year" on standardized assessments (p. 84).

High quality teachers tend to improve student achievement, whereas incompetent

teachers often hinder student achievement. Kaye (2004) found, in a study of 122 elementary

teachers in Canada, that most educators believe incompetent teachers have a negative to very

negative impact on students. Lawrence (2005) concluded that ineffective teachers are

detrimental to student achievement because they "are unprepared, deficient in teaching skills,

unable or unwilling to improve their teaching, have classroom management problems, display

poor judgment, have a negative attitude about the teaching profession, and have a high tardiness

and absence rate" (p. 11).

Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2011) found that replacing a teacher who's value-added

is in the bottom 5% with an average teacher would result in a $250,000 increase in a student's

lifetime income. In this instance, the term value-added refers to gains students make from one year to the next on state level assessments. According to Chetty et al. (2011), students assigned to a high value-added teacher also are less likely to have children as teenagers and more likely to go to college.

Several studies suggested that rates of incompetent teachers in schools are between 4% and 15% (Bridges, 1992; Fuhr, 1993; Parish, 1999; Tucker, 1997). One possible, and probably the most often used, intervention to improve student achievement is provide support for marginal teachers, but once a teacher is deemed incompetent, the only option may be dismissal. Much of this responsibility falls on school principals who's "foremost responsibility is to make sure that only the best teachers are on the job at his or her school, and that includes taking the necessary steps to effectively prove that a deficient teacher should be terminated" (Lawrence, 2005, p. 2). However, multiple studies (Bridges, 1992; Lawrence, 2005; Parish, 1999; Tucker, 1997) reported the percentage of teachers dismissed is 1% or less. Kaye (2004) found that less than one-quarter of the 122 teachers surveyed were aware of a principal ever recommending the dismissal of a teacher. These studies suggest that a number of incompetent teachers across the nation are currently working in schools hindering student achievement. Because of the importance of providing all students with highly capable and qualified teachers, this study explored characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal to help school leaders better understand, and hopefully reverse, the negative impact caused by incompetent teachers.

Purpose

Multiple authors (Bridges, 1992; Jacob, 2010; Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010; Nixon, Douvanis, & Packard, 2010; Parish, 1999; Walls, Mardi, Von Minden, & Hoffman, 2002; Wasiscsko, 2004) reported characteristics that lead a teacher to be labeled incompetent. These

characteristics included poor classroom management and instructional skills, lack of content area knowledge, insubordination, ethical violations, lack of relational skills, and lack of respect or integrity. However, little research was discovered that examined how these characteristics may differ based on variables such as grade level. For example, do the most prominent characteristics that define an incompetent teacher vary based on the grade level they teach? Do male and female principals have differing views on which characteristics are most important in determining the incompetence level of a teacher? Do incompetent teachers in small schools display the same primary characteristics as those in large schools? Do veteran principals view certain characteristics as important in determining the incompetence of a teacher as novice principals?

The first purpose of this study was to examine how the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers varied based on five variables. The first three were school related, which included school size, the grade level of the school, and the school location. The next two variables examined were the principal related variables of gender and level of experience. The study also sought to determine how frequently the specific characteristics of incompetent teachers were observed and how characteristics varied based on the five variables mentioned above. For example, did principals at elementary schools observe insubordination as frequently as middle or high school principals did? Did novice principals notice classroom management issues as frequently in incompetent teachers as veteran principals?

Several studies (Bridges, 1992; Claymore-Ross, 1996; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jacob, 2010; Menuey, 2005; Nixon, Packard, & Douvanis, 2010; Painter, 2000; Parish, 1999; Rolland, 2010; Thompson, 2006; Tucker, 1997) reported barriers to dismissal included teacher unions, tenure, time, cost, unwillingness to confront teachers, emotional cost to the principal, lack of principal

training in teacher evaluation, and poor evaluation systems. Although these barriers were reported multiple times (Bridges, 1992; Claymore-Ross, 1996; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jacob, 2010; Menuey, 2005; Nixon, Packard, & Douvanis, 2010; Painter, 2000; Parish, 1999; Rolland, 2010; Thompson, 2006; Tucker, 1997), minimal literature was discovered on how these barriers varied according to the five variables mentioned in the previous paragraph. Therefore, another purpose of this study was to examine the most significant barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher; and determine if differences exist between the relative significance of barriers based on school size, grade level of the school, school location, the gender of the principal, and a principal's experience.

It is also important to note that the purpose of this study was not to illuminate ways to fire teachers. Teachers who are not performing up to district or state standards should be given every chance become a satisfactory, or even a distinguished educator. They should be provided with support, encouragement, direction, and other resources for improvement. However, once efforts to improve have been exhausted, then the only action left may be dismissal. This study examined principals' perceptions about teachers who failed to improve, after remediation efforts were made, and have been deemed incompetent.

Research Questions

Mixed methods studies employ the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods questions. Quantitative questions were answered using results from a survey instrument developed specifically for this study. Each question on the survey was designed to help answer one or more of the quantitative research questions. In this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, qualitative questions were used as a guide to explore quantitative results in a deeper and context specific manner. Qualitative questions were answered through the use of semi-structured

follow-up interviews with six principals who completed the quantitative survey. The mixed

methods question was used as a guide to synthesize the two phases of the research process.

Quantitative Questions

1. What percentage of the teachers in Missouri do principals perceive as incompetent?

2. What are the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers and how do they vary by

    grade level, school size, a principal's experience, school location, and a principal's

    gender?

3. Which characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers are observed most frequently by

    principals?

4. What are the primary barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an

    incompetent teacher and how do these barriers vary by grade level, school size, a

    principal's experience, school location, and a principal's gender?

Qualitative Questions

1. How do principals describe the behaviors or characteristics exemplified by incompetent

    teachers that lead to a desire for their dismissal?

2. How do principals describe the challenges faced when attempting to dismiss incompetent

    teachers?

3. What effective practices do principals provide for overcoming barriers to dismissal?

Mixed Methods Question

1. What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about

    characteristics of incompetent teachers and their dismissal with outcome quantitative data

    from the survey instrument?

Methods

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used as a framework for guiding this research study. This design included a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) recommended using explanatory sequential designs when the researcher wants use qualitative data to help describe or explain quantitative data. Results from the qualitative phase of the study were used to help further explain the quantitative trends.

Data for the quantitative phase was collected using an online survey instrument. The survey was validated by five administrators who provided input concerning potential survey revisions. These administrators consisted of both male and female principals who served at different building grade levels, and had at least five years of administrative experience. They not only provided input for survey clarification, but were also used as a valuable resource to ensure validity of the survey instrument.

Surveys were sent to all elementary school, middle school, and high school head principals in the state of Missouri. Data was collected from 205 participants. Once collected, the data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. An ANOVA was performed on five variables to determine if significant differences existed in principals' perceptions of incompetent teachers. The five variables examined were grade level, school size, a principal's experience, school location, and a principal's gender.

Qualitative data collection began following the completion of quantitative data analysis. An interview protocol was developed before the quantitative study phase was complete, but was revised as necessary to tie or mix the two phases of the research together. A criterion purposive sample was employed to choose participants for interviews by primarily using variables of gender and grade level served. Participants from the survey were divided into six candidate

pools: elementary male, middle school male, high school male, elementary female, middle

school female, and high school female. Candidates were selected who met these criteria, but also

who represented a wide variety of other administrator characteristics as well.

Analysis of qualitative data was conducted using transcription of interviews, memo

writing, and multiple levels of coding. Data was analyzed for quantitative and qualitative phases

separately, results were synthesized into a comparative analysis of the overall study. Creswell

and Plano Clark (2011) stated, "the mixed methods data analysis is conducted to answer the

mixed methods research question as to whether the results from both analyses converge and how

they converge" (p. 223).

This multi-phase analysis and synthesis process was used to answer research questions

from the study, and provide a more robust study result than by using quantitative or qualitative

approaches alone. Though both the study and analysis took longer utilizing this approach, it was

used as a vehicle for adding meaningful insights on the topic of incompetent teachers.

Significance of the Study

Results from the study can be used to guide professional development for principals that

is focused on overcoming the most significant barriers different types of principals face when

attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers. If results show that a novice principal's primary

struggle is confronting incompetent teachers, then professional development can focus on

interventions to help overcome those barriers. Professional development can be specific and

tailored to the needs of each principal, since results of this study were disaggregated by gender

and experience of the principal, school size, grade level, and school location.

The primary goal of teacher education programs is to train high quality educators for full-

time practice in the field. However, a secondary purpose of these programs should be to identify

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those candidates who may need focused improvement. Preparation programs can use results of this study to better identify teaching candidates who display characteristics similar to those most frequently observed by current principals. Structured interventions can then be provided by the institution to remediate these characteristics before the teacher in training enters the profession, and possibly counsel a few candidates toward other careers.

Finally, results from this study may be used to guide teacher evaluation practice. Right or wrong, evaluation tools used by principals are one of the primary components in determining the quality of a teacher. If lack of instructional skills and poor content knowledge are found to be the most important factors in leading a principal to label a teacher as incompetent, and they are also the characteristics observed most frequently, evaluation tools should be revised to include items that help evaluate these two areas. This will not only help to collect more focused data to provide direction for teachers in need of improvement, but will also provide principals with the data needed to dismiss an incompetent teacher who is unwilling or unable to achieve at a higher level.

Assumptions

This study explored principals' perceptions about the characteristics of incompetent teachers and the major barriers to their dismissal. It was assumed that participants were transparent about their insights and experiences in working with incompetent teachers. Furthermore, it was assumed that information provided by principals added to the overall body of knowledge, and possibly interventions, when working with incompetent teachers. Findings from several studies (Hanushek, 2008; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011) indicated that teacher quality is probably one of the most important factors that have an impact

on student achievement. Therefore, it was assumed principals generally agreed that incompetent teachers have a negative impact on student learning.

Principal preparation programs educate future school leaders on a variety of school topics, including best instructional practices and teacher evaluation. Thus, it was assumed principals entering the field had the necessary skills to evaluate teachers and their related instructional practices and that principals had, through pre-service or in-service training, acquired the skills to be knowledgeable evaluators of teacher effectiveness. It was further assumed that, through appropriate use of evaluation tools, principals could identify characteristics that distinguish incompetent teachers from their more skilled colleagues.

Several authors (Bridges, 1992; Fuhr, 1993; Parish, 1999; Tucker, 1997) estimated that the rate of incompetent teachers working in schools is between 4% and 15% percent. Given these rates, it was assumed most principals, even those with one or two years of experience, had personally interacted with incompetent teachers. If principals worked on a personal basis with incompetent educators, it was also assumed they had experienced barriers when trying to improve teachers' instructional skills or in attempting to remove a teacher from their teaching position.

My personal experiences shaped my assumptions about incompetent teachers. I have witnessed incompetent teachers in each school for which I have worked, observing their impact on the educational environment. On each occasion, incompetent teachers had a negative impact on students, teachers, parents and the school culture. It was assumed that most principals also witnessed the negative impact first hand, and were willing to share these experiences with me via survey or interview.

Definitions

Incompetent Teacher – Any teacher who consistently fails to meet minimum state, district, or building level standards for effective teaching.

Barrier – Any obstacle that prevents, or makes it difficult, to dismiss an incompetent teacher.

Characteristic – A feature or quality that distinguishes one thing from another. For purposes of this study, it refers to any feature that distinguishes incompetent teachers from other educators.

Value-Added – Refers to gains students make from one year to the next on state or national assessments.

DESE – Is an acronym used to identify the Missouri State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Principal – is defined as the lead principal in each building within a school district.

Counsel Out – A tool used by administrators as an alternative to teacher dismissal. In this process, an administrator helps the incompetent teacher understand that education is not the most suitable career. The principal often helps the incompetent teacher discover a job that is more closely aligned with the teachers' talents and abilities.

Dismiss - When a board of education discharges a teacher through the use of a process mandated by the state of Missouri.

Forced resignation – A tool used by administrators as an alternative to teacher dismissal. In this process, an administrator allows the incompetent teacher to initiate the separation process rather than officially going through the legal steps to dismiss the teacher.

Incidence rate - The percentage of teachers in a school that are considered incompetent, as perceived by the principal.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter II will provide a comprehensive review of related literature on the topic of incompetent teachers. The review is organized in a way that is tied to research questions in this study. First, existing studies on incidence rates of incompetent teachers will be presented. Next, existing research will be explored on characteristics of incompetent teachers. Then, literature on barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers will be presented. Each section will be followed by a discussion of gaps in existing literature. Current teacher evaluation trends will also be examined in order to determine if new methods of evaluation will make it easier to identify and dismiss incompetent teachers. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how this study will build on existing research, potentially addressing some of the research gaps.

Research methodology and design will be discussed in the third chapter. Research questions will be presented first to provide a framework for research design and methodology. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical lens for both phases of the study. Next, I will present quantitative and qualitative sampling strategies, as well as information needed to complete the study. Data collection and analysis procedures will be described in detail, including a timeline for completion of the study. I will close the chapter by addressing ethical issues, issues of trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter IV will begin with a description of demographics of principals who participated in the study. This will be followed by a presentation of findings from the quantitative portion of the study. In the third section of the chapter, there will be a discussion of open-ended questions from the survey instrument. This part of the chapter is divided into themes built around principals' responses to questions about working with incompetent teachers. Findings from semi-structured interviews will be presented next, followed by a synthesis of quantitative and

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qualitative findings. The chapter will conclude with a summary of findings from this study on principals' perceptions of incompetent teachers in the state of Missouri.

Chapter V will provide a discussion of the findings from Chapter IV. First, the findings will be summarized and interpreted in order to present meaningful insights from the study. Results will then be compared and contrasted with existing research to better understand how these results fit into the context of literature on the topic of incompetent teachers. Next, implications for policy, practice, and administrator preparation programs will be discussed due to results from this study. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of limitations from the study and suggestions for future research on incompetent teachers.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Teachers play a critical role in student success and achievement. In fact, several studies suggested that hiring and retaining high quality teachers is probably the most important school related factor in providing a quality education for students, as well as improving student achievement (Hanushek, 2008; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Because of the importance of providing all students with highly capable and qualified teachers, this study explored characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal, in order to help school leaders better understand, and hopefully reverse, the negative impact caused by incompetent teachers.

The first purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perceptions about the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers varied based on five variables. The first three were school related, which included school size, the grade level of the school, and the location of the school. The next two variables examined were the principal related variables of gender and level of experience. The second purpose was to examine the most significant barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher; and determine if differences existed between the relative significance of barriers principals faced based on school size, grade level of the school, school location, the gender of the principal, and a principal's experience. The following literature review assists in establishing the conceptual framework that informs the study.

The purpose of this literature review was to examine existing research related to incompetent teachers. Research questions from this study were used to guide the review of existing literature. Studies on incidence rates of incompetent teachers, characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and the use of value-

added measures to identify and dismiss incompetent teachers are presented in this review. Once existing literature is presented for each section of the review, a brief discussion of gaps in literature will be discussed. Identification of gaps in existing research helped to provide a framework for how this study can potentially address current gaps. The literature review will culminate with a discussion of ways this study will add to the overall body of knowledge about incompetent teachers.

Defining the Incompetent Teacher

One challenge when researching the topic of incompetent teachers was finding a clear definition of what it means to be "incompetent". While there is existing literature on the subject, few studies provided a definition of incompetence. Instead they discussed the multiple effects incompetent teachers had on schools and students. Also, most states did not even provide a clear definition of incompetence (Dawson & Billingsly, 2000; Tucker, 1997). To further convolute the issue, researchers often used the terms inadequate, incompetent, marginal, poor-performer, and teacher malpractice interchangeably when referring to teachers who were performing well below teaching standards (Sahin, 1998).

Some researchers have actually attempted to define incompetence. For example, Menuey (2005) stated that an incompetent teacher is one "who has been designated incompetent by the evaluator by means of the evaluation process and is begin considered for dismissal, or already has been dismissed by the school board" (p.11). McCarthy and Cambron-McCabe (1987) used more of a generic legal definition claiming incompetence is "lack of ability, legal qualifications, or fitness to discharge the required duty" (p.395). Bridges (1992) defined incompetence by listing teacher's specific actions which included a failure to: treat students properly, teach the subject matter, accept advice, and produce gains in student achievement. In this study it was

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important to provide a common working definition for participants in order to increase reliability of responses. For purposes of this study, incompetence was defined as any teacher who consistently fails to meet minimum state, district, or building level standards for effective teaching.

Incidence Rates of Incompetent Teachers

Incidence rates are defined as the percentage of teachers in a school that are considered incompetent, as perceived by the principal. Reported incidence rates from studies of incompetent teachers vary. Fuhr (1993) estimated that 10-15% of the nation's teaching force is performing unsatisfactorily. Lavely, Berger, and Follman (1992) determined the number of incompetent teachers to be anywhere from 2-20%. Other studies (Bridges, 1992; Tucker, 1997) have determined the incidence rate is closer to 5%.

Although the estimated incidence rate of incompetent teachers is 5-15% (Bridges, 1992; Lawrence, 2005; Parish, 1999; Tucker, 1997), the actual percent of teachers dismissed is less than 1%. Parish (1999), when researching teacher dismissals in Georgia, found that 5.33% of non-tenured teachers were unsuitable in performance, while the annual proportion terminated was less than half that amount. On a more alarming note, he discovered the percentage of tenured teachers unsuitable in performance was 4.09% but the dismissal rate was only 0.12% (Parish, 1999). Teachers seem to be aware of this issue as well. Kaye (2004) found that less than one-quarter of the 122 teachers surveyed were ever aware of a principal recommending the dismissal of a teacher.

Jacob (2010), in a study of Chicago teachers, found that only 15 of the 11,621 teachers (0.1%) were rated as unsatisfactory in 2007. Only 641 were rated as satisfactory, meaning the rest were rated as excellent or superior in their teaching skills. In other words, 95% of teachers

in Chicago Public Schools were rated outstanding. However, the accuracy of this finding is uncertain. Sahin (1998) found that principals inflate teacher ratings as a way to avoid dealing with incompetent teachers. This suggests that results from Jacobs (2010) study may not accurately reflect teacher performance.

Gaps in Research on Incidence Rates of Incompetent Teachers

Relatively little research was discovered over the past decade to examine actual incidence rates of marginal teachers in the classroom. Some studies (Bridges, 1992; Lawrence, 2005; Parish, 1999; Tucker, 1997) indicated that at least 5% of educators are incompetent, but numbers may actually be higher as there is evidence to suggest principals sometimes inflate teacher ratings. These studies reported that a number of incompetent teachers across the nation are currently working in schools hindering student achievement.

Another weakness of many previous studies on incidence rates of incompetent teachers is that no common definition of teacher incompetence was provided. Furthermore, many educational researchers use the terms marginal, incompetent, ineffective, and poor-performing interchangeably when referring to educators. As a result, participants from some previous studies had to develop their own definition of incompetence when responding to survey or interview questions. This alone could have affected the validity and reliability in past studies.

Characteristics that Lead to Consideration of Dismissal for Incompetent Teachers

Ferchen (2011) found that dismissals were generally related to lack of classroom management skills, ineffective classroom instruction, poor communication skills, non-compliance with school district policy, and inability to improve even when areas of deficiency were addressed.   Other researchers (Bridges, 1992; Jacob, 2010; Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010; Nixon, Douvanis, & Packard, 2010; Parish, 1999; Walls et al., 2002; Wasiscsko, 2004) made

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similar findings. For purposes of this literature review, characteristics will be divided into four categories: classroom management and instruction, ethical violations, personal dispositions, and insubordination.

Classroom Management and Instruction

Bridges (1992) cited the most common reason for teacher dismissal was related to a lack of classroom management skills. In two separate studies of principals in the southeastern United States, general classroom incompetence was listed as a primary reason for termination (Nixon, Douvanis, & Packard, 2010; Parish, 1999). Claymore-Ross (1996) also discovered inadequate performance was the most stated reason provided by South Dakota principals for dismissing teachers. Principals in the Chicago area listed classroom instruction as the second most common reason for teacher dismissal (Jacob, 2010). Based on these studies, it is evident that classroom management and instruction play a significant role in teacher employment decisions.

Personal Dispositions

Wasiscsko (2004) reported that most teachers are unsuccessful because they do not have the appropriate dispositions. In a recent study of principals in the Southeast, dispositions accounted for teacher termination 53% of the time (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010). Examples of dispositions in the study included fairness, enthusiasm, respect, integrity, relational skills, and work ethic. College education majors and current teachers, when surveyed in a 2002 study, mentioned the above dispositions most frequently as a factor in differentiating between effective and ineffective teachers (Walls et al., 2002). While college students and student teachers are not responsible for the dismissal of incompetent teachers, results from the study provide further evidence concerning the importance of employing teachers with appropriate dispositions as it relates to teacher competence.

Ethical Violations

Results from a study of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama principals found ethical violations were the primary reason for dismissal (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010). Ethical violations are often tangible and easier to document for purposes of dismissal which may explain the high incidence rate for ethically related terminations. Nixon and colleagues (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010) listed common violations such as tardiness, excessive absences, inappropriate relationships with students, inappropriate relationships with co-workers, violating district technology agreements, and criminal misconduct.

Insubordination

According to Nixon, Packard, and Douvanis (2010), insubordination was an important factor related to the dismissal of teachers. Although there were few other educational studies discovered that mentioned insubordination, the issue is common to virtually every career field across the nation. Failing to follow directives and protocol can quickly put a teacher's employment in jeopardy.

Gaps in Research on Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers

Although existing studies supplied evidence to suggest that classroom management and instruction are characteristics used to identify and potentially dismiss incompetent teachers, categories provided by the researchers are vague. For example, "inadequate performance" could have been interpreted in many ways by principals participating in the survey. Even statements such as "classroom instruction" are vague when all components of the instructional process are considered. Additional research should be conducted in this arena to determine the specific acts of deficiency committed by marginal teachers.

Despite the fact that studies have been conducted on reasons for dismissal, gaps in knowledge remain. The majority of studies on the topic only surveyed principals at one grade level. Out of the three researchers surveying multiple grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school principals), only one provided a comparison of the ways in which views on reasons for dismissal differed by grade level (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010). This study also provided an analysis of differing opinions concerning reasons for dismissal based on school location (rural, urban, and suburban). However, survey return rates were under 10%, indicating a need for replication to validate results.

Multiple authors (Bridges, 1992; Jacob, 2010; Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010; Nixon, Douvanis, & Packard, 2010; Parish, 1999; Walls et al., 2002; Wasiscsko, 2004) reported characteristics that led a teacher to be labeled as incompetent and may ultimately lead to a recommendation for dismissal. Characteristics included poor classroom management and instructional skills, lack of content area knowledge, insubordination, ethical violations, lack of relational skills, and lack of respect or integrity. Minimal research was discovered that examined how these characteristics fluctuate based on variables such as the grade level. For example, do the most prominent characteristics that define an incompetent teacher vary based on the grade level they teach? Do male and female principals have differing views on which characteristics are most important in determining the incompetence level of a teacher? Do marginal teachers in small schools display the same primary characteristics as those in large schools? Do veteran principals view certain characteristics more or less important in determining the incompetence level of a teacher than novice principals do?

Barriers to Dismissal

So why are incompetent teachers retained? The answer is complex. In the following section, principal-identified barriers to dismissal of teachers that consistently fail to meet minimum standards will be presented. Barriers are divided into individual categories to provide greater clarity.

Teacher Unions

While it seems teacher unions had altruistic beginnings, school leaders today generally view unions as an obstacle to school improvement. Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003) conducted a study of almost 2,000 central office and building administrators from schools across America. Eighty-six percent of superintendents and 84% of principals felt "sometimes the union fights to protect teachers who really should be out of the classroom" (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 35). Roughly 70% of administrators also stated "the teachers' union sometimes resists doing things that would improve education in their district" (p. 35). Results from more recent research suggest teacher unions remain a barrier to the termination of incompetent teachers. Five years after the Farkas et al. (2003) study, the *Schools and Staffing Survey* (2007-2008) confirmed principals still felt unions were significant barriers concerning teacher dismissal. Unions were also cited as "major barriers" in studies prior to 2003 (Claymore-Ross, 1996; Painter, 2000).

Teacher unions, or organizations as some call them, exist in the state of Missouri. The most prominent teacher unions in the state are the Missouri State Teacher's Association and the Missouri chapter of the National Educator's Association. Both organizations work to support the rights of teachers in the state of Missouri. One of the goals of the study was to determine if principals in the state felt these two unions posed as significant barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers.

Tenure

According to Christie and Zinth (2011) tenure laws were created about 85 years ago to protect teachers from political favoritism and arbitrary dismissal. However, principals have often stated tenure has become a barrier in the dismissal of incompetent educators. In the latest *Schools and Staffing Survey* (2007-2008), principals across the nation agreed that tenure was indeed a barrier in terminating incompetent teachers. In a study of perceptions of elementary teachers in a large Virginia school district, researchers confirmed teachers felt tenure was an obstacle to dismissing incompetent educators (Menuey, 2005). Superintendents and principals agreed, 80% and 65% respectively that it is difficult to justify tenure when most other professions do not include this type of guarantee (Farkas et al., 2003).

This study was conducted in Missouri, thus, it is important to provide a definition of tenure, as well as the process for dismissing a teacher within the state. According to the *Missouri State Teacher Association School Law Guidebook* (2010), teachers who complete five years of full-time teaching service in a single school district may achieve the status of tenure. Tenured teachers in one district must work an additional four years to gain tenure when transferring to another school district. Non-tenured teachers may also gain tenure after four years in the new district, assuming they completed a minimum of two years teaching in their previous school. As with most states, non-tenured teachers in Missouri may legally be terminated at the end of each year without cause. Termination for a tenured teacher is a matter of due process. Dismissal procedures as defined in the Missouri Revised Statutes section 168.116 are presented in Appendix A.

Missouri laws on teacher tenure are conservative compared to most other states with tenure laws. Three years teaching experience was the most common amount of time states

required to gain tenure (Christie & Zinth, 2011). Since it takes longer to obtain permanent status in Missouri, one can conclude there are higher percentages of probationary teachers in the state. Considering probationary teachers' contracts may be non-renewed without reason, and since there is a greater proportion of non-tenured teachers in Missouri than in most other states, it is believed tenure will not be as significant an obstacle, compared to most states where similar studies have been conducted.

Time

It is a widely held belief that principals are to be instructional leaders, disciplinarians, mentors, communicators, visionaries, legal experts, adept in public relations, and collaborative team builders. Given the many duties principals are asked to carry out on a daily basis, it shouldn't come as a surprise that many principals feel they don't have time to adequately evaluate and dismiss incompetent teachers. Independent studies of administrators in Virginia, Arizona, and California revealed time as an obstacle in the dismissal process (Thompson, 2006; Menuey, 2005; Painter, 2000). Results from the 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey* confirmed that principals across the country perceive lack of time to be a barrier in teacher evaluation and dismissal. Unless school leadership is restructured, it appears lack of time will continue to be a significant roadblock to teacher termination.

Cost

Costs associated with dismissing tenured teachers vary from state to state. The price tag for dismissing a teacher in New York City is about $250,000 (Associated Press, 2008). As a result, only 10 of the 55,000 teachers on staff were fired in 2007. Dawson and Billingsley (2000), to illustrate the high cost of dismissing teachers in California, shared a story detailing how it took a district eight years and $300,000 to finally dismiss a teacher. Financial costs listed

above may be on the high end given the increased legal issues related to dismissing teachers in New York and California, but costs are relatively high in other parts of the country as well. It recently cost an Oklahoma school $80,000 and almost half a year to dismiss a teacher (Rolland, 2010).

Many schools incur significant expenses even without court costs. Non-tenured teachers can be dismissed without reason, but it still costs the district money to train a new teacher. This includes paying for professional development, a stipend for mentor teachers, and salary for district professional development coordinators. Nixon, Packard, and Douvanis (2010) best summarized the topic of cost stating:

> Principals who make decisions to recommend involuntary non-renewal of teacher contracts must not do so lightly because the up-front costs and consequences for the district are significant. The greatest cost, however, would be to have students forced to endure the permanent scar of an incompetent teacher (p. 8).

Unwillingness to Confront Teachers

Psychological discomfort and disruption of the school social environment are sometimes powerful barriers to confronting ineffective teachers (Painter, 2000). Bridges (1992) provided some common examples of ways principals avoid direct confrontation related to dismissal. Examples included inflating performance ratings, seldom making dismissal recommendations, treating the evaluation process as a celebration of only positives, and covering up criticism with empty compliments. Some principals will even knowingly rate incompetent teachers as satisfactory to avoid facing issues with low performance (Sahin, 1998).

Other popular alternatives to dismissal are intra-district transfer and teacher resignation. In Arizona, 26.5% of administrators admitted to transferring an underperforming teacher to another school in the district (Sahin, 1998). Principals claimed a transfer would allow the teacher a fresh start, but there is little empirical evidence to support the thought that a different

location will improve the performance of an incompetent teacher. Administrators also provided the option of resignation to many teachers. Menuey (2005) listed forced resignation or forced early retirement as options that were sometimes taken instead of formal dismissal when dealing with incompetent teachers. Forced resignation occurs when a teacher is given the option of either resigning or being formally dismissed. Most view resignation as less harmful to the long-term career of the teacher and is often the path taken. While this option is more efficient in some ways than dismissal, it often allows teachers to continue practicing in other schools, thus repeating the cycle of poor performance. Schools must develop a culture of confronting and removing ineffective teachers to help principals become more willing to initiate the dismissal process.

Emotional Cost to the Principal

Messer (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 18 principals in Tennessee and found that principals felt the dismissal process was very difficult emotionally. Principals struggled with dismissing a teacher who, in many cases, was the sole breadwinner of the family, or experienced a number of family crises in recent history (Messer, 2001). Parish (1999) stated:

> The thought of dismissing teachers and taking away their livelihoods is not a pleasant thought for most school administrators. But an even more unpleasant thought should be the disservice and wasted learning opportunities afforded students who are subjected to unsuitable teachers on a daily basis (p. 1-2).

Lack of Principal Training in Teacher Evaluation

Principal self-efficacy related to teacher evaluation and dismissal has been increasingly questioned over the past few decades. Individuals interested in teacher evaluation want to know if principals lack the motivation or skill-set to identify and dismiss unsatisfactory teachers. In this section, information will be presented from existing studies related to principal preparation

on teacher evaluation. A principals' evaluation and identification abilities related to incompetent teachers will also be inspected.

In 2005, Hess and Kelly conducted a study of principal preparation programs in the U.S. to determine the amount of instructional time devoted to various instructional topics. Researchers used stratified sampling to select schools from three categories: prestigious programs, normal programs, and programs with the greatest number of principal graduates. Syllabi were gathered for courses taught at each institution. Weekly course content was then reviewed and divided into instructional themes. Of the 2424 course weeks examined from the syllabi, only 360 weeks were devoted to personnel management, and only 12 weeks mentioned teacher dismissal. In other words, less than 0.5% of the 2424 course weeks were devoted to the topic of teacher dismissal. Furthermore, 20 of 31 programs in the study failed to mention teacher dismissal even once. Another interesting finding was that only 24% of the 360 course weeks were devoted to topics relating to evaluation of personnel. One limitation of the study was that only syllabi were used in conducting the research. No interviews, or more in-depth analysis of courses, were performed. Still, it provided evidence that principal programs may not be adequately equipping future administrators with the skills needed to evaluate and dismiss incompetent teachers.

Results from other studies were varied on the topic of evaluation and identification of ineffective teachers. Claymore-Ross (1996), when surveying elementary principals in South Dakota, determined most principals felt it was slightly difficult or difficult to document instructional classroom procedures of teachers. Tucker (1997) listed lack of evaluative skills on the part of the principal as a barrier to non-renewal. Mitchell (2011), however, found no statistically significant difference between personal efficacy and principals seeking dismissal of a

teacher. In a longitudinal study of principals and teachers in a school district in the Midwest, Jacob and Lefgren (2007) determined principals can generally identify the top and bottom 10% of teachers. Achievement gains of students were used to determine most and least effective teachers in the study. Parish (1999) reported that administrators in Georgia also stated above average confidence in a building administrator's ability to evaluate teachers.

Existing studies provided mixed evidence concerning the ability of a principal to evaluate and identify incompetent teachers. Specific guidelines for teacher evaluation should improve a principal's confidence and consistency in the teacher evaluation process. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is currently implementing a "Model Evaluation System" in the state. This new system, along with required principal training on teacher evaluation, could improve overall evaluation practices in the state of Missouri, thus increasing the possibility of properly identifying incompetent teachers.

Gaps in Research on Barriers to Dismissal of Incompetent Teachers

Multiple researchers (Bridges, 1992; Claymore-Ross, 1996; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jacob, 2010; Mueney, 2005; Nixon, Packard, & Douvanis, 2010; Painter, 2000; Parish, 1999; Rolland, 2010; Thompson, 2006; Tucker, 1997) reported barriers to dismissal that included teacher unions, tenure, time, cost, unwillingness to confront teachers, emotional cost to the principal, lack of principal training in teacher evaluation, and poor evaluation systems. While these barriers are widely reported, minimal literature was identified informing how these barriers vary based on grade level, size of the school, location of the school, gender of the administrator, or administrator experience. More studies should be conducted to examine the most significant barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher; and determine if

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differences exist between the relative significance of barriers based on school size, grade level of the school, school location, the gender of the principal, and a principal's experience.

Existing studies on this topic have additional limitations. First, the majority of studies occurred in states where teachers are granted tenure in three or less years. In Missouri it takes five years for a beginning teacher to attain tenure. It is important to know if differences exist in the magnitude of tenure acting as a barrier in Missouri compared with other states studied. Second, many of the studies researched only one school district. While this method has advantages, individual school district culture and climates are unique, making it difficult to generalize results to other settings. This study will include principals around the state of Missouri in order to obtain findings that can potentially be generalized to a larger population.

Value-added Teacher Evaluation as a Way to Identify and Dismiss Incompetent Teachers

Over the past decade the quality of teachers and related educator evaluator practices have come under increasing scrutiny. Traditionally, teachers have been evaluated subjectively by principals or other immediate supervisors. However, results from some studies indicate that principals inflate teacher ratings (Jacob, 2010; Sahin, 1998). Legislators and policymakers agree, questioning the legitimacy of an evaluation system where 98% of educators are rated as satisfactory (Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project, 2012).

As a result, there has been a push for additional methods of teacher evaluation. Race to the Top, Teacher Incentive Fund, and other initiatives, encourage, and in certain cases require, the use of additional measures that use student achievement gains as a means of evaluating teachers (Firestone, 2014; Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014). One purpose in the establishment of such initiatives was to improve teacher practice, provide feedback for teacher development, and to assist with the dismissal of incompetent teachers (Firestone, 2014). Most evaluations systems

measuring student achievement gains use some form of value-added models (VAM). These models focus on estimating teachers' contributions to achievement gains made by students on state exams, or other standardized assessments, from year to year (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck 2013). Proponents of VAMs as a means of teacher evaluation claim using student achievement data to evaluate teachers will improve teaching practices, as well as make it easier to identify and dismiss incompetent teachers (Winters &Cowen, 2013). Opponents state that VAMs are unstable, may not actually identify the worst teachers, and have a narrow view of what constitutes an effective educator (Baker et al., 2010).

Existing research supports the idea of using multiple measures, including VAMs, to evaluate and potentially dismiss teachers. One of the most comprehensive studies examining the use of multiple measures to evaluate teachers was the MET Project supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Results from the study indicated that using multiple measures led to higher reliability and stability in determining teacher quality (MET Project, 2012). Researchers also suggested that using three combined methods magnified the ability to identify the best and worst teachers. Rockoff and Speroni (2010), in a study of New York City teachers, found that using both subjective measures, such as principal observations, and objective measures, such as gains in student achievement, have significant potential to address the problem of low teacher quality. Harris et al. (2014) agreed with the proposal of using multiple measures concluding that neither VAMs nor teacher observation by principals alone are adequate to determine teacher quality.

Teacher evaluation is a complex process and cannot be completely understood using a single form of measurement. VAMs can assist in evaluating teacher effectiveness based on student assessment data. Student feedback can provide insight into teacher effectiveness in areas

such as ability to teach in practical ways, instructional strategies, student engagement, teachers' relationships with students, and classroom management.   Principal observations, when using an appropriate evaluation tool, can measure the above areas, as well as teacher cooperation, effort, knowledge in the content area, formative and summative assessment data, and motivation.

Legislators in Missouri have adopted a system which uses multiple measures, potentially including VAMs, to assess teacher quality. At this time, policymakers have yet to determine if VAMs will be used as a means to dismiss or promote a teacher (Collins & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). Given the shift in teacher evaluation methods within the state of Missouri, it is important to examine the potential benefits and drawbacks in using VAMs to identify and dismiss incompetent teachers. During the qualitative phase of the study, principals were asked to describe their feelings about the new evaluation methods and whether the new methods made it easier or more difficult to identify and dismiss incompetent teachers.

Additional Gaps in Existing Literature

Minimal research was discovered that examined the various aspects of teacher incompetence in the state of Missouri. Missouri is currently at a critical juncture in teacher evaluation. A new state-wide evaluation model has been developed and piloted in the state. This model is currently being implemented. Also, legislative efforts are being made to remove teacher tenure in Missouri and instead move to three or five year teacher contracts. These two developments may impact the way incompetent teachers are identified and the relative ease of the dismissal process. Studies should be conducted in Missouri to gain a better contextual understanding of incidence rates, characteristics of incompetent teachers, and barriers to their dismissal within the state.

The majority of research found during this course of this literature review was quantitative in nature. Only one qualitative study was discovered (Messer, 2001). Both quantitative and qualitative components are important to the development of a more complete understanding of teacher incompetence. Qualitative or mixed methods studies should be conducted to provide more in-depth information in the topic.

How This Study Will Address Gaps in Literature

Although literature was discovered on the topic of incompetent teachers, there are many gaps that remain. Results from this study will potentially add to the overall body of literature in multiple ways.

Benefits of Using a Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods approach was used in this study because it "provides strengths that offset weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research alone" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011, p. 12). This approach made it possible to elicit rich data using both quantitative and qualitative measures within a single study. Quantitative measures were used to gain an understanding of principals' perceptions of incompetent teachers across the entire state of Missouri. Qualitative methods were employed to add depth to the quantitative results. Few, if any, existing studies on the topic of teacher incompetence have been conducted that employed both quantitative and qualitative measures within a single study. Due to the nature of the design of the study, results may provide additional depth to current literature in the field.

State-wide Analysis of Missouri

As of the date when this study was completed, all known state-wide studies on teacher incompetence were conducted in the southeastern and western United States. Educational systems vary on many factors based on regions in the United States and even between states in

the same region. This study added to the body of existing literature by examining a state in the

Midwest. Comparisons can be made to determine how working with and dismissing

incompetent teachers varies based on geographic location within the United States.

Also, Missouri requires five years for a beginning teacher to receive tenure, tied for the

longest length of time to obtain tenure of anywhere in the nation. The majority of existing

studies occurred in states where a teacher can be granted tenure after two or three years of

service. Results from this study may be used to inform policy on teacher tenure laws in other

states. For example, if it is determined that tenure is not as significant of a barrier in Missouri as

it is in other states where research has been conducted, it may lead to a consideration for other

states to increase the number of years needed to obtain tenure.

Analysis of Teacher Incompetence Based on Demographic and Principal-related Variables

Multiple authors (Bridges, 1992; Jacob, 2010; Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010; Nixon,

Douvanis, & Packard, 2010; Parish, 1999; Walls et al., 2002; Wasiscsko, 2004) reported

characteristics that lead a teacher to be labeled as incompetent. These characteristics included

poor classroom management and instructional skills, lack of content area knowledge,

insubordination, ethical violations, lack of relational skills, and lack of respect or integrity.

However, little research was discovered that examined how these characteristics may differ

based on variables such as grade level. For example, do the most prominent characteristics that

define incompetent teachers vary based on the grade level they teach? Do male and female

principals have differing views on which characteristics are most important in determining the

incompetence level of a teacher? Do incompetent teachers in small schools display the same

primary characteristics as those in large schools? Do veteran principals view certain

characteristics more or less important in determining the incompetence of a teacher than novice principals?

This study examined how the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers varied based on five variables. The first three were school related, which included school size, the grade level of the school, and the school location. The next two variables examined were the principal related variables of gender and level of experience. The study also sought to determine how frequently the specific characteristics of incompetent teachers were observed and how characteristics varied based on the five variables mentioned above. For example, did principals at elementary schools observe insubordination as frequently as middle or high school principals did? Did novice principals notice classroom management issues as frequently in incompetent teachers as veteran principals?

Study results can be used to guide professional development for principals that is focused on overcoming the most significant barriers different types of principals face when attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers. If results show that a novice principal's primary struggle is confronting incompetent teachers, then professional development can focus on interventions to help overcome those barriers. Professional development can be specific and tailored to the needs of each principal, since results of this study were disaggregated by gender and experience of the principal, school size, grade level served, and school location.

The primary goal of teacher education programs is to train high quality educators for full-time practice in the field. However, a secondary purpose of these programs should be to identify those candidates who may need focused improvement. Preparation programs can use results of the study to better identify teaching candidates who display characteristics similar to those most frequently observed by current principals. Structured interventions can then be provided by the

institution to remediate these characteristics before the teacher in training enters the profession, and possibly counsel a few candidates toward another career.

Finally, results from this study may be used to guide teacher evaluation practice. Right or wrong, evaluation tools used by principals are one of the primary components in determining the quality of a teacher. If lack of instructional skills and poor content knowledge are found to be the most important factors in leading a principal to label a teacher as incompetent, and they are also the characteristics observed most frequently, evaluation tools should be revised to include items that help evaluate these two areas. This will not only help to collect more focused data to provide direction for teachers in need of improvement, it will also provide principals with the data needed to dismiss an incompetent teacher who is unwilling or unable to achieve at a higher level.

Up-to-date Research on Incompetence Rates

Few studies have been conducted over the past decade to determine incidence rates of incompetent teachers, yet lack of teacher quality in the United States continues to be "hot topic". Much has changed in the field of education over the past ten years and new research on incidence rates is needed in order to determine the current magnitude of the problem. This study was conducted, in part, to determine incidence rates of incompetent teachers in the state of Missouri. Knowing the actual number of teachers that principals deem as incompetent can help policymakers and educators better understand the magnitude of the problem in the state, especially with a new teacher evaluation system being implemented. Results on incidence rates from the study may be used to determine if the new system is identifying, and helping to dismiss, a similar percentage of incompetent teachers as were reported in the study.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to examine existing research related to incompetent teachers. Existing research presented in this review was used to guide the development of survey and interview questions for this study. Although general research exists on characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal, minimal research was discovered that explored how the magnitude of specific characteristics and barriers vary in different contexts. This study explored incidence rates of incompetent teachers, as perceived by principals, in the state of Missouri. Factors including school size, location, grade level, principal gender, and principal experience were also explored to better determine which characteristics and barriers are most prominent in each context. Results may potentially be used to inform professional development for current and future administrators, improve teacher evaluation practices, and provide more insight into the teacher dismissal processes.

Chapter III: Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine administrators' perceptions related to incompetent teachers. Specifically, the study explored perceived characteristics exemplified by incompetent teachers, as well as barriers that sometimes impede the dismissal process. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used for the study. It was a two-phase design which involved collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first phase of the study, survey data was collected from principals across the state of Missouri to determine the most prevalent characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers and the most significant barriers to their dismissal. The second, qualitative, phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results. Potentially, this study will contribute to the field of education in three areas: teacher preparation programs, teacher evaluation programs, and principal professional development in the area of teacher evaluation.

Research methodology and design will be discussed in this chapter. Research questions will be presented first to provide a framework for research design and methodology. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical lens for both phases of the study. Next, quantitative and qualitative sampling strategies will be presented, as well as information that was needed to complete the study. Data collection and analysis procedures will be described in detail, including the timeline for completion of the study. The chapter will close by addressing ethical issues, issues of trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Questions

This mixed methods study contained quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods questions. The quantitative portion of the study contained four questions. Qualitative questions

were stated to answer the exploratory nature of the qualitative phase of research. The mixed method question was used as a means of tying quantitative and qualitative phases together.

Quantitative Questions

1. What percentage of the teachers in Missouri do principals perceive as incompetent?

2. What are the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers and how do they vary by grade level, school size, principal experience, school location, and principal gender?

3. Which characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers are observed most frequently by principals?

4. What are the primary barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher and how do these barriers vary by grade level, school size, principal experience, school location, and principal gender?

Qualitative Questions

1. How do principals describe the behaviors or characteristics exemplified by incompetent teachers that lead to a desire for their dismissal?

2. How do principals describe the challenges faced when attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers?

3. What effective practices do principals provide for overcoming barriers to dismissal?

Mixed Methods Question

1. What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about characteristics of incompetent teachers and their dismissal with outcome quantitative data from the survey instrument?

Theoretical Framework

Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design required the use of both post-positivist and constructivist theoretical perspectives. Traditionally, using multiple perspectives has been seen as contradictory. However, the use of multiple viewpoints is recommended for two-phase mixed methods designs. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated, "our view is that worldviews relate to types of designs, that the worldviews can change during a study, that the worldview may be tied to different phases in the project, and that researchers need to honor and to write about their worldviews in use" (p. 46). Other mixed methods researchers also supported the stance that employing multiple worldviews in multi-phase studies provides a framework to develop a more complete understanding of the human experience (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). During the quantitative phase of the research process, a post-positivist viewpoint was utilized. A constructivist view was employed for the qualitative phase. These worldviews are described in the following paragraphs.

Post-positivist

Quantitative studies often use a post-positivist approach. Post-positivists support (a) the ontology that a single reality exists even though the researcher may not be able to understand it; (b) the epistemology that reality is approximated and constructed through research and statistics; (c) the axiology that researcher bias should be controlled and not included in the study; (d) the methodology that includes the use of the scientific method to create new knowledge in a logical manner (Creswell, 2013).

Constructivist

Qualitative phenomenological studies often embrace a constructivist approach. Constructivists support (a) the ontology that multiple realities exist and are based on individual

experiences; (b) the epistemology that reality is constructed through the interaction between

researcher and the researched; (c) the axiology that individual values are expressed and honored;

(d) the methodology that involves a collaborative process between the researcher and participants

in the study (Creswell, 2013).

Research Sample

A mixed methods approach was used in this study because it "provides strengths that

offset weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research alone" (Creswell & Plano-Clark,

2011, p. 12). A visual model of the design is provided below in Figure 3.1.

Quantitative Phase	
Collect Quantitative Data Through an Online Survey	Analyze Survey Data

Qualitative Phase	
Collect Qualitative Data Through Semi-structured Interviews	Transcribe, Code, and Analyze Data from Interviews

Combine Quantitative and Qualitative Data	
Use a Joint Display Table to Compare Quanitative and Qualitative Data	Synthesize and Interpret Information

Figure 3.1 Sequence of Data Collection and Analysis for the Explanatory Sequential Mixed

Methods Design

Quantitative data was given priority in the study with qualitative data playing a supporting role. Emphasis was placed on quantitative data because the entire state of Missouri was the focus of the study. Through the use of a quantitative survey, it is possible that generalizations may be made about principals across the entire state. During phase one, quantitative data was collected and analyzed. During the qualitative phase six participants were selected from the pool of principals who participated in the first phase of the study. Each of the six participants participated in semi-structured interviews for the purpose of further examining barriers to teacher dismissal. Finally, methods were mixed during the interpretation phase of the research process.

Quantitative Sampling Strategies

Public school principals in Missouri were the target population for this study. Surveys were sent to all elementary school, middle school, and high school head principals in the state of Missouri. School and participant names were accessed using the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) database. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), at least 100 participants are needed when conducting a descriptive study. In this study, 205 principals completed the survey instrument, thus making possible the generalization of study results.

Qualitative Sampling Techniques

Qualitative participants were selected from the pool of individuals who participated in the quantitative portion of the study. A criterion purposeful sample was employed to choose participants for interviews using variables of gender and grade level served. Participants from the survey were divided into six candidate pools: elementary male, middle school male, high

school male, elementary female, middle school female, and high school female. A total of six survey participants were selected, one from each category, for follow-up interviews.

Overview of Information Needed

Demographic, perceptual, contextual, and theoretical information was needed to answer questions in this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). During the quantitative phase, demographic, perceptual, and theoretical information was used; while all four types of information was used to help answer qualitative questions. A table of information needed to answer specific research questions and hypotheses can be found in Appendix B. Information was collected through the use of surveys and semi-structured, face-to-face interviews.

Demographic Information

Principals in the state of Missouri represent a vast array of public school systems that vary in size, culture, location, and grade level of students served. Administrators also differ in age, years of experience, gender, and level of education. Each of these variations were important in helping to directly or indirectly answer research questions. Information on school size, location, and grade level helped to determine if significant differences in characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal existed based on school-wide demographics. Principal characteristics, such as years of experience and gender, helped conclude if legitimate differences existed based on individual demographics. During the qualitative phase of the study, demographic information was used to select participants from the quantitative portion of the study. During and after the interview process, school and administrator characteristics were also used to better understand the phenomena of incompetent teachers in different educational contexts.

Perceptual Information

Perceptual information was collected from participants through surveys in the quantitative phase of research and by means of semi-structured interviews during the qualitative phase. Specifically, participants' perceptions on characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal were elicited. Surveys were used to gain a general understanding of principal experiences with incompetent teachers. Interviews were also used, as they are considered one of the primary methods to obtain perceptual data from participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). These interviews provided in-depth perceptual data to complement survey results. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), collecting perceptual data through both quantitative and qualitative means helped enhance understanding of principals' experiences in dealing with incompetent teachers.

Contextual Information

Participants in the qualitative phase of the study were selected from the group of survey participants in order to develop a deeper understanding surrounding the phenomenon of incompetent teachers. During the interview process with these participants, it was extremely important to gain insight into the context of each respective school's culture and environment (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Important contextual information in this study included the school district's stance on dismissing incompetent teachers, board policy related to teacher dismissal, and perceived efficiency of building level teacher supervision and evaluation processes that helps identify incompetent teachers. Contextual information was a key component in helping understand why significant differences existed, if any, between different educational contexts.

Theoretical Information

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), theoretical information involves exploring existing research to determine what is already known about the topic under study. In this study, it was important to review existing literature in at least three areas. First, it was important to explore incidence rates of incompetent teachers that have been cited in previous studies. Next, existing literature on characteristics of incompetent teachers was examined. Finally, existing studies that focused on barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers were explored. Results from this study can be compared to existing sources of literature in order to compare incidence rates of incompetent teachers, characteristics of incompetent teachers, and barriers to their dismissal.

Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used as a framework for guiding this research study. This design included a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. Explanatory designs are used when the researcher wants to use a qualitative strand to explain initial quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this study, results from the qualitative portion of the study were used to help further explain quantitative trends (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Emphasis was placed on the quantitative phase with the qualitative phase playing a supporting role. During the quantitative phase, a post-positivist orientation was used. As the study transitioned to the qualitative phase, orientation shifted from post-positivist to constructivist.

Data was collected during the quantitative phase using a survey for the purpose of collecting perceptual data from 205 administrators across Missouri on the topic of incompetent teachers. Once collected, data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to

determine if significant differences existed in principals' perceptions toward aspects of incompetent teachers. A criterion purposeful sample was employed to choose participants for phase two using variables of gender and grade level served. Participants from the survey were divided into six candidate pools: elementary male, middle school male, high school male, elementary female, middle school female, and high school female. A total of six survey participants were purposefully selected, one from each category, for follow-up interviews. Qualitative data was collected by conducting interviews with the chosen principals. Data was then analyzed to answer qualitative questions. Finally, results from both phases were synthesized and discussed to show how qualitative results helped explain quantitative results.

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Data Collection

For the first phase, which is quantitative, an online survey was used. This method was chosen because "survey research involves collecting data to test hypotheses or to answer questions about people's opinions on some topic or issue," in this case incompetent teachers (Gay et al., 2012, p. 184). The survey consisted primarily of Likert scale questions. Items on the survey were tied to research questions. Existing literature on the subject of incompetent teachers was used to inform the development of survey questions. Demographic questions were also included on the survey. The survey was administered to five administrators to gain feedback and make necessary modifications. The final survey was sent to participants using Qualtrics software. Qualtrics formatting allowed for an easy transition to SPSS software for analysis.

Surveys have numerous advantages when collecting data. They allow the researcher to collect data from a large number of participants in a relatively short amount of time. The development of online survey tools have also made them inexpensive to conduct. Generalization

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to the overall population is a possibility, since large numbers can be sampled (Gay et al., 2012).

Although survey research has numerous strengths, Gay and colleagues (2012) reported a few challenges that could threaten validity and reliability in the study. First, participants cannot ask for clarification on survey questions. Certain terms, phrases, or questions may mean different things to different people. Others may not understand portions of certain questions that are asked. It was important when creating the survey to word questions as clearly as possible and define any ambiguous terms.

Researchers are also challenged when conducting survey research by the fact that they cannot probe or follow-up on responses to specific items. One of the primary reasons for doing mixed methods research is to help overcome this weakness. During the qualitative phase of the research process, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected survey participants to gain a deeper understanding of initial responses.

A third challenge of surveys is the potential for low response rates. Suggestions for improved response rates include setting a deadline for response to the survey, creating a survey that is relatively brief, and potentially gaining backing for the survey through a state or national organization (Gay et al., 2012). When necessary, follow-up emails were used for potential participants who did not respond to the first email.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collection began upon the completion of quantitative data analysis. An interview protocol was developed before the quantitative study phase was completed, but was revised as necessary to tie or mix the two phases of the research together. Existing literature about incompetent teachers was used to inform the development of interview questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the six individuals chosen from the quantitative study.

A criterion purposeful sample was employed to choose participants using variables of gender and grade level served. Participants from the survey were divided into six candidate pools: elementary male, middle school male, high school male, elementary female, middle school female, and high school female. A total of six survey participants were purposefully selected, one from each category, for follow-up interviews.   Though this selection process did not guarantee participant representation from all five variables studied, using the two aforementioned variables provided rich and varied exploratory data. The purpose of the interview was to further explain and explore survey results on the phenomenon of incompetent teachers. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for the purpose of supporting and explaining quantitative results.

Interviews have a number of advantages. In this study, they played an important role in explaining and exploring in-depth data from principals concerning incompetent teachers, thus complimenting the survey responses. The researcher can gain insight through interviews he may not be able to elicit through observation alone. The interviewer can also immediately probe the participant to clarify information from initial responses (Creswell, 2008).

Creswell (2013) offered, "challenges in qualitative interviewing often focus on the mechanics of conducting the interview" (p. 172).   Researchers often encounter issues with getting participants to open up, staying on topic during the interview, and handling sensitive issues. During the interview process it was important to quickly establish rapport with each participant and create a non-threatening environment so participants were willing to talk openly about the phenomenon.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Quantitative Phase Organization for Analysis

Creswell and Plano Clark's procedural steps for explanatory mixed methods data analysis were used as a guideline for this study (2011, p. 217-218). The first step in data analysis was to organize quantitative survey data. Once survey data collection was completed using Qualtrics, raw data was exported to SPSS statistical analysis software. Qualtrics formatting allowed for an easy transition to SPSS software, which is often used for quantitative analysis. A copy of the raw data was also exported to Microsoft Excel as a redundancy system. Both raw and analyzed data files were saved on a laptop and backed up using both an online serve and external hard drive. A code book defining key variables, terms, methods, and procedures was also developed to guide the analysis process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The five variables under study were broken down into subgroups to prepare for analysis of how these subgroups differed within each variable. The breakdown of these variables is presented in Table 3.1

Table 3.1

Variables Broken Down by Subgroups

Variable	Subgroup
Gender of the Administrator	Male
	Female
Year of Administrative Experience	1-5 Years
	6-10 Years
	11 or More Years
Grade Level Where the Principal Serves	Elementary School
	Middle School
	High School
	K-8
	7-12
Student Population of the School Where the Principal Serves	1-249 Students
	250-499 Students
	500-749 Students
	750 or More Students
Location of the School Where the Principal Serves	Rural
	Suburban
	Urban

These variables were chosen because each one had the potential to add valuable insights on the topic of incompetent teachers. Males and females have historically held different views on many topics. This study helped to determine if males and females viewed the topic of teacher incompetence through a different lens as well. Years of administrative experience was chosen as a variable to understand how principals' ideas about incompetent teachers varied based on their exposure to the phenomenon over different lengths of time. Schools often experience different challenges due to school-related factors such as school size, location, and the grade level of students served. It was important to determine how these variables affected how a principal

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working in different school-related contexts viewed teacher incompetence. Based on research

and personal experience, it was believed exploration of these five specific variables would yield

rich data on the topic of incompetent teachers.

Quantitative Phase Planning for Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze survey results. Descriptive

statistics that were used included mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. These

procedures were used to gain a general overall understanding of the data. Inferential statistics

were then used to help determine if results from the sample in the study could be generalized to

the entire population of administrators in Missouri. A variety of statistical procedures were

conducted to examine the demographic variables of gender, experience of the principal, grade

level served, location of the school in which the principal served, and size of the school in which

the principal served. Survey questions that were directly tied to answering quantitative research

questions were analyzed using a number of procedures including mean, Levene's test for

homogeneity of variances, ANOVA, and Tukey's HSD to determine if significant differences

existed in principals' perceptions about incompetent teachers. If homogeneity of variances was

violated, and the variable showed significant differences, then Welch and Brown-Forsyth tests

were also conducted. These additional tests were used to validate results as they accommodate

for differences when homogeneity of variance and normality assumptions are violated. An

ANOVA was also conducted on the dichotomous of gender in order to provide consistency in the

manner in which results were presented.

A .05 level of significance was used to serve as a criterion or standard in determining

whether to reject the null hypotheses in the study. The given level is typically used in

educational research and states that results of the study could have occurred by chance only five

out of 100 times. This means there is a high probability (95%) that any variation found in characteristics and barriers between grade levels, school size, school location, gender of the principal, or experience of the principal in the study did not occur by chance and actually represent real differences (Gay et al., 2012).

Qualitative Phase Organization for Analysis

Qualitative data was collected through interviews with selected participants from the quantitative portion of the study. Interviews were taped using a digital voice recorder, and saved on a computer as a MP3 file. Digital audio files were used to transcribe interviews using Microsoft Word. All transcribed interviews and MP3 files were saved on a computer and backed up on both an online server and an external hard drive. Data was further organized and managed using Microsoft Word for coding and memo writing. A coding manual was written as a means of defining codes and themes that developed through the data reduction process.

Qualitative Phase Planning for Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data was conducted through transcription of interviews, memo writing, and multiple levels of coding. Although this study used mixed methods approach overall, the qualitative portion of the research most closely aligned with a phenomenological study. Creswell (2013) listed a practical approach for phenomenological data analysis based on the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (p.193-194).

First, interviews were transcribed soon after conducting them. This was a time consuming process which many researchers choose to contract out, but I felt it was an important initial step in the analysis process. Transcribing interviews provided the opportunity to repeatedly listen to audio recordings, tuning in to participant voice inflections, pause in responses, exclamations, and other key aspects of the interview I would not have experienced

otherwise. Transcription also helped me gain a better understanding of participant views and how multiple views of participants were interwoven together.

Second, I described my own personal experiences with incompetent teachers. Doing so helped minimize potential researcher bias so the focus could be on the participants in the study (Creswell, 2013). Next, I used structural coding to examine transcripts and match significant statements with pre-determined codes that were developed using results from the quantitative portion of the study. Saldana (2013) recommended using structural coding because it aligns well with mixed methods approaches. While pre-determined codes were initially used, I remained flexible and added other codes as needed to provide a more thorough representation of participant perceptions. During this initial coding process, I wrote memos to gain deeper insight concerning the essence of the study.

Codes and significant statements were sorted into general themes using Microsoft Word. Statements were considered significant if they provided support in helping better describe the essence of participant experiences. I then used themes from interviews, memos, and the coding process to provide a "written description of what the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). Creswell (2013) referred to this as textural description. Next I described the "setting or context in which the phenomenon was experienced" (Creswell, 2013, p. 194). Creswell (2013) referred to this as structural description. Finally, I combined textural and structural descriptions to describe the overall essence of the participant experiences (Creswell, 2103, p. 194).

Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

Once data was analyzed for quantitative and qualitative phases separately, results were synthesized into a comparative analysis of the overall study. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011)

stated, "mixed methods data analysis is conducted to answer the mixed methods research question as to whether the results from both analyses converge and how they converge" (p. 223). In order to efficiently compare quantitative and qualitative results, I used a "joint display" for merged analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 226). This involved presenting quantitative and qualitative results in a data table for comparison. I used the table to compare major categories and themes from the two phases. The table was used as a means for discussion, which in turn provided the vehicle for merging the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Through this multi-phase analysis and synthesis process, I sought to answer research questions from the study. Using a mixed methods approach provided me with the potential for developing more robust study results than by using quantitative or qualitative approaches alone. While both the study and analysis took longer with this approach, I was able to use it as a catalyst for meaningful insight into the topic of marginal teachers.

Procedures and Timeline

During the planning phase of this study a timeline was developed which listed action steps that needed to be taken during the research process. This was an important step in ensuring the study was completed in an efficient and timely manner. A description of the timeline and procedures can be found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Procedures and Timeline for the Study

Activity	Researcher Tasks	Participant Tasks	Timeline
Develop a draft of survey.	Develop initial survey using information from current literature and research as a guide.		Fall 2013
Choose potential participants for the quantitative phase of the research process.	Use the state data site to select a participant sample that meets parameters of the study; get contact information for potential participants.	Participants will not be contacted until approval for research has been given.	July-August 2014
Get research approval.	Work with the IRB at University of Arkansas to gain approval for the study.		August 2014
Pilot the survey.	Pilot the survey with a small group of administrators who are representative of the overall sample; gain feedback and make necessary revisions to the survey.	Take the survey; give feedback for revision.	October 2014
Begin phase one of the research process.	Send out surveys to participants; monitor responses.	Complete surveys.	November-December 2014
Analyze survey results and choose participants for the qualitative phase of the research process.	Analyze survey results; perform statistical analysis; revise interview protocol if needed; choose qualitative participants that are representative of the typical responses during the quantitative portion of the study.		December 2014-January 2015

Contact potential participants for the qualitative phase of the study.	Contact potential participants of the qualitative study; explain the interview process; gain consent to interview; schedule a time for interviews.	Agree to participate in interviews; sign consent forms.	December 2014
Write the quantitative portion of chapter four.	Begin writing chapter four of the dissertation to discuss results of phase one.		December 2014-January 2015
Conduct interviews for phase two of the study.	Conduct interviews for the qualitative portion of the study.	Participate in interviews; provide responses to interview protocol questions.	January-February 2015
Analyze interviews.	Transcribe and code interviews.	Verify transcription is accurate.	February-March 2015
Write the qualitative portion of chapter four.	Add qualitative results to the quantitative portion of chapter 4 that has already been written.		March 2015
Write chapter five of the dissertation.	Combine quantitative and qualitative results to provide a comprehensive interpretation of findings.		March-April 2015
Defend the dissertation.			April 2015
Graduate			May or June 2015

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of primary importance in any study dealing with human subjects. According to Gay et al. (2012), the researcher should keep the welfare of participants above the need to conduct the study. To protect the well-being of research subjects, issues must be examined that could ethically compromise the study. Safeguards can then be installed to minimize risk to participants. Ethical issues central to this study focused on three concepts: protecting participants from harm, ensuring confidentiality of research data, and ensuring honesty with research participants. Each of these concepts will be briefly discussed, including methods that were used to ensure the well-being of participants.

Protection from Harm

It is the responsibility of every researcher to ensure participants are not harmed in any way, and that participation in the study is voluntary (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Gay et al., 2012). One common method of achieving this goal is through informed consent, which is central to research ethics (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In this study, informed consent was only requested after participants were given a description of the study, including: the purpose, data collection methods, how results were to be used, and any potential risks associated with the study. Protection from harm was also achieved by making sure responses were confidential and reminding participants they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). It was especially important that administrators knew their decision to withdraw from part or all of the study would not be shared with anyone, including superintendents, school boards, and state leadership organizations.

Confidentiality

Establishing a relationship between participants and the researcher is crucial to the success of almost any study with a qualitative component. One way to do this is ensuring information provided by participants will be kept confidential. Some studies ensure confidentiality through anonymity, where identities are not revealed to the researcher (Gay et al., 2012). In this mixed methods study, anonymity was not possible, because participant names from the survey had to be known, since they were tied to the selection process for the qualitative phase of the study. Therefore, confidentiality was ensured by other means. First, only fictitious names were used in any research reports or public statements. Second, no responses were shared that would cause an administrator to be identified by any means, including: age, gender or race of the individual, size of the school, years of experience, opinions, or any other manner. If confidentiality could not be ensured, individual responses were not included in the study.

Honesty

Honesty is not only important to the researcher-participant relationship, it is also a critical component in determining the credibility of a study. Deception occurs in two ways. The first way is by deceiving the participant; and the second way is by providing misleading information in research findings (Creswell, 2008). Participants are deceived when the researcher fails to adhere to the guidelines written in the informed consent form. Audiences reading research findings can also be deceived when findings are altered or participant views are misrepresented, and when the researcher is not open about his own subjectivity.

Honesty in this study was achieved in three ways. First, I was open and honest with participants about the research process, including: the purpose, the goals, how data was to be gathered and used, and any risks associated with the study. Second, participants were given the

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opportunity to view completed transcripts to ensure the information was an accurate portrayal of their perceptions. Finally, I was open about my perceptions concerning incompetent teachers, in an effort to minimize bias.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a key issue with any research study. In the quantitative phase of mixed methods research, trustworthiness is achieved through establishing validity and reliability (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). For the qualitative phase, trustworthiness is achieved through credibility, dependability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In this section I will provide rationale for how mixed methods studies enhance overall trustworthiness, and also discuss trustworthiness in quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), "mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (p.12). Quantitative research can be used to potentially generalize findings, but typically it does not allow participants to share detailed insights about how the phenomenon is experienced. Qualitative research allows a researcher to gain meaningful data about how a phenomenon is experienced, but is typically unable to be generalized, due to small sample size. However, if the two methods are combined in a single study, they have the potential to increase credibility and reliability.

Validity is defined as "the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of any inferences a researcher draws based on data obtained through the use of an instrument" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 162). In the quantitative portion of the study, validity was ensured using a number of approaches. First, I used results from previous research, and input from current administrators, to develop appropriate and meaningful questions. Next, I only created items on the survey that were related to answering the research questions. Finally, I built a

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questionnaire that was both clear and concise. The final questionnaire was piloted with a group

of administrators to ensure the survey was clear, and that survey items were appropriate to help

answer research questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). According to Fraenkel and Wallen

(2009), "reliability refers to the consistency of scores or answers provided by an instrument" (p.

162). Reliability was achieved by creating multiple survey items that focused on each research

question, and through additional related questions from the interview protocol.

In the qualitative portion of this study, credibility was achieved by using multiple

methods to collect data, using "member checks," and "peer debriefing" (Bloomberg & Volpe,

2012). One advantage of using mixed methods is that multiple methods of data collection are

embedded within the study. Using this approach, data was collected through the use of surveys

and interviews, which helped to verify participants' viewpoints. Once interviews were

transcribed, I provided the opportunity for participants to check the transcripts for accuracy. I

also employed the services of co-workers who have been through doctoral programs, to check

transcripts and coding for accuracy.

Dependability is parallel to reliability in a quantitative study, and was ensured using an

audit trail (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Throughout the qualitative research phase, I kept

detailed records showing the procedures used during each step of the process. Themes from this

phase of research were also tied to findings from the quantitative study, thus increasing the

reliability of the overall study. Transferability refers to "how well the study has made it possible

for readers to decide whether similar processes might work in their own setting" (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2012, p.113). In order to increase the likelihood the study will be useful in other

contexts, I used "rich" and "thick" descriptions to provide detailed accounts of participants'

shared experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). Also, mixed methods research provides

a robustness that can potentially lead to both generalizable and transferable findings.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Delimitations**</div>

One advantage of using a mixed methods research design is that it potentially enables the

researcher to overcome limitations within the study. That said, even the best-laid research plan

does not come without limitations. In this section I will present both delimitations and

limitations, but first it is important to delineate between the two terms. According to Bloomberg

and Volpe (2012), delimitations are the "conditions or parameters that the researcher

intentionally imposes in order to limit the scope of a study" (p.8). Limitations are defined as

"external conditions that restrict or constrain the study's scope or may affect its outcome"

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p.8).

Delimitations

This study was confined to building level principals that worked in a public school in the

state of Missouri. Principals working in charter schools, alternative schools, and private schools

were excluded from the study. Over 200 principals were surveyed, which made the

generalization of results a possibility within the state, but one should be cautious in extending

potential findings to other states for a number of reasons. First, teacher tenure laws and teacher

dismissal procedures may be different in Missouri than other states. This could possibly affect a

principal's ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher. Principal preparation, certification

requirements, and teacher evaluation tools also vary by state, which could lead to different

perceptions concerning the ease of teacher dismissal. Regardless of these delimitations, it is

likely that lessons learned from this study will provide insight for educators working outside

Missouri.

Limitations

This study was limited by the fact there is no common definition of teacher incompetence in professional literature. Furthermore, many educational researchers use the terms marginal, incompetent, ineffective, and poor-performing interchangeably when referring to educators. In order to provide clarity within the study, a clear definition of the term "incompetent" was provided for research participants. This definition was in written form on the survey instrument and during the interview process. A written copy of the definition can also be found in the definitions section of this proposal. Using a common definition was an important step that enabled the researcher to more accurately compare survey and interview responses.

A survey was used as a means of collecting data during the quantitative phase of the study. According to Creswell (2008), potential limitations inherent within survey research include construction of survey questions, response bias, low response rates, and inability for elaboration of responses. Poorly constructed survey questions can lead to confusion on the part of participants, which can result in findings that do not accurately portray participant perceptions. Guidelines from Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) were used as a tool to create a valid questionnaire. First, the content in the survey was carefully developed. Only items directly tied to answering research questions were included. Each question was clear and focused on a single concept. Items were also organized from general to specific to increase flow and clarity. Finally, I created unbiased questions by adhering to question construction guidelines and through the use of five administrators who provided input concerning potential survey revisions (Gay et al., 2012). These administrators consisted of both male and female head principals who served at different building grade levels, each having at least five years of service in the field of

administration. Panel members not only provided input for survey clarification, but also acted as a valuable resource to ensure validity of the survey instrument.

A low survey response rate is a concern that could limit the credibility of findings in this study. High response rates are important. According to Creswell (2008), they give the researcher confidence in generalizing results from the study. Strategies for improving response rates included setting a deadline for response to the survey and creating a survey that was relatively brief (Gay et al., 2012). When necessary, follow-up emails were used for potential participants who do not respond to the first email.

According to Gay et al. (2012), researchers are also challenged when conducting survey research by the fact that they cannot probe or follow up on responses to specific items. One of the primary reasons for conducting mixed methods research is to help overcome this weakness. During the qualitative phase of the research process, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected survey participants to gain a deeper understanding of initial responses.

Creswell (2013) offered that mechanics of conducting the interview sometimes hinder the process.   Researchers often encounter issues with getting participants to open up, stay on topic during the interview, and handle sensitive issues; all of which can limit the credibility of the study. During the interview process, rapport was quickly established with each participant in order to create a non-threatening environment, so participants were willing to talk openly as they responded to questions. Participants also had a chance to view completed transcripts to ensure the information was an accurate portrayal of their perceptions and not influenced by researcher bias.

A final challenge that could potentially limit the study involved the process of selecting participants for the qualitative interviews. It would be ideal for participants to be chosen from a

pool of candidates from the first phase of the study who best represent views of the average survey participant. This process would be rather simple if the study only examined one independent variable. However, many school and principal related variables were examined, including size of the school, location of the school, grade level of the building in which the principal serves, gender of the principal, and experience of the principal. While exploring multiple variables increased the robustness of the study, it also provided for a more challenging selection process during the interview phase. To simplify the process, a criterion purposeful sample was employed to choose participants for interviews using variables of gender and grade level served. Participants from the survey were divided into six candidate pools: elementary male, middle school male, high school male, elementary female, middle school female, and high school female. A total of six survey participants were selected, one from each category, for follow-up interviews. Though this selection process did not guarantee participant representation from all five variables studied, using the two aforementioned variables provided rich and varied exploratory data. However, one should caution applying comments provided by interview participants to the overall population of administrators in the state of Missouri.

Summary

Teacher quality is an important factor in student achievement and success. This mixed methods study explored principals' perceptions of characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The overall goal of the study was to provide up-to-date research for school leaders, administrator preparation programs, and teacher education programs for the purpose of guiding professional development practices, teacher evaluation programs, and a principal's preparation in the area of teacher evaluation.

Chapter IV: Findings

Purpose

The first purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perceptions about the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers varied based on five variables. The first three were school related, which included school size, the grade level of the school, and the location of the school. The next two variables examined were the principal related variables of gender and level of experience. The second purpose was to examine the most significant barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher; and determine if differences existed between the relative significance of barriers principals faced based on school size, grade level of the school, school location, gender of the principal, and a principal's years of experience.

Organization of Findings

The introductory section of this chapter provides a description of demographics of principals who participated in the study. This portion is included for the purpose of describing the five variables that were examined during the quantitative phase of the research process. A brief summary of data collection and analysis procedures for this study will then be presented to provide a framework for the research findings. A full description of data collection and analysis procedures can be found in chapter three of this dissertation. The final portion of the introductory section concludes with a discussion of any differences that occurred between the projected study and the actual study.

The next section of the chapter contains findings from the quantitative portion of the study. Information presented in this portion was pulled from survey data. This section is broken down by quantitative questions from the study to help the reader more clearly understand how the data is tied to answering specific questions. Findings will be presented on incidence rates of

incompetent teachers in the state of Missouri, what principals feel are the most important characteristics in helping them identify incompetent teachers, characteristics that are observed most frequently in incompetent teachers, and the most prominent barriers that make it difficult to dismiss teachers.

During the third section of Chapter IV there will be a discussion of the open-ended questions from the survey instrument. This part of the chapter is divided into themes built around principals' responses to questions about working with incompetent teachers. The purpose of this section is to provide a bridge between the quantitative and qualitative sections of this mixed methods study, and to provide support for findings from the qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with six principals will be presented in section four of the chapter. Discussions in this section are organized based on the qualitative research questions from the study. The section is further broken down into themes on characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and effective practices principals use when working with or dismissing incompetent teachers.

The final section of Chapter IV provides a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative findings to help answer the mixed methods question from this study. Findings from both phases of the research process will be presented using a joint table in order to compare results from the surveys and semi-structured interviews. The chapter will conclude with a summary of findings from this study on principals' perceptions of incompetent teachers in the state of Missouri.

Demographics of Participants

Participants from this study came from the pool of head principals across the state of Missouri. In all, 205 principals completed the online survey. Principals representing a number

of backgrounds chose to participate in this phase of the study. One hundred-nine of the respondents were male and 96 were female. Sixty-five of the principals had one to five years of experience, 68 had six to 10 years of experience, and 72 had 11 or more years of experience as an administrator.

Principals who responded also worked in a number of different types of educational settings. Fifty-nine principals worked in buildings with less than 250 students, 84 in buildings with 250-499 students, 43 in buildings with 500-749 students, and 19 in buildings with 750 or more students. Participants represented buildings of different grade levels including elementary (N=84), middle school (N=32), high school (N=40), K-8 grade buildings (N=15), 7-12 grade buildings (N=13), as well as 21 principals from other types of public schools across the state of Missouri. Respondents also came from schools in different locations within the state including urban (N=24), suburban (N=55), and rural (N=126).

Qualitative participants were selected from the pool of 205 individuals who participated in the survey. A criterion purposeful sample was employed to choose six participants for interviews. The goal was to choose individuals who represented the vast array of principal and school characteristics that were explored in the quantitative phase of the study. Of the six participants, three were male and three were female. Two principals worked in the elementary setting, one male and one female. One female principal was interviewed from a K-8 building and one male from a 7-12 school. Finally, one male participant from a middle school and one female from a high school were interviewed. These principals also represented a range of other characteristics including level of experience, the size of school in which they serve, and the location of the school.

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Summary of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data for the quantitative phase of this mixed methods study were collected using an online survey through the use of Qualtrics software. An email was generated in Qualtrics and sent to 1967 principals across the state of Missouri. The first email generated 131 responses. A reminder email was sent two weeks later to those who had not yet responded. This generated an additional 74 responses for a total of 205 responses, resulting in a 10.4% response rate.

Once all survey data were collected, responses were exported to SPSS for analysis. A variety of statistical procedures were conducted to examine the demographic variables of gender, experience of the principal, grade level served, location of the school in which the principal served, and size of the school in which the principal served. Survey questions that were directly tied to answering quantitative research questions were analyzed using a number of procedures including mean, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, ANOVA, and Tukey's HSD to determine if significant differences existed in principals' perceptions about incompetent teachers. If homogeneity of variances was violated, and the variable showed significant differences, then Welch and Brown-Forsyth tests were also conducted. These additional tests were used to validate results as they accommodate for differences when homogeneity of variance and normality assumptions are violated. Results are presented in the quantitative findings section of this chapter and broken down by quantitative research questions from the study.

Three open-ended items were included on the survey instrument that asked principals to share effective strategies they have used to work with incompetent teachers or overcome barriers to dismissing incompetent teachers. These responses were coded in Microsoft Word using structural coding. Once coded, responses that fit under each theme were counted. Themes are

presented in this chapter according to the magnitude of responses given that fit under each theme.

For the qualitative phase of this mixed methods study, an interview protocol was developed. Questions on the interview protocol were tied to answering qualitative research questions for this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six principals who responded to the survey. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and then exported to Sony Sound Organizer software to prepare for transcription. Interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word.

Once transcribed, data from interviews were coded using Microsoft Word. During first cycle coding, structural coding was used as a method for separating data into the major categories of characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and effective practices when working with incompetent teachers. During second cycle coding characteristics, barriers to dismissal, and effective practices were further broken down into specific themes. Results are presented in this chapter by these themes in a manner which answer qualitative research questions.

Differences between the Projected Study and Actual Study

The actual study closely followed the procedures for data collection and analysis that were originally proposed for the study, with one exception. Atlas.ti was the software that was originally proposed to be used to analyze data for the semi-structured interviews. However, once the coding process began, it was decided that Microsoft Word would be used instead. This choice was made for two reasons. After initially examining interview data, it was determined that more sophisticated software was not needed for qualitative analysis. The interviews were structured in a way that already somewhat pre-coded information into categories by the order in

which the questions were asked. Microsoft Word software was sufficient to use for the coding

that was used. Also, the researcher already had access to Microsoft Word, and was very familiar

with using it for coding during past studies. Using Atlas.ti would have resulted in unnecessary

expenses and training.

<div align="center">

Quantitative Findings

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Percentage of Teachers Perceived as Incompetent

During the survey, principals were asked to share the total number of teachers currently

working in their buildings as well as the number of those teachers who they perceived as being

incompetent. The total number of incompetent teachers was divided by the combined number of

teachers to obtain an overall rate or percentage of incompetent teachers. Principals taking the

survey reported a total of 7226 teachers working in their buildings. They reported 237 of those

teachers as incompetent, which equates to 3.28% of the teaching sample.

Rates were also broken down and calculated according to the variables of gender of the

principal, experience of the principal, size of the school, location of the school, and grade level

of the school. Male principals reported higher rates of incompetent teachers (3.67%) than their

female counterparts (2.81%). Principals with six to 10 years of experience reported almost

double the rate of incompetence than principals with 11 or more years of experience. When it

came to school location, principals working in suburban districts noted rates that were

approximately half those in urban and rural districts. Elementary principals reported the lowest

rates of incompetence (2.2%) while K-8 and 7-12 principals reported much higher rates of 5.02%

and 4.90% respectively. When related to student population in the building, principals working

in schools with less than 250 students had the highest rates of incompetent teachers and

principals working in schools with 500-749 students reported the lowest rates. A complete list of

incompetence rates can be found below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Reported Rates of Incompetent Teachers in Missouri by Category

Category	Total Teachers	Total Incompetent Teachers	Rate of Incompetence
Total	7226	237	3.28%
Male	3952	145	3.67%
Female	3274	92	2.81%
1-5 Years of Experience	1941	71	3.66%
6-10 Years of Experience	2198	95	4.32%
11+ Years of Experience	3087	71	2.30%
Urban	954	38	3.99%
Suburban	2536	51	2.01%
Rural	3736	148	3.96%
Elementary	2767	61	2.20%
Middle School	1377	66	4.80%
High School	2013	63	3.13%
K-8	259	13	5.02%
7-12	306	15	4.90%
Under 250 Students	1119	53	4.74%
250-499 Students	2606	81	3.11%
500-749 Students	1882	46	2.44%
Over 749 Students	1619	57	3.52%

Primary Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers

On the survey, principals were asked two questions about identifying the characteristics

of incompetent teachers. The first survey item asked principals how important certain

characteristics were in helping them identify a teacher as incompetent. The characteristics

provided as response choices were lack of content area knowledge, poor instructional delivery,

absenteeism or tardiness, lack of classroom management, ethical violations and inappropriate

conduct, lack of student achievement, insubordination, and poor relational skills with students, parents, or staff. Possible choices for each of the characteristics were *Unimportant, Of Little Importance, Moderately Important, Important, and Very Important.* Each choice was assigned a point value from *Unimportant* (1) to *Very Important* (5).

Mean scores were calculated for each characteristic to determine which were most important in helping principals identify a teacher as incompetent. An ANOVA was also conducted to determine if significant differences existed in the relative importance of characteristics based on the five variables listed in the research question above. A .05 alpha level was used as a standard to determine if any differences were significant.

The next item on the survey asked principals to rank the eight characteristics in order from the most important in helping to identify incompetent teachers to the least important in helping to identify incompetent teachers. The most important characteristic in helping identify an incompetent teacher was given a ranking of one, the second most important characteristic was given a ranking of two, all the way to the least important which was given a ranking of eight. Mean scores were calculated to determine which characteristics principals felt were most important to help identify an incompetent teacher.

These questions were created in a manner that was similar, yet allowed for a different type of response. They were used to test the internal consistency of principals' answers in the area of teacher incompetence. Due to the sheer volume of the data created from these two responses, the only results presented are those which help to answer the research question. A more complete table of results may be found in Appendix G. First, data for all principals will be presented as a whole. Then, results on principals' perceptions of incompetent teachers are broken down by the variables researched during the study which are *Grade Level of the School,*

Size of the School, Experience Level of the Principal, Location of the School, and Gender of the Principal.

Principals rated all eight characteristics as *Important* to *Very Important* in helping them identify a teacher as incompetent. The three characteristics receiving the highest mean ratings, on a scale of one to five, were poor instructional delivery (4.75), ethical violations (4.72), and lack of classroom management (4.68). Those with the lowest mean ratings were lack of content knowledge (4.37), lack of student achievement (4.27), and absenteeism or tardiness (4.19).

Principals were also asked to rank the eight characteristic from most important to least important in identifying incompetence. They ranked the eight characteristics in the following order: ethical violations (1), poor instructional delivery (2), lack of classroom management (3), poor relationships (4), lack of content knowledge (5), lack of student achievement (6), insubordination (7), and absenteeism or tardiness (8). Responses from both questions yielded similar results, which adds to the reliability of the findings. Principals clearly identified poor instructional delivery, ethical violations, and lack of classroom management as the three most important characteristics that help them to identify a teacher as incompetent.

Grade level of the school. Principals who participated in the survey worked primarily in five different settings: elementary school, middle school, high school, K-8 buildings, and 7-12 buildings. Elementary principals and principals in 7-12 grade buildings ranked poor instructional delivery and ethical violations as the top characteristics used to identify incompetent teachers. Middle school principals reported ethical violations and poor relational skills as most important. Ethical violations and poor instructional delivery were ranked highest for high school principals. K-8 respondents felt poor instructional skills and poor classroom management were most important in identifying incompetence. All principals ranked

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absenteeism or tardiness as the least important characteristic. No significant differences were found between grade levels concerning principals' perceptions of the relative importance of each characteristic in determining teacher incompetence.

Size of the school. Respondents who completed the survey serve in schools of varying sizes. For purposes of analysis, schools were separated into four size ranges: those with 1-249 students, those with 250-499 students, those with 500-749 students, and those with 750 or more students. Principals from schools with less than 250 students reported lack of classroom management and poor instructional skills as most important in identifying incompetence. Respondents from schools with 250-499 students identified ethical violations and poor instructional skills as most important. The top characteristics reported by principals working in buildings with 500-749 students were poor instructional skills and ethical violations. Principals from the largest schools reported ethical violations as the most important characteristic in identifying incompetent educators. Poor classroom management skills and poor instructional skills were tied for second with this group. Absenteeism or tardiness was reported as least important characteristic for all school sizes.

An ANOVA was conducted using the variable of school size. Principals from the largest school group felt that lack of content area knowledge was significantly more important in identifying incompetence than principals from the smallest schools did, $F(3, 201) = 3.241$, $p = .023$, $n^2 = .046$. No other significant differences were found between groups based on school size.

Experience level of the principal. Principals who took the survey were divided into three categories: those serving five years or less as an administrator, those serving from six to 10 years, and those with 11 or more years of experience. Respondents in the category with the least

experience ranked poor classroom management and poor instructional delivery as the most important characteristics in identifying incompetent teachers. However, ethical violations and poor instructional delivery were designated as most important for the principals in the other two groups who had more administrative experience. It appears that novice principals put a higher value on classroom management skills and veterans look more at ethical behavior as the most important way to identify incompetence. All groups labeled absenteeism or tardiness as least important. An ANOVA was conducted based on the level of experience of the principals and no significant differences were found between groups concerning the relative importance of characteristics.

   Location of the school. During the survey, principals identified themselves as working in an urban, suburban, or rural school setting. Principals from urban schools ranked ethical violations and poor relationships with students as most important in identifying teacher incompetence. Those working in suburban settings reported ethical violations and poor instructional skills as the most important characteristics. Finally, rural school principals claimed poor instructional delivery and ethical violations were the most significant in determining which teachers are incompetent. Although ethical violations ranked highly for all three groups, principals from urban backgrounds tended to focus more on relationships while those from suburban and rural settings looked more at instructional delivery as factors in determining the competence level of a teacher. All three groups listed absenteeism or tardiness as least important. No statistically significant differences were discovered between principals from urban, suburban, and rural settings when their responses about characteristics of incompetent teachers were examined.

Gender of the principal. An ANOVA was conducted using gender as the variable and three significant differences were found. Female principals reported that lack of content area knowledge was significantly more important in identifying incompetent teachers than did their male counterparts, $F(1, 203) = 10.386$, $p = .001$, $n^2 = .049$. Females also perceived poor instructional delivery, $F(1, 203) = 9.375$, $p = .002$, $n^2 = .044$ as significantly more important factor in determining incompetence. Finally, females rated lack of student achievement more important than males did at a significant level, $F(1, 203) = 6.925$, $p = .009$, $n^2 = .033$. Overall, male principals ranked ethical violations and females ranked poor instructional delivery as the most important characteristics. Both groups perceived absenteeism or tardiness as least important.

Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers Most Observed

One item on the survey asked principals to rate how frequently they observed the following characteristics when working with incompetent teachers: lack of content area knowledge, poor instructional delivery, absenteeism or tardiness, lack of classroom management, ethical violations and inappropriate conduct, lack of student achievement, insubordination, and poor relational skills with students, parents, or staff. Possible choices for each characteristic were *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Always.* Each choice was assigned a point value from *Never* (1) to *Always* (5).

The mean responses of all principals were calculated for each characteristic to determine which ones were observed most frequently and least frequently. The four characteristics observed most frequently were lack of classroom management ($\bar{X} = 3.86$), poor instructional delivery ($\bar{X} = 3.81$), lack of student achievement ($\bar{X} = 3.56$), and poor relationships ($\bar{X} = 3.53$). Characteristics that principals on average viewed the least frequently were ethical violations ($\bar{X}$

= 2.43), insubordination ($\bar{X}$ = 2.66), absenteeism/tardiness ($\bar{X}$ = 2.91), and lack of content

knowledge ($\bar{X}$ = 3.07). A complete table of mean scores broken down by the five variables

explored in this study can be found in Appendix G.

Responses were also broken down by the number of principals that responded to each

answer choice. Table 4.2 contains responses, along with corresponding percentages on the

frequency principals observed certain characteristics of incompetent teachers.

Table 4.2

How Often Principals Observe Characteristics from Incompetent Teachers

	Never	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Always**
Lack of content area knowledge	8 (4%)	43 (21.7%)	84 (42.4%)	54 (27.3%)	9 (4.5%)
Poor instructional delivery	3 (1.5%)	12 (6%)	41 (20.6%)	107(53.8%)	36(18.1%)
Absenteeism or tardiness	10(5%)	53(26.6%)	84(42.2%)	48(24.1%)	4(2%)
Lack of classroom management	3(1.5%)	9(4.5%)	49(24.7%)	89(44.9%)	48(24.2%)
Ethical violations	27(13.6%)	98(49.2%)	45(22.6%)	20(10.1%)	9(4.5%)
Lack of student achievement	4(2%)	14(7%)	74(37.2%)	81(40.7%)	26(13.1%)
Insubordination	17(8.5%)	71(35.7)%	82(41.2%)	21(10.6%)	8(4%)
Poor relational skills	3(1.5%)	22(11.1%)	68(34.2%)	78(39.2%)	28(14.1%)

Note: The numbers above represent the number of respondents and corresponding percentages
for each response.

Through examination of the table above, one can clearly see that there is a sharp contrast between the four characteristics viewed most often and the four viewed least often. Approximately 70% of principals reported seeing incompetent teachers struggle with instructional delivery and classroom management "*Often*" or "*Always*." Almost 54% of respondents observed these teachers "*Often*" or "*Always*" displaying poor relationships with students, parents, and staff. Roughly the same percentage reported seeing lack of student achievement for students in these teachers' classrooms. On the contrary, principals only observed lack of content area knowledge and absenteeism or tardiness "*Often*" or "*Always*" about 32% and 26% of the time respectively. When examining the "*Often"* and "Always" responses, ethical violations and insubordination were seen even less frequently at a rate of 14.1%.

Primary Barriers to Dismissing Incompetent Teachers

On the survey, principals were asked two questions about identifying the most important barriers they encounter when attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers. The first survey item asked principals to rate whether or not nine different barriers significantly complicated their ability to dismiss a teacher. The barriers that were listed were time, teacher organization or union, inadequate support from the superintendent, inadequate support from the school board, high cost of litigation, desire to avoid conflict and confrontation, laws protecting teachers, poor quality of teacher evaluation tools and procedures, and lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss teachers. Possible choices for each of the barriers were *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.* Each choice was assigned a point value from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5).

Mean scores were calculated for each barrier to determine which ones complicated their ability the most to dismiss an incompetent teacher. An ANOVA was also conducted to determine if significant differences existed in the relative strength of each barrier based on the five variables listed in the research question above. A .05 alpha level was used as a standard to determine if any differences were significant.

The next item on the survey asked principals to rank the nine barriers in order from the most prominent barrier to dismissal down to the least prominent one. The most prominent barrier to dismissal was given a ranking of one, the second most prominent barrier was given a ranking of two, all the way to the least prominent, which was given a ranking of nine. Mean scores were calculated to determine which barriers principals felt were most prominent in complicating their ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher.

These questions were created in a manner that was similar, yet allowed for a different type of response. They were used to test the internal consistency of principals' answers in the area of barriers to dismissal. Due to the sheer volume of the data created from these two responses, the only results presented are those which help to answer the research question. A more compete table of results may be found in Appendix G. First, data for all principals will be presented as a whole. Then, results on principals' perceptions of barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers are broken down by the variables researched during the study which are *Grade Level of the School, Size of the School, Experience Level of the Principal, Location of the School, and Gender of the Principal*.

Principals were asked to rank the barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers in order from the most prominent barrier to least prominent barrier. They ranked the barriers in the following order: time and laws protecting teachers (tied at 1), teacher unions or organizations (3),

poor evaluation tools and procedures (4), lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss teachers (5), cost of litigation (6), the desire to avoid conflict or confrontation (7), inadequate support from the school board (8), and inadequate support from the superintendent (9). Principals somewhat disagreed that inadequate support from the superintendent and school board were significant barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers. They somewhat agreed that time and laws protecting teachers acted as significant barriers. Respondents were virtually neutral on the other five barriers, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that each significantly complicated their ability to dismiss a teacher.

Grade level of the school. Elementary and middle school principals agreed that time was the most significant barrier to dismissal, followed by laws protecting teachers. High school principals listed laws protecting teachers as the most prominent barrier and time as the second most significant barrier to the dismissal of incompetent teachers. All three of these groups felt that lack of support from the superintendent was the least significant barrier to the dismissal process. Principals in K-8 and 7-12 settings both reported laws protecting teachers as most prominent, but K-8 principals ranked cost of litigation second whereas 7-12 principals felt time was the second most significant barrier to dismissal. An ANOVA was conducted and one significant difference was found between groups. Principals in the K-8 setting reported that the desire to avoid confrontation was significantly more of a barrier to dismissal than 7-12 grade principals did $F(5,199) = 2.526$, $p = .030$, $n^2 = .060$.

Size of the school. Principals from schools with a student population of less than 250 reported the top two barriers to dismissal as being laws protecting teachers and time. Those from schools with student populations between 250-499 students and greater than 750 students both reported time then laws protecting teachers as the top barriers to dismissal. Finally, respondents

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working in schools with 500-749 students felt laws protecting teachers and teacher unions were the biggest barriers when attempting to get rid of incompetent teachers. None of the groups felt lack of support from the superintendent or board complicated their ability to dismiss teachers. When conducting an ANOVA, one significant difference was discovered between groups. Principals from schools with less than 250 students reported that lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss teachers was significantly more of a barrier to dismissing teachers than principals from schools with 500-749 students did, $F(3, 201) = 2.846$, $p = .039$, $n^2 = .041$.

Experience level of the principal. Laws protecting teachers and time were ranked as the two top barriers to dismissal by principals with one to five years of experience and those with six to 10 years of experience. Both groups also felt lack of support from the superintendent was not a significant factor that complicated their ability to dismiss incompetent teachers. Principals with 11 or more years of experience responded that time and laws protecting teachers were the top two barriers to dismissal respectively, whereas lack of support from the school board was ranked as the least important barrier. Upon conducting an ANOVA, no significant differences were found between groups.

Location of the school. Urban principals reported time and teacher unions or organizations as the top two barriers to dismissal, whereas lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss teachers was ranked as least important. Principals in suburban schools felt time and laws protecting teachers most complicated their ability to get rid of teachers. They also reported inadequate support from the school board was not an issue. Finally, principals working in rural settings responded that laws protecting teachers and time were the top barriers to dismissal, with inadequate support from the superintendent being the least significant barrier.

When an ANOVA was conducted, three significant differences between groups were found. Principals in urban settings reported that inadequate support from the superintendent was significantly more of a barrier than rural principals did, $F(3, 201) = 3.453$, $p = .034$, $n^2 = .033$. Rural principals also felt that teacher unions or organizations were significantly less of a barrier to the dismissal of incompetent teachers than both urban and suburban principals did, $F(2, 202) = 13.135$, $p = .000$, $n^2 = .115$.

Gender of the principal. Analysis of male and female responses to barriers yielded similar findings. Male principals felt laws protecting teachers and time were the top two barriers that complicated their ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher. Females reported the same top two barriers, but in the reverse order. Both males and females responded that lack of support from the superintendent was the least prominent barrier when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher. No significant differences were found between the responses of males and females concerning barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers.

Qualitative Findings from Open-Ended Survey Questions

Three open-ended questions were asked at the end of the survey in order to better understand how principals view working with and dismissing incompetent teachers. On the first question, principals were asked to identify strategies or tools they have used to overcome the barriers to dismissal of an incompetent teacher. This question yielded 194 responses which were focused on six themes: *Documentation, Professional Improvement Opportunities, Frequent Teacher Communication and Observations, Frequent Contact with Key Stakeholders, Counseling or Coaching Out, and New Evaluation Models.*

Documentation

The strategy mentioned the most times (76) for overcoming barriers to the dismissal of an incompetent teacher was documentation. Several respondents agreed that documentation was a critical component of dismissing such teachers. This viewpoint was voiced by one principal who wrote, "documentation is the key. Document everything including all conversations you have with the teacher. Keep all correspondence including notes, emails, etc." In addition to keeping records of communication, many principals recommended documenting expectations for improvement and whether or not those expectations had been met. One principal replied that he not only "documented poor-performance" but also "documented expected growth in improvement as well as the actual growth in improvement." Some principals added that when they meet with teachers to go over expectations and strategies for improvement, they also get the teacher's signature to ensure the teacher understands the content of the conversation.

One principal recommended, "using multiple observers who report similar findings." This advice was mentioned by others on different parts of the survey as well. The reasoning behind doing this is to ensure reliability of ratings and that the teacher won't be able to claim the primary evaluator is "out to get her." Other responses provided short phrases promoting "extensive documentation," "consistent documentation," "meticulous record keeping," and "document, document, document."

Professional Improvement Opportunities

Providing opportunities and support for improvement were identified by 64 principals as a means of overcoming barriers to dismissal. Respondents felt that providing professional improvement plans, opportunities for professional development, and support to improve were important for two reasons. First, incompetent teachers should be given resources and support to

improve. This thought was conveyed by one principal who stated, "once a struggling teacher is identified, my first duty is to support them with critique on what needs to improve and then give them the resources to do so." Another principal added, "my first intent with any incompetent teacher is to try to help them improve and monitor their progress."

The second reason given for implementing improvement opportunities is that they provide evidence to support dismissal by showing the school has made an effort to remediate the teacher before dismissal was considered. If remediation efforts fail then principals are able to pursue dismissal knowing they have given the teacher every chance to improve. One principal summarized this point well when she said, "first and foremost you work with them, care for them, help them, document, and give them deadlines. If [teachers] are not holding up to their end of the bargain then dismiss them ASAP!"

Frequent Teacher Communication and Observation

Establishing frequent contact with the teacher through observations and conversations was listed by 50 principals. It is important to be in a struggling teacher's classroom often to develop a better understanding of his areas of concern. One principal wrote it was important to "increase the number of observations and walk-throughs to make sure I have an accurate read on the level of effectiveness of instructional delivery, classroom management, and the ability to increase documentation when deficiencies are observed." Another principal added that observations should not only increase but also "occur during all times of the day" to get a more holistic view of what happens in the classroom throughout the day. Finally, three respondents recommended that other evaluators should observe the teacher as well, in order to ensure the primary evaluator is accurately assessing the deficiencies of a teacher.

Principals also felt that clear and consistent communication between the principal and teacher should accompany observations. Teachers should have a clear understanding of what needs to improve, supports provided, and what will happen if improvements are not made. One principal stated, "I meet regularly with teachers in question to clearly explain expectations and consequences of continued inadequate job performance." Another principal added that it is also important to develop "relationships with teachers in order to have honest and open communication for teacher growth."

Frequent Contact with Key Stakeholders

Consistent communication with key stakeholders in the district was mentioned by 46 respondents. Key stakeholders include the superintendent, human resources personnel, the district attorney, the school board, and other principals in the building. Principals listed three purposes for communicating with key stakeholders. The first purpose is to keep district leaders informed about the incompetent teacher. This ensures that there "aren't any surprises" and that the district leadership is aware of each step of the process when dismissal is pursued.

A second purpose is to gain support. Principals must determine that the superintendent and school board are supportive of the decision to dismiss the incompetent teacher. Consensus between the principal, superintendent, and school board is an important factor in the ability fire a teacher. One principal even had two superintendents conduct observations on an incompetent teacher "to refute or agree with my findings." The principal went on to state, "the teacher agreed that those results would be unbiased and would agree to their findings and future proceedings according to those findings. My superiors' results matched mine and thus we were able to remove the teacher who was tenured."

The final purpose given for communicating with key stakeholders was for guidance and advice. One principal shared, "I collaborate with other administrators for advice about how to best proceed." Another principal stated it was important to receive "guidance from the school attorney." The superintendent and other leaders can also provide direction for the principal as to how he should proceed, or not proceed, with the dismissal process.

Counseling or Coaching Out

One alternative principals seem to use instead of firing a teacher is convincing the teacher to resign. Respondents provided 17 comments related counseling or coaching the teacher out of the job. Principals listed numerous ways to accomplish this goal. One method mentioned was simply "conferencing with the teacher and encouraging or promoting retirement or resignation." A principal who responded to another survey question felt this avenue allowed the teacher to "exit the job without being disgraced." Other principals changed teaching assignments to a less desirable position or assigned additional duties "in hopes that they [the teacher] would leave." One principal stated that incompetent teachers also sometimes "decide that improvement plans are not worth the work and resign." This path to dismissal was supported by another administrator who wrote that incompetent teachers often choose to leave when you "make them uncomfortable in the spotlight through challenging them to improve continually."

New Evaluation Models

Twelve principals stated that quality evaluation tools can be used to help overcome barriers to teacher dismissal. A new teacher evaluation system was implemented in the state of Missouri in 2014. The system still allows districts to choose their own evaluation models, but they must ensure the models adhere to more stringent standards that were developed by the state. The two primary models districts have chosen to adopt are the model developed by DESE and

the Network for Educator Effectiveness model (NEE). Seven of the 12 principals who commented about evaluation tools listed the NEE as a means of working with incompetent teachers. One principal stated, "the new NEE teacher evaluation model has been extremely helpful in working with the teachers I have concerns about personally." Another principal wrote, "I am using the NEE process for the first time this year and it does a much more thorough job." Other principals said the NEE has improved the process of working with or dismissing incompetent teachers because "it is based on many walk-throughs and uses extensive data" and it provides "better documentation." No principals mentioned the DESE model specifically when referring to evaluation systems as a means of removing barriers to teacher dismissal.

On the second open-ended question principals were asked to share suggestions of effective practices they have used when working with incompetent teachers. This question elicited 181 responses which were focused on five themes *Documentation, Taking Time to Work with Incompetent Teachers, Consistent and Honest Communication, Develop a Student Centered Mindset, and Develop Solid Hiring Practices.*

Documentation

Documenting was the response provided most often (78) as an effective practice when working with an incompetent teacher. This is consistent with the responses given for the last question about overcoming the barriers to dismissal of an incompetent teacher. The first reason given for documentation was to provide evidence of the teacher's progress. One principal wrote, "I work to help them [teachers] improve and make sure there are no surprises. If they are put on a plan, I keep lots of data and documentation that shows if they are making improvements or not."

Respondents also listed documentation as a means of building evidence to support teacher dismissal. One principal stated, "Document all interactions with incompetent teachers that could potentially be used to help dismiss that teacher from their position. Take the time necessary to investigate and ensure that removal is the best option for the school." One mistake some principals may make is neglecting to document information that seems trivial at the time only to realize later that it was a crucial piece in the dismissal process. One principal gave this advice, "document everything, even the smallest details will help when dismissing a teacher."

Taking Time to Work with Incompetent Teachers

Taking time to invest in developing incompetent teachers was an effective practice listed by 60 principals. Respondents felt it was their moral and ethical duty to work with incompetent teachers to try to help them improve. One principal advised fellow colleagues to "care for them and put yourself in their shoes. As an administrator, you are no more important than anyone else, and you were a teacher. You taught the students, now teach the teacher." Other principals echoed the sentiment that principals should support teachers who are struggling, but are willing to work on areas of weakness. One respondent wrote, "If they [incompetent teachers] have the ability to grow and change, and are willing to improve, then continue to work with them. If they are unwilling or unable to change, then you have a moral imperative to remove them."

How do principals recommend working with incompetent teachers? One principal recommended to "choose one or two things to work on at a time. These should be the 'biggest bang for the buck' behaviors." Another principal advised to "set them up with a strong mentor and give them feedback often. Send them to watch competent teachers both in and out of the building." Other recommendations from principals included providing research based

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professional development to address areas of weakness, focusing on strengths, praising the teacher when improvements are made, and using cognitive coaching.

Consistent and Honest Communication

The need for consistent and honest communication was reported by 53 respondents. Principals reported that being courageous enough to address concerns in an efficient, honest, and open manner was important when working with incompetent teachers. One principal reported, "I think the number one suggestion is open and honest communication, even when it is hard. Being honest with a teacher who is struggling is the best way for him or her to see the areas for growth." Another principal added, "have the tough talk early, let them know what you expect and where they are lacking." Other principals recommended communicating frequently, using data to drive conversations, and communicate using a variety of methods.

Develop a Student Centered Mindset

Seventeen principals commented on keeping a student centered mindset when working with incompetent teachers. Students' needs should come before teachers, administrators, or anyone else. As one administrator stated, "always have a student centered mindset. We are in the kid business and if a staff member is failing at any part of that then it has to get remedied immediately." The primary message principals were sending was that students need good teachers who foster learning and achievement, not teachers who harm students. One principal stated, "for me, it is knowing that students DESERVE competent and effective teachers that causes me to confront teachers. Those students who are under the tutelage of an incompetent teacher will suffer greatly." Another principal wrote, "your school is a much better place for children when ALL of your staff members are competent. No one deserves a bad teacher."

Principals who responded with statements about putting kids first provided some of the most candid statements when it came to working with and dismissing incompetent teachers. One principal stated, "we have an obligation to provide the best possible education to the students in our building. If we know a teacher is incompetent, we need to do what we can to make sure they are not working with students." Another respondent stated, "have a backbone and don't let students suffer because of your inability to act." Finally, one principal challenged colleagues by writing, "administrators unwilling to go through the required processes to dismiss incompetent teachers, tenured or not, are guilty of their own malpractice."

Develop Solid Hiring Practices

The final effective practice principals identified was preventative in nature. Five respondents stated that developing quality hiring practices was important to remember when addressing incompetent teachers. Their premise was that, through the development of effective hiring practices, fewer incompetent teachers will be hired in the first place. In referring to squelching incompetence, one principal stated, "it is also very important to hire effective teachers so you are not in that position to begin with." Principals offered recommendations for hiring that included "hiring staff that fit into your vision and mission," "check references that are not on the application or resume," "ask specific interview questions about instructional practices and ask to see lesson plans," and "start interviewing for teachers early."

The final open-ended question asked principals if there was any additional information that they wanted to share on the topic of incompetent teachers. This question yielded 78 additional comments. Most of the comments repeated themes already covered in the previous two questions. However, one new theme emerged - *Teacher Tenure.*

Teacher Tenure

Fifteen principals provided comments voicing their perceptions about tenure as a barrier to the dismissal of incompetent teachers. Respondents overwhelmingly disapprove of tenure, claiming tenured teachers possess too much job security. One principal stated, "the absolute safest job in America is the teaching profession. Unfortunately, we harbor way too much incompetence." Another principal wrote, "I am disappointed that education fights and supports keeping tenure laws in place."

Principals recommended relaxing tenure laws, or doing away with them altogether. The general consensus from respondents was that removing a teacher who has tenure takes too much time, energy, and resources that could be spent elsewhere. One principal summarized the other statements by stating:

> Teachers deserve some measure of job security, they should not be fearful of losing their job from year to year. However, teacher tenure laws, as they are currently written in the state of Missouri, provide far too much protection for ineffective teachers. In my experience, ineffective teachers are allowed to get away with behaviors (tardiness, no planning, unprofessional conduct) that would result in immediate termination at other places of employment. The time spent working with, cleaning up behind, documenting, etc., that it takes to dismiss an ineffective teacher would be much better spent helping quality teachers.

Qualitative Findings from Interviews

The analysis of this data identified various themes and characteristics that related to each of the qualitative research questions. The sections that follow provide a description of the findings that relate to each question.

Descriptions of Behaviors and Characteristics Leading to Desire for Dismissal

Principals identified six primary characteristics or behaviors exemplified by incompetent teachers. These characteristics were *Poor Relational Skills with Students, Parents, and Teachers, Ineffective Instructional and Assessment Practices, Poor Attitude and Work Ethic,*

Lack of Classroom Management, Inward Focus, and an Inability or Unwillingness to Develop as an Educator.

Poor relational skills with students, parents, and teachers. The characteristic of incompetent teachers that yielded the most comments from principals was poor relational skills. Respondents felt that building relationships with students is a critical part of the learning process. Students learn better from teachers with whom they develop a mutual sense of trust and respect. One principal stated, "if they [students] feel like the teachers will care for them, that teachers like them, they are going to want to be there."

Unfortunately, many incompetent teachers are either unable or unwilling to build these crucial relationships. When referring to an incompetent teacher's inability to relate to kids, one principal stated, "they just have an awkwardness about them, a lack of with-it-ness when it comes to talking to kids and building a rapport and a relationship with kids." Another principal reported frustration with an incompetent teacher's inability to listen to kids. She declared:

> They don't listen to children. Part of that [building relationships] is listening to kids. If you don't have the ability to listen to them, and that ability to build a relationship with them to where they want to work for you and they like to please you, then it is going to be pretty difficult.

According to principals, the consequence of poor relationships with students can have a significant negative impact on student learning. One middle school principal stated, "it can have a huge impact on some of these kids. They can have a huge hold in their learning if they have a year with a teacher like that." One respondent agreed, saying, "what they [incompetent teachers] don't understand is that kids aren't going to score well for teachers they don't like." Another principal supported this view about teachers who don't relate by stating, "they [kids] don't care about the teacher, about what they are saying, about what they are trying to teach them. It makes a huge difference about their ability to learn in there."

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Incompetent teachers also sometimes fail to relate well to parents. One principal called it a lack of "social or people skills." These teachers often don't display "tact" when having difficult conversations with parents. Others fail to even communicate with parents at all. This principal continued by saying that, through these actions, teachers can quickly create a negative perception of the school in the eyes of parents and even the community.

Ineffective instructional and assessment practices. Incompetent teachers often lack the ability or desire to instruct students and assess them in an effective manner. Multiple principals that were interviewed spoke passionately about looking for this component when in the classroom. One principal stated, "I'm looking at how they can relate it to the kids and get the information relayed to them in an effective way." Part of the issue is they don't "create fun and engaging lessons for the kids." Another reason cited was that these teachers may not be "following instructional expectations." This could mean "not spending time where it needs to be spent in terms of instruction and curriculum." It could also mean the teacher just isn't covering the curriculum with any pace or rigor. When referring to an incompetent teachers' instructional practices, one principal exclaimed, "there is usually a lot of down time. I don't think it is fair to kids. You'll have people that take a unit that should take a week and make it a month. They are just so untimed!"

These teachers have difficulty assessing a student's academic progress and if students are understanding the content. One principal stated, "they really don't know where their kids are and they don't know if they are learning, so it kind of gets back to, well, you've wasted their year." They just keep on "teaching" thinking "I threw it out there and if you got it you got it and if you didn't you didn't. You know, half the kids fail my class, but I'm a good teacher." As a

result, many students fall behind academically, especially those who were already "lower-level" kids.

Poor attitude and work ethic. Principals reported that incompetent teachers typically display a poor attitude and work ethic. One principal stated, "I think it is just allowing apathy to become prevalent in your classroom." According to principals, apathy or lack of work ethic can be displayed in many ways including "disorganization", "not grading assignments in a timely manner", "losing tests and paperwork", and "not communicating in a timely manner." This lack of work ethic can have a significant negative impact on kids. Once principal spoke of this impact stating:

> You can tell who sticks around until five o'clock at night grading papers and getting ready for the next day versus the ones that leave right when the bell rings. You can totally tell, you walk in there and you're like okay, this is one of those teachers. You look around the room there's nothing on the walls, and you just know this is a lazy teacher collecting a paycheck, and who has tenure so we are stuck with them. And it's terrible for our kids, it's terrible. I would be willing to bet that I've got a few in my building who, the kids in their classroom learn less than half as much as some of our higher teachers. The kids are walking away with less than half, I guarantee.

Another principal reported that some teachers are "okay at teaching, but they have bad attitudes." They are the teachers who "love to sit in the faculty lounge and complain, and gripe, and gripe, and gripe, and be negative." In the classroom these teachers have "bad attitudes, are sarcastic, mean, and angry." As a result kids end up hating the teacher and even sometimes the topic. Multiple principals spoke of the damage this type of teacher can have on students in the classroom as well as the negative impact on the culture and climate in the building.

Lack of classroom management. Poor classroom management is a characteristic principals reported observing frequently. Principals felt like poor classroom management results in more behavior issues and impacts student learning. One principal stated, "you give a child who needs behavioral support to one teacher and you know they will be successful. You give

them to another and it's a miserable year. They are so in and out of focus." When these kids are in classrooms that are "really inconsistent or have no sense of rules" then "kids get into trouble when basically shouldn't be." When expectations are unclear and aren't clearly enforced, then inappropriate behavior increases. One principal voiced that when these things happen kids are probably going to "hate school" and "they are going to get behind."

Inward focus. Principals felt that incompetent teachers often have a focus on self instead of a focus on kids. One administrator reported, "when you talk about what is best for kids, they get wrapped up in what is best for them. They get wrapped up in contract time and not having enough time." Another principal added, "kids should feel like they are the most important thing in your day, every single day. When you are just getting your paycheck, it is time to move on." These are often the same teachers that struggle to build relationships with kids, because kids can see they don't care about them. They are more concerned with clocking in, clocking out, and getting a check.

Inability or unwillingness to develop as an educator. Principals reported that incompetent teachers display an inability or unwillingness to develop and become a better educator. Principals felt that they have a moral obligation to help struggling teachers grow professionally. However, it becomes frustrating for administrators when these teachers don't want to change and develop. One principal commented, "the ones that are most difficult are the ones that are stuck and won't, they're not willing to learn, you know. That is usually what we run into with incompetent teachers."

Not only are some teachers unwilling to learn, they are combative about any kind of change that is being implemented. One principal stated, "a lot of times you just see the bull headedness [incompetent teachers] as far as we're going to clash. I'm not going to do this and I

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don't care what you say." Another principal added, "They will take anything new and just blow

it off saying no I don't teach that way. It is really difficult." Principals said that when these

things happen, other teachers are watching to see how they are going to handle the situation.

Incompetent teachers do not seem to realize, or maybe just do not care, about how their behavior

affects the cohesiveness of the staff.

Challenges Faced When Dismissing Incompetent Teachers

During the interview, principals were asked to describe the challenges they have

encountered when attempting to dismiss incompetent teacher. Their responses yielded five

challenges or barriers which are *Potential Litigation, Tenure, Local Politics, A Teacher's*

Unwillingness to Admit Deficiencies, and Time.

Potential litigation. Principals reported that the potential for litigation was a significant

challenge when attempting to dismiss a teacher. One principal commented, "the biggest one

[barrier] is the legal aspect, because you have to, you've got to do your leg work and it takes a lot

of time." Another principal who noted fear of litigation added, "even when it comes to a non-

tenured teacher, you've got to have a paper trail. You have to do things a certain way by the

book or they find ways to say you discriminated against them."

Principals also felt the actual cost and emotional cost to the school is a significant factor

when considering potential litigation. One has to consider time to document, attorney fees, and

the impact the process could have on other staff. This opinion was well stated by one principal

who said:

> When you are dealing with a tenured teacher you better make sure you are on a first name
> basis with your school attorney, because you are going to be on the phone with them at
> least once or twice a week making sure you have your paperwork lined out, because if
> you don't, and it comes back to that, ultimately it comes back to a legal proceeding,
> because it is going to be in a hearing. Ninety-nine percent of the time they request a
> hearing, and if you can't produce that paperwork, then you've gone through all of that

work. You've done all of this for nothing and you've just about killed your culture. You've killed the trust and confidence teachers can have in you as an administrator.

Tenure. Principals mentioned tenure as a major challenge to the dismissal process. Some felt tenure was the biggest barrier to getting rid of incompetent teachers. One principal stated, "the system is broken because that [tenure] is a barrier. It is a huge barrier. When asked about barriers, one principal passionately proclaimed:

Tenure is the worst thing ever created! You hear all the time that America is behind on education, and in my opinion, that's the number one reason why. We are stuck with incompetent teachers and they know it. They know we can't get rid of them.

Other principals who were interviewed felt tenure was a barrier but that the extent to which it was a barrier was dependent on support from the superintendent and the board of education.

Local politics. Another challenge in trying to dismiss a teacher is local politics. Principals voiced a concern that incompetent teachers sometimes have connections with members of the school board or other prominent community members that makes dismissal difficult. They recommended proceeding cautiously in these situations. One principal stated that, "you have to play political football and sometimes be careful with it because they are related to a board member. Unfortunately you have to play the game." Another principal mentioned a situation where a teacher was not dismissed because they had been in the district a long time and they "knew people" and "went to church with people." Yet another principal was dealing with a similar situation where the incompetent teacher was the child of a prominent community member.

Respondents also feared that the pursuit of dismissal of the "connected" teacher may actually result in their own dismissal. One principal commented:

Sometimes you will find people with a certain name. You can't touch these people, because you know you will end up losing your job. So you have to decide, I want to do

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what is right and fall on the sword, or can I accept the fact that this is a mediocre teacher and I want to keep my job and feed my kids.

Principals in these situations felt torn between doing what was best for kids in the school and keeping their job. One principal alluded to this struggle when he stated:

You know, what you have to understand is, has this been attempted before and that is the reason I'm here and the other person isn't, or is it because no one has messed with it because of this. What can I do to make this teacher better? Honestly it's not worth it if it is going to cost you your job, if it is going to be a lot of turmoil for other people, sometimes you have to weigh the good with the bad.

A teacher's unwillingness to admit deficiencies. Principals reported a frustration with teachers who would not admit to deficiencies or that they even understood their deficiencies. They felt sometimes teachers do this so they do not have to follow through on improvement plans and have a defense when the time comes for them to be dismissed. One principal told a story when a teacher came in to speak with her and claimed she just did not understand what the principal wanted. The principal stated, "I don't think it was that. What I think it was, was that they just didn't want to do what we wanted them to do."

Another principal voiced a frustration with a teacher who said he didn't understand because he didn't feel she was communicating effectively with him. She stated, "I was very frustrated because I would bring him in and tell them exactly what he needed to do. I would have them fill out a piece of paper and have a list for them" so there was no confusion. One principal even noted an instance where a veteran teacher invited her to tell him if he got to the point where it was "his time to go" and he would retire. Then, when it came time for the "time to go" conversation, the teacher blew up and viewed it as a personal assault.

Time. The theme of time as a challenge to the dismissal process was interwoven throughout interviews with principals. It takes documentation to dismiss incompetent teachers. Documentation requires frequent communication with, and observations of, the teacher.

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Communicating with the superintendent and school attorneys takes time. It takes time to

develop, monitor, assess, and revise professional improvement plans. If the teacher pursues legal

action, then even more time is drained due court dates and related activities. Principals voiced a

concern that time was not only a barrier to dismissal, but also that they would be neglecting other

responsibilities if they did take the time and energy needed to remove the teacher.

Effective Practices in Dealing with Incompetent Teachers

Principals who were interviewed provided many effective practices for working with

incompetent teachers and overcoming barriers to dismissal. These practices were divided into

six themes which are *Frequent Communication with and Observation of Teachers, Meticulous*

Documentation, Utilize the Best Teachers in the Building, Consult with District Leadership,

Apply Pressure, and Develop Effective Hiring Practices.

Frequent communication with and observation of teachers. Principals identified

frequent communication with, and observation of, teachers as one of the most effective practices

in addressing incompetence. First, principals felt it was important to get in the classroom and

observe incompetent teachers in order to get a clear picture of what it looks like in their

classroom on a daily basis. "Frequent observation and frequent feedback are going to best,"

stated one principal. Another principal commented, "if you've got somebody who is a question

mark who is not tenured, get in there and stay in there. You need to live in their classroom."

Principals should also provide teachers with clear and consistent feedback on what is

being observed, what they can do to improve, and supports they can use to improve. One

principal advised, "be direct or candid feedback wise. Those are not fun conversations, but they

have to occur." Another principal recommended being very blunt in expectations, even making

the teacher "share with me what it is I am expecting." She said this helps not to "leave the door

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open for any confusion of I just don't understand" on the teacher's part. An elementary principal described the process well when he stated:

> Particularly if you have major concerns with a teacher, you need to be in there every day and at different times of the day. You are giving them feedback just like we expect our teachers to give our students feedback on how they are performing. You know, we need to be giving our teachers feedback on how they are performing. I think most of it is just informal feedback, you know, conversations between class periods, or after school get out and touch base about something you saw or something you had a question about. Have you tried this? Giving them consistent feedback and then if you aren't seeing a change, it goes from informal conversations to a more formal process. Now this has become an improvement plan at this point and it kind of puts them on notice that you're not performing, and if you don't perform you're not going to be employed anymore. So I think that, that feedback, and you can't give feedback unless you know what is going on in the classroom.

Meticulous documentation. Using detailed documentation practices helps to reduce barriers to dismissal. One principal advised, "document everything. I can't tell you how many times I've said thank goodness I wrote that down because if I wouldn't have done that it wouldn't look good for me now." Another principal recommended making the teacher sign written communications and expectations so she knows it is serious.

Principals said that documentation should include observations of deficiencies and that the teacher has received feedback concerning those deficiencies. Furthermore, respondents said documentation needs to include recommendations given to the teacher about what needs to improve, how it needs to improve, a timeline for improvement, and supports that are available to meet this goal. They also suggested keeping all email or written correspondence with the teacher. While these steps may not eliminate barriers to dismissal, principals feel it is an important step in the successful removal of incompetent teachers.

Utilize the best teachers in the building. Principals also recommended using the best teachers to work with incompetent teachers. One principal said they implemented a system that rewards teachers for going into master teachers' classrooms during their conference period. This

has created more of a system of collaboration and has helped to develop some of the marginal teachers. Another principal provided similar advice stating, "if you can get out there and get those teachers [your best teachers] to do some things the marginal teacher is struggling at and you can get them on board with coaching other teachers" then it can help to improve the marginal teacher. According to him, if the marginal teacher doesn't on board then "they are going to feel alone on an island and they don't want that."

Principals stated that using your best teachers to work with incompetent teachers does three things. First, it helps to develop a positive culture in your building to offset the negativity from the incompetent teacher. Second, it provides opportunities for your worst teachers to develop and grow. If they don't take advantage of these opportunities, it can be used as evidence of interventions used to support the teacher before dismissal was considered. Third, it can make it easier to identify those teachers who are unwilling to change or improve.

Consult with district leadership. Principals stated that early and frequent communication with district leadership is important when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher. Communication with key district personnel ensures everyone is on the same page and ensures the superintendent and board are "supportive" of dismissing the teacher. Consultation with the school attorney is also important to "make sure you have your paperwork lined out." Principals felt these steps were important because, if the board, superintendent, or attorney aren't in favor of the dismissal, it can be a significant barrier.

Apply pressure. Some principals have found that applying pressure to incompetent teachers assists in the dismissal process. One principal stated, "I like to use peer pressure." When most teachers in your building are working hard, learning new effective practices for reaching kids, and are excited about it, then the incompetent teacher is pressured to get on board

or leave. The principal also commented that kids who have the incompetent teachers will start "going to the incompetent teacher and saying, why can't we do stuff like that? Then they will start getting pressure from kids. Then they are getting it from all angles." Another principal claimed that some administrators "make their [incompetent teachers] life harder by putting extra work on their lap. They aren't good workers in the first pace and you make them work harder." Eventually they decide they do not want to do the work and end up leaving.

Develop effective hiring practices. Principals identified the development of effective hiring practices is a preventative measure to eradicate incompetence from schools. One principal stated, "It's interesting about interviewing, but just make sure you interview well and you try to ask those questions you know are going to let you know if the candidate has the characteristics you are looking for." Other principals recommended hiring teachers who are energetic and positive people who are team players. Through effective hiring practices, you develop a more positive, student centered culture. It makes incompetent teachers who are left in the building uncomfortable and they will often leave.

<p align="center">**Mixed Methods Findings**</p>

One of the benefits of using a mixed methods study is the potential for comparing quantitative and qualitative findings. Findings common to both phases of the study help to validate and strengthen the study overall. Information gleaned from only interviews or from the survey instrument helped to also add to the breadth and depth of the study. This section will address the question: What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about characteristics of incompetent teachers and their dismissal with outcome quantitative data from the survey instrument? Tables 4.3 - 4.5 will be used as a means of comparing results from the online survey and from interviews to gain more comprehensive understanding of the entire study.

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Only the top characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to their dismissal, and effective

practices when working with or dismissing incompetent teachers are included in the tables. A

discussion of findings will follow each of the three tables that are presented below.

Table 4.3

A Comparison of Survey and Interview Data on the Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers

Most important characteristics from the survey only	Characteristics common to both the survey and the interview	Characteristics on interview only
Ethical violations	Poor instructional delivery/ineffective instructional practices	Poor work ethic or attitude
	Lack of classroom management	Inability or unwillingness to develop as an educator
	Poor relationships with students, parents, and staff	Inward focus

Data from both the surveys and interviews revealed that ineffective instructional

practices, lack of classroom management, and poor relationships with key stakeholders were

some of the most significant characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers. According to

principals these characteristics were three of the top four most frequently observed with

incompetent teachers as well. These areas should be a central focus for administrators when

working with incompetent teachers. Other prominent characteristics identified through

interviews or the survey were ethical violations, poor work ethic or attitude, an unwillingness to

develop as an educator, and a focus on self instead of on students.

Table 4.4

A Comparison of Survey and Interview Data on the Barriers to the Dismissal of Incompetent Teachers

Most prominent barriers to dismissal from the survey only	Barriers common to both the survey and the interview	Most prominent barriers mentioned only in the interviews
Teacher unions and organizations	Time	Local politics
	Tenure and other laws protecting teachers	A teacher's unwillingness to admit deficiencies
	Potential litigation	

Responses during both phases of research clearly identified that principals felt time, tenure or other laws protecting teachers, and the threat of litigation were barriers encountered when attempting to dismiss and incompetent teacher. Time and tenure were the highest ranked barriers from the survey. These two topics also yielded the most responses from interviews. Teacher unions or organizations were ranked the third most prominent barrier on the survey, but was not mentioned directly by any of the principals who were interviewed during the study. Analysis of interview data did yield two additional barriers which were local politics and a teacher's unwillingness to develop as an educator.

Table 4.5

A Comparison of Survey and Interview Data on Effective Practices when Working with or Dismissing Incompetent Teachers

Effective practices from the open-ended survey questions only	Effective practices common to both the open-ended survey and interviews	Effective practices mentioned only in the interviews
Provide professional development	Documentation	Utilize your best teachers
Counseling or coaching out of the profession	Frequently observe and communicate with incompetent teachers	Apply pressure
Develop a student-centered mindset	Consult with key stakeholders	
	Develop effective hiring practices	

Responses from open-ended survey items and interviews both identified multiple

effective practices when working with or attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher.

Effective practices included detailed documentation, frequent observations of the teacher,

frequent communication with the teacher, consultation with key stakeholders, and the

development of effective hiring practices. Other suggestions from open-ended survey responses

included providing professional development and support for the teacher, counseling or coaching

the teacher out of the profession, and remembering to keep a student-centered mindset when

making decisions about incompetent teachers. Results from interviews included additional

recommendations from principals, which were: utilizing the best teachers in the building to help

the incompetent teacher, and applying various forms of pressure in order to remove the teacher.

Summary

The goal of this mixed methods study was to explore principals' perceptions about incompetent teachers. Closed and open-ended survey response items and semi-structured interviews were used as a means of collecting data on characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and effective practices with working with and dismissing incompetent teachers.

Data from both the surveys and interviews revealed that ineffective instructional practices, lack of classroom management, and poor relationships with key stakeholders were some of the most significant characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers. Responses during both phases of research clearly identified that principals felt time, tenure or other laws protecting teachers, and the threat of litigation were barriers encountered when attempting to dismiss and incompetent teacher. Effective practices when working with and dismissing incompetent teachers included detailed documentation, frequent observations of the teacher, frequent communication with the teacher, consultation with key stakeholders, and the development of effective hiring practices. Chapter V will include a discussion of the significance of the findings from this chapter. Strengths and limitations of the study, implications of the study, and suggested research in the future will also be presented.

Chapter V: Interpretation, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Overview

The first purpose of this study was to examine how principals' perceptions about the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers varied based on five variables. The first three were school related, which included school size, the grade level of the school, and the location of the school. The next two variables examined were the principal related variables of gender and level of experience. The second purpose was to examine the most significant barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher; and determine if differences existed between the relative significance of barriers principals faced based on school size, grade level of the school, school location, the gender of the principal, and a principal's experience.

Research suggests that hiring and retaining high quality teachers is probably the most important school related factor in providing a quality education for students, as well as improving student achievement (Hanushek, 2008; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Because of the importance of providing all students with highly capable and qualified teachers, this study explored characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal to help school leaders better understand, and hopefully reverse, the negative impact caused by incompetent teachers. The three goals of this study were to develop a more complete understanding of: 1) characteristics that cause teachers to be identified as incompetent; 2) barriers to removing incompetent teachers and replacing them with quality educators; and 3) to determine effective practices for working with and dismissing incompetent teachers.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings that were presented in Chapter IV. First, the findings will be summarized and interpreted in order to present meaningful insights from the study. Results will then be compared and contrasted with existing research to better

understand how these results fit into the context of literature on the topic of incompetent teachers. Next, implications for policy, practice, and administrator preparation programs will be discussed due to results from this study. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of limitations from the study and suggestions for future research on incompetent teachers.

<div align="center">**Summary of Findings**</div>

Principals in Missouri reported that 3.28% of all teachers were incompetent. Survey results revealed that respondents felt that the most important reasons these teachers were incompetent were because they lacked the ability to instruct students in effective ways, displayed poor classroom management skills, and committed ethical violations. Although these three characteristics were listed by principals as the most important overall, two subgroups reported an additional characteristic. Middle school principals and principals from urban schools reported that poor relationships with students, teachers, and parents were a primary factor in determining teacher incompetence. Principals were also asked which characteristics were observed most frequently from incompetent teachers. They felt that lack of classroom management, poor instructional skills, lack of student achievement, and poor relationships were seen most often when working with these teachers.

Six principals were interviewed as a follow-up to the survey to help better understand their views on the characteristics of incompetent teachers. During interviews, principals supported findings from survey data by reporting ineffective instructional practices, lack of classroom management, and poor relationships as characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers. Data from the interviews resulted in three additional characteristics seen from incompetent teachers which were: poor work ethic or attitude, an inability or unwillingness to develop as an educator, and a focus on self instead of a focus on students.

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Survey respondents reported that time and laws protecting teachers were the most significant barriers that complicated their ability to dismiss incompetent teachers. Although these two barriers were the top two reported overall, two subgroups reported an additional barrier. Principals from urban schools and those working in schools with a student population between 500-749 students both reported teacher unions or organizations as one of the top two barriers to dismissing an incompetent teacher. Principals who participated in interviews also felt time and laws protecting teachers were significant barriers to dismissal. However these principals also felt that local politics and a teacher's unwillingness to admit deficiencies sometimes complicated their ability to get rid of a teacher.

Principals were asked open-ended questions on the survey and questions during the interviews about effective practices for working with and dismissing incompetent teachers. Data from both phases of research revealed that principals felt that frequent observations, consistent communication, and meticulous documentation were all effective practices when working with teachers who are incompetent. They also advised consulting frequently with key stakeholders such as other principals, the superintendent, the school board, and the school attorney. One preventative practice reported by principals was to develop effective hiring procedures. Additional advice gleaned from survey responses was to provide relevant professional development opportunities for incompetent teachers, coach or counsel them out of the profession, and remember to keep a student-centered mindset at all times. During interviews, principals also recommended using the best teachers in the building to help the incompetent teacher, and apply pressure when necessary to encourage the teacher to resign.

<center>**Interpretation of Findings**</center>

Incidence Rates of Incompetent Teachers

The overall incidence rate of incompetent teachers in Missouri was reported to be 3.28%. However, it is interesting how much variation there was between subgroups on reported rates of incompetent teachers. For example, principals with 11 or more years of experience only felt that 2.3% of teachers in their buildings were incompetent. Those with six to 10 years of experience reported a much higher rate of 4.32%. One possible reason for this is that veteran principals have learned more effective practices over time for hiring quality teachers and removing incompetent ones. These principals may view incompetence through a different lens than they did in the beginning of their administrative careers. Also, principals with less experience are most likely recent graduates of administrator programs. These programs may have shifted ways in which they train administrators to identify and work with incompetent teachers since the time when veteran principals were in training. Differences in training methods could result in how novice and veteran principals perceive teacher incompetence.

Another interesting finding was that suburban principals reported rates that were half that of their urban and rural counterparts. One theory for this may be that suburban districts are attractive to the best teachers because of the competitive salaries, wealth of resources, and the lower free and reduced lunch rates that are common to suburban locations. As a result, suburban schools often have a larger pool of applicants to choose from when filling a teaching position. Rural schools may have community support and some resources, but often struggle to maintain salary schedules that are competitive with suburban schools. On the contrary, urban schools typically offer competitive salaries, but sometimes battle a lack of community support and the challenges associated with high free and reduced lunch rates. One question raised from these

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results is what effect does this have on student achievement, especially in urban and rural schools?

Principals from elementary schools reported that 2.2% of teachers were incompetent and high school principals reported a rate of 3.13%. However, K-8 and 7-12 principals claimed much higher rates of 5.02% and 4.9% respectively. Typically K-8 and 7-12 schools are located in rural areas. These results support the premise that rural districts may struggle to attract a large pool of quality teaching candidates due to noncompetitive salaries and other undetermining factors. Based on results on incompetence rates, principals from rural districts may need specialized training in how to develop effective practices for attracting quality teachers to their schools. Also, state legislators should continue to explore ways to improve funding for all schools, especially those in rural areas.

Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers

On the survey, principals were provided with eight characteristics and asked to rate how important each one was in helping to identify incompetent teachers. Four of the eight characteristics were rated at a 4.6 or higher on a five point scale. These characteristics were poor instructional delivery, ethical violations, lack of classroom management, and poor relational skills. Principals reported observing incompetent teachers frequently exhibiting poor instructional delivery, lack of classroom management, and poor relational skills. Although ethical violations were determined to be one of the four most important characteristics in identifying incompetence, they were actually observed the least often by respondents. This could possibly be due to the fact that, even though ethical violations don't occur often, they are generally easier to prove than other characteristics related to incompetence.

Based on these results, it appears principals feel lack of content area knowledge is not a significant issue with incompetent teachers. However, creating a structured classroom where students can learn and providing effective ways to convey knowledge to students is of primary concern. These characteristics were also mentioned repeatedly during interviews as a major issue. As a result, schools must work to make intensive professional development opportunities available on best practices in instruction as well as classroom management. These two areas of concern may be improved somewhat with appropriate professional development and practice. Also, emergency teacher certification programs may need to provide future teachers without a degree in education more training in classroom management and in effective instructional practices.

Other primary characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers that were reported on either the survey or through interviews were poor relational skills, poor work ethic or attitude, and a focus on self rather than on students. Unlike poor instructional delivery and lack of classroom management, these characteristics are all directly related to a teacher's core personality, which principals feel is extremely difficult to change. One principal stated, "that's character. It's hard to get somebody to change that. I don't really think you can in most cases." He went on to describe this concept further when he stated, "the with-it-ness, the with-it-ness, the ability to build that rapport with kids. If you don't have it, you can't teach that. Nobody can train someone to have with-it-ness with kids. You've got it or you don't." Other principals also supported the notion that characteristics related to a teacher's personality are extremely difficult to change.

According to these findings, it appears that an important step in working with incompetent teachers is to determine why the teacher is incompetent. Are they incompetent due

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to classroom management or instructional issues, or is it due to the teacher's personality? If it is the former, principals may be able to remediate the teacher somewhat. If it is the latter, there may be little hope that the teacher will improve. As a result, it is important that principals include questions or activities when interviewing potential teachers that help to determine an individual's work ethic, attitude, and ability to relate to others.

An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the way principals from different demographic backgrounds viewed characteristics of teacher incompetence. Upon analysis, it was found that principals from schools with student populations of at least 750 students felt that lack of content area knowledge was significantly more important in identifying incompetence than principals from schools with less than 250 students. This difference could have been due to the fact that most of the largest schools were secondary schools. In the majority of large secondary schools, teachers are hired in part because they specialize in specific content areas. These teachers typically only teach one content area and are expected to be experts in their field. As a result, principals from these schools may be inclined to focus more on content area knowledge than in schools where a teacher must instruct students in all content areas. This finding is important because it may be used for a basis of how principals working in large schools are trained to evaluate teachers.

Multiple differences were found between how male and female principals viewed characteristics of incompetence. Females reported lack of content knowledge, poor instructional delivery, and lack of student achievement as significantly more important in identifying incompetence than males did. However, males felt insubordination and ethical violations were more important than females did in determining incompetence. Although the differences in perceptions of insubordination and ethical violations were not statistically significant, these

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variations bring up an interesting point. It appears that females look at factors directly related to instruction in the classroom than males do; and males tend to focus more on issues not directly related to instruction. One possible explanation for this is that males have historically been viewed as the dominant gender. It could be that males feel their authority or dominance is being threatened by teachers in certain circumstances, resulting in the male principal focusing more on issues related to insubordination. Though significant differences did exist between males and females, it should be noted that both genders rated each of the eight characteristics as important factors to help identify incompetence. At the very least, results from this study show that males and females do have somewhat different perceptions about characteristics of incompetent teachers.

Barriers to the Dismissal of Incompetent Teachers

During the survey, principals were provided with nine potential barriers that could complicate their ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher. The barriers provided were those that had been reported as barriers in previous research conducted over the past 20 years on the topic. Principals were asked to rate whether each barrier complicated their ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher. Out of the nine choices, principals only felt that time and laws protecting teachers acted as significant barriers to dismissal. Respondents reported that lack of support from the superintendent and school board did not complicate their ability to dismiss incompetent teachers. Principals were neutral on the other five barriers, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that teacher unions, cost of litigation, the desire to avoid conflict, poor evaluation tools, or lack of training on how to evaluate teachers significantly complicated their ability to dismiss incompetent teachers. When asked to rank the nine barriers in order from most significant to

least significant, principals reported time and laws protecting teachers as tied for the most significant barriers to dismissal.

It was expected that time and laws protecting teachers would be perceived as significant barriers, which was the case in this study. However, it is surprising that principals in Missouri did not feel that any of the other seven barriers significantly complicated their ability to dismiss teachers. In fact, during open-ended survey responses and interviews, some principals implied that school boards and superintendents were actually systems of support when working with difficult teachers. This phenomenon could be due to increasing accountability for student achievement by the state and federal governments. Increased support from central office could also be the result of more collaborative practices that occur in districts due to professional based learning communities or other similar programs.

It was predicted that teacher unions or organizations may be less of a barrier in the state of Missouri, than were found to be in other states. This prediction was accurate. Teacher unions or organizations were ranked as the third most significant barrier in relation to the other barriers provided as choices, but not rated as a strong barrier overall. This could possibly be due to the fact that MSTA is the largest teacher organization in the state; whereas in many other states the majority of members belong to national organizations. Future studies should be conducted to determine how principals in Missouri perceive working with MSTA in comparison to nationally based teacher unions when it concerns pursuing the dismissal of incompetent teachers.

During interviews with six principals, an additional barrier mentioned repeatedly was local politics. Principals from rural and suburban settings felt frustrated that some teachers were "untouchable" just because they were related to a board member or prominent community member. One should caution generalizing this as a barrier affecting most principals in the state,

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but it does warrant future exploration. Also, local school boards and superintendents, especially those serving in rural or suburban locations, should consider undergoing training on how to navigate delicate situations involving local politics.

An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the way principals from different demographic backgrounds viewed barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers. Upon analysis, it was discovered that principals in K-8 settings reported that the desire to avoid confrontation was significantly more of a barrier to dismissal than principals working in 7-12 settings did. Although other differences within subgroups were not statistically significant, it is important to note that elementary and K-8 principals reported this variable to be a greater barrier to dismissal than principals serving in secondary school settings. Definite conclusions cannot formed based on this data, but it does imply that principals working in elementary settings may view relationships with teachers, or at least confrontation, differently than those who work in secondary buildings. Although a greater number of females work in elementary settings while males tend to occupy more secondary positions, this barrier does not appear to be gender related. This is supported by the fact that males actually rated this barrier as more significant than females did in this study. Future studies should be conducted to determine if elementary and K-8 principals may need training on how to effectively confront incompetent teachers.

Principals from schools with less than 250 students reported that lack of training on how to dismiss teachers was significantly more of a barrier to dismissing teachers than principals from schools with 500-749 students did. In general, principals working in schools with small populations felt lack of training was more of a barrier than principals who worked in schools with large student populations, though no additional differences between groups was statistically

significant. It could be that principals in larger schools have access to more resources and professional development when it comes to training on how to evaluate and dismiss teachers than principals in small schools do. There are also multiple principals working in large buildings, whereas small schools may only have a single administrator. Having multiple principals in a building is an advantage because it allows for multiple ideas and perspectives on teacher evaluation and dismissal. These principals can utilize one another for learning and support. Principals working in small schools who feel lack of training is a concern, should take initiative to network with principals in other school buildings or districts. Superintendents from these districts should also focus on networking with other schools to provide support and professional development for their school leaders.

When an ANOVA was conducted, three significant differences between groups were discovered. Principals in urban settings reported that inadequate support from the superintendent was significantly more of a barrier than rural principals did. Rural principals also felt that teacher unions or organizations were significantly less of a barrier to the dismissal of incompetent teachers than both urban and suburban principals did. These differences could be due to the closeness that is often experienced in small rural districts that may not exist in larger urban and suburban schools. Larger urban and suburban schools should engage in activities that improve the trust between the superintendent, principals, and local teacher organization representatives. Through the building of trust and mutual respect, principals will hopefully begin to see superintendents and teacher organizations as a system of support rather than a hindrance when working with incompetent teachers.

Effective Practices for Working with Incompetent Teachers and Overcoming Barriers to Dismissal

Items on both the survey and the interview protocol asked principals what effective practices they use to work with or dismiss incompetent teachers. Effective practices included detailed documentation, frequent observations of the teacher, frequent communication with the teacher, consultation with key stakeholders, and the development of effective hiring practices. Other suggestions from open-ended survey responses included providing professional development and support for the teacher, counseling or coaching the teacher out of the profession, and remembering to keep a student-centered mindset when making decisions about incompetent teachers. Results from interviews included two additional recommendations: utilizing the best teachers in the building to help the incompetent teacher and applying various forms of pressure in order to remove the teacher. It is interesting to note that most of the recommended practices mentioned above take time, which was one of the two most significant barriers that principals said complicated their ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher.

Principals who participated in this study seemed to feel conflicted between their duty to help incompetent teachers improve and their moral obligation to ensure all students receive a quality education. One can observe this dichotomy by looking at the effective practices listed above. Some are focused on providing the teacher with improvement opportunities and others are focused on the need to dismiss the teacher so students will not be hurt. This moral conflict has the potential to cause significant stress and take an emotional toll on the principal. In these situations it is important for principals to develop a strong support system. Not only can this provide principals with emotional support, but it can also help a principal be able to get advice on when remediation efforts should cease and dismissal should be pursued.

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Another effective practice which warrants further discussion is communication with key stakeholders. Key stakeholders can include other principals, the school board, the school attorney, and the superintendent. One purpose of communication with these individuals is to develop a network of support. An additional stakeholder mentioned by a few respondents was the local teacher organization or union as a means of support. At first, this suggestion may seem counterproductive, as teacher unions and organizations have traditionally been viewed as barriers to dismissal. However, building relationships and maintaining consistent communication with the local teacher organization can lead to increased trust and respect. Increased trust and respect may then lead to a mutually supportive working relationship.

One preventative theme mentioned was to develop effective hiring practices. The premise is that, through more effective hiring practices, fewer incompetent teachers will be allowed into the profession in the first place. Based on this suggestion, professional development should be provided to school leaders to help them better determine hiring practices that can distinguish quality teachers from ineffective ones. However, this is based on the idea that the pool of teaching candidates for open positions contains quality educators. In reality, some principals, especially in outlying rural districts, often struggle to find any qualified applicants. One administrator stated that it was frustrating because she had to sometimes hire a marginal teacher because she had to fill a position and no other candidates were available. In the near future, states will have to find an answer to the question, how do we increase the amount of quality teacher candidates so that all students can receive a quality education?

Context of Findings

The purpose of this section is to compare findings from this study with existing research on the topic of incompetent teachers. One goal is to determine how results from this study

support literature that has already been written. Another goal is to discuss how findings from this study add to the overall body of research about incompetent teachers. This section will include a discussion of incidence rates of incompetent teachers, characteristics of incompetent teachers, and barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers.

Reported incidence rates from studies of incompetent teachers vary. Fuhr (1993) estimated that 10-15% of the nation's teaching force is performing unsatisfactorily. Lavely et al. (1992) determined the number of incompetent teachers to be anywhere from 2-20%. Other studies (Bridges, 1992; Parish, 1999; Tucker, 1997) have determined the incidence rate is closer to 5%. Principals in this study indicated that 3.28% of teachers are incompetent. This percentage aligns with other studies conducted on teacher incompetence.

This study added to the overall body of literature on incompetence rates by breaking down results further to examine how perceived incompetence rates differ based on an administrator's gender, level of experience, grade level served, location of the school in which he principal served, and size of the school in which the principal served. Results can help to better understand how principals with different personal and school related attributes perceive incompetent teachers.

Multiple authors (Bridges, 1992; Jacob, 2010; Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010; Nixon, Douvanis, & Packard, 2010; Parish, 1999; Walls et al., 2002; Wasiscsko, 2004) reported characteristics that lead a teacher to be labeled incompetent. These characteristics included poor classroom management and instructional skills, lack of content area knowledge, insubordination, ethical violations, lack of relational skills, and lack of respect or integrity. During the quantitative phase of this study, principals rated ethical violations, poor instructional delivery, lack of classroom management, and poor relational skills as the four most important

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characteristics in identifying incompetent teachers. Three additional characteristics were

identified from qualitative interviews that were not discovered in prior research. These

characteristics were a poor attitude or work ethic, a focus on self instead of on students, and an

unwillingness to develop as an educator.

This study added to the overall body of literature on characteristics of incompetent

teachers by breaking down results further to examine how perceived characteristics of

incompetence differ based on an administrator's gender, level of experience, grade level served,

location of the school in which he principal served, and size of the school in which the principal

served. Results indicated that principals from large schools felt that lack of content area

knowledge was more important in identifying incompetence than principals from small schools

did. Male and female principals also differed in their views about how important content

knowledge, instructional delivery, and student achievement were in determining incompetence.

These results can be used to better understand how principals from different personal and school

related backgrounds view characteristics related to incompetence. They can also be used to help

develop training and professional development that is tailored to administrators from these

backgrounds.

Several studies (Bridges, 1992; Claymore-Ross, 1996; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jacob, 2010;

Menuey, 2005; Nixon, Packard, & Douvanis, 2010; Painter, 2000; Parish, 1999; Rolland, 2010;

Thompson, 2006; Tucker, 1997) reported that barriers to dismissal included teacher unions,

tenure, time, cost, unwillingness to confront teachers, emotional cost to the principal, lack of

principal training in teacher evaluation, and poor evaluation systems. Principals in this study

clearly ranked time and laws protecting teachers as the barriers that most significantly

complicate their ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher. These findings align with those from

previous studies. However, some findings diverge from earlier research. For example, principals in the study did not feel poor evaluation systems, lack of training to evaluate teachers, or emotional cost to the principal were significant barriers to dismissal. Results from qualitative interviews yielded two additional themes which were not discovered in existing literature. The first of these was local politics. Principals felt that sometimes incompetent teachers have close relationships with members on the school board or prominent community members which makes dismissing them difficult. Some principals reported that their own employment was even threatened when they pursued the dismissal of such individuals. The other additional barrier was an unwillingness to admit personal deficiencies on the part of the incompetent teacher. Principals noted a frustration with the teacher acting as if they did not understand why they were being "targeted" since they were a "good teacher."

This study also added to the overall body of literature on barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers by breaking down results further to examine how perceived barriers to dismissal differ based on an administrator's gender, level of experience, grade level served, location of the school in which the principal served, and size of the school in which the principal served. For example, principals in small schools felt lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss incompetent teachers was more of a barrier than large schools did. Urban principals felt lack of support from the superintendent was more of a barrier than rural principals did. Teacher unions were also more of a barrier for urban and suburban principals than it was for their colleagues who work in rural schools. Results from these findings can help to provide direction for schools from different backgrounds to better understand the barriers principals who work in their schools face when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher. Through a better

understanding of context specific barriers, schools can begin to implement targeted strategies to minimize these barriers.

Implications of Findings

One of the most important aspects of a study is how results will be used to change the field of education. Results from this study may potentially be used to impact three areas: policies concerning teacher tenure, professional development opportunities for current administrators, and training for future principals.

Implications for Policy

One area addressed during the review of literature prior to the completion of this study was teacher tenure. In Missouri, it currently takes teachers five years to achieve tenure. This length of time is tied for the longest for any state in the nation. Most states where the topic of teacher incompetence has been studied have been those where tenure was granted in two or three years. In these studies, tenure was listed as a significant barrier to the dismissal of incompetent teachers (Farkas et al., 2003; Menuey, 2005). One goal of this study was to determine if tenure was a significant barrier to dismissal in Missouri. Due the extended length of time required to attain tenure in Missouri, it was predicted that principals would not feel that tenure was a significant barrier. However, results from both phases of this study revealed that principals in the state felt that tenure and other laws protecting teachers was in fact one of the top barriers that complicated their ability to dismiss incompetent teachers. Principals recommended implementing new laws that would significantly weaken or abolish tenure.

Multiple legislative efforts have been made over the past four years in Missouri to modify teacher tenure, but many of these efforts were included in bills that were attempting to change many other facets of the educational system as well. The latest effort was Amendment 3 which

was on the November 4, 2014 ballot. This amendment included legislation that would have replaced tenure with multi-year teacher contracts in most cases. However, the primary goal of this amendment was to make teacher evaluations tied to students' state testing results; a topic that was hotly contested by educator and non-educator groups across the state. As a result, the Amendment was voted down by a 76% to 24% vote.

Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that state legislator groups and educators work together to explore solutions that focus solely on teacher tenure, without it being tied to other pieces of legislation such as school funding, teacher evaluation, or state testing. These groups should explore ways to modify tenure in order to reduce the barriers tenure has created when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher, while at the same time ensuring measures are still in place to protect quality educators from undue scrutiny or dismissal. Principals, superintendents, and school boards may also need training to clarify specifics about tenure laws in the state. It could be that some school leaders have a misconception about what is and is not protected in tenure laws.

Implications for Practice

Results from this study may be used to guide professional development for current principals. According to the results from this study, challenges encountered when working with or attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers varies somewhat in different educational contexts. For example, principals from suburban and urban districts felt teacher unions were significantly more of a barrier to dismissal than principals from rural schools did. If this is the case, principals working in urban and suburban settings may need additional training on how to work effectively with local and state teacher organizations.

Current principals should also use results of this study to develop more effective practices for working with or dismissing incompetent teachers. As advised by respondents in this study, principals should develop detailed documentation practices, find ways to consistently observe teachers, communicate with teachers early and often, ensure effective professional development opportunities are available for teachers, develop a network of support from other administrators, and adhere to other suggestions provide in this study. Perhaps most importantly, principals should develop a focused effort to develop effective hiring practices that will assist them in hiring quality educators. Principals should learn to ask questions during the hiring process to determine if a potential employee does or does not possess the characteristics in this study that respondents felt were exemplified by incompetent teachers.

Implications for Administrator Preparation Programs

Some research studies have suggested that principal preparation programs may not adequately prepare future principals for the challenges they may encounter when working with or attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers. During a study of 31 principal preparation programs across the United States, Hess and Kelly (2005) discovered that 20 of the programs did not have any content related to teacher dismissal. In order to better prepare future administrators to work with incompetent teachers, administrator preparation programs can use the results of this study to provide learning opportunities for administrators in training on issues such as characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and effective practices to use in order to overcome barriers to dismissal.

Programs should first develop content that helps future principals better understand the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers that were identified in this study. Future administrators must also receive training on professional development practices to address the

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primary characteristics of incompetent teachers that were found in this study which were: poor classroom management, ineffective instructional practices, and poor relational skills. Finally, institutions who train administrators should spend time equipping and empowering future leaders to successfully navigate the barriers identified in this study that complicate a principal's ability to work with or dismiss incompetent teachers. Administrators should learn how to implement the effective practices provided by principals in this study for working with and dismissing teachers. They should be given opportunities to learn and practice documentation procedures, observation of teachers, confronting teachers about ineffective practices, how to implement professional development that is aligned to a teacher's area of weakness, how to work effectively with key personnel in the district, and how to coach incompetent teachers into a profession more suited to their interests and abilities.

Limitations

Every research study has limitations and this one was no exception. The primary limitations in this study dealt with the procedures in place in some districts that restricted them from participation in the survey and the number of participants used to participate in interviews.

Non-participation by Some Districts

A list of email addresses from all public school administrators was obtained from DESE. Duplicate names and emails were removed. The online survey was sent to the remaining email addresses. Principals in some districts from around the state replied that they would like to fill out the survey but that the study had to be approved through the district office before any administrator could participate. Unfortunately there was no way to know which districts had a policy like this in place short of calling more than 550 individual districts across the state. These

policies that were implemented in some districts that restricted participation limited the study by reducing response rates.

Options were explored for completing the necessary paperwork and processes to gain approval for principals within some of these districts to participate in the study. Sadly, in most cases, the length of time it would have taken to gain approval was a minimum of two months. Due to the time constraints of the study, this was not possible. Also, some districts required that the researcher share all findings, including raw data, with the research committee at the district's central office. Since one of the ethical obligations in this study was to ensure confidentiality of participants, this would have violated such standards.

Number of Interview Participants

The goal during the qualitative phase of the study was to interview principals who best represented respondents across the state who participated in the first phase of the study. Six principals in all participated in interviews, each with a unique administrative background. Through the interview process, a wealth of information was yielded about incompetent teachers. However, interviewing more principals could have resulted in adding breadth and depth to the qualitative portion of this study. Unfortunately, completing a multi-phase study was a significant undertaking for a single researcher, so conducting, transcribing, and analyzing more interviews was not possible. As such, no principals from urban settings were interviewed. At least one principal participating in interviews represented all other subgroups within the five variables under study.

Tenure Versus Multi-year Contracts

One theme that arose from both open-ended survey responses and the responses from interviews was that of teacher tenure. Tenure was mentioned by numerous principals as a significant barrier to the dismissal of incompetent teachers. They felt that current tenure laws make it very difficult to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom. Some suggested replacing teacher tenure with multi-year contracts, or at least relaxing tenure laws.

Future studies should explore how multi-year contracts may impact teacher quality in schools. A number of questions exist on this topic. For example, are there any states that have shifted from teacher tenure to multi-year contracts? If so, is there any evidence that multi-year contracts increase teacher quality or make it easier to dismiss incompetent teachers? Do states using multi-year contracts, if any, report lower incidence rates of incompetent teachers than states with teacher tenure? Studies could also focus on how key stakeholders in Missouri view multi-year contracts. Some of the primary stakeholders are teachers, administrators, parents, state legislators, school boards, and state teacher organizations. One final question to be explored is what is the appropriate balance between making it easier to dismiss teachers and developing laws that promote adequate job security for teachers? It will be important to answer these questions, and potentially others, as a foundation for developing an effective teacher retention policy.

Effective Hiring Practices

Results from the study revealed that many principals felt that the best defense against incompetent teachers is developing effective hiring practices. Future studies should be conducted to help principals and schools develop quality methods of selecting the best teachers

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out of the possible pool of candidates. In order to do so, researchers may need to answer the following questions. What information should be elicited on an employment application? What additional documents should be requested from candidates? What are the most important interview questions to ask when conducting an interview that will help effectively assess teacher quality? What are best practices when narrowing a pool of candidates and checking references? What are the most important characteristics to look for during interviews that help determine teacher quality?

Future studies could also focus on case studies in individual schools that have proven to hire and retain quality teachers over a long period of time versus those schools who employ a number of marginal teachers. Researchers could use multiple methods to determine how these schools are alike and how they are different. Doing so could help to shed light on teacher related and school related factors related to hiring and retaining quality educators.

Evaluation Systems in Missouri

The state of Missouri recently adopted a new mandatory evaluation system. Although individual districts are not required to use a specific model, they must use a model that adheres to multiple standards established by the state. More rigorous standards have resulted in the development of new evaluation models that are more complex and detailed than old models. The vast majority of districts in the state have chosen to use either the model developed by DESE or the NEE model developed by the University of Missouri.

During qualitative interviews in this study, principals were asked how they felt the new evaluation system affected their ability to evaluate teachers, identify incompetent teachers, and dismiss incompetent teachers. Although comments were generally positive, principals felt it was too early in the process to form a definite opinion on the matter. In upcoming years, it will be

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important to conduct studies to determine the effectiveness of new models in evaluating teachers, improving teacher performance, and identifying and dismissing incompetent teachers. These questions may be answered through perceptual data from principals and teachers across the state. Future studies should also compare the DESE model with the NEE model to determine which components of each are most effective in assisting principals with evaluating teachers, improving teacher quality, and potentially identifying and dismissing incompetent educators.

Summary

Hiring and retaining quality teachers is probably the most important school related factor in providing a quality education for all students, as well as improving student achievement. Because of the importance of providing all students with highly capable and qualified teachers, this study explored characteristics of incompetent teachers and barriers to their dismissal to help school leaders better understand, and hopefully reverse, the negative impact caused by such teachers. This study added to the overall body of literature by examining teacher incompetence in the state of Missouri. Incidence rates, characteristics of incompetent teachers, barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers, and effective practices in overcoming barriers to dismissal were examined through the eyes of public school principals within the state. Results were broken down to determine how a principal's gender, level of experience, grade level and size of the school in which the principal serves, and location of the school affect how a principal views teacher incompetence. Findings indicate the most prominent characteristics to be ineffective instructional practices, lack of classroom management, poor relational skills. The most significant barriers to dismissal were reported to be time, laws protecting teachers, and potential litigation. Effective practices for working with or dismissing incompetent teachers included frequent observation and communication, consultation with key stakeholders, meticulous

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documentation, and the development of effective hiring practices. Results from this study may

be used as a catalyst for conversations on changing policies related to teacher tenure. Schools

can use results from this study to guide professional development for current administrators on

the topic of working with incompetent teachers. Administrator preparation programs may use

results to guide learning processes about incompetent teachers for future administrators.

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Appendix A

Missouri Dismissal Procedures

Dismissal procedures as defined in the Missouri Revised Statutes section 168.116 are summarized below.

1. The indefinite contract of a permanent teacher may not be terminated by the board of education until after service upon the teacher of written charges specifying with particularity the grounds alleged to exist for termination of such contract, notice of a hearing on charges and a hearing by the board of education on charges if requested by the teacher.

2. At least thirty days before service of notice of charges of incompetency, inefficiency, or insubordination in line of duty, the teacher shall be given by the school board or the superintendent of schools warning in writing, stating specifically the causes which, if not removed, may result in charges. Thereafter, both the superintendent, or his designated representative, and the teacher shall meet and confer in an effort to resolve the matter.

3. Notice of a hearing upon charges, together with a copy of charges, shall be served on the permanent teacher at least twenty days prior to the date of the hearing. The notice and copy of the charges may be served upon the teacher by certified mail with personal delivery addressed to him at his last known address. If the teacher or his agent does not within ten days after receipt of the notice request a hearing on the charges, the board of education may, by a majority vote, order the contract of the teacher terminated. If a hearing is requested by either the teacher or the board of education, it shall take place not less than twenty nor more than thirty days after notice of a hearing has been furnished the permanent teacher.

4. On the filing of charges in accordance with this section, the board of education may suspend the teacher from active performance of duty until a decision is rendered by the board of education but the teacher's salary shall be continued during such suspension. If a decision to terminate a teacher's employment by the board of education is appealed, and the decision is reversed, the teacher shall be paid his salary lost during the pending of the appeal. (Missouri Revised Statutes, 168.116)

Appendix B

Information Needed to Answer Research Questions

Quantitative Questions:

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method
Research Question 1: What percentage of the teachers in Missouri do principals perceive as incompetent?	Total number of faculty in the building of each participant; number of faculty the participant would consider incompetent (based on the provided definition) out of the total number.	Survey
Demographic	Size of school, grade level of school, participant's administrative experience, participant's age, participant's age, participant's education level, number of faculty in the building	Survey
Perceptual	Participants' perceptions concerning the number of incompetent teachers in their building	Survey
Theoretical	Existing data on incidence rates of incompetent teachers	Review of research on incidence rates

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method
Research Questions 2 & 3: 2)What are the primary characteristics of incompetent teachers and how do they vary by grade level, school size, experience of the principal, school location, and gender of the principal? 3) Which characteristics displayed by incompetent teachers are observed most frequently by principals?	Participants' perceptions of the most prevalent characteristics of incompetent teachers in their respective buildings.	Survey

Demographic	Size of school, grade level of school, participant's administrative experience, participant's age, participant's age, gender of the principal, and number of faculty in the building	Survey
Perceptual	Participants' perceptions concerning characteristics of incompetent teachers	Survey
Theoretical	Existing data on characteristics of incompetent teachers	Review of research of characteristics of incompetent teachers

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method
Research Question 4: What are the primary barriers faced by principals when attempting to dismiss an incompetent teacher and how do these barriers vary by grade level, school size, experience of the principal, school location, and gender of the principal?	Participants' perceptions of the most prominent barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers in their respective buildings.	Survey
Demographic	Size of school, grade level of school, location of the school, participant's administrative experience, gender of the principal	Survey
Perceptual	Participants' perceptions concerning the primary barriers to the dismissal of teachers they consider to be incompetent	Survey
Theoretical	Existing data on barriers to dismissing incompetent teachers	Review of research on barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers

Qualitative Questions:

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method
Research Question 1: How do principals describe the characteristics exemplified by incompetent teachers that lead to a desire for their dismissal?	The characteristics participants feel are most often exemplified by incompetent teachers, specifically those that contribute to a consideration for dismissal.	Semi-structured interviews
Contextual	School district's stance on dismissing incompetent teachers, board policy related to teacher dismissal, and perceived efficiency of building teacher supervision and evaluation processes that helps identify incompetent teachers	Semi-structured interviews
Demographic	Size of school, grade level of school, participant's administrative experience, participant's gender, and location of the school.	Information from survey in quantitative portion of the study
Perceptual	Participants' descriptions and explanations of their experiences with incompetent teachers	Semi-structured interviews
Theoretical	Existing data on barriers to dismissing incompetent teachers	Review of research on barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method
Research Question 2: How do principals describe the	Obstacles that stand in the way of participants; roadblocks to dismissing	Semi-structured interviews

challenges faced when attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers?	incompetent teachers	
Contextual	School district's stance on dismissing incompetent teachers, board policy related to teacher dismissal, and perceived efficiency of building teacher supervision and evaluation processes that helps identify incompetent teachers	Semi-structured interviews
Demographic	Size of school, grade level of school, participant's administrative experience, participant's gender, and location of the school	Information for survey in quantitative portion of the survey
Perceptual	Participants' descriptions and explanations of obstacles faced when attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers	Semi-structured interviews
Theoretical	Existing data on barriers to dismissing incompetent teachers	Review of research on barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers

Mixed Methods Question:

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method

Research Question 1: What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about characteristics of incompetent teachers and their dismissal with outcome quantitative data on the survey instrument?	No additional information is needed from participants; analysis and synthesis of existing data from the study will answer this question.	Comparison of survey and interviews

Appendix C

Copy of the Survey Instrument

Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to Their Dismissal

The purpose of this survey is to understand your views when it comes to working with incompetent teachers as a building principal. Specifically I want to know what characteristics or behaviors you encounter that lead you to label a teacher as incompetent. I also hope to gain a better understanding of the barriers you face when trying to dismiss an incompetent teacher from your building, and how you have worked to overcome those barriers. This survey should only take you 5-10 minutes to complete. Thank you again for your participation. Please use the following definition of incompetent when answering the questions below: "any teacher who consistently fails to meet minimum state, district, or building level standards for effective teaching".

What is your first and last name? This information is solely for the researcher. Your identity will not be shared with anyone else.

What is your gender?
❍ Male (1)
❍ Female (2)

Including this year, how many total years have you worked in the field of education? This includes all years worked as a teacher, counselor, director, or principal combined.

Including this year, how many years have you worked as a principal?

Which best describes the location of your school?
❍ Urban (1)
❍ Suburban (2)
❍ Rural (3)

Which best describes the grade levels in your building?
❍ Pre-K and/or Elementary Only (1)
❍ Middle Grades Only (2)
❍ High School Only (3)
❍ K-8 (4)
❍ 7-12 (5)
❍ Other (6) _____

What is the current student enrollment in your building?

What is the current free/reduced lunch rate in your building?
- ❍ Below 30% (1)
- ❍ 30-39% (2)
- ❍ 40-49% (3)
- ❍ 50-59% (4)
- ❍ 60-69% (5)
- ❍ 70-79% (6)
- ❍ 80% or above (7)

How many teachers work in your building?

How many teachers in your building would you consider incompetent? In this case an "incompetent teacher" is defined as any teacher who consistently fails to meet minimum state, district, or building level standards for effective teaching.

In your professional opinion, how important are the following characteristics in helping you to identify a teacher as incompetent?

	Unimportant (1)	Of little importance (2)	Moderately important (3)	Important (4)	Very Important (5)
Lack of content area knowledge (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor instructional delivery (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Absenteeism/Tardiness (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of classroom management (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ethical violations and inappropriate conduct (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of student achievement (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Insubordination (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor relational skills with students, parents, or staff (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please rank the following characteristics in helping you to identify a teacher as incompetent. The most important characteristic in helping you identify incompetent teachers

should be marked with an 1, the second most important with a 2,......with the least important being marked with a 8. Please use each number only once.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)
Lack of content area knowledge (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor instructional delivery (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Absenteeism/Tardiness (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of classroom management (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ethical violations and inappropriate conduct (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of student achievement (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Insubordination (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor relational skills with students, parents, or staff (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

How often do you observe the following behaviors from incompetent teachers?

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
Lack of content area knowledge (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor instructional delivery (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Absenteeism/Tardiness (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of classroom management (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Ethical violations and inappropriate conduct (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of student achievement (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Insubordination (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor relational skills with students, parents, or staff (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Which of the following barriers complicate your ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher? For example, if you feel a factor is a significant barrier you would mark "strongly agree", if it is not a barrier you face you would mark "strongly disagree."

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Time (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teacher organization/union (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Inadequate support from the superintendent (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Inadequate support from the school board (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
High cost of litigation (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Desire to avoid conflict and confrontation (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Laws protecting teachers (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor quality of teacher evaluation tools and procedures (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss teachers (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please rank the barriers to dismissing incompetent teachers in order from most prominent to least prominent. The most prominent barrier to dismissing an incompetent teacher should be marked with a 1, the second most prominent with a 2,......with the least prominent being marked with a 9. Please use each number only once.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)
Time (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teacher organization/union (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Inadequate support from the superintendent (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Inadequate support from the school board (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
High cost of litigation (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Desire to avoid conflict and confrontation (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Laws protecting teachers (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Poor quality of teacher evaluation tools and procedures (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lack of training on how to evaluate or dismiss teachers (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

What strategies or tools have you used to overcome the barriers to dismissal of an incompetent teacher?

What suggestions would you give to other principals when working with incompetent teachers?

Is there anything else you would like to share on the topic of incompetent teachers?

Appendix D

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

Name of Interviewee:_____

Date:_____

Preliminary Script: "This is _____. Today is _____. It is _____ o'clock, and I am here at _____ with _____, the principal of _____. We will be discussing Mr. _____ experiences in working with incompetent teachers in the school setting."

1. Tell me a little about your background in education? *(This is not tied to a particular question; the purpose is to build rapport with the administrator.)*
    a. How long have you worked in the field of education?
    b. What positions have you held during your time in education?
    c. How long have you worked as an administrator?
    d. How long have you worked in your current position?

2. What are the keys to creating an optimal learning environment for students? *(The purpose of this question is to better understand the philosophy of the administrator.)*

3. What role do teachers play in student achievement and the overall success of a school? *(This question will help me to determine an administrator's perception of the level of impact, both positive and negative, that teachers have on students.)*

4. How would you describe the best teachers in the school? What characteristics do they display? *(Tied to qualitative question #1)*

5. How would you describe the worst teachers in the school? What characteristics do they display? *(Tied to qualitative question #1)*

6. What impact do the best teachers have on students and schools? *(Tied to qualitative question #1)*

7. What impact do the worst teachers have on students and schools? *(Tied to qualitative question #1)*

8. What are the characteristics of incompetent teachers that ultimately lead to your consideration for their dismissal? *(Tied to qualitative question #2)*

9. What are the barriers you have experienced when attempting to dismiss incompetent teachers? Can you expound a bit on each one? *(Tied to qualitative question #2)*

10. What advice would you give to other principals when working with incompetent teachers? (*This question might be used for a future study, or I may decide to use it within the scope of the dissertation.*)

11. What best practices could you share with other principals in overcoming barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers? (*This question might be used for a future study, or I may decide to use it within the scope of the dissertation.*

12. How would you describe your experiences in working with intra-district transfers at your school after they have not been successful at their previous location? *(Research has shown that an alternative to dismissing a teacher is to transfer them to another building in the district. The goal of this question is to see if this remediates the problem or only magnifies the barrier. Tied to qualitative question #2)*

13. In your opinion, how has the new teacher evaluation system in Missouri affected your ability to identify and/or dismiss incompetent teachers? *(This question is included because a new evaluation system has been implemented in Missouri for the 2014-2015 school year. Responses may be able to provide insight into how the new system impacts a principal's ability to dismiss incompetent teachers.)*

14. Is there anything else I haven't asked you yet that you feel would better help me understand the process of working with and dismissing incompetent teachers? *(This could be tied to questions #1 and #2. It allows the interviewee to share any other information that might be important in helping me better understand his view of incompetent teachers.)*

Informed Consent (for the survey)

Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to Their Dismissal: A Study of Administrator Perceptions in the State of Missouri

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study titled "Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to Their Dismissal." This research is being conducted by Chris Grauf (University of Arkansas). I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or repercussion. I am aware that, if I choose to withdraw from the study, my information may be excluded from the study if I so choose.

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine administrators' perceptions about the characteristics of incompetent teachers. The study will also explore the perceived barriers principals face when considering dismissal for incompetent teachers.

Participants in this study will be elementary, middle, and high school administrators from public schools across the state of Missouri. During the quantitative, survey based, portion of the study approximately 200 participants will be sought. Six to eight of the participants from the first phase of the study will be asked to participate in an in-person interview for the purpose of further explaining survey results.

Results of the study may potentially be used to inform administrator preparation programs on how to better train future administrators to identify, work with, and/or dismiss incompetent teachers. The study may also benefit current administrators by informing them of typical barriers faced based on personal and school related characteristics.

If I agree to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
1. Complete a 10-15 question, multiple-choice and short answer, survey lasting approximately 5-10 minutes.

I will not receive any monetary compensation as a participant in this study. Since I am an administrator, I may benefit from knowledge gained or insight as a result of this study. There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

Information collected from surveys will be stored in a secure, password protected, location. Unless required by law, identifiable information about me will not be disseminated to the public. Once survey data has been collected, individual names will be replaced with numbers to ensure anonymity. Names will be kept in a separate file from the rest of the data to increase safety measures. All digital data will be stored in a password protected folder on the researcher's private laptop. Hard copies of survey data will be locked in a fireproof safe at the researcher's home office in Republic, MO. All data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Pseudonyms will be provided to replace any information given that could potentially identify research participants.

By clicking on the link below and taking the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

(I will insert a link to the survey here.)

For questions about your rights as a research participant, please call or write:

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
210 Administration
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

Researcher's Contact Information:

Chris Grauf

Faculty Advisor's Contact Information:
Dr. Ed Bengtson
479-575-5092
egbengts@uark.edu

Informed Consent (for the semi-structured interview)

Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to Their Dismissal: A Study of Administrator Perceptions in the State of Missouri

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study titled "Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to Their Dismissal." This research is being conducted by Chris Grauf (University of Arkansas). I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or repercussion. I am aware that, if I choose to withdraw from the study, my information may be excluded from the study if I so choose.

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine administrators' perceptions about the characteristics of incompetent teachers. The study will also explore the perceived barriers principals face when considering dismissal for incompetent teachers.

Participants in this study will be elementary, middle, and high school administrators from public schools across the state of Missouri. During the quantitative, survey based, portion of the study approximately 200 participants were sought. Six to eight of the participants from the first phase of the study will be asked to participate in an in-person interview for the purpose of further explaining survey results.

Results of the study may potentially be used to inform administrator preparation programs on how to better train future administrators to identify, work with, and/or dismiss incompetent teachers. The study may also benefit current administrators by informing them of typical barriers faced based on personal and school related characteristics.

If I agree to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
1. Participate in a one hour follow-up interview. I realize that I may refuse to participate in the interview phase of the study without penalty or repercussion.
2. If I participate in the interview process, I may be asked to review my interview transcript for accuracy.

I will not receive any monetary compensation as a participant in this study. Since I am an administrator, I may benefit from knowledge gained or insight as a result of this study. There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

Interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder and then transcribed by the researcher. Names will be replaced with numeric identifiers when interviews are transcribed. Real names and other information collected from interviews will be stored in a secure, password protected, location. Unless required by law, identifiable information about me will not be disseminated to the public. Names will be kept in a separate file from the rest of the data to increase safety measures. All digital data will be stored in a password protected folder on the researcher's private laptop. Hard copies from audio files and transcripts from interviews will be locked in a fireproof safe at the researcher's home office in Republic, MO. All data collected will be kept

confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Pseudonyms will be provided to replace any information given that could potentially identify research participants.

I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in this research project. I also understand that I may receive a signed copy of this form by contacting the principal researcher, Chris Grauf.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, please call or write:

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
210 Administration
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

Name of Subject: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:**_____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Researcher's Contact Information:

Chris Grauf

Faculty Advisor's Contact Information:
Dr. Ed Bengtson
479-575-5092
egbengts@uark.edu

Appendix F

IRB Approval Forms

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

September 12, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Christohper Grauf
                Ed Bengtson

FROM: Ro Windwalker
                IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 14-08-049

Protocol Title: *Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to their Dismissal*

Review Type: ☐ EXEMPT   ☒ EXPEDITED   ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 09/12/2014 Expiration Date: 08/19/2015

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 200 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes.   All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

January 5, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Christopher Grauf Ed Bengtson
FROM:	Ro Windwalker IRB Coordinator
RE:	PROJECT MODIFICATION
IRB Protocol #:	14-08-049
Protocol Title:	*Characteristics of Incompetent Teachers and Barriers to their Dismissal*
Review Type:	☐ EXEMPT ☒ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period:	Start Date: 12/27/2014 Expiration Date: 08/19/2015

Your request to modify the referenced protocol has been approved by the IRB. **This protocol is currently approved for 250 total participants.** If you wish to make any further modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

Please note that this approval does not extend the Approved Project Period. Should you wish to extend your project beyond the current expiration date, you must submit a request for continuation using the UAF IRB form "Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects." The request should be sent to the IRB Coordinator, 109 MLKG Building.

For protocols requiring FULL IRB review, please submit your request at least one month prior to the current expiration date. (High-risk protocols may require even more time for approval.) For protocols requiring an EXPEDITED or EXEMPT review, submit your request at least two weeks prior to the current expiration date. Failure to obtain approval for a continuation *on or prior to* the currently approved expiration date will result in termination of the protocol and you will be required to submit a new protocol to the IRB before continuing the project. Data collected past the protocol expiration date may need to be eliminated from the dataset should you wish to publish. Only data collected under a currently approved protocol can be certified by the IRB for any purpose.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix G

Data Tables

In your professional opinion, how important are the following characteristics in helping you to identify a teacher as incompetent? (Overall mean scores are listed in column one of each table, followed by mean scores by category.)

1- Unimportant 5- Very Important

	Mean	Male	Female	Elem.	MS	HS	K-8	7-12
Lack of content knowledge	4.32	4.17	4.49	4.37	4.19	4.33	4.53	3.85
Poor instructional delivery	4.75	4.66	4.84	4.75	4.69	4.73	4.87	4.77
Absent/tardy	4.19	4.17	4.21	4.18	4.06	4.23	4.20	4.08
Lack of classroom mgmt.	4.68	4.68	4.68	4.70	4.53	4.68	4.73	4.54
Ethical violations	4.72	4.74	4.70	4.73	4.75	4.83	4.47	4.92
Lack of student achieve.	4.27	4.15	4.42	4.25	4.06	4.33	4.53	4.23
Insubordination	4.48	4.52	4.44	4.43	4.53	4.48	4.53	4.62
Poor relationships	4.60	4.57	4.63	4.63	4.56	4.60	4.60	4.46

	Mean	Urban	Suburb.	Rural	1-5 yr	6-10yr	11+yr
Lack of content knowledge	4.32	4.42	4.40	4.26	4.25	4.29	4.40
Poor instructional delivery	4.75	4.75	4.76	4.74	4.80	4.65	4.79
Absent/tardy	4.19	4.17	4.05	4.25	4.25	4.15	4.17
Lack of classroom mgmt.	4.68	4.63	4.60	4.72	4.71	4.68	4.65
Ethical violations	4.72	4.75	4.76	4.70	4.66	4.75	4.75
Lack of student achieve.	4.27	4.29	4.35	4.24	4.23	4.22	4.36
Insubordination	4.48	4.42	4.44	4.52	4.32	4.56	4.56
Poor relationships	4.60	4.75	4.64	4.55	4.54	4.60	4.64

	Mean	1-249	250-499	500-749	750+
Lack of content knowledge	4.32	4.08	4.38	4.40	4.58
Poor instructional delivery	4.75	4.64	4.74	4.86	4.84
Absent/tardy	4.19	4.19	4.12	4.23	4.37
Lack of classroom mgmt.	4.68	4.80	4.67	4.56	4.63
Ethical violations	4.72	4.59	4.77	4.79	4.74
Lack of student achieve.	4.27	4.22	4.24	4.42	4.26
Insubordination	4.48	4.36	4.51	4.53	4.63
Poor relationships	4.60	4.49	4.62	4.70	4.58

Rank the characteristics in helping you identify a teacher as incompetent. The most important characteristic is #1, least important #8. (Overall mean scores and mean scores by category are reported. The lowest mean score represents the most important characteristic.)

	Mean	Male	Female	Elem.	MS	HS	K-8	7-12
Lack of content knowledge	4.57	4.93	4.16	4.55	4.66	4.75	3.8	4.92
Poor instructional delivery	3.47	3.97	2.91	3.30	4.09	3.83	3.13	2.31
Absent/tardy	6.15	5.96	6.36	6.11	6.22	6.03	6.33	6.85
Lack of classroom mgmt.	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.49	3.94	4.08	3.93	4.00
Ethical violations	3.36	3.02	3.74	3.44	2.81	3.15	4.40	3.38
Lack of student achieve.	4.64	4.85	4.40	4.51	5.06	4.58	4.40	4.54
Insubordination	5.23	4.93	5.58	5.62	4.13	5.20	6.27	5.15
Poor relationships	4.20	3.86	4.58	4.02	3.81	3.95	5.00	5.00

	Mean	Urban	Suburb.	Rural	1-5 yr	6-10yr	11+yr
Lack of content knowledge	4.57	4.79	4.22	4.67	4.52	4.71	4.47
Poor instructional delivery	3.47	4.17	3.45	3.35	3.32	3.49	3.60
Absent/tardy	6.15	6.46	6.29	6.03	5.88	6.35	6.21
Lack of classroom mgmt.	3.70	4.00	3.60	3.68	3.23	3.91	3.92
Ethical violations	3.36	3.33	3.33	3.37	3.68	2.96	3.44
Lack of student achieve.	4.64	4.63	4.15	4.86	4.71	4.60	4.61
Insubordination	5.23	5.13	5.53	5.13	5.34	4.96	5.40
Poor relationships	4.20	3.42	3.89	4.48	4.25	4.18	4.18

	Mean	1-249	250-499	500-749	750+
Lack of content knowledge	4.57	4.53	4.51	4.79	4.42
Poor instructional delivery	3.47	3.76	3.32	3.30	3.63
Absent/tardy	6.15	6.03	6.43	6.02	5.58
Lack of classroom mgmt.	3.70	3.32	3.88	3.88	3.63
Ethical violations	3.36	3.66	3.26	3.40	2.74
Lack of student achieve.	4.64	4.73	4.69	4.51	4.42
Insubordination	5.23	5.46	5.26	5.19	4.53
Poor relationships	4.20	4.64	4.01	3.98	4.16

How often do you observe the following behaviors from incompetent teachers? (Overall mean scores as well as mean scores for each category are calculated below.)
1-Never 3-Sometimes 5-Always

	Mean	Male	Female	Elem.	MS	HS	K-8	7-12
Lack of content knowledge	3.07	2.96	3.19	3.04	2.91	3.05	3.53	2.75
Poor instructional delivery	3.81	3.75	3.88	3.71	3.81	3.90	4.07	3.67
Absent/tardy	2.91	2.96	2.86	2.95	2.88	2.90	3.00	2.67
Lack of classroom mgmt.	3.86	3.89	3.82	3.83	3.78	3.82	4.07	3.92
Ethical violations	2.43	2.38	2.48	2.35	2.56	2.44	2.60	2.17
Lack of student achieve.	3.56	3.50	3.63	3.50	3.31	3.67	3.73	3.58
Insubordination	2.66	2.61	2.72	2.54	2.91	2.62	2.87	2.58
Poor relationships	3.53	3.56	3.50	3.43	3.72	3.67	3.53	3.08

	Mean	Urban	Suburb.	Rural	1-5 yr	6-10yr	11+yr
Lack of content knowledge	3.07	3.26	3.02	3.05	2.98	3.12	3.09
Poor instructional delivery	3.81	3.87	3.80	3.80	3.72	3.85	3.86
Absent/tardy	2.91	2.74	2.85	2.98	2.88	2.86	3.00
Lack of classroom mgmt.	3.86	4.00	3.75	3.88	3.86	3.82	3.90
Ethical violations	2.43	2.48	2.39	2.43	2.33	2.47	2.48
Lack of student achieve.	3.56	3.52	3.56	3.57	3.38	3.68	3.61
Insubordination	2.66	2.65	2.54	2.71	2.58	2.64	2.75
Poor relationships	3.53	3.70	3.56	3.49	3.38	3.55	3.67

	Mean	1-249	250-499	500-749	750+
Lack of content knowledge	3.07	3.23	2.90	3.23	2.89
Poor instructional delivery	3.81	3.91	3.64	4.00	3.79
Absent/tardy	2.91	3.11	2.72	3.07	2.84
Lack of classroom mgmt.	3.86	4.02	3.70	4.00	3.74
Ethical violations	2.43	2.45	2.26	2.67	2.53
Lack of student achieve.	3.56	3.64	3.43	3.65	3.63
Insubordination	2.66	2.68	2.62	2.65	2.79
Poor relationships	3.53	3.55	3.43	3.67	3.58

Which of the following barriers complicate your ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher?
(Overall mean scores and mean scores by category are listed in the table below)
1-Stongly Disagree 3-Neutral 5-Strongly Agree

	Mean	Male	Female	Elem.	MS	HS	K-8	7-12
Time	3.27	3.28	3.27	3.35	3.34	3.25	3.00	3.23
Teacher Union/Org.	2.75	2.63	2.89	2.96	2.88	2.38	2.53	2.69
Inadequate Supp. From Sup.	2.21	2.12	2.31	2.25	2.28	2.00	2.40	1.85
Inadequate Supp. From SB	2.42	2.40	2.44	2.39	2.59	2.28	2.73	2.00
Cost of Litigation	2.72	2.71	2.74	2.71	2.97	2.53	3.40	2.38
Avoid Conflict/Confront.	2.44	2.50	2.39	2.58	2.38	2.30	2.87	1.62
Laws Protecting Teachers	3.17	3.19	3.14	3.05	3.41	3.20	3.53	3.15
Poor Eval. Tools	2.76	2.76	2.76	2.81	2.94	2.63	2.93	2.85
Lack of Princ. Training	2.80	2.76	2.83	2.82	2.81	2.48	3.13	2.69

	Mean	Urban	Suburb.	Rural	1-5 yr	6-10yr	11+yr
Time	3.27	3.46	3.58	3.10	3.14	3.51	3.17
Teacher Union/Org.	2.75	2.44	3.13	3.31	2.80	2.74	2.72
Inadequate Supp. From Sup.	2.21	2.79	2.22	2.10	2.06	2.22	2.33
Inadequate Supp. From SB	2.42	2.54	2.16	2.51	2.35	2.49	2.42
Cost of Litigation	2.72	2.75	2.89	2.64	2.78	2.65	2.74
Avoid Conflict/Confront.	2.44	2.13	2.62	2.43	2.46	2.50	2.38
Laws Protecting Teachers	3.17	3.13	3.27	3.13	3.26	3.12	3.13
Poor Eval. Tools	2.76	3.04	2.75	2.71	2.69	2.87	2.72
Lack of Princ. Training	2.80	3.00	2.71	2.79	2.97	2.78	2.65

	Mean	1-249	250-499	500-749	750+
Time	3.27	3.15	3.31	3.42	3.16
Teacher Union/Org.	2.75	2.58	2.73	3.09	2.63
Inadequate Supp. From Sup.	2.21	2.27	2.10	2.37	2.16
Inadequate Supp. From SB	2.42	2.44	2.43	2.47	2.21
Cost of Litigation	2.72	2.80	2.58	2.88	2.74
Avoid Conflict/Confront.	2.44	2.61	2.55	2.16	2.11
Laws Protecting Teachers	3.17	3.12	3.14	3.26	3.21
Poor Eval. Tools	2.76	2.73	2.82	2.65	2.84
Lack of Princ. Training	2.80	3.10	2.79	2.49	2.58

Rank the barriers to dismissing incompetent teachers in order from most prominent to least prominent. Most =1 Least =9 (Overall mean scores and mean scores for each category are listed below. The most significant barrier has the lowest mean score.)

	Mean	Male	Female	Elem.	MS	HS	K-8	7-12
Time	3.81	3.70	3.95	3.71	3.56	3.68	4.67	3.77
Teacher Union/Org.	4.78	4.88	4.67	4.29	4.44	5.50	5.40	5.54
Inadequate Supp. From Sup.	6.20	6.30	6.08	6.07	6.25	6.33	6.20	5.85
Inadequate Supp. From SB	5.85	5.79	5.92	6.04	5.75	6.05	5.33	5.62
Cost of Litigation	5.08	5.05	5.13	5.20	5.06	5.23	4.07	5.15
Avoid Conflict/Confront.	5.43	5.39	5.47	5.33	5.75	5.25	6.27	5.31
Laws Protecting Teachers	3.81	3.56	4.10	4.11	3.69	3.43	3.67	3.00
Poor Eval. Tools	5.05	5.00	5.11	5.07	4.84	5.05	4.80	5.62
Lack of Princ. Training	5.07	5.02	5.13	4.99	5.41	4.90	4.93	6.46

	Mean	Urban	Suburb.	Rural	1-5 yr	6-10yr	11+yr
Time	3.81	3.38	3.53	4.02	4.08	3.97	3.43
Teacher Union/Org.	4.78	4.04	3.95	5.29	5.03	4.66	4.67
Inadequate Supp. From Sup.	6.20	4.79	6.53	6.33	6.54	6.26	5.83
Inadequate Supp. From SB	5.85	5.63	6.96	5.40	5.89	5.68	5.97
Cost of Litigation	5.08	5.63	5.42	4.83	5.03	4.90	5.31
Avoid Conflict/Confront.	5.43	5.21	5.22	5.56	5.43	5.43	5.43
Laws Protecting Teachers	3.81	4.75	3.84	3.63	3.42	3.90	4.10
Poor Eval. Tools	5.05	5.50	5.13	4.94	4.97	4.74	5.43
Lack of Princ. Training	5.07	5.96	4.78	5.02	4.63	4.97	5.56

	Mean	1-249	250-499	500-749	750+
Time	3.81	4.03	3.61	4.30	2.95
Teacher Union/Org.	4.78	5.17	4.89	4.21	4.37
Inadequate Supp. From Sup.	6.20	6.37	6.30	5.95	5.79
Inadequate Supp. From SB	5.85	5.80	5.71	5.93	6.42
Cost of Litigation	5.08	4.93	5.15	5.21	4.95
Avoid Conflict/Confront.	5.43	5.42	5.26	5.81	5.32
Laws Protecting Teachers	3.81	3.73	3.75	4.05	3.84
Poor Eval. Tools	5.05	5.14	4.79	5.30	5.42
Lack of Princ. Training	5.07	4.97	4.93	5.40	5.26