

TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITIES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
TEACHERS

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Stefanie Arminda Volk, February 2019

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the qualities that make teachers effective. A high rate of teachers are leaving the profession early in their careers; knowing the qualities that brings success in the classroom can help encourage teachers to stay and change lives of children on a daily basis. This study was performed in a rural school district at a freshman academy. A questionnaire was sent to four students, and they were later interviewed one-on-one. A similar questionnaire was also sent to every teacher at the freshman academy, and four teachers from each of the core subject areas were chosen to be interviewed and participate in a focus group. The findings of this study present what both teachers and students believed are the most highly effective qualities of teachers, and these results are compared to each other. The themes discovered are determined for teachers who are struggling to achieve effectiveness in their own classrooms.

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God has always made a way for me when there seemed to be no way. I would not have made it through this program without his guidance.

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Finally, to all of my teammates: thank you for listening to me complain about having to write another paper. You always noticed when I was stressed and tried your best to help me overcome the stress. Students come and go every year, but I am grateful that I get to have you back to teach with every year!

Dedication

I dedicate this study to all teachers, particularly ones who feel like giving up. I truly believe teaching is a calling; it is not a profession to enter because a person wants to have the summers off. Teaching is one of the toughest professions in the world. I once heard that teachers have to make more quick decisions than a brain surgeon. Do not give up; your profession may be one of the toughest, but it is also one of the most rewarding.

I also want to dedicate this to my two daughters. Making this doctorate degree my first priority many nights after coming home from a long day of teaching was not easy, but I see now that it was worth it. You both were always understanding (even though you were not always the best behaved while I worked!). Remember that you can do anything you set your mind on!

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

Teaching is a perpetually-changing profession. Teachers are expected to meet certain expectations that seem to change every other year. Throughout history, new theories and techniques, which have been thoroughly researched and evaluated by educators, have appeared in classrooms across the world. Finding the best techniques can be complicated because no two classrooms are exactly alike, and neither are any two teachers. Adapting to the environment of the classroom is essential for a teacher's success; he or she must employ the best methods to fit the students' needs. Several events have occurred throughout history that have led to America's current educational state.

Bloom's Taxonomy was originally designed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom. The approach is a pyramid, meaning teachers start from the bottom and work their way up. The categories from bottom to top are Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. Like building a structure, the foundation, which in this case is knowledge, should always be established first. The teacher can then build off the knowledge students have of a topic by checking for comprehension, then applying and analyzing. Finally, synthesis and evaluation are the highest tiers of the pyramid; they determine if a student truly understands the topic being taught. In 2001, however, Bloom's was revised to contain the categories of Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create. Bloom's Taxonomy was designed to allow teachers to have guidelines of how to teach students.

In 1982, Madeline Hunter wrote a book called *Mastery Teaching*. Her seven-step lesson planning is still widely encouraged by principals and used by teachers today. Many lesson plan

templates and evaluation rubrics include some of the seven steps. Her seven steps consisted of having a set of objectives (which are called “I can” statements today), an element to “hook” the learner, state standards, teaching by modeling and assessing, student practice with teacher or peer guidance, closure, and independent practice. All of these steps outline what a rigorous lesson should contain.

In 1983 changes were brought about in education as well. President Ronald Reagan issued a report about the issues surrounding public education and proposed ways to fix these issues. Some of the issues included teacher salary and curriculum. Reagan’s report addressed fears of some Americans and explained the importance of putting those fears aside to better prepare American students for the workforce. This report changed America because it led to comprehensive school reform efforts, was the impetus for the academic-standards movement, drew attention to the importance of education policy, and led to a focus on school accountability (Park, 2004).

One thing should always remain the same: best practices in the classroom. For a classroom to be effective, teachers must exhibit proven qualities of highly effective teachers. Numerous studies confirm that the most important factor contributing to student success is the effectiveness of instruction (Bright, 2012). Even though extensive research has been completed on what qualities teachers must have to be successful, various stakeholders may have different perceptions about these qualities. Teachers and students all have various experiences and jobs within the same building.

Recently, the United States created Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is an adaptation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Originally, NCLB outlined what it means to be a highly effective teacher; with ESSA, the power to create this definition goes back into the hands

of each state. The state education agencies (SEAs) are instructed to develop their own definitions of unqualified, out-of-field, inexperienced, and ineffective teachers (Saultz, White, McEachin, Fusarelli, L., & Fusarelli, B., 2017). Knowing some teachers and students' perspectives of what qualifies a teacher to be highly effective is crucial for developing a definition.

Statement of the Problem

There are not as many highly effective teachers in Tennessee as needed for Tennessee to meet its educational goals. In a 2016 report by the Tennessee Department of Education, only 30% of English I teachers were highly effective while only 39% of Algebra I teachers were considered highly effective. The report explains how Tennessee planned to increase the amount of highly effective teachers available to students. The report said, "This strategy calls for explicit attention to students' access to highly effective teachers with the goal of closing systematic gaps in achievement between different groups of students" (Equitable Access, 2016).

To increase student test scores, teachers must be using strategies that are effective for their students. Entering ninth grade can be one of the most emotionally difficult, most academically challenging times in children's lives (Reents, 2012). The age of 14 and 15, which is the age of most freshmen students, is a challenging age because of the students entering puberty. These students are distracted by social dilemmas, and therefore, they struggle to focus academically. The 9th graders need the academic assistance from highly effective teachers more than any of the other high school grade levels. Countless 9th grade students struggle with the transition from middle school to high school because of higher expectations from teachers, additional homework, and the freedom of selecting the most appropriate classes and activities to prepare them for life after high school (Styron & Peasant, 2010). Knowing the qualities that are

perceived as effective by teachers and students will help guide teachers at the freshman academy chosen for this study to strive to incorporate the identified highly effective techniques in the classroom.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of teachers and students on what it means to be a highly effective teacher. Students and teachers are in the classroom daily sharing the experience through different perceptions, yet both hold different roles. They may have various ideas of how success occurs in the classroom. Knowing what these effective strategies are will allow the teacher to use the technique however it fits best into his or her classroom. Teachers should be the designer of teaching environment, the guider for students' learning, and the academic consultant for students (Jia, 2010). Because Tennessee struggles to possess highly effective teachers within its education system, these qualities identified through this study will help determine the highly effective qualities possessed by teachers use in their classrooms.

Research Questions

1. What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade teachers?
2. What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade students?
3. How do the opinions of the qualities of effective teachers compare between 9th grade teachers and students?

Researcher Positionality Statement

The researcher has a bachelor's degree in English Education, a Masters in Reading Education, and an Education Specialist degree in Administration. She also has seven years of experience in classroom instruction in grades 8 and 9, and she is currently the teacher leader at her school. Being a classroom teacher and a teacher leader has given the researcher the opportunity to view qualities and techniques of various teachers at various grade levels and subject levels. The researcher's role in the study will include evaluation of teacher instructional techniques. The researcher has used some of the qualities indicated as highly effective and hopes to use newly-discovered qualities that will improve instruction.

Limitations and Delimitations

There are several limitations to consider in this study. One limitation is that only one school was examined due to convenience. Because the students are all from the same school, they will not have as diverse of opinions as they would if more schools in other districts were evaluated. Also, to save time and cost, surveys will be sent out through Microsoft Forms to the teachers and students via school email. Finally, the last limitation for this study is the availability of students; certain students may not be available due to their schedules.

Delimitations of the study exist as well. Sampling is a delimitation for various reasons. Only 9th grade teachers and students are being studied instead of all high school grade levels; however, the 9th grade school has approximately 40 teachers and 550 students. Also, the geographical setting of the school is rural. Nearly 500 of the students attending the freshman academy are Caucasian; therefore, the population is not ethnically diverse. Teacher quality is central to efforts to improve education, and educational equity, throughout the country (Saultz,

White, McEachin, Fusarelli, L., & Fusarelli, B., 2017). These limitations and delimitations should not inhibit the results of the study.

Definition of Terms

Some terms must be defined in order to understand the educational realm of this study:

Teacher effectiveness.

Teacher effectiveness relates to the idea of examining effectiveness at different levels of an education system, such as nationally, at a Local Authority/School district level, for individual schools, for departments within a school or for individual teachers in terms of their success in achieving particular goals or educational outcomes (Ko, Sammons, and Bakkum, 2014).

Perception.

Perception involves the way one sees the world (McDonald, 2012). Perception comes from a person's prior experience. Because everyone experiences events differently, everyone comes to a situation with a different perception. For this study, perception involves how the teachers and students perceive qualities of highly effective teachers.

Highly Effective.

Teachers who had a TVAAS level 4 or 5 in the previous school year (Equitable Access, 2016) are considered highly effective. For the purpose of this study, "highly effective" will refer to a teacher's test scores.

Highly Qualified.

Highly qualified in Tennessee, which is the location of this study, refers to teachers who have obtained a degree in the subject-area or grade level-area they are teaching. Also, the teachers must pass the Praxis exams, which are content area tests. Two tests are given: one for

the principles of teaching and learning and the other for the content are the candidate wishes to teach.

Summary

Teaching is an art; no two classrooms are alike. There are techniques, however, that teachers can adapt and use in their own classrooms. Identifying the commonalities among what teachers and students say are highly effective qualities of teachers will allow these 9th grade teachers to focus on the top three qualities identified and use them in their own classroom. The challenge for the teacher is not only to identify and develop mastery of certain instructional strategies and behaviors accepted as effective practices, but the teacher is also challenged to develop the ability to effectively match these strategies and behaviors, at the appropriate time, to individual students and student groups, in specific teaching situations as these relate to the teacher's desired student learning outcomes (Hunt, Touzel, & Wiseman, 2009). Students' academic success is the ultimate goal; these effective qualities must be identified so that teachers can exhibit this qualities in their lessons.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A plethora of research has been conducted on what qualities are common in all effective teachers. Various researchers have ranked the most effective qualities, and even though no two researchers will rank the qualities in the same order, there is some overlap. The qualities they have discovered as being effective have proven that success can occur in the classroom if the teachers exhibit the qualities properly identified. The issue, however, is that administrators, teachers, and students may have a different perception on what these qualities are.

Every teacher wants to be effective in the classroom. Teacher effectiveness is comprehensive since several qualities make up an effective teacher. Even though tremendous pressure is placed upon teachers to help students perform well on tests, it goes beyond testing. Students want to feel comfortable and confident in the classroom. Teachers must help build the students' confidence by encouraging them and exhibiting positivity. By defining teacher effectiveness, teachers can have a checkpoint of the qualities they already exhibit and ones they should strive to achieve. Discovering what works in the classroom will take students one step closer to success. This chapter will discuss the qualities that previous studies have identified as being effective.

Constructivism in Education

Constructivism involves an individual's prior experiences and how it shapes their outlook on things. It was developed by Lev Vygotsky, a researcher who was determined to discover how children learn best. This theory presents the idea that individuals will try to make sense of all information that they encounter by constructing the information themselves to make connections (Olusegun, 2012). Because the research questions in this study deal with perceptions, it requires

the theoretical framework of constructivism. Teachers and students will use their past experiences to construct ideas about what helps a student learn in the classroom. Under constructivism, teachers should offer more humanism cares for students and create a favorable teaching environment for students (Jia, 2010). Constructivism argues that people's experiences allow them to construct knowledge based upon their experiences (Olusegun, 2015). A psychological constructivist view of learning has implications for education derived from the premise that students will construct their own understanding as they make connections between what they already know and new knowledge (McPhail, 2016).

The first who contributed a lot to the development of constructivism thought and apply it to classes and students' learning and development are Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Jia, 2010), who were philosophers and psychologists. However, Lev Vygotsky is credited with social constructivism. The theory of Constructivism referred to students' ability to make sense of knowledge by using past experiences to make the connection. Teachers are no different. In fact, teachers are students; they are constantly learning new techniques and lessons to present to students.

Amineh and Asl (2015) described constructivism in education as learning that is represented as a constructive process in which the learner is building an internal illustration of knowledge, a personal interpretation of experience. They explained learning as an active process; the learning is challenged with constructing meaning from the experience. The authors explained that even though the learner is not creating a fictional world, they are constructing a new idea in their minds that reflect their past experiences. This is part of their interpretation of the concepts, yet it is individualized based on the learner's prior experience or knowledge. Their constructs are still the real world; they are simply tailored to the individual's ideas. (Amineh and Asl, 2015).

More specifically, this study falls into the category of social constructivism, Vygotsky's psychological theory. Social constructivism teaches that all knowledge develops as a result of social interaction and language use, and is therefore a shared, rather than an individual, experience (Lynch, 2016). Teachers learn effective techniques from one another in hopes of reproducing those techniques in their own classrooms. A school in which teachers do not interact and share ideas is a school that will never meet its goals; effective techniques must be shared from teacher to teacher so that all members of a school can work to meet their goals. Also, the teacher interaction should not stop with the sharing of ideas; teachers should share the effectiveness of the techniques used in their classrooms.

Qualities of Effective Teachers

Although academic success can refer to many things, most people think academic success refers to grades and test scores. Grades in the classroom are important, but grades can become complicated due to each teacher's different grading methods. Some teachers take more participation grades while other teachers like to use more assessment tools. Academic success refers to each students' ability to reach or exceed their individual goals. Ultimately, mastering the standards to achieve success at the next grade level is the goal.

Test scores are important for schools because the lack of success on state tests can result in lack of funding for schools and districts. Test scores, though, are not a measurement of lifelong learning. Identifying what makes a teacher effective can be a difficult task. A teacher knowledgeable of the content does not necessarily mean that teacher will be successful in the classroom; knowledge alone is not enough. In fact, teacher training programs that emphasize content-knowledge acquisition and neglect pedagogical coursework are less effective in

preparing prospective teachers than programs that offer both content and pedagogical knowledge (Little, Goe, Bell, 2009). State test scores do not fully indicate success either. Instead, the effectiveness stretches beyond knowledge; it extends to relationships and how a teacher handles situations. In other words, teacher effectiveness is based on a comprehensive approach. Just because a teacher is knowledgeable of the subject matter he teaches does not mean he will be effective in the classroom. Just because a teacher gets along with the students does not mean she will be effective in the classroom. “Effective” goes beyond the scores; it encompasses the teacher’s ability to build a student’s confidence in himself. By forming positive relationships with students and supporting the students both in and out of the classroom, teachers can build their effectiveness. Students love when teachers come to watch them at a school activity, and by building a positive relationship, students will want to work hard to perform well on the state test.

A positive school climate is crucial for the success of a school. Various aspects of a school must be in place for these successes to happen. Students must feel safe. Also, teachers must have positive relationships with other teachers, students, and the administration in order to have an uplifting climate at the school. When students have positive relationships with teachers and school staff they tend to feel connected to the school, avoid unsafe and disruptive behavior, and perform well academically (Hopson, 2014). Parents want to be able to send their children to a school whose climate is an encouraging and engaging environment, and teachers want to teach in that kind of environment as well. A welcoming, safe, and supportive environment can help students' belief in their potential and provide motivation for success-particularly if they feel they are respected in all their diversity, including differing types of talents and learning styles (Gorton and Alston, 2009). Leaders are not the only ones who establish and supportive environment; it

involves all members: stakeholders, the community, teachers, administration, students, and support staff.

Robert Walker (2008) taught college-level students, and over the course of 15 years, he surveyed and interviewed his students about qualities of highly effective teachers. He discovered that most students expressed their ideas of a highly effective teachers as one who has a relatable personality. These students found this quality more important than any academic attributes a teacher exhibits. The students made no mention of awards received by teachers for academic success; instead, they focused on the kind and caring qualities a teacher may possess.

Regardless of nationality, race, or gender, all effective teachers will exhibit the same qualities. Misigo, Hezborn, Koderno, Jackson (2014) studied qualities of effective teachers from Kenya. Despite this, the themes of effective teachers reign true for any educational institute. From the beginning, this article explained that teacher effectiveness has had a profound effect on student achievement according to previous research. The qualitative study asked secondary students what they believed were qualities of an effective teacher. 25 common themes emerged from the study with the number one theme being a sense of humor. The top ten list include the following: Sense of humor, knowledgeable of content, caring and understand, explains thoroughly, patient respectful, God-fearing, self-confident, emotionally stable, smart and presentable, exceptional in attendance.

Although number six would not apply to public schools in the United States due to the First Amendment, all the other qualities are comparable to previous studies. Overall, teachers who demonstrated that they were well prepared, organized, explained and presented their lesson content well, involved learners, encouraged questions and corrected learners' incorrect responses politely, were highly regarded by the participants in this study (Misigo, Hezborn, Koderno,

Jackson, 2014, p. 146). In contrast, a survey conducted to students by Dawn Hadley revealed that a sense of humor did not make the top five characteristics students value, but most of them believe this factors into teachers' effectiveness (2011).

In addition, Goe, Bell, and Little's article takes a deeper consider teacher effectiveness. In the article, the authors listed a five-point definition of teacher effectiveness: Having high expectations for students, promoting positivity for student success, creating and adapting effective lessons, developing a safe culture, and collaborating with all stakeholders for the benefit of the students

The text explained that the teacher evaluation model is in place to measure most of these five points, but it also explained that teacher effectiveness goes beyond the evaluation instrument. Researchers still have a long way to go toward clearly establishing the validity of various instruments for measuring teacher effectiveness (Authors, 2008). These authors suggested looking at a comprehensive approach to teacher effectiveness, such as teacher involvement in school activities, test scores, evaluation, and teacher reflections. These elements encompass the true meaning of teacher effectiveness. It first explained that teacher effectiveness is not necessarily defined by test scores. Teacher effectiveness can be measured multiple ways, and an effective teacher has more than one effective quality.

Possibly the most well-known piece of literature on qualities of effective teachers is James Stronge's *Qualities of Effective Teachers*. Stronge is a college professor at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. His research involves analyzing teachers in the public school system for qualities of effective teachers. In the first part of the book, Stronge discussed the qualities he identified as highly effective: Teacher as a Person, Classroom Management,

Planning and Organization for Instruction, Implementing Instruction, and Monitoring Student Progress and Potential.

Teacher as a person.

Effective teachers care about their students and demonstrate that they care in such a way that their students are aware of it (Stronge, 2007). According to Stronge, to be effective, teachers must care about students' lives both inside and outside their classrooms. This involves learning about the students' personal lives, not just how they perform academically in the classroom. Effective teachers care for students first as people and second as students (Stronge, 2007). It is therefore plausible that having negative relationships with teachers might incite greater classroom disengagement in students with more significant oppositional behaviors, while having positive relationships might act as a protective factor (Archambault, Vandebossche-Makombo, & Fraser (2017). Arif, Rashid, Tahira, and Akhter's article "Personality and Teaching: An Investigation Into Prospective Teachers' Personality" stated many acts about how a teacher's personality can greatly influence a student's learning process. Personality encourages the choices of the teacher in the classroom. Examples include interaction with students, teaching methods, and other various experiences. The authors explain that a teacher should use the knowledge of his or her personality to successfully influence the learning environment. They noted that a positive relationship between teacher and student can bring tremendous academic success. Even responses to students can influence the classroom. A negative response to a student in which damages their confidence can ruin an entire school year. A teacher must discover the strengths of his or her personality and use it to his or her advantage. For example, the teacher with aggressive and dominating personality characteristics will often show those tendencies in class, which is not pleasing to any student (Arif, Rashid, Tahira, and Akhter, 2012).

In Rita Pierson's video *Every Kid Needs a Champion*, she discusses the value and importance of human connection. She encouraged all educators to form relationships with students, citing a personal experience of telling a reluctant teacher that students do not learn from teachers they do not like. Forming positive relationships with students allows students to feel safe in the classroom, providing a feeling of safety in which allows them to learn. These relationships should also be built between administrators and teachers as well. As Pierson mentioned in the video, teachers will not like every single student, but it is important for the teacher to build the relationship with the student regardless.

In educational research specifically, studies have found that the characteristics of effective teachers are largely personality-based (Kim, Dar-Nimrod, MacCann, 2017). Eryilmaz and Kara completed a study on the personalities of teachers in terms of being able to adapt to various situations in the profession. The study proved that teachers possess the proper personality traits to adapt while student teachers do not. The article explained the reason for this is because teachers have years of experience in the classroom, which has allowed them time to learn how to adjust to scenarios in the classroom. The authors note that studies have found that teachers' personality characteristics have an effect on being an effective teacher, on students' academic achievement, on the subjective well-being of students, the use of effective teaching methods, and on the relationship between teachers and students (Eryilmaz & Kara, 2017). As proven in the study, maturity often helps develop these personality traits, allowing the teacher to be open and adjust when change occurs; however, the study did not detail the amount of teaching experience required for a teacher to feel comfortable letting his or her personality show. It simply creates a divide between teachers and pre-service teachers (student teachers).

One of the most important things a teacher can do in the classroom is make a connection with the students. Building this relationship can ensure trust and respect between the two people. Some of the best teachers may not be the most intelligent, but they do have Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a theory of intelligence involving the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotion (Morton, 2012). This is established in workplaces when the teacher understands a student's emotions and acts to ensure that the teacher recognizes the problem. The objective of a teacher is to complete the task successfully, keep the students working together and manage the team on an individual basis to ensure everyone is happy and playing to their strengths (Emotional Intelligence Theory, n.d.). According to *Emotional Intelligence: A Leadership Imperative*, Emotional Intelligence is about being smart with your emotions... it's about tuning in to yourself and others and then using this valuable information to better manage yourself and your relationships with others (Coffey & Murray, 2010,). Coffey and Murray define EI as different than one's IQ; instead, it has to do with a teacher's ability to relate to an employee's emotions and handle scenarios with the employee's emotions in mind. For a teacher, it is important to remember that students are human, too. Teachers must be able to teach according to students' interests and lifestyles. Also, students are filled with many emotions. A teacher with Emotional Intelligence should be able to help a student cope with his or her situation and help guide him or her in the right direction. For example, if a student who comes to school without his homework because he had to go to work that night and get up early to get his brothers and sisters ready for school, a teacher with Emotional Intelligence would understand that this young student is struggling to stay afloat and provide all necessary resources available (after school tutoring, morning tutoring, etc.) Students come to school with all kinds of problems, and no two students or their situations are the same. A teacher must have the skills necessary to

exercise Emotional Intelligence daily when these scenarios arise. Change is inevitable in the classroom.

In contrast, researchers found that a teacher's personality is a vital aspect in student-teacher relationships rather than the student's academic outcomes (Kim, Dar-Nimrod, and MacCann (2017). This research presents the question of whether a connection with students truly does present successful outcomes or simply assists in the teacher-student relationship.

Classroom management.

Classroom management is essential for a successful learning environment. In fact, its importance is emphasized in teacher education programs in college. In a study conducted, almost all the programs in the sample (98 percent) required assignments of teacher candidates that were related to classroom management (Greenberg, Putman, and Walsh, 2014). An essential quality of an effective teacher is classroom management. Classroom management is about creating inviting and appealing environments for student learning (Korpershoek, Harms, De Boer, Van Kuijk, & Doolaard, 2016, p. 645). In a study conducted by these authors, they analyzed several teachers and students and discovered that two factors are essential for successful classroom management: teacher and student relationship and reactive behaviors to discipline problems. These two elements help promote a culture of respect. Classroom management is usually a bigger problem with new teachers who are already overwhelmed with lesson planning and managing any other aspects of teaching. The new teachers also feel as if they want to gain the approval of the class and try to be relatable, which is a huge mistake to do in the beginning. It is very essential that the prospective teachers should be versatile in their classroom management techniques (Pachaiyappan & Ushalaya Raj, 2014, p. 53). Jim Burke explains four keys to achieving classroom management: begin the period efficiently, end the

period productively, provide a disciplined, supportive classroom environment, and manage group instruction productively. Although many qualities are required for a teacher to be effective, the effectiveness begins in the classroom with classroom management.

For classroom management to be achieved, a teacher must begin and end the class productively. This means that the teacher must be prepared. Students sense unpreparedness and take advantage of the teacher's insecurities. Studies on unprepared and underprepared teachers versus fully prepared teachers consistently show that the students of teachers who are prepared show stronger learning gains (What Makes A Teacher Effective, n.d.). A teacher must also end the class productively to be effective. This includes performing formative assessments. Some formative assessments given in class can reveal struggles the students may be having, which would prevent frustration with homework that night or homework that would be used in the future to reveal those gaps (Burke 2008). Student success is what helps teachers become effective, but the journey to effectiveness begins in the classroom.

When discussing classroom management, management of the students is always considered. Research on effective, high-performing classrooms consistently identifies a culture of high expectations as a determining factor in the success of students (Burke, 2008, p. 44). High expectations for students shows the students that the teacher cares and wants the students to succeed for their own good. High expectations means teachers assign work that is challenging for the students, and also, teachers hold the students to a high standard and do not let them give up. Classroom environment also includes discipline. Teachers do not have to be strict for students to behave; they simply must establish a positive classroom environment with high expectations.

Finally, for classroom management to be established, a teacher must manage group instruction. Movement from one activity to another is essential in any successful class (Burke, 2008, p. 50). The teacher must carefully plan the group members based on ability and behavior. Also, the teacher must roam from group to group to determine if students are engaged and on task. Group work is not a babysitting activity; it must have a purpose, and students must understand that purpose. This is established by the teacher. For a teacher to be successful, students must always be engaged in the work even during group activities.

Classroom management could be understood as actions taken by teachers to create and maintain a favorable teaching and learning environment and to deal with all the arising problems which may disrupt effective teaching and learning (Nguyen, Tran, & Luu, 2016). Classroom management is one of the toughest elements to establish within the classroom. The average ratio of teacher to student is 1:25. Therefore, classroom management is essential for teachers to be effective. Without classroom management being instilled early in the year, chaos ensues, and students do not retain what they are learning.

Classroom management influences student performance in the classroom. Students taught by below average classroom managers and low interaction teachers exhibit lower levels of engagement, an important indicator of school success (Gage, Scott, Hirn, MacSuga-Gage, 2018). For the purpose of this discussion, student performance includes behavior as well as academic success. A study, completed by Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, and Doolard (2016), analyzed several teachers and students and discovered that several factors are essential for successful classroom management: teacher and student relationship and reactive behaviors to discipline problems. The study revealed what every teacher is curious about: how important is it for me to build a relationship with my students even if the student is difficult to deal with? This

article proved the importance of teachers and students having a positive classroom relationship for the class to run smoothly. Their examining of 54 classrooms revealed that the classroom management interventions had a small yet significant outcome on student measures (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, and Doolard, 2016). One element of establishing classroom management is the teacher and the student's relationship. The study proved that positive interaction between the leader of the class and the students is essential for effective classroom management, and classroom management is a quality that an effective teacher possesses.

Several factors could contribute to a teacher's success with classroom management. Pachaiyappan and Ushalaya set out to debunk previous research-based theories on several aspects of teacher effectiveness. These include male versus female teachers, rural versus urban schools, difference in effectiveness in secondary and higher education schools, effectiveness in humanities courses, effectiveness based on years of experience, and classroom management styles. They said, "Effective teacher one who has clear concept of the subject matter, ability to write clear objectives for his/her course, ability to organize learning materials, ability to communicate his/her knowledge to the students successfully and deal with classroom situations (Pachaiyappan and Ushalaya, 2014). The study expected to find that there is no significant difference in any of these categories mentioned; however, there were significant differences. Urban school teachers were found to be more effective, higher secondary school teachers were more effective than secondary, science teachers were more effective than art teachers, and teachers with better classroom management were more effective. Although, there were no differences found in male and female teacher effectiveness, and there was no difference in teachers with little teaching experience versus much experience. This study found that years of

experience does not play a significant role in teacher effectiveness. The authors noted, “To retain the enrolled masses in the classroom, to make real education possible, to increase the level of achievement, to tap the potentialities of the students and to improve educational standards remarkably, the teacher should not only be committed and devoted but also be competent and effective” (Pachaiyappan and Ushalaya, 2014). Classroom behavior management seems to assume an instrumental role that allows classroom instruction, although it is not a teaching goal in itself (Lopes, Silva, Oliveira, Sass, Martin, 2017).

Planning and organization for instruction/ teacher preparation.

Planning and organization for instruction is critical in teaching. Teachers must have a plan in the classroom in order to avoid chaos. Organizing time and preparing materials in advance of instruction have been noted as important aspects of effective teaching (Stronge, 2007). Stronge discussed the importance of tailoring a lesson to fit the needs of at-risk students as well as high-achieving students. According to Stronge (2007), “Effective teachers do not focus merely on basic skills, even if students are lacking in these skills. Instead, they plan for mastery of the basics while incorporating higher-level, metacognitive thinking into the lesson” (p. 60). The effective teacher recognizes academic instruction as central to his or her role (Stronge, 2007).

The article “What Makes a Teacher Effective?” discusses the importance of teacher preparation, which presented research findings on the importance of teacher preparation with a focus on its importance for first-year teachers. Preparation begins with being highly qualified and continues in the classroom with the lessons the teacher designs for the day. Research and common sense tell us that subject matter knowledge is necessary for effective teaching. But there is a second part of the equation: knowledge and skill in how to teach is also a must. Effective

teachers understand and are able to apply strategies to help students increase achievement” (What Makes a Teacher Effective, 2006).

Implementing instruction.

Effective teachers use appropriate teaching strategies based on the content, the students, and other factors such as time and resources (Stronge, 2007). Research shows that flexibility is an important factor in education. With various students’ personalities, it is crucial for a teacher to be able to act upon instinct and skill. No two teachers’ classrooms are similar; therefore, the methods of implementing instruction should not be the same. Instead, the teacher should apply the effective qualities according to how it best fits in his or her classroom.

Louis Warren’s article “Viewing Teachers as Leaders Without Being Administrators,” teachers are required to exhibit leadership skills within the classroom to be effective. This means this teacher is in charge and makes the big decisions. A teacher is a leader based on their influence to make sure that students channel their energies into explicit academic goals or ideas (Warren, 2016). Despite principals being the ultimate leaders of a school, teachers must act as sub-leaders to keep the management of the school under control. It is important for leadership qualities to be instilled in teachers to be successful in the classroom. Teachers can be leaders without having to hold an administrative position.

Implementing instruction in the classroom involves teachers mixing up their methods of teaching. For example, a teacher should spend time lecturing while still allowing students some time to collaborate with one another. Switching methods of teaching allows students not to feel as if learning is monotonous; it can be fun and engaging.

Monitoring student progress and potential.

Effective teaching occurs when students are put first. In her article “The Flexible Teacher,” Leila Christenbury, a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, mentioned that she often tells her student-teachers that there is no specific definition of effective teaching. Christenbury identified several characteristics of effective teaching. These include the following: teachers must be willing to change, push the learning based on student motivation, have freedom to make decisions without a principal “on their heels,” and put the students’ best interest first over any other state requirement. All of these are characteristics of an effective teacher simply because they require the teacher adjusting his or her lessons to fit the students’ needs. By monitoring student progress and potential, the teacher can discover what students have mastered and what they still need to improve.

Motivation is internal-not something that is done to us-and emphasizes nurturing an inherent ongoing human proclivity to continue growing, developing and maturing, and being enriched by new experiences (Owens & Valesky, 2015). It should be the responsibility of the teacher to help instill intrinsic motivation. One way to motivate students is to allow them autonomy in some decisions. Giving students some space and freedom to be creative in their learning helps them gain intrinsic motivation because they feel independent. Extrinsic motivation should be used when appropriate; this includes scenarios when intrinsic motivation may not be present. If extrinsic motivation is offered when intrinsic motivation is enough to cover the task, it can be detrimental to the outcome. In a study completed on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, results showed that using an extrinsic reward to motivate someone to do something that the person would have done anyway could have detrimental effects on the quality and creativity of the person’s performance and on the person’s subsequent motivation to perform

the activity once the extrinsic reward is received (Harackiewicz, 2000). When these creative ideas prove to be successful, teachers should praise the students, making the students feel appreciated.

Even as teachers provide experiences for students to learn material, they must still check for individual student learning (Stronge, 2007). This includes providing students with feedback. Effective teachers provide feedback in a timely manner and ensure that it relates specifically to the criteria of the task (Stronge, 2007). Many teachers give a form of pretest to assess students' skills at the beginning of the school year. At the end of the year, they give a posttest to measure the extent of their learning. This allows teachers to monitor students' progress and potential; they teacher can identify to students' weaknesses and focus more time on lessons related to those weaknesses.

Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies

At the beginning of the 1970s, researchers began to look at the effects of instruction on student learning (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Since then, valiant efforts have been made to improve teaching techniques. One of the most effective researchers is Robert Marzano. He is an advocate for teachers improving teaching techniques and travels the country speaking about these techniques. One theory he has created is the "Nine Instructional Strategies" model. These are nine activities teachers should incorporate in their lessons. If teachers use these instructional strategies, literature shows they will be successful in the classroom. Implementing these in the classroom provides students with differentiated opportunities to learn. The following are Marzano's strategies: Identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, reinforcing effort and providing recognition, homework and practice, non-linguistic

representations, cooperative learning, setting objectives and providing feedback, generating and testing hypotheses, and cues, questions, and advance organizers.

Identifying similarities and differences.

Asking students to independently identifying similarities and differences enhances students' understanding of and ability to use knowledge (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Comparing and contrasting requires students to understand and remember the organization, points of comparison, and similarities or differences as they read and identify relevant content (Hammann & Stevens, 2003). Requiring students to identify similarities and differences, also known as comparing and contrasting, in the classroom allows the students an opportunity for critical thinking; they must realize why two elements are similar or different. Recognizing the similarities and differences allows these students to fully grasp all aspects of the material, allowing them to teach themselves essentially. Once students master this, they will be able to understand all aspects of where the material is coming from and see how it was developed. This allows the students to showcase their ability to process problems and learn how to solve from just realizing the similarities and differences within the problem itself.

Summarizing and note taking.

Incorporating these two techniques into lessons shows students understand the material. To effectively summarize, students must delete some information, substitute some information, and keep some information (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Summarizing and note taking is a key aspect of how students learn the information; after taking notes, students can use the notes to study. A teacher should require students to take notes but not force them to take

notes in a particular style. Note taking is dependent on the student and how the respective student processes and learns information the best. Some students learn from writing every single word down, and some learn from writing just the key points of the material. Once the information is presented and the teacher has made sure the students are all paying attention, it is the responsibility of the students to record the information in a manner that works best for them.

Reinforcing effort and providing recognition.

A common concern shared by many teachers, regardless of setting, is the passive nature of students---students doing the minimum on an assignment or not turning in their best work (Ozar & Boyle, 2008). It is critical for teachers to reinforce effort specifically. Instead of “good job,” teachers should specifically mention what was good about the work. These specific types of feedback are discussed later.

Marzano recommended teachers use “Pause, Prompt, Praise.” When students are struggling, Marzano suggested teachers have the students pause, prompt them with support to help guide them to the answer and praise their efforts. This allows students to feel appreciated and reassured in their work. Reinforcing effort gives the student who may be struggling with the material a chance to grasp any concepts with which they may not feel comfortable.

Homework and practice.

According to Marzano, students should be given homework to practice skills. However, inappropriate homework may produce little or no benefit—it may even decrease student achievement. (Marzano & Pickering, 2007). Negative attitudes have developed regarding homework due to this redundant behavior by some teachers. Meaningful homework on

occasions can increase study achievement. Homework allows students to practice the new skill outside the classroom. In addition, homework allows the students to not only practice the skills that they learned within the classroom, but it also gives students the opportunity to study and review the skills that they learned from their own work they completed instead of examples given to them by their respective teacher.

Non-linguistic representations.

According to Patricia Vakos's article "Why The Blank Stare? Strategies for Visual Learners" (n.d.), "65 percent of the population consists of visual learners." Therefore, activities such as graphic organizers, flowcharts, and concept maps can help these learners. Concept maps have distinct features; they can help students see how information such as ideas and concepts are structured and connected (Thomas & Green, 2015). If over half of the class learns best by seeing visuals, the teacher must use hands-on activities and visual to teach. It is also helpful for students to create their own nonlinguistic representation. Creating a nonlinguistic representation helps students deepen their understanding because it requires them to think about the content in new ways (Marzano, 2010).

Cooperative learning.

With the current need to improve the quality of education in the country, it has become necessary for efforts to be geared towards shifting the pedagogical trend from teacher-centered teaching to learner-centered teaching. Teachers need to use innovative and interactive teaching techniques to bring an overhaul in the teaching trend (Rabgay, 2018). Marzano believed that teachers should group students according to their interests. The groups should be kept small so

that interaction can take place. Some students' fear of being judged by peers will keep them from expressing their ideas, which is why groups must be kept in small numbers. These small groups allow students to express their ideas and get feedback from their peers on their ideas. This not only improves their communication skills, which stretches far beyond the classroom, but it also allows the students to combine ideas and form a quality answer to a question or the objective that their group is working on. Sometimes students have mental block and can only find one solution to the problem that they have been tasked with, but when the students are paired into groups they can ask for other ideas and formulate a group answer. How the students are grouped is a key component of the success of these small groups. The teachers must learn their students' personalities and group the classmates based on their interest and effort.

Setting objectives and providing feedback.

Marzano argued that students must receive feedback and be recognized for their hard work. Students use feedback in different ways including enhancing motivation, enhancing learning, encouraging reflection and clarifying their progress (Crisp, 2007). Feedback has a tricky area because of how the students will receive and process the information. Feedback can be taken differently because of the student's personality. Some students will not take well to criticism, but when a teacher can understand how the student receives feedback, they can then translate what the student has accomplished into an area where the student can improve his or her work for the future. After the student receives the feedback, he or she can then understand their abilities and how much room they must grow, which in turn allows them to set realistic goals that the student can work towards and accomplish. The goals and the ability to understand their own growth rate is why positive feedback and realistic goals are so crucial within the classroom.

Generating and testing hypotheses.

When students generate and test hypotheses, they are predicting and use critical thinking. These kinds of activities may include students having to write a detailed explanation for their answer, which allows the teacher to see if the student truly understands the concept. Andrea Beesley and Helen Aphorpe (2010) define this category as having two types of thinking: deductive and inductive. In deductive thinking, students use prior knowledge to create general rules to make predictions about future events or novel situations. In inductive thinking, students gather information and then generate principles that help explain events or phenomena (p. 114).

Cues, questions, and advance organizers.

Allowing students to frontload information for themselves before beginning the lesson provides them with an opportunity to construct information for themselves, which is a concept of Constructivism. Teachers should also provide students with wait time, a technique of asking a question and waiting several seconds before giving students the opportunity to answer. This allows all students to have the opportunity to decide on an answer to the question. How a question is asked and the cues that are given to the students is very important for his or her future learning. Questioning must be difficult for the students to answer so they are challenged to critically think about the information that has been given to them. Not all students will be able to answer the difficult questions that are given to them, which then puts the responsibility back on the teacher to provide helpful cues to guide the student closer to the answer. These cues must not be too easy for the student; otherwise, the critical thinking question that is given to the student is rendered irrelevant, and the student has not accomplished anything. Too often, teachers simply give the student the answers so that they can move on to another concept. This can be

detrimental to students' learning; they should be given hints to the answer so that they can figure out the answer for themselves.

Teacher Motivation

A need for teacher motivation exists as well. Simply showing up to work and going through the motions should no longer exist in today's rigorous education system. Motivation is an important element to have in the workplace. Motivation comes from various sources, and teachers play a vital role in the implementation of their own motivation. For a teacher to be successful, he or she must be able to not only instill motivation in others but have motivation for oneself.

One motivational theory is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but an adapted version, created by Lyman Porter, exists. Maslow's theory centered around the idea that all people were destined to become successful and also acknowledge that the success meant for them is attainable (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Each must be accomplished before moving to the next category. These categories are Physiological, Safety, Love/Belong, Esteem, and Self-actualization. A teacher must have innate characteristics that help them be effective teachers, but they also need encouragement from the workplace to help them sustain their effective teaching.

For instance, teachers must have all basic needs met in the workplace, and by law, all of these basic needs must be met for a teacher in the workplace. Water, food, air, and shelter are all present within in a school. Next, a teacher must feel safe and secure in the workplace. The 21st century has seen many school shooting, but many schools are making a valiant effort to help all within the school building feel safe. The third category, Love and Belonging, claims humans

must feel a sense of community. Teachers must feel a sense of community at school; support must be present from administrators and colleagues or else this level will never be met. Teachers must have motivators within the school to cheer them on throughout the school year. Esteem is the fourth category, and it involves teachers feeling confident in their teaching. Teaching is not an easy job and requires the teachers to acquire many other responsibilities not related to teaching the material. Having confidence in these responsibilities will help teachers feel motivated to complete the daunting tasks daily. The final stage of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can only be met after all other levels have been achieved. A self-actualizing teacher knows his or her potential. The individual knows his or her teaching style and can motivate oneself even in times of difficulty in the classroom. Because of the multiple tasks teachers are expected to accomplish daily, it is rare for a teacher to reach the self-actualization stage. Those who do reach it tend to find success in the classroom and are often seen as highly effective.

Methods of Measuring Teacher Effectiveness

Darling-Hammond's article "Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: How Teacher Performance Assessment Can Measure and Improve Teaching" (2010) explained how the United States has not yet created a nationwide initiative to reward teachers for their achievements and effectiveness.

Although the topic is controversial, this article focused on test scores as a means of evaluating teacher effectiveness. The author argued this because he explains that tests required for teachers to be highly qualified, such as the Praxis, do not measure how effective teachers will be in the classroom; it simply tests them on knowledge of education and rules of teaching. He also said that new teacher's data should be assessed as an average over a period of three years

due to their being novice teachers. The text said that becoming National Board Certified is one of the best ways to assess teacher effectiveness since it is a portfolio of the teacher. The author did say, however, that within that portfolio, student gains on test are the most accurate sign of effectiveness. When many people consider teacher effectiveness, test scores automatically come to mind despite teachers' loathing of test scores. This article argued that test scores are important, and for new teachers, they must become apprenticed before being considered effective.

High stakes testing is in place to hold teachers accountable for the material they teach throughout the year. States across the nation give high stakes testing at the end of the course's semester or term. Although Common Core is widespread across the United States, some states have opted to create their own high stakes test. Most states do not begin giving students this kind of test until 3rd grade. The two fields examined nationwide since 2002 have been Reading and Mathematics (Thomas, 2005), but by the time students reach high school, they may also have a high stakes test in History and Science. Regardless of the subject taught, teachers are held accountable for the students' performance on these tests. Those who are in a core subject are held accountable for those tests given in their course. Recently, many school districts have instated a differentiated pay system. In Tennessee, this means a level 5 teacher would receive a "bonus check" of anywhere from a couple of hundred dollars to possibly \$1,000 or more.

Tests have been given since the B.C. Era. Tests are used to hold people accountable for what they are doing; tests can measure anything from physical ability to mental ability. Before the early 20th century, student performance was measured through tests of absolute standard of proficiency. This means that students were given an assessment in which all students were expected to master, provided their attendance was excellent and the teacher taught the material.

However, in the early 20th century, the testing platform shifted to normative standards, which means students were compared to other students across the nation. According to the book *The Paradoxes of High Stakes Testing* (2009), all students can succeed under absolute performance standards; however, normative standards will have a greater percentage of students not meet the benchmarks. Normative standard testing has caused much stress on the parents and teachers of lower academic achievers because they will never appear “normal” on these kinds of tests.

Dr. Louis Volante explained the positives of high stakes testing for students, teachers, and administrators in his article “Accountability, Student Assessment, and the Need for a Comprehensive Approach” (2005). He focused on the positives of high-stakes testing, especially the benefit it brings teachers in their own classroom practice. He said teachers can use these tests to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses or if there is a pattern, possibly the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher’s instruction. He also believed that the standardized tests help administrators make executive decisions regarding teachers and their quality of work.

Dr. Louis Volante took a positive approach to high stakes testing and explained that despite the negative perception of these tests, they do have positive impacts as well. Knowing there is an end-of-course test that students must be prepared for can help motivate students and teachers throughout the year.

Michaela Minarechová said in her article “Negative Impacts of High-Stakes Testing (2012), “During the test, students are exposed to an enormous amount of stress caused by public comparisons between students in the classroom or school” (p. 91). Minarechová completed a study on the effects of high stakes testing in the classroom, and she discovered that “under high stakes testing, the way students are taught is changing along with the methods used and the way in which teachers’ approach instruction” (p. 91). This is dangerous for classrooms because

teachers will find themselves teaching to the test; teaching test-taking strategies may be beneficial for success on the test but not for students' future careers.

Little, Goe, and Bell wrote another article titled, "A Practical Guide to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness." This article was a compilation of information for methods of evaluating teacher effectiveness. The methods suggested are test scores, classroom observations, analysis of materials (lesson plans), portfolios of teacher activities, self-reports, and student ratings. The point of this article was to explain that teacher effectiveness should come from a comprehensive list, not solely from principal evaluations. The text explained that just because a teacher is highly qualified does not mean he or she is highly effective in the classroom. Considering multiple factors of a teacher's profession allows one to see the big picture, not just test scores in which the teacher has little control over.

In 2009, the United States created the Race to the Top initiative. This grant gave \$4.35 billion dollars to the United States' education system to help improve students' education and reward teachers and schools for a successful performance. States had to submit an application to be considered to receive funds. The program was created for four main goals: Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace; Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; and turning around our lowest-achieving schools (Race to the Top, 2009).

Tennessee was one of the winners of the Race to the Top funds. Using part of the funds allotted to them, Tennessee chose to create a rubric called the Tennessee Educator Acceleration

Model (TEAM) rubric. This model has three categories: planning, environment, and instruction. For each category, there are several sub categories.

Planning includes three areas: instructional plans, student work, and assessment. This category is graded solely off the teacher's lesson plan. Teachers are not graded on whether or not their lesson plan closely follows what they actually teach that class period. The domain is designed to determine if teachers are creating highly effective lessons for their students.

Environment includes expectations, managing student behavior, environment, and respectful culture. This category is graded while the evaluator is observing the classroom. He or she must monitor the teacher's classroom environment as well as the teacher's interaction with students. A positive classroom environment provides students with an opportunity to learn without distractions. A welcoming, safe, and supportive environment can help students' belief in their potential and provide motivation for success-particularly if they feel they are respected in all their diversity, including differing types (Gorton & Alston, 2009).

Instruction includes twelve sub-categories: Standards and Objectives, Motivating Students, Presenting Instructional Content, Lesson Structure and Pacing, Activities and Materials, Questioning, Academic Feedback, Grouping Students, Teacher Content Knowledge, Teacher Knowledge of Students, Thinking, and Problem Solving. The instruction is the longest category. This domain focuses not only on the content of the lesson but the delivery. Instructional strategies have been studied as long as formal education has been established. Tennessee believes these are all elements that teachers should include in every lesson if applicable.

Tennessee incorporated all of these categories and subcategories to its rubric because they believed these qualities were all qualities that an effective teacher exhibits. Teachers are given a score of 1-5 for each subcategory, and all the subcategories are averaged to create one score of 1-5 for that category. The average of the evaluation scores, professionalism scores, and test scores give the teacher a Level of Effectiveness (LOE) score. This score determines how many classroom evaluations the teacher has for the next year. For teachers with an LOE score of a Level 5, only one evaluation from each category on the rubric is required, meaning teachers are formally observed once and must receive an informal walk-through twice the rest of the year. Teachers scoring a Level 2-4 are formally evaluated twice a year on every category plus an extra Instruction category. Teachers scoring a Level 1 LOE score, which includes first-year teachers, are formally evaluated three times year; they are evaluated three times on Instruction and twice on Evaluation and Planning.

The number of times a teacher is evaluated is based on level of experience and LOE score from the previous year. A teacher is considered a Practitioner for the first three years of teaching. For instance, a brand new teacher with no LOE data would be observed three times in a school year, and two of those must be unannounced visits. Teachers with LOE scores of 1-4 from the previous year also are observed the same amount. These Practitioners must be observed three times in Instruction, twice in Planning, and twice in Environment. A Practitioner with an LOE score of 5 receives one unannounced visit covering all three domains and two walkthroughs. The walkthroughs are not score but are simply a checklist for observers to analyze. A teacher is considered a Professional after three years of teaching. Teachers with an LOE score of a 1 receives the same amount and type of observations as a Practitioner teacher with an LOE score of 1-4: two unannounced visits and one announced. A Professional with an

LOE score of 2-4 receive one announced observation and one unannounced. These observations must include being observed on Instruction Twice, Planning once, and Environment once. A Professional with an LOE score of 5 have one unannounced observation covering each of the three domains once. They also receive two walkthroughs.

Tensions often rise when districts have a differentiated pay program. More pressure is placed on teachers to perform at the highest level so that they can receive a bonus on their paycheck. Some districts pay teachers according to their LOE score. For example, in 2017 one school district in Tennessee paid each Level 5 teacher \$654, Level 4 teacher \$436, and Level 3 teacher \$218. Because the LOE score comes from two of three domains in which scores are determined by administrators, some teachers often feel as if the TEAM rubric and professionalism scores are biased.

Historical Events That Affected Education

Several historical events have also played a part in the increasing of funding for schools nationwide. After Sputnik's launch, many Americans began to think more seriously about science and technology. American did not want to drop from the number one spot and let Russia be the best in the world. A year after Sputnik was launched, Congress responded with the National Defense Education Act, which increased funding for education at all levels, including low-interest student loans to college students, with the focus on scientific and technical education (Powell, 2007). America hoped that this increase in funding would provide better educational opportunities for college students. Sputnik's launch allowed America to see that technology must be readily used in classrooms beginning in elementary school; therefore, technology was incorporated into the elementary curriculum.

Lyndon B. Johnson gave a speech in 1964 titled “War on Poverty,” and part of his plan was to pass the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which did pass the next year. The act provided funding for districts who housed low-income and disabled students. This law was later reauthorized into George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind of 2001 and again in 2015 as Barack Obama’s Every Student Succeeds Act.

Highly Qualified in Tennessee

In 2001 under the George W. Bush administration, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was created. The law’s purpose was to hold schools accountable for student success with an emphasis of improving the economically disadvantaged, English language learner, special needs students. Schools were required to report all testing data so that these low-achieving groups’ test scores could be monitored. The law also requires states to ensure their teachers are highly qualified, which generally means that they have a bachelor’s degree in the subject they are teaching and state certification (Klein, 2015). To receive the bachelor’s degree, the teacher must pass the required course work and a content test called the Praxis. The Praxis I is required for all students who do not score higher than a 21 on the ACT, but all students must take the Praxis II, which is a content exam.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were created “by state leaders, including governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia, through their membership in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers” (Common Core, n.d.). It all began, however, with Janet Napolitano, who was the governor of Arizona when the standards were developed. Napolitano's initiative had a strong focus on improving math and science education, as well as the workforce (Bidwell, 2014). Despite the hard work that went into creating these

standards, they were dropped by many states after just one school year due to backlash over the fact that Common Core skips the requirement for students to learn basic skills. Tennessee developed the Tennessee State Standards after the Department of Education eliminated Common Core from its schools; however, the new standards are strikingly similar to the Common Core initiative. In Tennessee, students are given the TN Ready test, which is aligned to the state standards. The TN Ready test for English, for example, consists of a written portion, multiple-select, and multiple-choice questions. These tests are given in late April and early May. When Common Core was implemented in Tennessee, students were expected to take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test, but this never happened. Also, the ACT is given at our school in April. TN Ready standards are aligned with the ACT standards even though more thinking is involved when matching the two together.

In 2015 under the Barack Obama administration, NCLB was replaced with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which gave power back to the states while still requiring them to following federal guidelines. The new act focuses on more than just test scores; it focuses on overall school improvement, including high school graduation rate, absenteeism, school safety, and college readiness. Alex-Berg Jacobson's "Teacher Effectiveness in the Every Student Succeeds Act" (2016), he explained how states now have the power to implement the evaluation tool for assessing teachers. He suggested creating a bar for all teachers to reach. This would define a clear line in which teachers are expected to reach, and going above that line would show teachers are exceeding expectations while those below would not be meeting the standards set for them. He mentioned that some states considered having equity plans, which would include everyone having access to the knowledge of who are the teachers considered less than effective. Rhode Island and New Mexico are two of these states according to Jacobson.

Requiring all core subject teachers to be highly qualified provides schools with the opportunity for the best education for every student. Becoming highly qualified proves the teacher is knowledgeable of the content teaching; however, it does not prove that a teacher has the highly effective skills needed to guide students to academic success. Pamela Tucker and James Stronge explained the difference between highly qualified and highly effective:

Teacher effectiveness is characterized by a far more complex set of qualities than one's professional preparation. It includes dispositions and an array of planning, organizational, instructional, and assessment skills. Effective teachers are able to envision instructional goals for their students, then draw upon their knowledge and training to help students achieve success. A “highly qualified” teacher is certainly a good starting point, but most of us would want our child to have a highly effective teacher whose teaching effort yields high rates of student learning (2005).

Highly Qualified in Other States

In Ohio, teachers are evaluated on an expanded rubric. They must receive a maximum of 100 points for each of the following categories to be considered highly qualified: Years of Experience in the Teaching Assignment (24 points maximum), College Coursework in This Content Area (27 points maximum), College Coursework in Pedagogy Related to the Content Area (27 points maximum), Professional Development in the Content Area (24 points maximum), Professional Activities in the Teaching Assignment (25 points maximum), and Recognition in Content Area (6 points maximum).

In contrast, Michigan gives more freedom to its districts. Michigan allows the districts to use their own evaluation tools but recommends one of the following evaluation rubrics: Charlotte

Danielson's Framework for Teaching, Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, The Thoughtful Classroom, or Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. Providing more freedom of choice gives the power back to each district to decide which evaluation model works best for their school systems.

New York also gives more freedom to its districts. It allows the districts to create their own teacher evaluation rubric, but it must be approved by the state department. Teachers in this state receive a score based on students' test scores and this evaluation rubric created by their district. The principals oversee the evaluation each teacher. Nearly 97 percent of New York City teachers earned the top two ratings of either "effective" or "highly effective" in the 2016-17 school year (Disare, 2018).

In Florida, teachers are assigned a Value-Added Model (VAM) score. These are used to measure the teachers' effectiveness on student performance. One type of VAM score, called Aggregate VAM Score, takes a teacher's average over the course of his or her teaching career for up to three years. This is because some teachers teach at multiple schools in a day, some teacher different subjects in a semester or even in a day, and some may be moved to a different teaching assignment from year to year or even mid-year. For instance, if a teacher receives a $+0.35$ on an Aggregate VAM Score, it means the teacher scores 35% above the average state VAM score for his or her subject and grade level. In contrast, a negative score, such as -0.05 means the teacher was below 5% of the average state value-added score. The teachers who receive a negative score are considered ineffective in their performance for that school year. A zero indicates the teacher's performance is considered average, which is what is expected of them year-to-year. Over 30% of teachers in Florida use VAM data that they are able to use in their calculation of their overall teacher evaluation. (Performance Evaluation).

National board certification.

The United States offers an opportunity for teachers to become Nationally Board Certified, an additional certification for teachers that could possibly earn them a pay raise in their district.

The Nationally Board Certified website explained why a teacher should become board certified:

Board-certified teachers prove their effectiveness in the classroom every day. First, students learn more. The article explained that multiple pieces of research show that the board-certified teachers are able to guide non-board-certified teachers to better practices. These certified teachers are the ones who are anxious to learn new methods and techniques to implement into their classrooms. Studies show an increase in minority and special education students' performance with national board-certified teachers as well. Because of that, teachers improve their practice. These teachers typically want to showcase their new methods to other teachers; they want to share effective ideas with others so that more teachers can improve student learning. This shows the teacher is committed to the profession whose ultimate goal is to help students succeed academically. Also, the article noted that board certified teachers are also more involved in the community. They feel a part of a community of other board educators, which makes them motivated to help their own community achieve excellence. Studies have also indicated increased morale because of the person's community involvement. (Why Certify, n.d.).

To become certified, a teacher must hold a bachelor's degree, have at least three years of teaching experience, and hold a valid teaching license. Teachers must submit a portfolio with four components, each of which are \$475 to submit. The four components are Content Knowledge, Differentiation in Instruction, Teaching Practices and Learning Environments, and Effective and Reflective Practitioner. Each of these components requires teachers to analyze

their own practices and collect data on their performance in the classroom. In addition to the portfolio, applicants must also take a content knowledge test at a local testing center.

Highly Effective Versus Highly Qualified

Highly effective and highly qualified hold similar meanings. Because of the enactment of ESSA, each state's department of education now determines what is considered a highly qualified teacher. Under NCLB, highly qualified meant all teachers must hold a bachelor's degree, pass the Praxis II exam, and hold a valid teaching license. The term "highly qualified" was essentially eliminated under ESSA, but most states still require the same qualifications in order to teach in that state. For instance, in Tennessee, teachers must still hold a bachelor's degree, pass the Praxis II, and hold a valid teaching license. This is the case for several other states in the United States, including Texas, Montana, and Nevada. Federal law, however, eliminated these requirements, and in some states, teachers may only need to hold a valid teaching license without the bachelor's degree or demonstration of content knowledge. Ohio, as mentioned before, has a rubric that teachers must complete to be considered highly qualified.

In contrast, highly effective is a broader, more opinionated term. Various opinions exist regarding what highly effective means, yet many states have attempted to define "highly effective." For example, in Tennessee, "highly effective" means a teacher has scored a level 4 or 5 on his or her Level of Effectiveness (LOE) score. This score is comprised of evaluation scores, professionalism scores, and test scores provided the teacher teaches a tested subject. A teacher who does not teach a tested subject chooses another measurement instead of testing, such as graduation rate, ACT scores, or others. In 2015, there were just five states – California, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska and Vermont – that still had no formal state policy requiring that teacher

evaluations take objective measures of student achievement into account in evaluating teacher effectiveness (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015).

Professional Development

Teachers play a pivotal role in the increasing of student learning in the classroom. Through frequent common assessments, grade-level expectations, and progress monitoring, teachers and administrators identify at-risk students and write goals and devise action steps to achieve those goals (How PLC Impact Student Success, 2014, p 1). The most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning, however, is not by micromanaging instruction but by creating the collaborative culture and collective responsibility of a professional learning community (DuFour, R. & Mattos, M., 2013, p. 34-40). In their book *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, DuFour and Eaker demonstrated eight principles that play a huge part in student success: Instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum, students are carefully oriented to lessons, instruction is clear and focused, learning progress is monitored closely, when students do not understand, they are retaught, class time is used for learning, there are smooth, efficient classroom routines, and standards for classroom behavior are explicit.

Based on this research, we learn that teachers need to be doing these eight things to be successful in the classroom, but not all teachers do. This is where collaboration comes in; teachers should collaborate with each other, discuss research, and share ideas during these professional learning community meetings. In its standards the National Staff Development Council recognizes PLCs as a strategy or school improvement---specifically, as a means of supporting high-quality and ongoing professional development (Comprehensive School, 2015). PLCs increase student learning because they allow for teachers to have time to work together and exchange best strategies in order to enhance student achievement. Education is constantly

changing because our culture is changing, and new research is completed to learn what works best with our students of the 21st century. Teachers must be willing to change as well in order to reach goals- goals that require students to master difficult materials, discover techniques that help them learn, pursue industrious occupations, and compete in a worldwide economy (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). As mentioned earlier about the factory model, schools must avoid top-down management, and professional learning communities give the power back to the teachers.

In a study training teachers to be effective instructional leaders, Yost, Vogel, and Rosenberg discovered the importance of training teachers on a specific task. They hosted professional development meetings because “research has shown that more time spent on quality professional development means more effective teaching” (Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009). Once highly effective qualities are identified, teachers need to be trained on how to use the techniques in their classroom.

James Stronge’s book *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2007) explained the importance of teachers being trained on the highly effective qualities he outlined in the book: “For those already in the field, high-quality professional development activities are necessary tools for improving teacher effectiveness” (p. 103). Often, teachers feel as if professional development is unnecessary; they believe they have already mastered the profession. Those who believe they have mastered the profession are incorrect; there is always room for improvement. When conducted correctly, professional development can be meaningful and productive. Another research study focusing on highly effective qualities perceptions of students found that teachers should be encouraged to attend seminars on teaching strategies that will develop and facilitate the learning process of students (Sabb, 2014).

Summary

Simply identifying effective classroom management practices, by itself, is unlikely to affect meaningful change (Gage, Scott, Hirn, MacSuga-Gage, 2018). A plethora of research has been conducted to identify qualities of effective teachers; however, little research has been conducted to determine the perceptions of those qualities according to those stakeholders who are exposed to the qualities on a daily basis. Identifying these qualities according to the stakeholders could support the information that research has uncovered, allowing teachers to have multiple examples of why the technique needs to be used in their classrooms.

For a teacher to be effective, he or she must build relationships with students while creating engaging activities for students to participate. They must also exhibit classroom management while being willing to adapt to the various scenarios that teaching presents. The students must always be considered first in order for a safe and educationally-centered environment to be effectively administered. These elements build a teacher's effectiveness, which provides success for all stakeholders.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Qualitative studies tend to use methods that result in text production rather than numerical outputs (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). The researcher for this study is a teacher who is highly interested in assessing the perceptions of those involved in education regarding their perceptions of highly effective teachers. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton, 2015). The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of highly effective teacher from various stakeholders in education. Because teachers and students hold different roles, they may have various ideas of how success occurs in the classroom. This chapter will explain the research approach, population and setting, data collection procedures, and the data analysis process.

Research Questions

1. What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade teachers?
2. What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade students?
3. How do the opinions of the qualities of effective teachers compare between 9th grade teachers and students?

Research Approach

Grounded theory and constructivist theory was used as the qualitative research type. The purpose is the generating of ideas throughout the process and ending with a unified theory emerging 55 from data and closely linked to, or grounded in, data— as opposed to the kind of verification of ideas sought in quantitative research (Feeler, 2012). The research focused on building a theory of what constitutes qualities of effective teachers. Grounded theory identifies a range of essential elements that, when combined, offer a consolidated framework within which wide-ranging data are gathered, assessed, and subsequently used in developing theory, based on what has been observed (Rosenbaum, Elizabeth More, & Steane, 2016). The data provided information on best practices, which helped build the theory of what are the most successful techniques teachers can use in the classroom. Data collection is an important part of the process for grounded theory research, as studies are driven by researchers seeking answers to questions to establish theories (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, & Walker, 2013).

Population and Setting

The population was teachers and students involved in 9th grade. The freshmen academy is located in East Tennessee. There are approximately 600 students and approximately 40 teachers in the building. There are also two principals on the campus, but the other four principals on the main campus reside over the academy as well. The school consists of 90% white students, 6 % Latino or Hispanic, 3% African American, and 1% Asian. 30% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged. The freshmen academy has one English Language Learner teacher who is present at the school for one out of four periods of the day. The campus is broken into four main teams, each consisting of two Language Arts teachers, one

Social Studies teacher, one Science teacher, and two Math teachers. Several electives are offered each semester, including a career course, art, home economics, agriculture, physical education, band, and JROTC. The study was conducted during the 2018-2019 school year. All teachers and students who were either employed by the school or attended the school during the 2018-2019 year.

All teachers in the building were asked to fill out the questionnaire, and based on responses, four teachers were asked for an interview to discuss their answers. For student data, one student was randomly selected from each of the four freshmen teams. A convenience sampling was used for this study. Convenience sampling is a kind of non-probability or nonrandom sampling in which members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer (Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). The teachers and students were all in the same building and all of the same grade level. 9th grade is a difficult age for students; they have just left middle school but are not quite considered high school yet. Knowing techniques that are effective for them will help both teachers and students succeed academically.

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaires were given on Microsoft Forms. This is a survey platform provided by Microsoft. The questionnaires, which were sent out to all teachers and four randomly-selected students via email, asked participants both ranking scale questions as well as open-ended questions rather than “yes/no” questions. The ranking questions allowed the participants to rank what previous research said are some of the most highly effective qualities of teachers. Open-

ended questions allowed for a variety of responses that provided an opportunity to ask follow-up questions regarding the responses. The amount of motivation felt by participants to complete the questionnaire can affect how much they are prepared to concentrate on completing it (Adams & Cox, 2008). Therefore, the questionnaires contained only a few questions. Based on the responses from this focus group, four teachers were selected for interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations. These answers on the questionnaire helped support the theoretical framework of constructivist theory for this study; participants were required to reflect on previous experiences to develop answers to what they believed were qualities of highly effective teachers.

Interviews were conducted after the questionnaires. Four teachers whose answers merited more information were selected; one teacher was selected from Math, English, Science, and Social Studies. The interviews were recorded on an I-Phone and took place during a planning period. Each interview conducted lasted 10 minutes. In-person interviews allowed the interviewer to ask deeper questions regarding questions already answered on questionnaires. Interviews allow the researcher asks questions, controls the dynamics of the discussion, or engages in dialogue with a specific individual at a time (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2017). For the four student interviews, students had to be taken out of their elective classes to be interviewed during a planning period. Each of these interviews only lasted five minutes due to the students not being able to be absent from class for a long amount of time.

Focus groups were also conducted. Teachers who were interviewed were members of the focus group. In this setting, the researcher facilitates or moderates a group discussion between participants and not between the researcher and the participants (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, &

Mukherjee, 2017). Having a group of teachers together in the room helped facilitate discussion that may or may not have made the participants change their original answers given on the questionnaires and during the one-on-one interviews. On a separate day, four students were brought into a classroom for a focus group discussing their answers to the questionnaire and interviews. These focus groups supported the grounded theory framework for this study because participants were able to develop new ideas or adapt existing ideas regarding their thoughts on qualities of highly effective teachers.

Classroom observations were recorded on a video recorder. Participant observation allows researchers to check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews, observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share when doing so would be impolitic, impolite, or insensitive, and observe situations informants have described in interviews, thereby making them aware of distortions or inaccuracies in description provided by those informants (Kawulich, 2005). Teachers who were interviewed were observed teaching, provided they agreed to allow their lesson to be watched. With observations, the interviewer has the opportunity to view body language and facial expressions of teacher and students; these are things that would not be available during the other three instruments. Due to the lack of time to observe, only two of the four teachers were observed.

Ethical Considerations

One ethical principle all researchers must follow is approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Colleges and universities engaging in research with human subjects form an IRB that must approve each proposal and certify that the research will be conducted in

accordance with the law (Ary, Sorenson, & Walker, 2013). Once the approval was given, data collection began.

Some stakeholders in education prefer to keep their opinions private in fear of others disagreeing with their opinions. In order to avoid a lack of honesty in this research study, the school's name and all participants' names were kept anonymous using pseudonyms. The participation in all the data collection was voluntary. No signed forms were needed for the initial questionnaire that was sent out to all teachers and four students; if they chose not to participate, they simply did not need to fill out the survey. All participants were required to sign a consent to interview form before interviewing. Also, participants had to sign a form consenting to the use of their techniques and quotes from classroom observations.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data coding is the process in which the data is analyzed. Three types of coding were used in this study: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was used to develop major or core categories while axial coding was used to develop categories around the core (Ary, Sorenson, & Walker, 2013). Selective coding then allowed for comparison among categories.

The questionnaires were given on Microsoft Forms to teachers and students. If the survey is web-based or administered by an interviewer using a computer, the responses can be captured digitally, facilitating automatic transcription or computer-assisted coding, in turn reducing the cost and effort involved in analyzing the responses (Singer & Couper, 2017). Because these were open-ended questions, open coding was used to find key words and phrases used in responses (these most likely were terms tied to highly effective qualities). Notes were

made on the most common techniques mentioned via axial coding. After collecting the data and analyzing it, selective coding was used to place these techniques in hierarchical order. This allowed interviewee to describe in writing previous experience and expertise in knowledge of teachers' best practices.

The interviews were recorded via I-Phone and took place during a planning period; the interviews took 30 minutes. Open coding began so that the key words and phrases used by teachers and students could be explored. After making a list of these terms, axial coding allowed the finding of commonalities among these terms. Students had a different term for a technique than teachers did. Finally, selective coding was used to indicate what techniques these stakeholders considered qualities of highly effective teachers. This allowed the interviewee to verbally explain experiences and expertise in knowledge of teachers' best practices.

The focus groups were also recorded via I-Phone. Open coding was used to analyze the examples the participants unveil. Notes were made through axial coding to note any additional information the participants express that coincides or deflects elements they mentioned previously. Lastly, selective coding was used to determine the patterns that occur with the participants' responses. Because of the social constructs of grounded theory, the patterns helped identify the comparisons between teachers and students' responses on their opinions of qualities of highly effective teachers.

The observation of the teacher classroom was video recorded so that facial expressions and body language could be analyzed as well as audio. Open coding began after the observations so that these details could be analyzed. Key elements of what research says are qualities of highly effective teachers were examined. Of the number of teachers observed, axial coding was used to group the techniques these highly effective teachers used so that they can

analyze them. The techniques were grouped from most used to least used. Selective coding was used to analyze the top three results to decide how these techniques create a successful classroom environment. This allowed teachers to showcase their best practices in their own classroom. Perhaps the most important aspect of this study was the toolset for collecting qualitative data, sharing with the instructor and engaging in a focused one-on-one conversation about THEIR students and THEIR teaching style (Hargis, 2014).

To ensure internal validity, confirmability and credibility were determined with peer debriefing and triangulation throughout the study. The role of peer debriefer is one that is increasingly encouraged in qualitative methodology to improve trustworthiness and credibility in the research (Barber & Walczak, 2009). A fellow doctorate student was selected to peer debrief, and triangulation was confirmed by asking questions such as, “Was the correct process used in data collection?” and “Are the results unbiased?” Member checking is used to validate, verify, or assess the trust-worthiness of qualitative results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Member checks were also conducted after the study was completed so that the participants could read what was written about them. Also, to ensure dependability of the study, details of the study were reviewed to confirm that they were sufficiently thick.

Summary

The research for this study took place in one school which is an academy for freshmen. The teachers and students were sent questionnaires regarding what they believed to be the qualities of highly effective teachers. Afterwards, certain teachers were selected for interviews based on their responses. Students who filled out the questionnaires were also interviewed. Focus groups were held for teachers, and a second focus group was held for students. Based on the schedules of the participants, one focus group encompassing all participants was not possible.

Finally, teachers who were interviewed were observed teaching for one class period. Of these qualities identified by participants, the top responses from teachers were compared to the top responses of students.

Chapter 4: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to compare students and teachers' perspectives of what qualities the most highly effective teacher possesses. All research except one interview was completed during the school day; most of the evidence was collected during the teachers' planning period.

Student and teacher questionnaires were delivered via school email on Microsoft Forms; teachers were given seven days to answer the questionnaire and were sent a reminder email as the deadline approached in hopes most of the teachers would respond. Four students were asked to complete the survey while all 32 faculty members were asked to participate. All four students complied, and 23 of the teachers filled out the questionnaire.

The interviews, recorded on an i-Phone, were conducted during the students' first period and teachers' planning period. All four students, two males and two females, were chosen from only two elective courses in order to avoid interrupting multiple classes. One teacher from each core subject area was chosen, and all of these teachers were on the same team. They were chosen from the same team as a convenience sampling due to the lack of being able to interview multiple teachers during multiple class periods.

Additionally, the teacher focus group was also conducted during the teachers' planning period and recorded on an i-Phone. The focus group discussed their answers in a classroom with all teachers sitting at the students' desks while the researcher sat at the teacher's desk. Three research questions guided this study:

- 1.) What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade teachers?
- 2.) What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade students?
- 3.) How do the opinions of the qualities of effective teachers compare between 9th grade teachers and students?

Participants

The freshman academy studied in a rural East Tennessee area has approximately 550 students. Four students, two male and two female, were randomly selected for this study. Two classes were selected in order to avoid interrupting multiple elective classes. The students were interviewed on a day that was convenient for their first period teacher to allow them to leave the room for 10 minutes to be interviewed. This school has 32 teachers, 20 females and 12 males. One teacher from each core subject area was chosen for this study. The sample of participants was a convenience sample. Convenience samples are sometimes regarded as ‘accidental samples’ because elements may be selected in the sample simply as they just happen to be situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

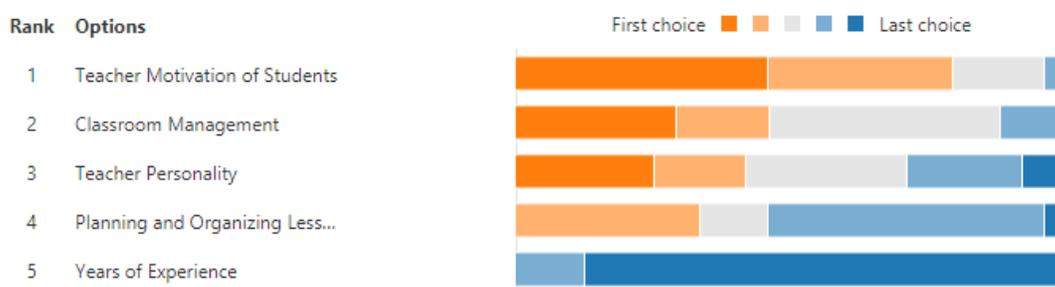
Teacher Results

The questionnaire for teachers was sent to 32 faculty members, and the questionnaire contained a ranking for qualities of highly effective teachers, which was identical to the students’ survey. Four of the qualities on the ranking were several of James Stronge’s research-based theories on highly effective qualities of teachers. The other choice, “Years of Experience,” is also a highly researched quality. The only difference in the ranking scale was that the ranking

scale for teachers was placed at the end of the survey in hopes that the teachers were not given ideas about qualities of effective teachers; instead, their answers should be original. In addition, the teachers had four open-ended questions. Of the 32 teachers who received the questionnaire, 23 completed it. The questionnaire took teachers an average of 24 minutes and 24 seconds to complete. Four teachers were then selected to participate in an interview and focus group. Each of the four teachers are 9th grade teachers, but they each teach a different subject.

Table 4.1

Teacher Ranking of Qualities of Effective Teachers on Questionnaire



This pictorial representation is a bar graph of 23 teachers' rankings of qualities of effective teachers. 11 teachers, or 46%, chose "Teacher Motivation of Students" as the most effective quality of a teacher. 33% chose it as their second choice, 17% chose it as their third choice, and 4% chose it as their fourth choice. No participants ranked it in last place. In second place was "Classroom Management" with 29%, or seven teachers, ranking it high on the list. 17% chose it as their second choice, 42% as their third choice, and 13% as their fourth choice. No participants ranked it in last place. The third most important quality of an effective teacher according to those surveyed was "Teacher Personality." 25%, or six teachers, ranked it as being the most important quality. 17% ranked it second, 29% ranked it third, 21% ranked it fourth, and

8% ranked it in last place. In fourth place was “Planning and Organization” with no teachers ranking it as the most important quality. 33% ranked it in second place, 13% ranked it in third place, 50% ranked it in fourth place, and 4% ranked it as least important. Finally, “Years of Experience” was ranked last on the list overall. No teachers ranked it first, second, or third place, but 13% ranked it in fourth place while 88% thought it was the least important.

Figure 4.1

Questions on Questionnaire for Teachers

1. What subject do you teach?
2. In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher must have in order to be effective in the classroom? Be specific.
3. List and describe at least two other qualities or strategies a teacher must have to be effective in the classroom.
4. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most effective), how effective would you consider yourself in the classroom?

Table 4.2

Subject Taught By Participants

Subject	Number of Teachers Interviewed	Percent of Teachers Interviewed
Algebra I	5	22%
Biology/Physical Science	4	17%
Business	2	9%
English I	6	26%

Special Education	2	9%
World History	4	17%

The questionnaire responses were open coded with labels, and afterwards, the responses were tallied and ranked. Axial coding revealed what teachers believed to be the most effective quality of a teacher. The following table illustrates the results:

Table 4.3

Open-Ended Response to Question Two

Response	Number of Teachers Who Answered
Relationship with Students	11
Content Knowledge	3
Knowledge of Students	2
Passion	2
Classroom Management	1
Consistency	1
Creativity	1
Discernment	1
Wisdom	1

Table 4.3 illustrates a strong response of “Relationship with Students” being the most effective quality of a teacher. 48% of teachers believed this is what all teachers must have to reach success in the classroom. Open coding was used to determine which category the teachers’ responses belonged while axial coding allowed the rankings of these categories.

Selective coding developed a theme, one that shows that “Relationship with Students” was predominately considered the most important quality of an effective teacher.

Below, Table 4.4 represents the topics teachers say are also important characteristics of a highly effective teacher.

Table 4.4

Teacher Responses Regarding Question Three

Response	Number of Teachers Who Answered
Classroom Management	6
Content Knowledge	5
Flexibility	4
Organization	4
Relationships	4
Ability to Change	3
Creativity	3
Desire for Learning	2
Engaging Lessons	2
Fairness	2
Ability to Follow Through	1
Communication	1
High Expectations for Students	1
Resilience	1
Respect for Students	1

Routine	1
Sense of Humor	1
Teacher Personality	1

Three teachers did not give two responses due to the requirement of having to type both answers into one box. Because of the open ended questions, open coding was difficult to categorized; however, after the responses were read, they were placed into categories. These categories were then combined via axial coding. As seen in the table, Classroom Management was the most mentioned quality that effective teachers possess with six responses; this was revealed through selective coding, which helped reveal this theme. Content Knowledge was mentioned five times out of the 41 responses. Only mentioned once were Communication, High Expectations for Students, Resilience, Respect for Students, Routine, Sense of Humor, and Teacher Personality. Similar to question two, open coding helped categorize the characteristics of additional qualities of effective teachers while axial coding helped rank these responses in a hierarchy.

Figure 4.3 represents the flow from how the raw data was coded into open coding, axial coding, and selective coding for the question asking participants what they consider the most effective quality of teachers. Figure 4.4 represents the flow from how the raw data was coded for the question that asked teachers what other two qualities they consider most effective.

Figure 4.3

Raw Data to Coding from Teacher and Student Questionnaire

Question #4: In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher must have in order to be effective in the classroom? Be specific.

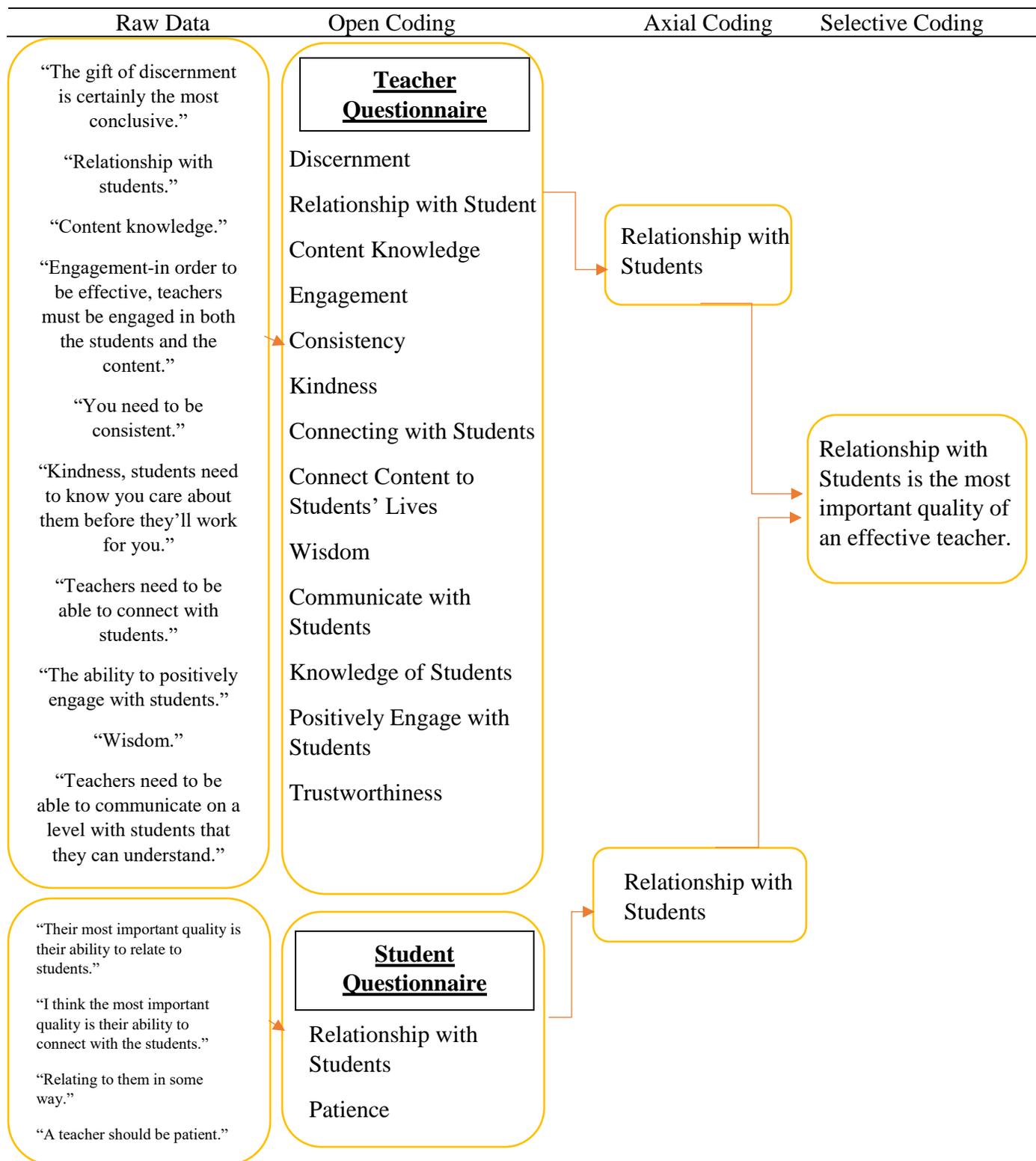


Figure 4.4

Raw Data to Coding from Teacher Questionnaire

Question #5: List and describe at least two other qualities or strategies a teacher must have to be effective in the classroom.

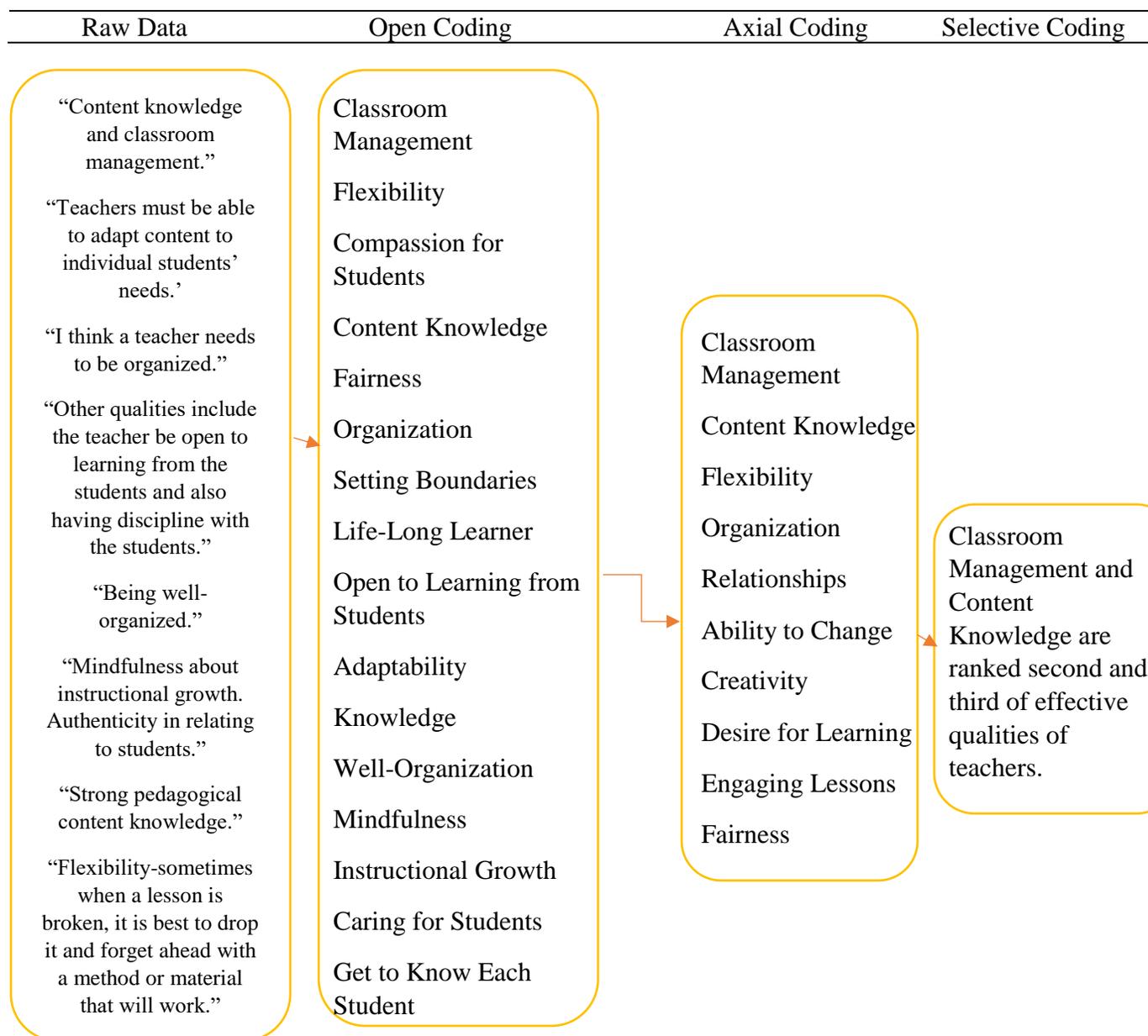


Table 4.5 illustrates the teachers' responses to what they would rank themselves on a level of effectiveness scale, with 10 being the most effective.

Table 4.5

Teacher Responses to Question Four

Ranking on Scale of 1-10	Number of Teacher Responses
10	3
9	4
8	10
7	5
6	1

As shown in Table 4.5, 43% of the teachers surveyed consider them an eight on the scale of effectiveness; these results were discovered through open coding. No teachers considered themselves below a six.

Teacher interviews

Four teachers were selected for interviews; three of the interviews were conducted during the researcher's planning period while the other interview was conducted outside of school. All interviews were recorded on an i-Phone and later transcribed for coding. One teacher from each of the core subject areas (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) was interviewed. The interviews took an average of 10 minutes.

Teacher One

Teacher One was interviewed outside of school. She is a mother of three children who feels the pressure of keeping up with daily responsibilities. Often, Teacher One is overwhelmed but never fails to give her students attention when and where they need it. Her extracurricular activities include tutoring every day after school, being a Tennessee Achieves mentor (a program that provides freshmen in college a mentor), and participating in the district's technology teacher group. At the 9th grade level, she teaches Math and has been in the profession for seven years, all at the current school she teaches in now. When asked to elaborate on her questionnaire answers, she said she believed the most important quality of an effective teacher is the ability to change. Being able to discern students' needs unexpectedly is a quality she thought helps guide a teacher to success. She emphasized the importance of being aware of students' academic needs as well as their personal needs. She only mentioned one quality, but that quality was Teacher's Personality. Teacher Personality, according to Teacher One, is what establishes classroom management and relationship with students.

Next, she was asked to explain why she ranked herself as a seven on a scale of 1-10 of effectiveness. She explained on her very best day, she is a seven; she believed there is always room to improve. However, she loves her students daily, which she said is enough to make a teacher effective.

She then was asked to explain her rankings based on James Strong's qualities of effective teachers. Teacher One chose "Teacher Personality" as the most important because it is the foundation behind the classroom: how classroom management is established, how a teacher connects with students, how instruction is delivered, and how a teacher motivates students. Her second choice was "Teacher Motivation of Students," which she did not elaborate on since she

mentioned it in her previous answer. Due to time constraints, she was not asked to explain her third and fourth choices, which were “Classroom Management” and “Planning/Organizing Lessons,” respectively. When asked to explain why “Years of Experience” was last on the list, she explained that many veteran teachers refuse to change the way they teach, and they have been teaching the same way for 30 years. Teachers must adapt lessons to fit the group of students they have each school year. Although experience is important, Teacher One does not believe it should be the sole indicator of effectiveness.

Teacher Two

Teacher Two’s interview was recorded during the teacher’s planning period. She has been teaching Science for 17 years. Six of those years was spent teaching at an inner-city high school. She moved to her current school to shorten her drive to work, and she has been teaching at the 9th grade level ever since. While she teaches at the freshman academy, her husband teaches Math at the high school’s main campus. Because he usually stays late after school, she stays at her campus as well. She offers tutoring to students any day after school. Lately, she feels the pressure to connect with her students. Teacher Two’s fear is that she is getting older and is not able to relate to her students as well. This teacher has spoken openly about her Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and how teaching has made the condition worse at times. Her lack of confidence also makes this disorder worse. Because of these troubles, she gave up her team leader assignment in order to focus more on teaching. Teacher Two is usually hesitant to add any extracurricular activities to her schedule, but she is always willing to try new activities in her lessons.

She was first asked to explain why she said “Consistency” is the most important quality of an effective teacher. She retorted that consistency builds respect. The selection of favorites

can be detrimental to keeping consistency in the classroom. Teacher Two was asked if she was referring to relationships with students or simply in her own classroom. She responded, saying, “Both.” She was also asked if she thought her students appreciated a routine classroom like hers as oppose to a crazy classroom. She believed they desire routine.

When asked to name two other effective qualities of teacher, she named Fairness and Ability to Follow Through. Fairness and Consistency go together, and as for Ability to Follow Through ties back to Classroom Management. She mentioned it could destroy one’s classroom management because the students are not held accountable.

Next, Teacher Two ranked herself as an eight on the effectiveness scale. She believed she is effective, but she also mentioned that any teacher who believes he or she is a 10 needs to leave the profession. Because education is constantly changing, there is always room for improvement.

Her ranking portion of the questionnaire revealed she believed Classroom Management is the most important quality of an effective teacher. She was not asked to elaborate considering she already discussed Classroom Management. She was, however, asked to elaborate on her second choice: Teacher Personality. For students whom the teacher does not naturally click with, they must be approached in different methods to connect with the teacher. Teacher Two believed that all teachers should have techniques to help reluctant learners. When asked what happens to teacher who is not willing to make an effort to connect with students, she said she is not sure if he or she would last in the profession. That personality is somewhat natural but can be learned; however, a teacher not willing to learn how to interact with students could end up leaving the profession.

Teacher Two was not asked about her third and fourth ranking due to time constraints, but she was asked about her last choice: Planning/Organizing Lessons. She believed this is the least important because all the others are more important than this category. The other choices are more person-to-person oriented. Paying attention to the students and caring for them is important because the teacher may be the only adult who does care for them.

Teacher 3

Teacher Three has been teaching English for 14 years. She is the only teacher interviewed who left the teaching profession but five years later returned. She was born and raised in New York and move to Tennessee to be closer to her mother. Having experience teaching in another state, she often mentions the differences she sees in Tennessee's education system versus New York's. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree and hopes to hold a literacy coach or principal position once she completes her degree. She is a Tennessee Achieves mentor, and she also recently started a book club at the school.

Her open-ended response to the most important quality of an effective teacher was "Kindness," which was coded as "Relationship with Students." She was aware of the value of students knowing teachers care about them, and she explained that even if a teacher does not like a student, he or she must pretend like he or she does.

Her other two choices of effective qualities were "Organization" and "Content Knowledge." Lessons flow smoother if teachers are organized, and students love routine. The teacher explained her second choice, Content Knowledge, as important mainly at the high school level more so than the elementary level.

Next, the teacher was asked to discuss her choosing a 10 for herself on the level of effectiveness scale. She sarcastically stated, "I'm not at all modest, am I?" She explained that she had never been below a five on the level of effectiveness (LOE) scale that Tennessee produced when the new TEAM rubric was enacted. She said that even prior to the LOE scale, she was always the equivalent to what is considered a level five now for teachers. She claimed that the fact she helped her students score higher on the TN Ready test is what makes her an effective teacher. Teacher Three knows she is not consistent with the type of students she helps exceed their test score goal; she said sometimes it is her honors kids who excel, and other years, it is her lower group that excels. She said those test scores were what proves she is effective in the classroom. Based on her response, she was asked if most teachers consider themselves highly effective based only on their test scores or on their performance daily within the classroom. She said both. Although test scores are important, she retorted that the rapport in the classroom is vital, also. She emphasized the importance of self-reflecting as a teacher and mentioned that she has former students every year come back and thank her for preparing them for their English classes in 10th, 11th, and 12th grade.

Lastly, Teacher Three was asked about her ranking of qualities of effective teachers. The most effective quality she chose was "Teacher Personality." As she mentioned before, teachers must care about their students while being transparent and genuine with them. Students know when a teacher is not being genuine, but when a teacher is real and genuine with students, they recognize it and appreciate it. In reference to teacher and student relationships, she explained that teachers cannot take students' anger toward the teacher personally. She was then asked if a new teacher does not have that kind of personality, will he or she last in the profession? Her response was that it can be learned through a mentor, administration, or any support team of

teachers. Not having time to learn how to develop this personality is detrimental to new teachers because they get fired before they have time to grow in the role. Because of time constraints, Teacher Three was not asked about question numbers two and three, but she was asked why she chose “Planning/Organizing Lessons” as fourth place and “Years of Experience” as fifth place. Although she believed organization is the second most important quality of an effective teacher, she chose it as fourth place because her first, second, and third choice seemed more important than “Planning/Organizing Lessons.” She did not elaborate any more on fourth place having noticed she contradicted herself. She continued by discussing her last choice on the ranking, which was “Years of Experience.” She explained that the teacher determines whether it is important or not; the same lessons should not be taught year to year because the kids are different every year; however, she did believe that if a lesson is working from year to year, it should be repeated.

Teacher Four

Teacher Four is currently in his third year of teaching History. This father of one is also the wrestling coach for the school. Just this year, he began teaching a dual-credit course, which allows students the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit in World History. He is calm-natured despite all of his responsibilities both in school and out of school. He hopes to become an athletic director later in his career.

He was interviewed during his planning period on a separate day from Teacher Two and Three. He was first asked about his answer for the most important quality of an effective teacher, which was “Trustworthy.” He believed that students should trust in the teacher’s lesson and that the teacher has the content knowledge to teach the students everything they need to be successful in that subject area. Teacher 4 teaches a dual-credit history course, which is a course

that students take to give them college credit as well as high school credit. He was asked whether he feels he always has to tell those honors students why they are doing the assignments that they are required to complete. He said he usually does, especially at the beginning of the semester. He often emphasizes the mass amount of studying and homework is preparing those students for college.

Next, he was asked to discuss his other two choices of effective qualities, which he chose “Organization” and “Fairness.” For organization, he believed staying on pace with the curriculum for the semester helps guide the teacher to success with the lessons. Also, keeping up with Individualized Learning Plans (IEPs) for special education students and 504 plans help the teacher know what accommodations or modifications should be made for those students’ assignments. In regard to fairness, he said fairness relates more to classroom management and discipline, not necessarily the academic part of class. Fair, he explained, is different than equal. Consistency is crucial when giving students referrals to the principal.

On the ranking scale, Teacher Four said he is a seven. He believed this because he said he is somewhat effective, and he does not think a level 10 is achievable; there is always room to grow.

Finally, on the rankings of the five effective qualities of teachers, Teacher Four said “Classroom Management” is the most important because students need to know what to expect in each class. If the kids are acting wild and crazy, they will never listen to what is being taught. Due to time constraints, he was not asked about questions two and three, but he was asked to discuss his fourth and fifth ranking. For “Teacher Personality,” he believed the way a teacher teaches is more important than his or her personality. For example, he has had many students tell him they like him as a person but not the way he teaches or the subject of history. As far as “Years of Experience,” he did not think it has anything to do with a teacher’s ability to help

students achieve success in the classroom. Some veteran teachers less effective than apprentice teachers and vice versa.

Teacher focus group

The teacher focus group was held during the teachers' planning period and lasted 13 minutes. A round-table discussion format took place, and the responses were recorded on an i-Phone.

First, the four teachers were asked for a definition of "highly effective." Even though they discussed qualities of highly effective teachers and whether they believed they were one of those, they were never asked to provide a definition. Teacher One mentioned "highly effective" is when a teacher grows a student and is reaching all students. When asked how they would explain "grow a student" to new teachers, Teacher One said it could mean a variety of things from test scores, effort, or personal relationship with the students. Teacher Two explained that it could be shown through a student if he or she never knew how to study but learns how from that effective teacher. She believed it is more than just test scores. The focus group was then asked if the measurement from state test scores are better or a teacher's own classroom assessments. Teacher One said she thought the teacher's own classroom assessment, and Teacher Two agreed. Teacher Three spoke and said teachers do not know what is going to be on the state tests.

Regarding the definition of effectiveness, the focus group was asked if they think teachers' ideas of effectiveness are different than legislatures. They collectively answered yes. Teacher Three believed there is not any state legislature who has ever had any teacher preparation. Next, the teachers were asked how they could improve as a teacher since they have already answered whether they believe they embody the effective qualities. Teacher Two believed she needs to try new things because teaching is a profession that is constantly changing; teachers must change as

well. Teacher One reiterated Teacher Two's point by saying teachers cannot be static. Teacher Three said she needs to work on being patient. Regarding Teacher Three's point, the focus group was informed of the four students' answers of the most highly effective quality of teachers. Because one of the students said patience is a vital quality for a teacher to possess, Teacher Three was asked to elaborate on her answer. She said her patience level depends on the day. Some days she is short-tempered while others she can tolerate more frustrations. She believed she needs to be more consistent and not let her personal life affect how she treats her students. Teacher One believed she can improve in every area. She wished she had more activities for students as well as more time to do everything. Teacher Four said he is trying to improve on the qualities he deemed most effective, which was "Trustworthiness," "Organization," and "Fairness." Additionally, he said he is trying to improve his content knowledge. When asked if the teachers ever feel like they would leave a group of kids to assist one kid who was truly struggling, Teachers One, Two, and Four said no. Teacher One said it is not possible if a teacher wants to be successful in the classroom. Teacher Three said it depends on the day because sometimes a teacher has to go after the one student. After being challenged by Teacher 1 agreeing with Teacher Three but saying overall, a teacher must focus on those who want to succeed, Teacher Three changed her mind and said that teachers should not leave the majority behind. She mentioned just because that one particular student is needy does not constitute the teacher paying all the attention to him or her. Regarding the question about what area each teacher could improve upon, Teacher One said it changes for her every year. Being year 17 of teaching, she knows that if she is successful in one area one year, she should strive to improve other areas the next year. She mentioned that every teacher has areas to improve.

The final question to the focus group related to the student research group's answers of the most effective quality of a teacher on their open-ended questions. Since three out of the four students said "Relationship with Students" is the most effective quality, the focus group was asked what percentage of students they believed they had a connection with this year. Teacher Two said 90% of the students, Teacher Four said most of the students, Teacher Three said 80-90%, and Teacher One said 90%. When asked how to explain to a new teacher what it means to have a connection with students, Teacher Three said talking to the students about what is going on outside of school. For example, she said she always asked them what book they are currently reading or what activities they did over the weekend. Teacher One explained her recent observation of another teacher in the building. She said they students were not engaged in the lesson because the teacher had no connection with the students; the most personal interaction the teacher and student had in that classroom was the teacher calling the student by his or her first name. Teacher One emphasized that students want to know a teacher is a real person, and Teacher Three echoed that students want to know teachers are authentic.

Teacher classroom observations

For the teacher observation, two teachers were observed -the Math teacher and the Social Studies teacher. The teachers were observed for 20 minutes of a 90-minute class period. The researcher sat on the side wall where an exist desk resides.

Teacher Four has a class schedule different from the other teacher observed; he splits his 90-minute class into two 45-minute sections with the science teacher. The 20-minute segment observed was all lecture about World War I. All students were taking notes as the teacher discussed the PowerPoint presentation. Students in the front row appeared to be paying attention while those toward the back started getting fidgety. Several students asked questions during the

lecture, and many times, these questions were asked without raising hands. Two times Teacher Four had to tell the class to be quiet and listen. Mid-way through the lesson, a male student started mouthing something to a female student in which she responded by nodding her head. Despite this, the female student seemed consistently on task and asked questions throughout the lesson.

Teacher 1 has three 90-minute class periods. On this particular day, she was teaching systems of equations. During the lesson, several students were struggling to pay attention; they were whispering to one another or staring blankly at the wall. As she lectured, she called on them to answer a question or even simply told them to pay attention to the board. One unruly student started challenging her description of how to solve an equation, and instead of bickering with the student, she went to his desk to diffuse his frustrations. This student seemed to be ostracized by other students, so diffusing the situation privately appeared to solve all the problems. After 15 minutes of lecture, the teacher allowed the class to break into their groups and begin working on a worksheet of equations. At this point, students surrounded Teacher One's desk before she could go around the desks to answer questions. As the teacher answered questions, half the students not asking questions were off task and talking with the group about topics not related to math.

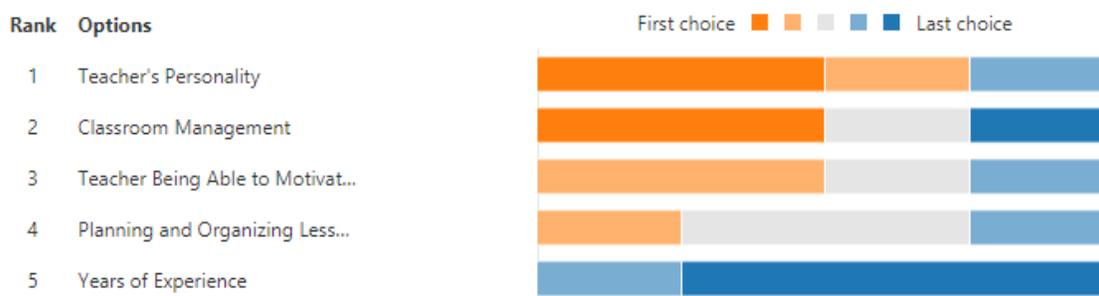
Student Results

Two female and two male ninth grade students were randomly selected for this study. Each student first received a survey consisting of a ranking portion and two open-ended questions. Some of the ranking questions were adapted to ease understanding of educational

terminology. It took the students 13 minutes and four seconds on average to complete the questionnaire. The students were then interviewed to discuss their answers.

Table 4.6

Student Ranking of Qualities of Effective Teachers on Questionnaire



This pictorial representation shown in Table 4.6 illustrates two of the four students ranked “Teacher Personality” as being the most effective quality of a teacher; one student ranked this category as the second most effective while the other student ranked this as his next-to-last choice. Similarly, two students also said “Classroom Management” is the next most effective quality; one student ranked this category third while the other ranked it as his last choice. “Teacher Motivation” was reworded to “Teacher Being Able to Motivate Students” to guide students to a better understanding of what the category means. Two students ranked this as their second choice, one ranked it third, and the other ranked it fourth. “Planning and Organizing Lessons” ranked fourth overall. One ranked it as second most effective, two students ranked it third, and one student ranked it fourth. Ranking fifth was “Years of Experience.” One student ranked it in fourth place while the other three students ranked it in fifth place.

Figure 4.2

Questions on Questionnaire for Students

1. In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher must have in order to be effective in the classroom? Be specific.
2. Describe one of the best teachers you have ever had. Explain in detail what made him/her an excellent teacher.

Figure 4.2 represents two additional questions asked to students regarding qualities of effective teachers. Students were required to answer all questions before submitting the questionnaire.

The first question asked students to name an additional quality of an effective teacher. Table 4.7 illustrates the results:

Table 4.7

Question #1 Response on Questionnaire

Student	Response
Student One	Relationship with Students
Student Two	Relationship with Students
Student Three	Relationship with Students
Student Four	Patience with Students

As shown in Table 4.7, three out of four of the students who took the survey said relationship with students is the most important quality of an effective teacher. This was revealed through axial coding.

The second question asked students to name a teacher who they felt was an effective teacher and describe why they thought so. Table 4.8 illustrates these responses:

Table 4.8

Question Two Response on Student Questionnaire

Student	Response
Student One	High Expectations of Students
Student Two	Relationship with Students
Student Three	Relationship with Students
Student Four	Classroom Management

Table 4.8 shows a correlation between students' answer to question one and question two; axial coding revealed that students named teachers who embodied qualities they believe to be highly effective qualities of teachers. Selective coding revealed one theme: half of the students believed "Relationship with Students" is the most effective quality of a teacher.

Student interviews

After the questionnaires were completed, the students were interviewed one-on-one. The interviews took an average of eight minutes to complete. Each student was asked to elaborate on their ranking scale as well as on their open-ended questions' answers. Additional information was discovered via these interviews.

Student One.

Student One is a 14-year-old male student. He was pulled from his elective class to complete the interview. He was first asked to elaborate on his rankings. He revealed that he chose “Teacher Personality” as the most important quality of the five choices because he believed teacher and student relationships were important; it allows students to learn easier. He explained the importance of a one-on-one connection between the two. As for why he chose “Motivation of Students” as his second choice, he explained that a teacher’s ability to motivate students encourages the students to complete the assignments. He did not elaborate on his third and fourth choices, which were “Planning and Organizing Lessons” and “Years of Experience,” respectively. His final choice, “Classroom Management,” revealed a misinterpretation of the definition of that term. He explained that classroom management is not as important because although organization makes items easier to find, a student’s management is not crucial for success in the classroom.

Next, Student One was asked to explain his open-ended question’s answers. He did not elaborate on the first question because it related to his explanation of why “Teacher Personality” is the most important quality of an effective teacher; however, when asked if he and the teacher and a good relationship, he said they did. As for the next question, Student 1 explained that he appreciated one of his former teachers because she had high expectations for her students; she pushed students beyond what they believed they could accomplish. Additionally, he was asked about her classroom management since this was the least important quality on his ranking survey. Although he misinterpreted the meaning of “classroom management” before, he was able to make sense of its definition. He explained that she had “pretty good” classroom

management because she had different sections of groups but would also allow students to do solo work.

Student Two.

Student Two is a 15-year-old male student who is currently taking three honors courses. He was also pulled from his elective class. Like Student One, he was first asked about his rankings one-by-one. In regard to his number one answer being “Teacher Personality,” he believed a robotic teacher creates a boring classroom for students. He also explained that it makes it difficult for students to understand the teacher in normal context. When asked to what degree a one-to-one relationship between teacher and student is important, he said it allows for students to feel comfortable coming to the teacher for help in certain areas. He also said he finds it crucial for a teacher to ask a student about a topic of interest not related to the classroom. Next, he said “Planning and Organizing Lessons” is important because a teacher must help students build knowledge. Terms such as “Intermediate,” “Advanced,” and “Mastered” showed this student is familiar with commonly-used education vocabulary. He emphasized the importance of this building being transferred into notes so that students can self-teach. When asked why “Classroom Management” comes in third place, he said it depends on the group of students more so than the teacher; many students’ personalities can hinder a smooth classroom environment. Student Two said even a teacher with terrible classroom management can manage a quiet class effectively. He explained why “Years of Experience” was in fifth place first. He believed that as long as a teacher has content knowledge, years of experience does not matter. He continued by explaining his reasoning for “Teacher Motivation of Students” being 4th on his survey ranking. Students motivate students more than teachers motivate students; he gave an

example of a peer getting a 100 on a test while he made an 80, and it motivated him to perform better next time so that he could beat his fellow classmate.

For the open-ended questions, Student Two did not elaborate on relationship with students as he already elaborated on that element earlier in the interview. Next, he said the teacher he thought was most effective was a teacher who connected with his students. This new teacher was a male who was able to joke with students and discuss topics with students that were unrelated to school.

Student Three.

Student Three is a 15-year-old female student who also plays soccer. All of her classes are honors courses. She was pulled from her fourth period class to complete the interview. On her rankings, she selected “Classroom Management” as the most important quality of an effective teacher. She said it is vital for a classroom to be under control. She explained her struggle to focus in a loud classroom because she gets easily distracted. She elaborated by explaining if a student is talking behind her, she starts listening to that conversation and participates in it instead of doing her work. Her second choice, “Teacher Personality,” was important to her because an energetic teacher allows the teacher to effectively teach and connect with students. She was not asked to explain her third and fourth answers due to time restraints. For her last choice, “Years of Experience,” she explained that some of the best teachers she ever had were young.

According to Student Three, “a good teacher will be a good teacher.” She had no more information to add to her first open-ended question as she already discussed why relationships are important for a connection to develop between teacher and student. For question two, the

most effective teacher she ever had was a male teacher who had a dry personality and would joke around with students; however, he would be strict when necessary. The students knew when it was appropriate to joke as well as when it was time to work. The classroom was balanced.

Student Four.

Student Four is a 15-year-old female who participates in the band at her school. She was pulled from her 4th period class, which is the last period of the day. On her rankings, she named “Classroom Management” as the most important. She believed if a teacher cannot keep a class quiet, it makes it difficult to focus. She explained that she cannot work in a noisy classroom. Number two was “Teacher Motivation of Students.” She said because most students do not have intrinsic motivation to work on their own, they need the extra push from their teacher. If they are not motivated to work, they will not work. She was not asked about her 3rd and 4th choice due to time restraints, but she was asked about her last choice, “Years of Experience.” According to Student 4, due to creativity, a teacher can be a brand-new teacher and be a more effective teacher than an older teacher.

For her open-ended question, Student 4 emphasized the importance of patience being the most effective quality of a teacher. She believed that students often do not listen, so a patient teacher can work more effectively with those students to guide them along. When asked to elaborate on the most effective teacher she has ever had, she explained this teacher’s effectiveness in classroom management. This teacher created a desirable learning environment because of her organization. The class felt calm, and it was easier to learn.

Summary

In conclusion, the study was conducted in one freshman academy. All students and teachers work or teach at this rural location. The evidence conducted set the foundation to establish what these stakeholders believed to be the most effective qualities of teachers. The ranking option for students and teachers was based on James Stronge's book *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, which sets the groundwork for what qualities effective teachers in the past have embodied. All participants' responses helped develop a theme of these effective qualities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

Teacher effectiveness is a hot topic amongst all things in education. It is quite clear that some teachers are more effective than others, yet the source of such differences is largely unknown (Kim, Dar-Nimrod, & MacCann, 2018). Teachers are the heart of the school and therefore must possess qualities that will bring success to the classroom. Research proves various qualities can be seen as effective. For instance, research shows that to be stimulating, lessons should be enjoyable and be seen by students to be useful for fulfilling their “competence needs” (Hue & Li, 2008). Other research will emphasize the importance of teachers’ relationships with students. The purpose of this study is to identify the mystery behind what makes a teacher effective. Three questions drove this study:

- 1.) What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade teachers?
- 2.) What qualities of teachers are perceived to be the most effective according to 9th grade students?
- 3.) How do the opinions of the qualities of effective teachers compare between 9th grade teachers and students?

Discussion

Research question one

Research question one focused on what qualities teachers perceive to be the most effective. Of the 23 teachers who completed the questionnaire, “Teacher Motivation of

Students” was predominantly the top choice. Classroom Management ranked second. It is vital that today’s teachers have tools for improving motivation in the classroom in order to positively impact student learning (Farmer, 2018). Years of Experience being in last place showed teachers do not deem experience as important as actual qualities and techniques that take place in the classroom. This finding does not provide evidence as to why teachers’ pay grades are based on years of experience.

All subject areas were represented in this study as at least two members from each department completed the questionnaire. “Relationship with Students” dominated the open-ended question of what makes a teacher highly effective. This showed the value these teachers invest in connecting with students. “Knowledge of Students” could be grouped with “Relationship with Students,” but because the terminology was the same from two teachers, it was coded separately. No quality dominated the category of two additional qualities of effective teachers. “Classroom Management” was mentioned the most with six answers. Content Knowledge was answered five times, showing both of these elements must be a quality of an effective teacher according to teachers. Four teachers mentioned “Relationships” as one of the additional two qualities, which showed that even if the teacher did not answer “Relationships with Students” as the most effective quality, it still is a strong quality for developing effectiveness.

When ranking themselves on a scale of 1-10 of effectiveness, several teachers appeared confident in themselves, but the majority of teachers ranked themselves a Level 8. These teachers appeared confident in their role as a teacher.

For the interviews, the theme of “Years of Experience” being not as essential of a quality of an effective teacher was revealed. In the focus group, all teachers collectively believed that state tests should not be a major indicator of a teacher’s effectiveness. Several other themes were revealed: teachers should be dynamic, teachers should always be willing to improve their skills, and effective teachers always build relationships with their students.

The teacher focus group revealed a frustration amongst the teachers about state testing. Their frustrations are echoed regularly across the state as they see Tennessee’s state test, TN Ready, as an inaccurate measure of effectiveness. There was one discrepancy from one of the teacher participants. Teacher 3 changed her answers from the interview to the focus group. She ranked herself as a Level 10 on the effectiveness scale but mentioned in the focus group that she has room for improvement. Also, her answers changed during the interview. She discussed her reasoning for ranking herself as a Level 10, which was due to her high test scores, yet when asked if most teachers consider themselves effective based on test scores or classroom performance, she said both are considered.

Research question two

The questionnaire completed by four students proved “Teacher Personality” as the most effective quality while “Classroom Management” was close in second place. Similar to the teacher survey, “Years of Experience” also was considered least important on the ranking scale. The first open-ended question to students revealed the most effective quality of a teacher is “Relationship with Students.” This factor ties in with students’ choosing of “Teacher Personality” of the most important quality of an effective teacher on the ranking scale. For the second open-ended question, which asked students a quality of the most effective teacher they

ever had, the questionnaire revealed that “Relationship with Students” is also the most effective to two of the four students. “High Expectations” was another students’ answer, which again ties into the relationship a teacher has with the students in his or her classroom.

During the interviews with students, Student One emphasized the importance of teacher and student relationships, but he misunderstood the meaning of “Classroom Management.” He interpreted this as a quality of a student, not a teacher. Had he properly understood the definition, his rankings might have been different.

Student Two seemed knowledgeable of the classroom. He knew what he appreciated in a teacher. His ability to use state testing terms, such as “Intermediate,” “Advanced,” and “Mastered,” showed that he was aware of how teachers label their students in testing. He mentioned peers being more influential than teachers, reiterating his choice of “Teacher Motivation of Students” being at the bottom of the list. He emphasized the importance of teacher and student relationships as well.

Student Three’s lack of being able to focus in a rowdy classroom encouraged her to choose “Classroom Management” as her most important quality of an effective teacher. Relationship with students was mentioned in Student Three’s interview; she chose “Teacher Personality” as the next most important quality and also mentioned this quality as the most effective in her open-ended question. The most influential teacher she had connected with students, showing how important teacher and student relationships are.

Although Student Four’s number one ranking was the same as Student Three’s answer, she differed in her number two answer, which was “Teacher Motivation of Students.” Her

realization that many students lack intrinsic motivation showed her awareness of her peers around her. Both Student Three and Student Four reveal that new teachers are usually more motivated and creative with their lessons than veteran teachers. Differing from the other three students, Student Four said patience is the most effective quality of a teacher, which again shows her knowledge of students around her.

Research question three

Similarities and differences exist with teacher and student perceptions of qualities of highly effective teachers. Similarities that existed amongst the responses were that “Relationship with Students” and “Classroom Management” are two of the most effective qualities while “Years of Experience” appeared to be the least effective. These similarities are discussed below. The open-ended responses revealed both teachers and students perceive “Relationship with Students” as the most effective quality a teacher possesses. Also, they agreed that “Years of Experience” is the least effective trait of a teacher compared to the other four options.

Although, differences did exist in the responses. For instance, in the ranking question, the quality teachers perceived as most important is “Teacher Motivation of Students” while the students believed “Teacher Personality” reigns over all the others. Also, “Content Knowledge” was mentioned several times by teachers yet never mentioned by students, which could be attributed to the fact that students automatically put trust in their teachers’ knowledge of the subject he or she is teaching.

Implications

Selective coding revealed one major theme exists between teachers and students' perceptions of effective teachers: teachers and students must have a connection for successful academic progress. Trust must be present in the relationship because students cannot learn from an adult they do not respect or trust. If a teacher is struggling connecting with a student, he or she must find a topic of interest with that student and discuss that interest. This builds a connection and gives the student the attention he or she seeks. All adolescents desire attention, and if they do not receive positive attention from their teachers, they will exhibit bad behavior in class to seek negative attention.

Two theories are supported from this study. Constructivism was enacted through the teachers' answers to their questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups; their idea of what effective qualities of teachers are stems from their prior experience as students in the classroom as well as their experience as teachers in their own classroom. Even though constructivism is individualized, the majority of the participants gave similar responses. This shows that similar experiences appear to be shared by the participants; all students and teachers have experienced a positive relationship with a teacher at some point in their education. Next, grounded theory was established through this study. The initial question of "What are the qualities of highly effective teachers?" was the foundation of the study, and the answers to this question helped build the rest of the framework. As shown through this study, a relationship with students is an essential quality a teacher must exhibit to be successful in the classroom. Also, classroom management is a vital part of a class running smoothly.

Recommendation for Further Study

This study's results are limited due to a convenience sample population. In order to discover a wide variety of opinion from stakeholders in education, other geographical areas, such as an urban school district, and other grade-levels should be studied. A future study may consist of administrators' opinions of qualities of highly effective teachers as well. It would be beneficial to hear from all stakeholders to understand opinions from various realms of the education systems.

A quantitative study could also be performed to determine how a teacher's state test scores compare to their opinion of their effectiveness. This would present tangible evidence that a teacher's effective qualities help create a student's academic success on a state test, which is the primary measurement of a student's knowledge gained during that school year. A discussion could then take place about the definition of "effectiveness" according to teachers versus legislatures, who spearhead the testing process. This quantitative study would incorporate stakeholders not just within a school district but also those who create laws for the schools across the state of Tennessee.

Summary

This study revealed the importance of connections between teachers and students in the classroom for academic progress to occur. This study not only revealed the most effective quality of teachers, but it also revealed teachers and students' perceptions of teacher qualities that are considered effective. Teachers who are struggling to succeed in the classroom should self-reflect on these qualities and make improvements as needed.

This study also revealed how minimal the importance of years of experience is for teachers. Although experience brings comfort and confidence, it can ultimately be detrimental to a teacher; he or she becomes complacent and unwilling to try new techniques. Proven through this study are the effective qualities according to teachers and students that would bring success to teachers in the classroom.

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Appendix

Student Questionnaire

1. Please rank the following characteristics from 1-5 with #1 being the most important quality to have in order to be an effective teacher.

Classroom Management

Years of Experience

Teachers Being Able to Motivate Students

Planning and Organizing Lessons

Teacher's Personality

2. In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher must have in order to be effective in the classroom? Be specific.
3. Describe one of the best teachers you have ever had. Explain in detail what made him/her an excellent teacher.

Teacher Questionnaire

1. What subject do you teach?
2. In your opinion, what is the most effective quality a teacher can have in order to be effective in the classroom? Be specific.
3. List and describe two other qualities or strategies a teacher must have in order to be effective in the classroom.
4. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the most effective), how effective would you consider yourself in the classroom?
5. Please rank the following characteristics from 1-5 with #1 being the most important quality to have in order to be an effective teacher.

Classroom Management

Years of Experience

Teachers Motivation Students

Planning and Organizing Lessons

Teacher Personality

Student 1 Interview

Interviewer: So I'm going to ask you about your rankings first, and it looks like...I know you did this Friday, but you had to rank your five qualities. The first one is teacher personality. Why is that the first one?

Student 1: Because when the teacher has a good personality, it is just easier to connect with them and just relate to them and understand what they're saying more.

Interviewer: Are you talking about how important teacher/student relationships are or just in general classroom as a whole?

Student 1: Umm, I think a little more teacher/student bonds just because when they like bond together they can learn easier.

Interviewer: Ok. The second one was teacher being able to motivate students. Tell me why that's important.

Student 1: Because it seems like you have to have to be in honors classes, you just have to be motivated to do all of this stuff, and when the teacher helps motivate, it is a lot easier to do.

Interviewer: Then your third and fourth one was planning/organizing lessons and years of experience, but your fifth one was classroom management. To you, why is that not as important as the other ones.

Student 1: I think mainly with management I'm not the biggest manager, but I'm good with managing my time. But I think it's not as bad because when you know where things are, you can get to them easily.

Interviewer: Ok so the other two you had to write in if you remember. So one of them was what is the most important quality, and you said being able to get the students involved and relating to them in some way, which I guess ties into your number 1 quality.

Student 1: Yes, it does.

Interviewer: Ok, so the other one was describe one of the best teachers you've ever had, and you said Mrs. McCoy. Tell me about her based on what you said.

Student 1: Yes. Basically, I liked her a lot. Basically, when we thought we had done the hardest we had done, she made us do more so that we were pushing ourselves and pushing ourselves like with prepositions and everything like that. It helped us learn better.

Interviewer: Did she have that personality that would help you connect?

Student 1: Yes, very much.

Interviewer: You had that good relationship 1:1?

Student 1: Yes.

Interviewer: What was her classroom management like?

Student 1: She had pretty good classroom management. She had like different sections of five or six people and we would do solo work also.

Interviewer: Awesome. Is there anything else you want to add to this?

Student 1: Umm, not really.

Student 2 Interview

Interviewer: So this was done Friday and we have already answered your name questions, so number 3...you had to rank from 1-5 the qualities of effective teachers. And I want to ask you about that. Number 1 was teacher's personality. Why was that #1?

Student 2: Because, I feel like if that teacher is robotic, that they're not, umm, able to connect with their students, then the students can't understand what they are teaching if they can't understand them in normal context.

Interviewer: To what level do you feel it is important for a teacher to have a one on one relationship with students?

Student 2: Just like, if the teacher knows what the students likes, that teacher gets to the point that the student is able to come to that teacher for help in certain areas.

Interviewer: Do you appreciate if a teacher asks you about something outside of class.

Student 2: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think that helps build that relationship?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Number 2 was planning and organizing lessons. Talk to me about why that was important.

Student 2: Some teachers, their lessons are off the wall, and sometimes that's ok, but if you're learning something that needs to be in order, that is not really effective. But if a teacher can plan out their lessons from basic to intermediate to advanced to mastered, it is easier for that student to follow along and look over their notes to realize that this makes sense to this, etc.

Interviewer: Makes sense. The 3rd one was classroom management. Why is that one important yet falls in the middle of the pack in importance?

Student 2: Umm, I feel like that one depends on how the class is instead of how the teacher does it. Some classes are harder to manage than some classes because of the personalities in that said class. So it's not really an important thing if you have quiet kids or something like that than if you have a disruptive class. It's more of a thing that needs to be pushed upon.

Interviewer: Number 4 was teacher being able to motivate students and number 5 was years of experience

Student 2: I don't feel like years of experience matters if that teacher knows what they're talking about. IT only matters on how often they come across a certain problem. With motivating students, students are able to motivate each other. I know I have had experiences where a friend made a 100 on a test and I made an 80, and I'm like, "I want to make a 100 on the test!" I want to do better than that kid.

Interviewer: Right. That makes sense. Ok, these were the ones you wrote in, and it asked you what you felt was the most important quality of a teacher, and I guess that one ties back to teacher personality.

Student 2: Yeah, it does.

Interviewer: Do you want to add anything about teacher personality?

Student 2: Nah, I think I got it.

Interviewer: Ok, and the last one was to tell me about the best teacher you ever had. Tell me about that.

Student 2: The teacher was able to really able to connect with other students. He was a new teacher who was able to relate what students were talking about outside of the classroom. So he was able to joke with them and understand them and that's what helped increase that relationship with them on a personal level.

Interviewer: Very cool. Anything you want to add?

Student 2: No.

Student 3 Interview

Interviewer: Alright. The first question asked you to rank the five qualities listed from most important to least important. Tell me about your number 1, which you said was Classroom Management.

Student 3: Classroom management is important because if a teacher cannot keep the class quiet, it is difficult for students to work. I cannot focus in a loud classroom.

Interviewer: Ok, your number 2 was teacher being able to motivate students. Why is that important?

Student 3: Many students are not hard workers, so they need that extra push to motivate them. If they cannot be motivated, they are not going to work.

Interviewer: Awesome. Your number 3 and 4 were planning/organizing lessons and teacher personality in that order, but your least important was years of experience. Why is that the least important quality?

Student 3: A teacher can be a brand new teacher and still be as good as an older teacher. Experience does not matter that much. In fact, sometimes new teachers are more creative than older teachers.

Interviewer: Ok. The next question asked you to describe the most effective quality of a teacher. You said patient. Discuss that with me.

Student 3: Patience is important because a teacher often has students who do not listen, but a patient teacher is able to work with that student to help guide them along.

Interviewer: The last question was asking you to describe one of the best teachers you have ever had. Your answer explains a teacher you had who was very organized. Tell me about that.

Student 3: Yeah, this particular teacher created a desirable environment from her organization. The class felt calm, and it was easier to learn.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to add?

Student 3: No, I don't think so.

Student 4 Interview

Interviewer: So you did this questionnaire on Friday, but discuss with me about your rankings of most important qualities of a teacher to least important. Number 1 was classroom management. Why is that the most important?

Student 4: Classroom management helps keep the classroom under control. A student like me gets easily distracted. If a student is talking behind me, for example, I start listening or participating in the conversation instead of doing my work.

Interviewer: Ok. Your next quality was teacher personality. Why is that number 2 for you?

Student 4: A teacher must have a good personality to teach. They need to be able to talk to students but also be energetic to teach.

Interviewer: Number 3 and 4 were teacher being able to motivate students and planning and organizing lessons, respectively. Number 5, you said, was years of experience. Why is that the most important?

Student 4: Some of the best teachers I have ever had were young. I don't think experience matters. A good teacher will be a good teacher.

Interviewer: Next, I asked you for a quality that is most effective for a teacher to have, and you said an ability to connect with students. That ties back to a comment you made earlier. Do you have anything to add to that?

Student 4: No.

Interviewer: Ok, and last is to discuss the best teacher you ever had. You mentioned a male teacher. Tell me about him.

Student 4: Mr. Hensley had a dry personality and would joke around with us, yet he would be strict as well. It was a good balance. We knew when it was time to work, but we also had fun in there.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Student 4: Nope.

Teacher 1 Interview

Interviewer: So you teach mathematics... In your opinion, what is the most important quality of a teacher, and you said there are so many, but it's hard to narrow it down to one. Teachers have so many nuances throughout the day that it is hard to discern, etc. Tell me about what you said there.

Teacher # 1: I think being able...the gift of discernment is our best quality. We don't only have to look at students and see, "Are they falling behind?" "Is there something going on at home?" "Do they need more time on this topic?" "Do I need to see to their emotional needs?" So it's constant, and if you can't do that with a child, you'll never connect with them.

Interviewer: So you're saying the ability to change?

Teacher # 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. List and describe two other qualities. You mentioned to be effective, you must reach all of the learners. Talk to me about that.

Teacher # 1: Umm...personality is a huge thing, but I put that because it covers so many areas. Your personality is what creates your classroom environment, it's what creates your classroom management, all of these things are great teacher qualities and it ties back to personality.

Interviewer: Ok, which brings up the response---well, we will get to that in a second. On a scale of 1-10, you considered yourself a 7. Why not a 10, and why not a 1?

Teacher # 1: Well, that's on my very best day because I feel like there's always room to improve and always ways to reach different learners in different ways. And I'm by far not the worst because I love my kids, and just loving your kids is enough to get your through.

Interviewer: Very good. And then your order of 1-5. You mentioned teacher personality is #1. Why is that #1?

Teacher # 1: Ummm, well like I said on the previous question, it drives back to the fact that your personality influences so many things in your classroom: classroom management, how you connect to your students, how you deliver your instruction, how you motivate your students. All of that stuff.

Interviewer: And that was your #2---teacher motivation of students. And your number 3 and 4 were classroom management and planning/organizing lessons. Talk to me about #5, years of the experience. Why is that the least important?

Teacher # 1: You can have taught for 30 years and you are not able to change and be flexible and you're not able to adapt to new things, then you are not going to be very successful as a teacher teaching and reaching your students. So years of experience, yes, I'm not saying you're not going to be very successful, but I'm just saying that should not be the sole indicator of what makes a teacher effective.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Teacher # 1: No.

Teacher 2 Interview

Interviewer: The first question was what is the most important quality of a teacher...a teacher must have in the classroom. You said you need to be consistent. Talk to me about that.

Teacher #2: Well, I think that builds respect. If you have favorites or whatever, you're going to lose respect of anybody. Whether it's your best kids or your worst kid, the rules still apply to them.

Interviewer: So you're talking about your relationships with students, not necessarily your classroom? Or are you saying both?

Teacher #2: Umm, well, both, I do have...I'm a very routine person. There are no surprises or anything. I mean, it's both.

Interviewer: Do you think your students appreciate when there is more of a routine going on in your room versus craziness? Does that make sense?

Teacher #2: They like routine. You change something up and it messes them all up. I don't think...we all need routine.

Interviewer: Speaking of, I asked for two other qualities of effective teachers. You said you need to be fair with all students and need to follow through with that. Talk to me about that or an experience you've had with that.

Teacher #2: Umm, again, I think the fairness goes with the consistency. No matter who it is, rules are rules and this is what we do if this happens. Whether it is the best kid in class or the worst kid. What was the other?

Interviewer: Being able to follow through with things you say.

Teacher #2: Oh, if it's all talk and no action, then they're going to quickly see that you're all talk and no action. And that's gonna just break down any classroom management in the classroom. Because for them to learn, you gotta have classroom management first, and then from that, learning takes place.

Interviewer: Ok, the next one is on a scale of 1-10, how effective do you think you are. You said an 8, so why not a 10 and why not a 1?

Teacher #2: I've said it before because I've heard it said before by my mom (her being a teacher). She has always said once you feel like you know everything, you need to go to the house. Because, you know, there is no way that you know everything in education. Education is constantly changing—you have to adapt, you have to change. No one, to me, if anyone is a 10, um, no. I really question, question that.

Interviewer: Ok. I had you rank the characteristics 1-5, with 1 being the most important a teacher has. Your number one was classroom management. We already talked about that. Why does teacher personality come in 2nd?

Teacher #2: There are some kids you are naturally going to connect with. For those kids you don't naturally click, you gotta have other tools in the toolbox to get them on your side. because once you get the kids on your side and do well with classroom management, then learning can take place.

Interviewer: What happens if a teacher just does not have that "clicky" personality? Will he/she last in the profession.?

Teacher #2:" Well, that's a good question. I guess it all depends on, I guess, I don't want to say years of experience, but in one way, I can't help but wonder if it's a veteran teacher, I can't help but think the spark has been lost, and that's ok. We all have had years or days or whatever. If it's a new teacher, I do kind of question. They are just going to have to work harder. It's like a kid in our classroom, if a kid is deficient in certain areas, they're gonna have to work harder.

Interviewer: Right. The next one was teacher motivation of students and # 4 was years of experience. #5 was planning/organization lessons. Why is that least important? Still important but least important on that list?

Teacher #2: It all goes back to if you have them, then you can have the best, wonderful lesson plan ever taught. But those kids...if you don't have the classroom management and have those kids on your side, what's the point? It's going to go, you know.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Teacher #2: No.

Teacher 3 Interview

Interviewer: Ok, so the first actual question was what is the most important quality a teacher must have, and you said “kindness.” Tell me why you said “kindness.”

Teacher #3: I think that the relationship between a teacher and a student is the most important thing and that you can't get students to do academic work unless they genuinely believe that you care about them and we might not like all of our students but we at least need to pretend that we like them.

Interviewer: Yes! Right.

Teacher #3: We need to love on them because a lot of times we are the only adult who does love on them.

Interviewer: True. Yes, that's very true.

Teacher #3: The other one was list or describe two other qualities and you said “organization” and content knowledge. Tell me more about that.

Interviewer: I think the more organized a teacher is, the better the lesson flows smoothly and kids have, like, a structure to a lesson. And they feel more comfortable because they know what is coming, they know what to expect. Like they know we are going to do this warm up, or we are going to do this vocabulary. They just feel...they like a routine, and it helps if you create a routine. And content knowledge, that's particularly important at the high school level. For example, a chemistry teacher or a biology teacher, or us English teachers---we have a very specific content knowledge that we need to have, whereas I think elementary teachers are more general.

Teacher #3: Yes, and the extend we have to know or they start questioning you. Umm, then on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the most effective, and you said 10. Tell me about that.

Interviewer: I'm not at all modest, am I? (laughter)

Teacher #3: Well, no, I want honesty. That's what I want.

Interviewer: I have never been below a five...ever. Since they've started scaling us on that scale and even before that on the other scale my data was always a plus what they would consider a five back then. So I feel like I've been a very effective teacher, I can grow my kids every year. Now, it's not the same every year. Some years I can grow my honors more than I grow that middle group or that lower group, and sometimes the middle group grows. I feel like every year there has been proof that I have been highly effective.

Teacher #3: Do you think most teachers....part of the literature study of mien was what different states consider highly effective, highly qualified. Do you think most teachers do look at that LOE or do most of them look within their own classroom? Or both?

Interviewer: Umm, yeah I was gonna say it is probably a little bit of both. I think they need to look at the level of effectiveness, umm, but I do think they also need to see who their students feel about them and how they feel things are going in their classroom. They need to self-reflect. I have kids years later come and say, "Thank you so much. I've had an easier time in 10th grade, 11th grade." Whatever because 9th grade classes when I've even had kids come back and say I've learned the most your year.

Teacher #3: Ok, and the last one was ranking from 1-5 with #1 being the most effective quality, with your #1 being teacher personality. Why is that the most effective?

Interviewer: I think it goes back to the caring for your students and being real and a genuine person. Kids, I think, see through dishonesty really easily. So if they don't think you're genuine, if they don't, I mean if you could even be not their favorite but they can see you're a real person, I think they appreciate that. I think that has a lot to do with your personality. You have to be comfortable enough with yourself to just be who you are and not take things personally when kids get mad at you. It's that relationship component. It all goes back to the relationship thing.

Teacher #3: If a brand new teacher doesn't have that teacher personality, do you think they'll last.

Interviewer: I think it can be learned. I think it depends on if they've had a quality mentor and administration that was going to be supportive of them. It may be very frustrating the first couple of years. I think we sometimes get rid of new teachers too soon. We don't give them time to develop. Because I think there are new things to learn and one year is sometimes not enough to do that.

Teacher #3: Right. Your number 2, let's see, is teacher motivation of students. Then it's classroom management. Then your #4 and 5 were planning/organizing lessons and years of experience. Why are those important but on the bottom end of those 5?

Interviewer: I do think organization is important, I guess I think it is less important than those things at the top. But years of experience is less important because sometimes it is valuable and sometimes it's not. You get teachers who burn out and you get teachers who do the same thing every year. I do think it's ok if it's working, but you don't want to just repeat the same year over and over again with different kids because they are different kids. So, to some extent, years of experience can be detrimental if the person doesn't

Teacher #3: Almost gets too comfortable.

Interviewer: Yeah, and isn't responding and wanting to learn.

Teacher #3: Right. Thank you!

Teacher 4 Interview

Interviewer: In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher needs in order to be effective, and you said, "You have to be trustworthy." Tell me about that.

Teacher #4: So, um, I feel like students should trust in what you're doing to help their education, but also that they trust in what you're doing. That you're competent in your subject area.

Interviewer: Do you feel like in your class, especially in dual credit, that you always have to tell them why they're having to do what they're doing.

Teacher #4: Yeah, sometimes especially at the beginning of the semester. A lot of people though it was too much work, too much reading overnight, stuff like that. I have to tell them that it is preparing them for college, and when they get there, it's a lot of reading.

Interviewer: That's true. The next one was list two other qualities of effective teachers. Your next one was being organized. Why is that important?

Teacher #4: Yeah, I think being organized helps you stay on line and on pace of what you're supposed to be getting done as far as getting done before the semester and getting to where you need to be. Also, keeping track of your IEPs and 504s and knowing which kids need accommodations and so forth.

Interviewer: That's true. And your other one was being fair and consistent. Why is that important?

Teacher #4: I think that's more on the discipline side or classroom management. You know, treating all the kids fairly. Not necessarily the same but fairly. If you're going to write one up kid for doing something wrong, you have to write another kid up for doing the same thing.

Interviewer: On a scale of 1-10, you said you're a 7. Why not a 10 and why not a 1?

Teacher #4: Umm, I would like to think I'm somewhat effective. Then, umm a 10 I feel like there is a lot of room for growth still. Considering this is my second year of teaching, there is no way I'm a 10 yet. I still have a lot to learn.

Interviewer: Do you think that's achievable?

Teacher #4: A 10? No.

Interviewer: Ok, the last one was ranking 1-5 with #1 being the most important quality and you said "classroom management." Why is that the most effective?

Teacher #4: Umm, well, the kids, I mean, there needs to be some sort of management and they have to know what to expect in the class. If the kids are just up and running around like crazy, you're never going to be able to teach them anything.

Interviewer: That's true. The second was planning/organizing lessons. The 3rd was teacher motivation of students but your last two were teacher personality and years of experience. Why are those the last two?

Teacher #4: Teacher personality, umm, I have had a lot of kids tell me, not necessarily with me, but in my class, "I like you, but I don't like the class. It's not my favorite subject." So my personality is not going to make them like history any more. But I've also heard I don't like so-and-so as a person but he/she is a good teacher. You can still learn from someone even if you don't like their personality. And then years of experience...some people have been teaching forever aren't very effective and some people who are fresh out of school are very effective.

Interviewer: Very good.

Focus Group Interview

Interviewer: On your survey, I asked you qualities of highly effective teachers, but we never talked about the actual definition. So let's talk about "highly effective" means. If a brand new teacher is coming in, how to you explain to them what highly effective is?

Teacher 1: I think highly effective is when a teacher grows a student.

Teacher 2: Yes.

Teacher 1: And is reaching all students.

Interviewer: And if a new teacher were coming in, how would you describe "grow a student" to them?

Teacher 1: It could be a lot of different things...not just test scores. It's, "Did they grow as a student academically?" "Are they trying harder?" "Are they focusing more on school?" "Are they opening up?"

Teacher 2: A person who has never studied before has now knowing how to study. I agree...it's more than what the test scores say.

Interviewer: Is the measurement better from state test scores or is it better within your own classroom with your own assessments?

Teacher 1: Own classroom. I mean, I think.

Teacher 2: What did you say?

Teacher 1: Own classroom.

Teacher 2: Ohh. Oh yeah. Own classroom.

Teacher 3: We don't have time. WE don't really know what is going to be on the state tests. Right.

Teacher 1: We don't even know if we are going to get the information back on a state test!

Interviewer: Ok. The next question is do you think a teacher's definition of what makes a teacher effective is different than a legislature?

Collective: YES!

Teacher 3: I don't think there is any state legislature who has ever had any teacher preparation.

Interviewer: The next one (in a second I'm going to tell you what four students said in comparison when your answers). How do you think you can improve as a teacher? You've told me your best qualities whether you embody them or not. What are some areas you think you can improve?

Teacher 2: Being willing to try new things. Umm, I mean, just being willing to...we're in a profession that is constantly changing. We have to change, too.

Teacher 1: Can't be static.

Teacher 2: Yeah. Can't be just set on something. Be willing to try new things and do different things.

Teacher 3: I need to work on patience.

Interviewer: Somebody...let me Segway to this. I interviewed four students, and one of the students said, "A teacher should be a patient. A student needs a teacher who is willing to help them. Umm, so will you elaborate on what you mean?"

Teacher 3: I think it depends on the day. There are days when I have lots and lots of patience and some days where I have a really short fuse. It needs to be more consistent. It needs to be even because it is not their fault of everything else that is going on.

Teacher 1: Everything. I don't ever feel like I'm good enough or effective enough in the classroom. So more activities, I guess. More time to do everything.

Teacher 4: Some of the qualities I picked that highly effective teachers should have...that's what I'm trying to work on still. Like organization, all that stuff as well as the content knowledge.

Teacher 1: Umm, having the patience to try and reach every kid, not get frustrated with them. Not getting frustrated with the individuals and wanting to quit.

Interviewer: Would you say (and I always use this in class) the whole Jesus thing...if you go after the one and leave the 99 as a teacher. Do you feel like you're that way?

Collective: No.

Teacher 1: You can't.

Teacher 4: Depends on the day. Sometimes you have to go after the one, but...

Teacher 1: Yeah, but overall...

Teacher 4: Yeah, you shouldn't leave them behind. The kids in the middle just because they don't present upon being needy.

Teacher 1: Gosh, I don't know because every year I find something to work on. And I feel like it's still a juggling act and it's year 17. I feel like one year, I'm like, "This is what I want to focus on" and then next year, I focus on something else and let something slide. I don't think I'll ever get there. I think that's ok. I think it's supposed to be like that. No one has it all figured out.

Interviewer: I have one last question: of the four students I interviewed, one said patience was the most important quality, but the other three said the most important quality is being able to relate to students. So, I want to ask you, this year, what percentage of students do you feel you have a connection with?

Teacher 1: Connection and relate to? Not reached, right?

Interviewer: I wouldn't say "reached" at this stage, I'd say just a connection.

Teacher 1: I would say, I mean it would be high. I joke around with all of them. Probably 90%. I was thinking 90 or above. Yeah.

Teacher 4: I would say most of them.

Teacher 3: I feel the same way. I would say 80-90%. There's only a handful I don't feel a connection with.

Teacher 2: I'd say the same thing. I'd say 90.

Teacher 1: You guy have a lot more students, though.

Teacher 2: Yeah! Well, I think that's where the time restraints of six classes and 45 minutes, I don't feel like, when I say 90%, I don't feel...when I say my 90%, it's not going to be the same as your 90%. For me and Dylan, having twice the amount of kids is going to be different from your 90%. With the time that we have, we do well to connect in that 45 minutes.

Interviewer: Right. What do you call "connect?" In terms of if a new teacher were to read this study, is it "hey...hey?" What's a connection?

Teacher 4: Talking to them about what's going on at school. For me, I always ask them what they're reading or what they did this weekend. Just general conversations.

Teacher 2: Shaina and I were talking with a new teacher this morning about connections.

Interviewer: Is there like a connection there?

Teacher 1: No. I think that's most important thing, and I talked to her about that. I told her the most personal thing she said to any of them was calling them by their first name.

Interviewer: Wow.

Teacher 1: So it could be anything. Students want to know you're a real person, too.

Teacher 4: They want to know you're authentic.

Interviewer: Ok. Thank you!!!