IMPACTFUL TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR
UNDERSERVED STUDENTS

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Travis Jolley

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Student Name: Travis N. Jolley

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This dissertation has been approved and accepted by the faculty of the Education Department, Carson-Newman University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education.

Dissertation Committee:

Signatures: (Print and Sign)

Dissertation Chair
Dr. Brian Sohn

Methodologist Member
Dr. P. Mark Taylor

Content Member
Dr. Tanisha Heaston

Approved by the Dissertation Committee Date: 8/12/19
Abstract

A primary focus of school systems in Tennessee is to eliminate achievement gaps between traditionally underserved students (minorities, low socioeconomic status, rural, special education students, and English learners) and those who do not meet these criteria. Significant work has been done by stakeholders to support these students, but there has been limited progress. This study sought to find teachers in schools with a majority underserved student population who are achieving positive learning outcomes as verified by their principals to gain their input regarding effective teaching strategies and explore how they attribute their success. Observations, artifacts, and interviews were used as data sources for six high-performing teachers at five schools. Four of them taught at the elementary level, one taught middle school, and one taught high school. During the study, Dr. Albert Bandura’s social learning theory served as the theoretical framework, and Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings’ culturally relevant teaching served as the conceptual framework. As the data were coded, five major themes emerged among these teachers. The data indicated these teachers had a positive disposition, practiced focused instruction, varied their instructional techniques within lessons, used effective behavior management, and carefully monitored their students’ progress. Effective teaching strategies these teachers use on a regular basis include cooperative learning, project-based learning, structured student talk, and problem-solving. Many reasons were given by teachers during the interviews which contributed to their success with underserved students. These included collaborating with other teachers, being supported by their schools with resources and strategies, and having perseverance to overcome challenges to meet their students’ needs. The results of this study can contribute to the work being done with underserved students statewide and inspire future areas of study to ensure that all students are provided the best educational opportunities possible.
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Chapter 1: Purpose and Organization

Introduction and Background of the Study

Statement of the problem. Since the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, Tennessee has worked diligently to secure a high-quality education for all students (Fleming, 2018). Many federal, state, and local efforts have directed resources and personnel to educate students of all ethnicities, socioeconomic levels, and locations. However, the quality of education students receive still varies widely with lower results among urban and rural regions, minorities, students with disabilities, low socioeconomic levels, and English language learners (Camera, 2016a; Hansen, Levesque, Quintero, & Valant, 2018; Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis, 2018). Multiple studies have shown that the achievement results including standardized test scores, graduation rates, and the percent of students working on grade level for these groups are much lower than their peers who do not fit these descriptors (National Education Association, 2017). This is despite all the time and effort devoted by educators, community leaders, and politicians to correcting these issues at all levels nationwide. As a society, it is imperative that we learn and implement the most effective teaching strategies possible to help these more vulnerable students succeed no matter their individual circumstances or the labels placed upon them.

With the continued underperformance of students in these subgroups, it is clear working with these populations presents a unique set of challenges for all educators (Ahram, Fergus, Noguera & Stembridge, 2018; Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Behavior difficulties, engagement issues, and learning deficits are some of the pressing issues teachers work to address daily. Often, the academic challenges that exist in schools today are generational (Keenan, 2015). The issue of historically low-performing schools is one that countless educators and
leaders actively seek to address. A major endeavor to correct this issue was the passage of Title I in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty (Rees, 1999). This law was intended to help steer millions of dollars to schools with high percentages of impoverished students who lacked the richer educational opportunities of their more affluent peers (Reber, 2018). While there have been some schools making academic gains, many of the schools receiving these funds over multiple years still struggle to close the achievement gaps. In more recent history, the No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top, and Common Core State Standards in English and math have all been designed to increase the performance of underserved students nationally with varying degrees of success (McGuinn, 2016).

As part of No Child Left Behind, states were encouraged to use their authority to reconstitute failing schools when other measures proved ineffective. This was meant as a last resort after other local measures had been exhausted, such as developing growth plans for educators, addressing school climate, and modifying the curriculum (Malen & Rice, 2010). Many states, including Tennessee, have instituted these turnaround measures in hopes of seeing major, lasting changes in their struggling schools. Having identified a list of the lowest performing 5% of schools known as Priority Schools, Tennessee began to target resources and expertise into improving the outcomes for these schools. (Tennessee Department of Education, 2018). When some schools showed a continued lack of progress, they were transferred to state control. These schools became part of the Achievement District, a network of state-run or charter-controlled schools with the Tennessee Department of Education as the chief operating agent (Achievement School District, 2018). Even with these increased, targeted forms of support, many schools continue to struggle to improve outcomes for their students, many of whom are categorized in high-needs groups. Instead of being controlled completely by the state, many
struggling schools are now run as Innovation Zones. These I-Zone schools are still part of their local school systems but work closely with the state to institute changes to see student outcomes improve.

In addition to government efforts to improve student achievement for all students, many national and local foundations have worked diligently to research the reasons for certain student subgroups’ lower performance and guide resources to improving the situation. On a national level, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Achieve, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York have invested millions of dollars into educational research and support (Ho, 2018). Regarding East Tennessee, the Benwood Foundation, UnifiEd, and the Public Education Foundation (PEF) have provided professional development to teachers and provided schools with many resources, including teaching supplies and technology aimed at improving student outcomes (PEF Chattanooga, 2018). Still, the results for underserved students suffer compared to their peers not labeled as such. Therefore, more research is needed into what effective teaching looks like for this vulnerable population of students that count on educators for support and guidance to a successful future.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to research effective teaching practices that highly rated teachers in historically low-performing schools are implementing to make positive impacts on their students. Because of their top performance and recognition as outstanding in their field, these educators’ knowledge and insight for working with underserved students is worth careful consideration. In this study, observations, interviews, and artifact evaluations will provide needed insight into quality instruction and learning at historically low-performing schools. The goal of this research is to help guide other educators to find the best instructional practices which
meet their own students’ needs. Understanding and disseminating these strategies will lead to better teaching in all classrooms which continue to serve a substantial number of underserved students (Robbins, Stagman & Smith, 2012). This improves the likelihood of increasing equity among student outcomes in all schools.

For the location of this study, I have selected a public-school system in East Tennessee. I chose this location to conduct my study because this area has a significant urban and rural population that has traditionally been outperformed by suburban students. In addition, with several pockets of affluence, many families choose to send their children to private schools. Wide gaps exist among achievement levels by race, socioeconomic levels, and English language proficiencies. Nevertheless, there are teachers in the area’s urban schools that have regular success while many around them struggle to produce strong student outcomes. It is my hope that this research will help county leaders understand more about what is working well in high-performing teachers’ classrooms with many historically-underserved students, so these practices can be implemented strategically in all classrooms to boost student achievement and provide students a robust education no matter their circumstances.

This study is significant in several ways. First, the issue of closing the achievement gaps among subgroups in student performance is a major focus of school systems in Tennessee. For the 2014-2015 school year, 35,000 of Tennessee’s 450,000 students (8%) tested below basic in both math and English language arts. “All but 2,000 of these students fall into one of the four historically underserved student groups Tennessee uses in its district accountability models” (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2018, para. 4). These categories are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, English learners, and Black/Hispanic/Native American
which can all be classified as underserved students. These numbers reflect a need to improve teacher effectiveness for all students to achieve success.

Furthermore, how to increase teacher effectiveness is a primary consideration for educational leaders. Since the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act, there has been significant research on this topic. The RAND Corporation conducted a 2010 study on the effects of including student performance data in teacher evaluations. Their summary of research included many key points of previous research. One is “Teachers are the most important school-based determinant of student learning as measured by standardized tests” (Hamilton, Stecher & Steele, 2010, p. 1). They also explored several studies which indicated that teacher education levels and years of experience were not consistent predictors of student success on standardized tests. Additionally, the RAND study indicated the shortcomings of teacher evaluation methods, which rely solely on observations. The researchers noted in a study of 12 school districts in four states, “Weisberg and colleagues (2009) found that among the many districts that use evaluation systems in which teachers are rated as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, more than 99 percent of teachers received the satisfactory rating” (Hamilton, Stecher & Steele, 2010, p. 2). This was despite achievement data which indicated that there were shortcomings in the achievement levels of students. More effective teacher evaluation tools are needed which include multiple measures of effectiveness so “schools will have richer information with which to make a variety of personnel decisions, and teachers will have more-accurate information about how well their students are learning” (Hamilton, Stecher & Steele, 2010, p. 28).

As teachers receive feedback on their teaching practices and student achievement, research has shown that schools benefit when teachers collaborate with one another to solve common problems. A study of urban Boston schools by the Rennie Center and Edvestors noted
that “Universally across study schools, educators note that teams have enabled schools to use data to inform instruction, to increase the school’s academic rigor, and to more effectively support student learning needs – all key factors in improving student learning” (Edvestors & Rennie Center, 2014, p. 16). With collaboration as a key reason, Dr. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory will serve as the theoretical framework for this study. Because many underserved students go to school in urban, minority communities, the culturally responsive teaching work of Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings will be utilized as the conceptual framework throughout the research process.

It is my intention that this study will help teachers understand the teacher evaluation model better as they gather insights from high-performing teachers’ classrooms. In 2010, Tennessee was awarded the first Race to the Top Grant. As part of receiving the grant, Tennessee adopted the Common Core standards and began a new teacher evaluation system. This system increased teacher observations, utilizing targeted rubrics to identify teacher effectiveness in key categories. In addition to observation scores, students’ achievement test scores and growth are also included in a teacher’s overall evaluation level. This marked a major shift for Tennessee teachers, who continue to use their evaluation data to make needed improvements to help all students succeed. It is with this backdrop in mind that I conduct my study on understanding teacher effectiveness in schools with a high majority population of underserved students.

**Research Questions**

Two major research questions will guide the process:

1. How do teachers with high teacher evaluation scores in low-performing schools explain their success in the face of numerous challenges?
2. What specific techniques do teachers with high teacher evaluation scores in low-performing schools use to maximize student learning?

The first question provides a means for teachers to consider and express their own thoughts regarding their success working with underserved students. During an interview, they will be asked to reflect on how teacher preparation, professional development, collaboration, and personal experience have shaped their teaching effectiveness. The second question allows for me to obtain a firsthand view of what strategies high-performing teachers are using to achieve positive results for underserved students. With the use of interviews, observations, and artifact collections, the classroom environment will be studied carefully for insights into teacher effectiveness with underserved students. This case study approach will reveal teaching strategies that have been proven effective for improving the educational outcomes in schools with a large percentage of high-needs students.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

Like all research projects, this project will be conducted under certain conditions. Some of these are out of my control, while others have been instituted by design. The degree to which the limitations affected the study will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

**Limitations.** Time is the first major limitation. The timeframe will be approximately three months from the start of data collection to the presentation of the findings. Another limitation is the fact I have never formally observed teachers before. I have watched several teachers teach for a few minutes at a time to learn techniques, but I have never used a formal observation rubric to document my findings. Next, the participation level of participants is another limiting factor. I may not work with the best teachers possible because they can refuse to
participate. Also, funding is a major limitation. In this research project, I am providing all financing. Lastly, a final limitation is that I am the only researcher who is responsible for all aspects of the study. This limits the scope of what I can accomplish in a set time while also fulfilling my other responsibilities.

**Delimitations.** The first delimitation is six teachers will be selected from which to gain data. More participants than this will be too many with the necessary coding and analysis of several data types. Also, only highly rated teachers from schools with mostly underserved students will be selected. This supports the focus of the study to help determine the reasons for this sustained success. Additionally, teachers selected for participation will be from a public-school system in East Tennessee. I want to use this research to understand how teachers can achieve results with all students in my community. Finally, I will select two elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and two high school teachers for study in grades 3-11. This allows me to get a varied sample of data from grades that are responsible for TNReady achievement scores which are instrumental in assessing the growth we hope to see for underserved students.

**Definition of Terms with Citations**

For the purposes of this study, several terms will be used to signify themes to the research. **Equity** will be defined as “providing all students with the unique supports they need to succeed” (Education Commission of the States, 2017, para. 1). **Underserved students** will be used to describe “students of color, low-income students and those with disabilities” (Camera, 2016b, para. 1).

Then, **high-needs students** will be defined as

“students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools (as
defined in the Race to the Top application), who are far below grade level, who have left
school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating
with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been
incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners” (U.S. Department of
Education, 2018, para. 10)

As stated in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), **low-performing**
**schools** will be used for those “that are in the bottom 10 percent of performance in the State, or
who have significant achievement gaps, based on student academic performance in
reading/language arts and mathematics on the assessments required under the ESEA or
graduation rates” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, para. 13). **Achievement gap** will be
used as “the difference in the performance between each ESEA subgroup (as defined in this
document) within a participating LEA or school and the statewide average performance of the
LEA’s or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as
measured by the assessments required under the ESEA” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018,
para. 1). **LEA** will be used to describe the local education agency.

Next, **teacher evaluation system** will be defined as one
“that: (1) will be used for continual improvement of instruction; (2) meaningfully
differentiates performance using at least three performance levels; (3) uses multiple valid
measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on
student growth (as defined in this document) for all students (including English learners
and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be
gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous
teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys); (4)
evaluates teachers on a regular basis; (5) provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and (6) will be used to inform personnel decisions” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, para. 33).

Furthermore, a **turnaround strategy** will be “as defined by the School Improvement Grant regulations, published in the *Federal Register* on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363), turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformational model” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, para. 34). Finally, **Achievement School District** will be defined in Tennessee as “a statewide district charged with turning around the state’s lowest-performing schools” (Public Impact, 2015, p. 5). These definitions will guide the study throughout the process.

**Organization**

The remaining document will be divided into four chapters. Chapter 2 will include a review of related material found on teacher effectiveness for underserved students. It will describe how this study will add to the work that has been done previously on this topic. Then, Chapter 3 will explain the research methodology that will guide this study. Chapter 4 will comprise the data analysis section where the results of the study are described in proper detail in accordance to the research questions. Finally, the conclusions, implications, and recommendations made from the study will be the subject of Chapter 5. The entire document will be concluded by references and the appendix.

**Summary**

Historically, underserved students have struggled to achieve the same results as their peers not in this category. Recent 2018 Tennessee student achievement data indicates the results for the underserved student population are not close to the same rates for their non-underserved
peers. Some teachers in the state have shown a strong ability to effectively teach this population, while many have not. This project, with all its components, aims to research what effective teachers are doing in their classrooms to be successful and record their thoughts on what should be done to strengthen the work school systems nationwide are already doing. Recent changes to standards and assessments make it imperative that leaders get a sense for what is working in local classrooms and how they can make the process of improving student outcomes more efficient and powerful for teachers of underserved students.
Chapter 2: Review of Related Material

Review of Chapter 1

As discussed in Chapter 1, the need to improve the education of underserved students has been a major topic of national concern for the past century. Efforts to improve the academic outcomes for all students regardless of class, race, gender, and location continue in 2018 for school systems nationwide. Local, state, federal and worldwide means have been utilized to achieve improvement in this field critical to America’s continued success as a nation. The wide disparity in educational outcomes in the U.S. among student subgroups is a major issue that all educators and leaders are called to address. To understand how to best fix this problem, research is needed into improving the quality of teacher effectiveness in the U.S. today for underserved students. Stakeholders need to know how public and private reform efforts are supporting improved teaching strategies for ensuring all students are receiving the highest quality of education possible.

Guide to the Chapter

First, this chapter will explore the methods used for the literature review on teacher effectiveness for underserved students. Next, it will include a defense of Dr. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory as the theoretical framework. Also, an explanation will be given for selecting Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings’ theory on culturally responsive teaching as the conceptual framework for the study. This will be followed by a review of empirical studies of effectively teaching underserved students and local and broad-based school turnaround efforts in use today in the United States. Finally, there will be a summary of the findings from the articles in the chapter. Implications for the next steps in improving the education of underserved students will be discussed.
**Methods**

To conduct this literature review on effective teaching for underserved students, a host of methods were used. First, the search terms were carefully constructed to reveal previous studies on this issue. This issue is unique in that it can appear under multiple indicators depending on how it is categorized. Considering this, I used many search terms to locate research studies including teacher effectiveness, underserved students, school turnaround, school takeover, and low-performing schools. During this review, I used several databases which yielded refereed, peer-reviewed studies. ERIC, Google Scholar and JSTOR were used to find the core 25 studies which were cited in this review. As a starting point, a previous literature study *Approaches to evaluating teacher effectiveness: A research synthesis* (Bell, ETS, Goe & Little, 2008) was utilized. Each study selected comes after the year 2005, which is after the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, which played an enormous role in defining and shaping teacher effectiveness in the United States.

The selected studies are all related to effective teaching practices for underserved student populations. These include school studies in urban, suburban, and rural areas at all grade levels. Different levels of teacher experience are also accounted for as some studies examine novice teachers, while others consider the general teaching population and even award-winning teachers, many of whom have had much longevity. Some studies scrutinize the issue exclusively from a school point of view, while others analyze the problem holistically from a district, state, or even national level. The final studies in the set examine conditions for teaching, which play a crucial role in teacher effectiveness. Lastly, the research selected indicates that the work in improving teacher effectiveness for underserved students has been continuous and explored in
multiple vantage points. There has been a sustained effort across many years to find workable solutions for student success.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Dr. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory.** Social cognitive theory was developed by Dr. Albert Bandura in the early 1960s. Dr. Bandura is a noted psychologist who had a decorated career while working at Stanford University. His theory proposes that human cognition has a strong social aspect to it with frequent learning interactions among groups. Bandura theorized people learn positive and negative outcomes of behaviors by observing those around them in certain contexts and circumstances. He developed this theory after conducting a study known as the bobo doll experiment, a “groundbreaking study on aggression…that demonstrated that children are able to learn through the observation of adult behavior” (Nolen, 2018, para. 1). This includes complete strangers which were used in the study.

In this experiment, 72 preschool students were used as participants with 36 boys and 36 girls. Three groups were used throughout the experiment. One group was exposed to an adult verbally and physically abusing the inflatable bobo doll, another group was exposed to a non-aggressive adult who played quietly, and the final group was a control group with no adult influence (McLeod, 2014). The results indicated that the children who observed the aggressive model made considerably more aggressive responses than those who were in the non-aggressive or control groups. The children tended to replicate the behavior they saw by the adult. This is an important consideration for all educators.

Social cognitive theory has several components which apply to the work that teachers do every day with their students. It is unique in that its goal is “to explain how people regulate their behavior through control and reinforcement to achieve goal-directed behavior that can be
maintained over time” (LaMorte, 2018, para. 2). As people work toward their goals, they utilize the controls and reinforcements provided by others or self-perception to influence their behavior along the way. A key component of this is the idea of reciprocal determinism. This is “the dynamic and reciprocal interaction of person (individual with a set of learned experiences), environment (external social context), and behavior (responses to stimuli to achieve goals)” (LaMorte, 2018, para. 3). The person, environment, and behavior all have a continuous impact on the other components and play a key role in how individuals learn, interact with others, and achieve their goals.

According to this theory, as individuals are learning from their interactions with others, they are also developing internal qualities. Their memories improve as they learn from the consequences of their own behavior and seek out models of behavior they wish to replicate for their own experiences. When this happens, people add to their self-knowledge with reinforcements “that affect the likelihood of continuing or discontinuing the behavior” (LaMorte, 2018, para. 6). Finally, individuals continue to formulate expectations for their own behavior, which helps them to analyze the consequences of their actions before they begin the behavior, which helps them to achieve a deeper learning experience.

Aside from the main theory proposed by Dr. Bandura, social cognitive theory is still being researched today in particular contexts. A major branch of Bandura’s theory utilized today is self-efficacy theory. Studied again by Dr. Bandura, this theory proposes that one’s belief in the ability to complete a task plays a major role in the success of completing it (Bandura, 1994). This belief effects motivation, stamina, and how one approaches the task at different stages in the process. A study on teacher efficacy concluded “Teachers with a higher sense of efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching have greater commitment to teaching…and are more likely to
stay in teaching” (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2001, p. 784). For teachers with high numbers of underserved students, the challenges that exist can be intimidating and overwhelming. Social, academic and behavioral concerns are frequent for teachers in this environment. Learning to manage these difficulties in the face of all the expectations and requirements of the teaching job can be daunting.

Along with self-efficacy theory, another offshoot of social cognitive theory is self-regulated learning. In terms of Bandura’s theory, it can be thought of that the individual is observing oneself and how the learning experience is taking shape around him/her. Motivation is a primary factor in this learning theory as one must remain disciplined to learn a new skill, even in the face of challenges. Dr. Barry Zimmerman has done considerable work in this field at City University in New York. “Zimmerman’s work started from cognitive modeling research in collaboration with Albert Bandura and Ted L. Rosenthal. Later Zimmerman began to explore how individual learners acquire those cognitive models and become experts in different tasks” (Panadero, 2017, p. 2).

In his work, Zimmerman developed several models to explain how self-regulated learning serves individuals. His model created in 2000 highlights the cyclical nature of self-regulated learning in a three-step process. While the order stays true, each step can be thought of to occur at any of the three positions. The steps in order are: Performance Phase, Self-reflection Phase, and Forethought Phase. Most importantly, in the Self-reflection Phase, “students assess how they have performed the task, making attributions about their success or failure. These attributions generate self-reactions that can positively or negatively influence how the students approach the task in later performances” (Panadero, 2017, p. 3). These attributions are key for teachers to understand as they must teach all students who have experienced a myriad of
situations in their lives which can all positively or negatively impact the learning that must occur if students are to reach their highest potential.

In conclusion, Bandura’s social cognitive theory is a powerful guide in understanding the scope of teacher effectiveness for underserved students. Teaching remains a highly social endeavor full of teaching and learning by teachers and students. Teachers learn how to be effective in their jobs by implementing practices they know to be successful through firsthand observation or secondhand accounts of effective practices. To further their growth as educators, teachers rely on self-efficacy and self-regulated learning. It is this lifelong learning, even through difficult circumstances, that propels teachers into their full effectiveness to be ready to help all students further their educational goals. For this reason, Bandura’s social cognitive theory will serve as the theoretical framework of the study and the overall guide for the literature review in this chapter.

Conceptual Framework

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings’ culturally responsive teaching. A key consideration for educational leaders in the United States is why historically underserved students do not attain the same academic achievement as their peers in the same age groups. According to Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, the answer lies in how society is educating these students. She notes that historically it has been common for districts to use the same curriculum and methods despite the large differences in student demographics that existed across populations. In her studies on the issue, Dr. Billings noted “educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 159). To increase student motivation and performance in school, Dr. Billings argued that teachers must
incorporate culturally responsive teaching into their classrooms for the immediate and future success of their students.

While a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Billings formulated this theory after researching highly effective teachers of underserved students and observing the actions they took to help their students achieve (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Most of her work was done in urban schools with African American students. Dr. Billings has written several prominent works which outline her experiences as a teacher and researcher in this field. As the result of her findings, Dr. Billings outlined seven characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. Many of them have a connection to social cognitive theory, including communication of high expectations, learning within the context of culture, and student-centered instruction (Brown University, 2019).

Notably, Dr. Billings’ work proposed that to fully teach underserved students, the teacher must tailor education to their cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Otherwise, students become disengaged due to the lack of connections to their own lives and do not aspire to reach their true educational potential. This operates as a form of modeling – the teacher models to the student why the material is culturally important and the students in turn respond to this importance by taking it on as their own avenue to self-improvement in their community. Her theory has gained more prominence in recent years as other studies have confirmed her findings (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). With her theory in mind, teachers can be more proactive and impactful in their daily work with underserved students. For this reason, Dr. Billings’ theory on culturally responsive teaching will serve as the conceptual framework throughout this study on teacher effectiveness with underserved students.
Empirical Studies

Successful methods for teaching underserved students and school turnaround. As noted previously, efforts for improving the educational outcomes for underserved students have existed for decades. A key event in recent attempts to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement was the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. It shaped how education professionals and the public at large view and encounter teacher effectiveness and learning outcomes for all students. The following studies were all conducted after this pivotal law went into effect. Each will be analyzed in consideration of Bandura’s social learning theory. In his work, three main themes arose, which he proposed have a significant impact on learning – motivation, modeling, and self-efficacy. The research studies will be grouped by these major themes to see how they all influence the work that is done with high-needs students to ensure they receive the best education that can be offered to them regardless of any circumstances beyond their control.

Motivation. In his research on social learning theory, Dr. Dale Schunk concluded “people are motivated to act in ways they believe will result in outcomes that are self-satisfying” (Schunk, 1995, p. 2). This holds true for all – leaders, teachers, and students. The first study which indicates the importance of motivation was conducted by the Wallace Foundation. The topic of collective leadership for school success is a key outcome of the study (Anderson, Leithwood, Louis & Wahlstrom, 2010). This six-year study sought to identify the nature of successful educational leadership and to better understand how leadership can improve educational practices and student learning. Quantitative analysis of test scores, teacher surveys, interviews, principal interviews, and classroom observations were all utilized in the research. Data were collected from a wide range of respondents in nine states, 43 school districts, and 180 elementary, middle, and secondary schools.
In the study, these methods produced survey data from a total of 8,391 teachers and 471 school administrators, interview data from 581 teachers and administrators, 304 district level informants, and 124 state personnel, and observational data from 312 classrooms.

In districts where levels of student learning are high, district leaders are more likely to emphasize goals and initiatives that reach beyond minimum state expectations for student performance, while they continue to use state policy as a platform from which to challenge others to reach higher ground. In schools that are doing well, teachers and principals pay attention to multiple measures of student success, a key for continued motivation. After analyzing the results, it was “found that higher-performing schools generally ask for more input and engagement from a wider variety of stakeholders and provide more opportunities for influence by teacher teams, parents, and students” (Anderson, Leithwood, Louis & Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 282). Additionally, “Teachers and principals agreed that the most instructionally helpful leadership practices were: focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement, keeping track of teachers’ professional development needs, and creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate” (Anderson, Leithwood, Louis & Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 66). The researchers pointed out on average, schools are assigned about one new principal every three to four years and that very few principals have systematically collected evidence about the school and classroom conditions that would need to change for achievement to improve. Without data collection and usage, administrators are less likely to accurately address the school’s needs, which feed into the motivation of students and teachers.

Focused on the importance of student motivation on learning, a study by the Harvard Kennedy School was conducted (Boyd, Chandran & Hui, 2016). This research emphasized teacher effectiveness for underserved students at the elementary school level. The researchers
explored strategies for leveling the playing field working with underserved students in Massachusetts. The researchers revealed some Massachusetts public schools achieve high educational outcomes with the same types of high-needs students as schools with low educational outcomes. To study the issue, the researchers identified Level 1 and 2 schools (highest-performing) with similar demographics to Level 4 and 5 schools (lowest-performing) as target schools. This meant that at least 53% of a school’s student body was economically disadvantaged or 55% came from minority backgrounds. Interviews, field visits, and analysis of Monitoring Site Visit Reports were utilized. In addition, the researchers ran regressions of student achievement data to determine what indicators were relevant to school performance. The two school-level characteristics that stood out when looking at student data were student attendance rate and teacher retention rate.

Interviews with educators at high-performing schools indicated the importance of positive reinforcement and providing students with a clear set of expectations. The higher-performing Level 1 and 2 schools had increased opportunities for teacher leadership in school decisions and established a student-centered culture. The researchers noted their data “shows that a 1% increase in student attendance is associated with a 7.4 percentage point increase in the probability of a school being rated as a Level 1/2 school” (Boyd, Chandran & Hui, 2016, p. 16). Also, “enrichment and tutoring opportunities are consistently available in the Level 1/2 schools” (Boyd, Chandran & Hui, 2016, p. 12). This shows the relationship between teacher effectiveness and establishing a positive school climate. As student attendance and engagement increased, so did student outcomes. Increasing student motivation was found to be a productive tool to increase student achievement.
An additional study which researched the impact of student motivation on high needs students was conducted by Dr. Glenda Haynie, Wake County Public School System Evaluation & Research Department (Haynie, 2010). Teacher effectiveness is important at all school levels. In this study, effective teaching strategies for underserved North Carolina high school students were explored in Wake County’s report from their evaluation and research department. This is a cross-case analysis of five previous studies from the same system: Biology, Algebra I, U.S. History, Middle School Algebra I, and English I. The most effective WCPSS teachers were identified by using a multiple regression analysis of the state EOC test scores. This analysis generated for each student, teacher, and school a measure of whether their test scores showed a level of performance that was either higher, lower, or about what was expected, compared to other WCPSS students, teachers, or schools. Teacher surveys, observations, student scores, and focus-group interviews were utilized in the study.

During the study, four common themes of successful teachers emerged: high academic expectations for all students, thoughtful management of time and materials, learning-centered classrooms, and proactive planning. Top teachers developed systems and structures to support the success of all students and were thoughtful in their management of time and materials. Observations clarified that the attitude that a teacher holds is the attitude that the students adopt. In addition, all students were expected to actively participate in all assignments. These findings are hallmarks of learning that is centered around building and sustaining student motivation. Haynie noted “All top teachers practiced proactive planning. They devoted time before classes began to study the district instructional guides and develop their own “year-at-a-glance” documents” (Haynie, 2010, p. 29). Most notably, the teachers all reported on the survey that they viewed themselves as successful. At this point, social learning theory would suggest they
collaborate and share these results with others to improve collective efficacy and improve the overall motivation level for students and faculty.

A reality for too many students is academic failure and the decision to drop out of school. This lack of student motivation prompted Dr. Becky Sumbera of Pepperdine University to conduct a study on how certain schools are successfully reaching this student population (Sumbera, 2017). Student disengagement during the learning process was the focus of Dr. Sumbera’s study in low-performing California high schools. Her research explored and detailed policies, programs, and practices that school-site administrators perceived as most effective in reengaging underserved students emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively at 10 California Model Continuation High Schools (MCHS). The data were collected from twice-awarded MCHS applications from a pool of 81 schools between the years 2009-2015 (the awards were given by the California Continuation Education Association in partnership with the California Department of Education). In addition, the researcher used 60-minute semi-structured, open-ended interviews to collect data from 10 site administrators who had at least four years of leadership at the MCHS.

The data showed MCHS started emotional reengagement during the voluntary intake process, by treating new students with respect and welcoming them into a safe and caring environment. They continued to reengage students by providing individualized support opportunities to immediately address each student’s needs, frequently acknowledging the students’ progress, and encouraging active participation to holistically develop behavioral engagement in and out of the classroom. By supporting the students’ interest for future personal goals, MCHS allowed students to build intrinsic motivation and altered their beliefs toward graduation and beyond. They also re-engaged underserved students emotionally by maintaining a welcoming, safe, and clean campus, establishing meaningful and supportive adult-student
relationships, providing on- and off-campus counseling support, and frequently celebrating small wins. MCHS also built students’ self-efficacy and locus of control through individualized instruction and support to raise the students’ confidence in their abilities. In analyzing the results, the researcher quoted Dr. Bandura saying, “Students with low self-efficacy tend to regard their performance as a measurement of inherent aptitude, and failure as an indicator of intellectual deficits or something out of their control (Bandura, 1997)” (Sumbera, 2017, p. 24). Teachers can work with students specifically on building their self-efficacy. When these students can discern that their peers in similar situations are able to experience success, they are more likely to choose similar paths.

Understanding the importance of student motivation on learning, Dr. Shawn Jones conducted a study to determine what teaching characteristics were the most influential on student performance (Jones, 2017). Dr. Jones scrutinized effective characteristics for teaching in urban and suburban settings. This study explored specific personality characteristics among 22 highly effective teachers (14 urban and eight suburban), measured by the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI). The 44 item BFI developed by Oliver (2009) was used to describe the specific personality characteristics of highly effective teachers in urban and suburban school settings. The mean percentile for all five dimensions of the BFI results were used to describe the specific personality characteristics of each teacher. The participants included Teachers of the Year from Solano County, California.

The results showed that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness have the highest influence on teaching effectiveness in the urban and suburban settings. These traits were proven to be associated with higher student achievement by spurring student motivation. The researcher claimed there may be personality traits that are more likely to yield results working with
different student populations. His recommendation is teachers should be educated on these traits, so they can learn to adapt to the surroundings they are working in to benefit the needs of all students. Dr. Jones noted “The field of education has not used personality assessments as a part of a pre-screening process for employment, and personality assessment use could result in an increase in the number of highly effective teachers in the classroom” (Jones, 2017, p. 134). Again, teachers can learn from others what success has looked like for them and experiment in finding their own solutions for increasing the motivation of all students.

In addition to student motivation, maintaining teacher motivation has been shown to be a primary factor in sustained improvement for underserved students. Another study prepared for the National Center for Homeless Education examined award-winning teachers’ effectiveness (Grant, Popp, & Stronge, 2008). The study cited multiple studies which indicated that the quality of teaching is a major determinant of gains in student learning. The researchers argued it is still unclear what the most effective teachers do that results in substantial academic growth of students. A case study of six award-winning teachers was utilized. Each participant had received either a state or national award for excellence in teaching and they taught in schools that could be categorized as having high mobility, a substantial homeless population, and/or high poverty compared to typical schools.

The results showed student engagement was high across the six teachers, with an average engagement score 2.83 on a scale from 1-3. Teachers directed most of the learning during the observations with a mean of 1.63 on a scale of (1) teacher directs all learning to (5) student directs all learning. The teachers held high expectations of their students and viewed the students’ success as their own success. They also used, on average, 8.5 instructional activities per observation, which means that students were engaged with different activities at different times.
during instruction. The teachers’ responses to the interview questions reflected a high level of teacher self-efficacy. They showed a belief that their teaching changes the lives of students. One participant, Tanya, said regarding teaching “It has to be a calling. It has to be your mission in life if you’re going to survive in a school like this one. Some of us not only survive, we thrive in this environment. Because every day I go to work, I think this is the day I can make a difference in a kid’s life. What could be more awesome than that!” (Grant, Popp & Stronge, 2008, p. 62). As evidenced, motivation among teachers is essential to keeping their focus on helping their students meet their needs while also taking care of their own.

Teacher motivation was also the focus of a study published in Learning Environments Research (Hornstra, Mansfield, Peetsma, Van der Veen & Volman, 2015). The researchers claim, “students have three basic innate needs: to feel related to others, to feel competent and to feel autonomous” (Hornstra, Mansfield, Peetsma, Van der Veen & Volman, 2015, p. 364). Motivation focuses mainly on the need for autonomy. They claim there are two main types – controlling and autonomy-supportive. In the research study, nine 6th grade teachers from different primary schools in the Netherlands participated. Each teacher participated in an interview in which he/she self-reported the motivation techniques used in the classroom and were asked to rate them on a scale from controlling to supporting autonomy. “A concerning finding of this study is that, especially when teachers considered their students to be at-risk (i.e. low-ability, unmotivated, difficult in behavior or from disadvantaged backgrounds), they relied much more often on controlling strategies” (Hornstra, Mansfield, Peetsma, Van der Veen & Volman, 2015, p. 385). The more controlling the teaching strategies are, the greater the chance that overall student motivation could suffer.
Notably, the teachers who used more controlling teaching techniques recognized the importance of building relationships with their students. The researchers said this phenomenon could be an attempt to counterbalance the more controlling nature of the classroom with additional affection. They note “Abundant research has shown that students’ affective relationship with their teacher (e.g. Cornelius-White 2007; Roorda et al. 2011) is crucial to their motivation” (Hornstra, Mansfield, Peetsma, Van der Veen & Volman, 2015, p. 387). Whether this comes through a controlling or autonomous classroom environment, a student knowing his/her teacher cares for them is vital for success.

As Tennessee and other states have implemented state takeover of failing schools, the effects of these efforts on teacher motivation have been examined in several studies. The first is research conducted by the Center on Education Policy. No Child Left Behind was the backdrop for this study over a five-year period (Center on Education Policy, 2009). This report synthesized CEP studies of school restructuring under NCLB conducted from 2004-2009. Over the five years of the studies, the number of states participating expanded to include six states (CA, GA, MD, MI, OH & NY), 23 districts, and 48 schools in 2008-09. The researchers conducted interviews with state department of education officials and with district and school-level administrators, teachers, and other staff in all six states—more than 260 people in total. Also examined were restructuring documents and data from the state, district, and school levels in the six participating states. The researchers noted some states have identified an unmanageable number of schools for restructuring, and many schools remain stuck in restructuring across multiple academic years which has caused many teachers to express frustration and a lack of overall motivation toward the situation.
The results showed most case study schools that did not exit restructuring said they experienced setbacks or needed more time or information. A challenge of the study was states use different policies to identify schools for restructuring, which results in great variety of conditions in schools across states. State to state comparisons are therefore problematic. All case study schools that successfully exited restructuring reported that their reform efforts had evolved over time. Also, they reported making frequent use of data to guide decisions about instruction and regrouping students. Replacing staff helped improve many schools but sometimes had unintended negative consequences. The researchers concluded “Study participants from schools that exited restructuring were typically concerned about maintaining student achievement to avoid slipping back into school improvement—a fear that is all too real, given the experience of one of our case study schools” (Center on Education Policy, 2009, p. 25) and that “almost all participants have called for more federal funding to improve low-performing schools” (Center on Education Policy, 2009, p. 23). The work reveals that teachers experience multiple sources of motivation which all influence how he/she handles the pressures of guiding their schools through the turnaround process.

Another study which examined teacher motivation in relation to state reconstitution of schools was conducted by Vanderbilt University. The researchers examined teacher turnover in the Achievement District and I-Zone Schools (Henry, Kho, Pham & Zimmer, 2017). The study scrutinized the extent to which schools engaged in turnaround models have been able to recruit and retain highly effective teachers. It follows previous work which examined the initial impacts of Tennessee’s turnaround approaches on student achievement, mobility, and teacher retention, as well as stakeholder perceptions. Tennessee's lowest-achieving 5% of schools, known as priority schools, have been placed in one of four interventions: The Achievement School District
(ASD), Innovation Zones (I-Zone) in local school districts, a federal School Improvement Grant model, or LEA-led school improvement planning processes. The study utilized a state database containing de-identified data on each teacher in Tennessee, including his/her school of employment, education level, certification, experience, salary, and value-added scores. Data on all teachers in Priority Schools from the 2010-11 through 2014-15 school years were used.

The report’s findings suggest that the ASD schools experienced a high level of turnover and they have lost more effective teachers than they have retained. The turnover rate for ASD schools averaged 63% and the turnover rate for all Tennessee I-Zone schools averaged 37% from 2012-13 through 2014-15. At the same time, both ASD and I-Zone schools recruited more highly effective teachers when compared with other priority schools in Tennessee and all non-priority Tennessee schools. The I-Zone schools have retained and recruited highly effective teachers, as well as developed teachers to the highest level of effectiveness in the state’s evaluation system. There were no systematic differences between externally managed charter schools and Achievement Schools. Unfortunately, both the ASD and I-Zones have continued to expand in more recent years and the list of priority schools has been updated by the Tennessee Department of Education. Lastly, the researchers concluded “the turnover of teachers in the ASD schools makes it less likely that multi-year strategies for developing teachers will be effective since most teachers in any given year will not have been there in the prior year” (Henry, Kho, Pham & Zimmer, 2017, p. 8). The constant turnover makes sustained academic success harder to reach while also chipping away at teacher motivation to continue overcoming the challenges of school turnaround measures.

In conclusion, student motivation to learn is a key indicator of academic progress, according to several studies. Meeting students’ learning needs and building healthy, productive
relationships with them are seen throughout the studies as critical steps for achievement of underserved students. Importantly, “Higher motivation to learn has been linked not only to better academic performance, but to greater conceptual understanding, satisfaction with school, self-esteem, social adjustment, and school completion rates” (Center on Education Policy, 2012, p. 2). Additionally, educator motivation is also an important component of student success. School systems with a high percentage of teacher turnover are less likely to have satisfactory academic progress. The school system and administration play a central role in student success by ensuring that the motivation of all participants remains high.

**Modeling.** Regarding the importance of modeling on learning, Dr. Dale Schunk states, “Observing similar others succeed can raise observers' self-efficacy and motivate them to try the task because they are apt to believe that if others can succeed, they can as well” (Schunk, 1995, p. 3). Students and teachers are faced with daily decisions to embrace or reject the models that exist around them. The first study which confirmed the importance of modeling for student learning was conducted by Daniel Rushton of Concordia University – Portland (Rushton, 2017). The author’s objective was to determine the perceived needs of teachers of underserved students regarding strategy-based professional development and supports for teachers to perform better within the classroom. The study used a total of 331 teacher participants in various schools. All teachers in this study worked within a school district that is a combination of rural and suburban areas. The chosen school district had a greatly varying demographic makeup, including student ethnicity and an English Language Learner (ELL) population. In addition, the schools within this study were of highly varied socioeconomic status. This study used a modified version of the APA’s Teacher Needs Survey (American Psychological Association, 2006).
In the surveys, teachers of underserved students prioritized in-class behavior, student motivation, and mental health as primary needs for professional development. They also expressed a desire for more behavior specialists, technology, and social workers. Teachers of non-underserved students said student critical thinking, student motivation, and in-class behavior were needs for training. They requested technology, behavior specialists, and training in technology. Notably, the teachers of underserved students demonstrated high levels of interest in every support that was presented to them. This indicates that they are very willing to try all techniques to improve student performance. The teachers of underserved students also expressed a strong interest in character education and increasing the number of adults working with students daily. This points to the social aspect of the learning process considering in social learning theory. The researcher stated “PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) have become more commonplace in schools, identifying and supporting students who are at risk of school failure” (Rushton, 2017, p. 27). Lastly, regarding underserved students the author concludes “Strong relationships with adults may supply these students with important tools for navigating school thereby creating the increased sense of belonging” (Rushton, 2017, p. 20). As teachers model to students that their needs are important, they build the ethic of care that is needed to help all children grow into their full potential.

Another study emphasizing the importance of modeling comes from an education professor Dr. Robert Walker, who had worked with education students at Alabama State University for 15 years before publishing his study on teacher effectiveness (Walker, 2008). During his course, he asked students to reflect on what teacher effectiveness has looked like in their own schooling through a detailed essay about their most effective teacher. This is a recollection of the students social learning experiences. The opinions of over 1000 pre-service
and in-service teachers in college were gathered concerning what makes an effective teacher in this study. Dr. Walker sought to determine how the lives of his current students were influenced by the modeling their previous teachers had done.

After studying the results, it was concluded that effective teachers share at least 12 clear characteristics which consistently affected his students in positive ways. Some of the more unique traits are that students say effective teachers are prepared, fair, have a personal touch, use humor, are forgiving, and admit mistakes when they make them. They also cultivate a sense of belonging and respect students. Dr. Walker challenged his students to emulate these behaviors in their own classrooms. He noted “Students seldom mentioned where teachers attended school, what degrees they held, or whether they had been named a “Teacher of the Year.” Instead, students focused on these teachers’ nurturing and caring qualities” (Walker, 2008, p. 64). Dr. Walker also said, “Numerous stories established how the sensitivity and compassion of caring teachers affected them in profound and lasting ways” (Walker, 2008, p. 66). He is convinced future and current educators need to understand the characteristics of an effective teacher and seek to adopt them as their own.

While many people associate underserved students with those in large urban areas, many students in rural areas experience some of the same hardships. A study by Tamara Webb of Ashland University focused on effectively teaching rural students (Webb, 2008). The researcher interviewed administrators and teachers in an Ohio school to study what contributed to their students performing at rates higher than other schools with similar populations of underserved students. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document reviews collected over nine nonconsecutive days from 12 participants. The school in question went from being rated on Academic Watch in 2001 to Excellent in 2005. While there, the researcher observed
many teachers using graphic organizers, engaging activities, and utilizing strong time on task. Interviews indicated the teachers conducted frequent goalsetting activities with their students. The teachers indicated initially they were discouraged by their school’s negative rating but ultimately persevered through the leadership of the principal and increased opportunities for teacher leadership and collaboration.

Webb detailed that in 1967, the President Lyndon Johnson’s National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty “reported that the rural population had not kept pace with the rest of the country in areas of change in technology and environmental happenings. These delays were also present in the areas of education and training programs” (Webb, 2008, p.1). In relaying what students in poverty experience, the researcher noted “Rosenberg (1973) stated that ‘being poor is always feeling a little mad because you never have what you need’ (Webb, 2008, p. 151). How their families react to these circumstance plays a large role in how students handle these same burdens. By having a teacher who models the importance of education and engages students in a caring relationship, these students have a much greater chance of experiencing academic success despite their life circumstances.

Looking exclusively at the needs of urban students, Lewis & Robinson (2017) published a study examining characteristics of effective teachers in urban learning environments. The central problem observed in this study is the problem of the long tradition of universality in the approach to effectiveness, in which effectiveness is a one-size fits all model regardless of school setting. Critical theory, critical race theory, and culturally responsive pedagogy were used as theoretical frameworks. This study explored the shared experiences of nine teacher educators with significant experience in urban schools - five or more years of direct teaching or administrative experience in urban schools. During open-ended interviews, the participants were
provided teacher typologies from established research of Abbate-Vaughn (2004), Haberman (2004), and Ladson-Billings (2009) to help ground their responses.

An effective teacher in urban schools, according to participants, is responsive to students in style and delivery. In assessing style responsiveness, participants conceive the effective teacher as one who designs an instructional delivery style that works for their children. There is a focus on bridging content from what is presented in the materials to the actual experiences from students’ lives. These educators have the desire and willingness to go beyond the general expectations of a teacher and inconvenience themselves for the greater good of their students. The researchers noted the overwhelmed teacher “really had great intentions of becoming a teacher…but they're just so overwhelmed that they don't know where to begin, they don't know where to start, and they don't know who to trust either” (Lewis & Robinson, 2017, p. 129). One educator said, “effective teachers ‘see that child as a human being who deserves the best that you can offer’” (Lewis & Robinson, 2017, p. 130). Children are more likely to respond positively with caring educators who model for them daily the difference a caring, hard-working educator can make in their lives.

In accordance with Dr. Bandura’s social learning theory, teachers learn enormously from interacting with other teachers. It is this fact which propelled the Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at American Institutes for Research to commission a study on examining what award-winning teachers do that makes them highly effective (Bassett, Behrstock-Sherratt, Jacques & Olson, 2014). The researchers claimed teachers have been recognized as the single most important school-level factor influencing student achievement. Therefore, tremendous public resources have been invested across the country in new systems to both assess and address teacher effectiveness. However, most of the research on the factors that make teachers effective
focuses on quantifiable factors, including years on the job, grade point averages, certifications, and degrees. Instead, their survey relies on qualitative data, such as teaching techniques or beliefs from an exploratory survey of National and State Teachers of the Year. The researchers argued that these factors can be replicated much easier with other teachers than other quantifiable factors like degrees or experience.

To acquire data, teacher interviews of 311 award-winning teachers were conducted. The survey results highlighted the teachers' opinions of the importance of the preservice clinical experience, mentors, placement aligned with their license and expertise, collaboration with colleagues, strong school leadership, opportunities for reflection, self-selection of professional development that is grounded in day-to-day practice, and leadership opportunities. Also, opportunities for collaboration, the development of professional growth plans, and informal evaluations of strengths and weaknesses at the Novice Stage were considered predictors of later success. The researchers found that “fully 88 percent of National and State Teacher of the Year respondents had access to a final clinical practicum that they found to be high quality, and nearly three quarters of this group ranked the experience as among the three most important aspects of their preservice experience” (Bassett, Behrstock-Sherratt, Jacques & Olson, 2014, p. 8). The study shows teacher effectiveness is gained through determination to succeed and learning from successful colleagues through multiple opportunities for modeling and sharing learning with other teachers.

As the leader of the school, the principal plays an important role in modeling behavior for teachers and students. He/she works diligently to increase student engagement as it is a primary driver for the effectiveness of all teachers. Encouraging students to develop their own leadership capabilities to help the work of improving schools was the focus of a study by Damiani (2013).
This study examined how principals used student voice to create more responsive schools to the needs of all students. Four different elementary school settings were utilized with a wide range of socioeconomic levels. This multi-site ethnography examined both principals and students regarding student voice in school decisions, which directly affect teachers as well. The first class of participants was four principals that were interviewed twice and observed a minimum of four times. The second class was made up of focus groups of elementary school students, which were interviewed twice and observed a minimum of four times.

During the study, the students revealed they would like their principal to help teach them and not just observe. Students at Everton (an urban school with 100% poverty) listed distractions in the classroom, physical challenges of the building, and misbehavior as their biggest challenges in school. David (an urban school principal) delegates most of his managerial responsibilities to his support staff, which frees him up for more instructional contact with students. While Joseph (the principal of a suburban school) acknowledges the role students play in making the school function, he is not inclined to take their lead or use their voice to support their experiences of school or learning. The research noted “Principals and students play key roles in shaping school culture and enter school with similar goals. These shared goals include an intention to succeed as participants in the academic program, as well as a strong desire to be supported socially and emotionally” (Damiani, 2013, p. 247). The author concluded that increasing student empowerment has resulted in better behavior, increased engagement in the instructional program, and the development of a more shared set of goals between students and staff. This information is critical for teachers and all school staff to understand in raising teacher effectiveness through empowering students to make their voices heard in school decisions and modeling that their needs are valued and addressed.
In addition to working on student engagement, a principal plays a key role in evaluating the staff and helping each educator rise to new levels of success. The next study examines the work of The Bill & Melania Gates Foundation on educational outcomes for underserved students. This group has as one its goals to improve the educational attainment of students worldwide. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched a $575 million study Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching (IP) in the 2009–2010 school year. The results of their program were evaluated in a study by the American Institutes for Research & RAND Corporation (American Institutes for Research & RAND Corporation, 2018). The foundation identified seven IP sites in the United States—three school districts including then Memphis City Schools (now Shelby County) and four charter management organizations (CMO)—to implement teacher-evaluation systems and related human-relations reforms over a six-year period. The theoretical framework for the study was Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching (IP) theory of action, which incorporated changes to four major levers for school improvement at the district level: measures of effective teaching, staffing policies, evaluation-linked professional development, and compensation and career ladders. All these areas were significantly different than the prior school system.

The IP initiative heightened the sites’ attention to teacher effectiveness; however, measuring effectiveness and using it as the basis for teacher management and incentives did not lead to gains in student achievement or graduation rates. School evaluations were based on interviews with central-office administrators, annual surveys of teachers and school leaders, case studies of schools, analyses of site records and student test scores. The data showed few teachers were classified as ineffective on teacher evaluations, the sites struggled to deliver evaluation-linked professional development, and true career leaders were not implemented. Schools in each
of the IP sites, on average, did not have better outcomes (e.g., student achievement, graduation) than similar nonparticipating schools in their state. Additionally, the school sites had difficulty attracting effective teachers to high-need schools, and persistent teacher turnover was a problem for the CMOs. Notably, “most teachers agreed that the evaluation system had helped them improve their instruction, but some mentioned side effects, such as a perceived need to ‘play it safe’ and avoid taking risks or exploring new instructional approaches” (American Institutes for Research & RAND Corporation, 2018, p. 111). This is an example of modeling that is counter to the original intent but powerful, nonetheless. Overall, this study indicates educational reform can be both costly and ineffective.

The final study which has a strong modeling theme is centered around Tennessee’s plan for school turnaround. Regarding Tennessee’s takeover of schools, the state has implemented a state-run school system called the Achievement School District (ASD) to govern the lowest 5% of schools (priority) and set up Innovation Zones (I-Zone) which are partnerships between local and state districts to help improve student outcomes in these struggling schools. A study by Vanderbilt University explored the TVAAS (value-added) rates for schools in the Achievement District and I-zone schools compared to the other Tennessee schools (Henry, Kho, Viano & Zimmer, 2015). In theory, these schools have the most room for growth and should have the highest TVAAS scores to make up ground in achievement levels. However, this has not always been the case in the history of these turnaround efforts. The database for the report included student-level data, including demographic characteristics, both TCAP and EOC test scores, and school enrollment data from 2009-10 through 2014-15 school years. For the analysis, they used reading, math, and science scores. The researchers analyzed the differences in the pre- and post-treatment performance to determine if they were larger or smaller than the differences in
performance of students in a set of similarly low-performing schools over the same time horizon to determine the effectiveness of the turnaround efforts.

The data showed slightly positive increases in student performance over the period. While the I-Zone schools have shown promising test score effects, the effect on test scores from priority schools and ASD schools, specifically, has been less than many advocates had hoped for. Overall, I-Zone schools have moderate to large positive effects in reading, math and science with strong consistent effects across subjects for Memphis I-Zone schools. Overall, ASD schools did not gain more or less than other priority schools that were not in an I-Zone. The data indicated the I-Zone schools overall are performing better than other school reconstitution efforts in the state. The researchers note “some may consider it premature to pass definitive judgment on the ASD schools or priority schools more generally as schools have been designated as priority schools for only three years and most of the ASD schools have been under the auspices of the ASD for less than three years.” (Henry, Kho, Viano & Zimmer, 2015, p. 10). Lastly, the researchers acknowledged the slow progress of priority schools saying, “By the end of the 2014-15 school year when federal Race to the Top funds ran out, 77 of the original 83 schools (94%) remained open and 49 (64%) had been placed under the ASD or special local districts” (Henry, Kho, Viano & Zimmer, 2015, p. 9). These schools would have great expertise to share with one another as they navigate school restructuring together and continue modeling the teaching practices that are the most beneficial for struggling students. The sharing of ideas and strategies for helping all students learn is critical for sustained success.

In conclusion, modeling has been shown in several studies to be an important component of student success in underserved populations. Research indicates that “people intentionally or unintentionally learn by observing the behaviors of others (models) and their consequences.
Moreover, it holds that people may choose to replicate a behavior depending on whether they are rewarded or punished for it” (Adaji, Oyibo & Vassileva, 2018). The teacher plays a key role in the modeling that students observe daily. The previous studies indicated having a caring, personable teacher with high expectations for learning makes a student increasingly likely to perform better in school. The concept of modeling can also take place on a larger scale with school districts as they engage in school turnaround measures. As their practices are compared to one another, key components for student success emerge and are utilized for decisions that must be made to further academic achievement.

**Self-efficacy.** Concerning the impact of self-efficacy on learning, Dr. Albert Bandura and Dr. Daniel Cervone concluded “Those who distrust their capabilities are easily discouraged by failure, whereas those who are highly assured of their efficacy for goal attainment will intensify their efforts when their performances fall short and persevere until they succeed” (Bandura & Cervone, 1986, p. 93). The first study with insight into the importance of self-efficacy was conducted by Dr. Pamela Tatem at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Tatem, 2015). This study examined dispositions of effective teachers in urban school districts. Dr. Tatem argued a teacher’s attitudes, beliefs and practices should be considered for effectiveness as these attributes have a greater impact and are most malleable, unlike years of experience or education level. This study aimed to explore how teachers’ dispositions impact students’ math achievement at the elementary level in an urban school district. The participants in this study were all full-time, general education teachers who worked with students in grades three, four, and five in an urban school district. Dr. Bandura’s self-efficacy theory was the framework used throughout the research.
For the study, the district’s research and testing department determined teachers who were effective based on their end-of-year Standards of Learning (SOL) test results for the school year 2011-2012. Three surveys were conducted with these teachers as one: Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Beliefs, and Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy. The data were used to determine characteristics of effective teachers. The data indicated effective teachers believe they make a difference on student achievement when all factors are considered. When effective teachers responded to the question “I am able to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?,” the results showed 28 teachers (90%) who either strongly or moderately agreed. Also, the data indicated effective teachers build personal relationships with students and their families. Nearly all teachers (97%) believed that they were able to assist families in helping their children do well in school. Also, effective teachers set high expectations for their students. The researchers concluded “Before signing on as a teacher in an urban school district, pre-service teachers should expose themselves to urban school populations even if it is on a volunteer basis” (Tatem, 2015, p. 89). Also, “teachers should use feedback to help students attribute success to effort (Hoostein, 1996)” (Tatem, 2015, p. 85). This is an important lesson for students’ future endeavors that can have both short and long-term impact in students’ lives as they build their own self-efficacy.

As educators continue finding ways to best teach struggling students, it is important to note the successes that have been previously documented in other studies. One study that examined impactful teaching strategies for urban students was performed by researchers at The University of Memphis (Ransdell, Rousseau & Thompson, 2005). This study examined the teaching dispositions of 14 elementary (K-6) urban teachers designated as effective by their principals to determine the classroom practices that promote academic success for students based on standardized test scores. The researchers observed 14 K-6 classroom teachers for
approximately 45 to 60 minutes using the Teacher Quality Measure (TQM). Observations were unscheduled and occurred three times each. They determined indicators of dispositions to examine the connection between teacher effectiveness and student success as measured by standardized scores.

The data showed the participants in this study were excellent communicators. The researchers observed teachers engaging all students in learning 90% of the time. They used effective feedback and probes, motivated students by using a variety of strategies within their lessons, gave encouraging feedback, and drew on students’ prior knowledge. Teachers in this study used direct instruction to convey knowledge most of the time. They did not allow students to make many decisions, did not vary instructional techniques, or use cooperative/collaborative methodologies. While the standardized test improvement is important, the researchers argued “at some point, students need to be moved to a more challenging academic setting where they are asked to think and problem-solve on a regular basis” (Ransdell, Rousseau & Thompson, 2005, p. 33). Also, “The participants’ focus on consistency and routine could be a response to the belief that such practices are especially important for urban children as their lives outside of the school context may be quite different and often chaotic” (Ransdell, Rousseau & Thompson, 2005, p. 32). The results suggest that effective teachers whose students score high on standardized tests in urban school settings actively engage their students in learning in a teacher-centered classroom. These teachers share a strong sense of self-efficacy in that they are adjusting their teaching practices to maximize their students’ learning opportunities to help them be more successful on standardized testing.

As previous studies have indicated, teacher effectiveness takes considerable time to develop. Unfortunately, many teachers do not remain with the teaching profession for very long.
A 2017 study examined why novice middle school teachers in urban school districts leave after their initial year teaching (Albright, Glasgow, Safer, Sekulich, Sims, Tagaris & Zaharis, 2017). This research investigated the experiences of new teachers employed in urban school districts and how these novice teachers perceived school district and school administrators’ support required to retain them. The study also examined teachers’ perceptions of their pre-service experiences. The three middle schools selected were characterized by high poverty, low academic achievement, and not meeting Average Yearly Progress on required testing.

Teacher interviews of nine first-year teachers were conducted. Principal interviews of five administrators with at least five years of experience were done. Focus groups of each were performed. The study found many education students leave college unprepared for working with underserved students. They also said supports from the school system (Peer Assistance and Review Program) and the principal were not enough support. Many had contemplated quitting. Principals indicated that the new teachers at the school lacked classroom management skills and techniques for working with underserved students. These principals also complained of a lack of time to work more with the new teachers. While all the teachers had a semester in student teaching, not all of it was completed in an urban school building. Those teachers who did student teach in an urban community believed that they still needed additional time to learn and practice the necessary skills specific to this new classroom setting. Lastly, the researchers noted “There was a consensus that as building leaders they should have provided more support” (Albright, Glasgow, Safer, Sekulich, Sims, Tagaris & Zaharis, 2017, p.13). These experiences would have been meaningful for the teachers who were hoping to get specific help for their needs as they continue to build their self-efficacy in being able to effectively perform the functions their students need.
In recent years, teacher evaluation has undergone considerable changes from previous models. Many states like Tennessee incorporate student achievement data as part of a teacher’s overall evaluation scores, have unannounced teacher observations, and offer targeted support for low-rated teachers. A 2017 Harvard study examined the impact teacher evaluations have had on teacher effectiveness distribution in schools (Gilmour & Kraft, 2017). The data on the distribution of teacher effectiveness came from 24 states, including 14 Race to the Top winners. A case study utilized in the report focuses on teacher evaluation ratings in a poor, minority-dominated urban district in the Northeast that serves over 50,000 students. Principal interviews and evaluator surveys were also implemented. In most of these states, the percentage of teachers rated unsatisfactory remains less than 1%. However, the full distributions of ratings vary widely across the 24 states, with 0.7% to 28.7% rated below proficient and 6% to 62% rated above proficient.

In the principal interviews, several mentioned that they sought to avoid the “long, laborious, legal, draining process” of evaluating out a teacher (Gilmour & Kraft, 2017, p. 16). The median percentage of teachers rated above Proficient is 38.7% but varies considerably from 6% in Georgia to 62% in Tennessee. Most teachers are rated above proficient in five states, while less than 20% of teachers are rated above proficient in five other states. On average, the evaluators who participated in the survey in 2012/13 estimated that 27.1% of all teachers in their schools were performing at a level below proficient. This estimate is more than four times the percentage of teachers who were rated below proficient. Fourteen principals said that a lack of time was the most frequent reason for not giving a teacher a low rating and claimed they did not have the capacity to provide these teachers with support. The researchers argue with inconsistent implementation, the teacher evaluation system may not be valid. Many differences are seen in
the data such as only 6% of teachers in Georgia and 9% of teachers in Massachusetts are above proficient, but 62% meet this higher standard in Tennessee. It is evident different leaders do not agree on what constitutes teacher effectiveness in different state evaluation models. Finally, the researchers argued “Ultimately, districts will have to grapple with their priorities for the evaluation process and the inherent tension within a high-stakes evaluation system” (Gilmour & Kraft, 2017, p. 20). Whatever systems districts use, it is imperative for educators and leaders to be reflective of their teaching practices and look for ways to improve the educational outcomes for all students.

Next, Los Angeles was the focus of two separate research studies by the same group which examined teacher effectiveness and student outcomes for both elementary and middle/high school students. The first study conducted focused on elementary schools in the district (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009b). While previous studies examined teacher qualities, this research scrutinized the impact of teacher licensure test scores on elementary student achievement. The researcher argues many teachers come to underserved schools poorly prepared, have difficulties in the classroom, and often leave the teaching profession or transfer to suburban schools. This study used panel data from the Los Angeles Unified School District for 2nd to 5th grade students for five consecutive school years from 2000-2004. The students were enrolled in self-contained classrooms taught by a single teacher, where the student and teacher data are linked closely.

In the study, the researchers developed a formula for calculating value-added scores related to licensure test scores, education and experience of teachers. They compared the results for all the schools in the Los Angeles area. The results show that student-to-student deviations in achievement are about four times as large as teacher-to-teacher deviations. Also, school effects
are much smaller than teacher effects. The study revealed socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of student success. The data indicated teacher licensure test scores are unrelated to teacher success in the classroom, and student achievement is unaffected by whether classroom teachers have advanced degrees. Lastly, student achievement increases with teacher experience, but the connection is weak and mostly reflects low results for teachers during their first year or two in the classroom. The researchers stated, “The current compensation system rewards measured teacher inputs and not performance per se. Perhaps this system provides too little incentive for the ‘best’ teachers to deliver their best performance in the classroom on a consistent basis” (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009b, p. 30). This study indicates that the differences among teachers were not as strong as predicted. Qualitative aspects like self-efficacy and work ethic are much more likely to be considered reasons for success above other quantitative measures like degrees and experience.

The second study by the same group focused on urban high schools in Los Angeles (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009a). This study examined whether teacher licensure test scores and other teacher qualifications affect high school student achievement. The researchers mentioned previous research from Greene and Forester (2003) showed that only 70% of public high school students graduate on time and only 32% of these graduates have enough high school course preparation to attend four-year colleges. The situation is even worse for minority students, with only 50% of Black and Hispanic students graduating from high school on time and only about 18% of these students qualifying to attend four-year colleges. The dataset included records for about 150,000 high school students per year in about 120 high schools. They focused on results from English language arts (ELA) and mathematics teachers as these are the most prominent
subjects taught in school that draw significant attention from federal and state education agencies.

Results showed that student-to-student differences are the largest component of effects and are much larger than either teacher or school effects. Concerning teacher qualifications, years of experience and degrees are not statistically correlated to student outcomes. Similarly, teacher aptitude and subject-matter knowledge, as measured on state licensure tests, have no significant effects on student achievement. Achievement outcomes differ substantially from teacher to teacher, however, and the effects of a good ELA or math teacher spillover from one subject to the other. The researchers concluded “Teacher effects are relatively balanced across high schools even although the mix of teacher qualifications is unbalanced” (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009a, p. 25) and the “results imply that incentives to improve the traditional qualifications of teachers at low-performing high schools are unlikely to improve educational outcomes at those schools” (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009a, p. 26). The study implied it is the sharing of personal teaching experience among colleagues which drives student growth as these success stories build the collective efficacy of the entire staff. These experiences help improve expectations for tackling difficult circumstances in the future.

Another study with a self-efficacy theme was conducted by The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd (Cornier, Hassel & Lutterloh, 2016). These researchers examined the results of states’ school reconstitution efforts. The researchers formed a sample of low-performing schools from three states—Tennessee, Colorado, and Illinois. They used standardized achievement data to determine which schools reached three targets related to turnaround success in the four years following the baseline year, which would make them a turnaround success. Schools had to demonstrate significant growth in math and
English/Language Arts. Also, the proficiency gaps between students in low-performing schools and average-to-high-performing schools had to be significantly narrowed. Lastly, the demographic breakdown and enrollment numbers of schools had to remain stable. Besides looking at achievement scores, state and national leaders were interviewed over the course of the study to give context for the results.

The results showed that more schools met the targets for proficiency and growth in math than in reading. Some turnaround schools were able to dramatically improve student outcomes in one core subject (math or reading), but the other subject either showed a lack of improvement or decrease in performance. More elementary schools met targets than middle and high schools. In general, more elementary schools across all three states met the minimum and higher targets, followed by middle schools, then high schools. Unfortunately, most schools did not meet the threshold target in reading. Only 25% of schools moved out of the bottom 10% of schools for reading proficiency. Schools did slightly better in math, with 38% of schools moving out of the bottom 10% of schools. The researchers argued social promotion was being utilized ineffectively here as it “moves students through the system and can lead to students graduating without meeting the academic requirements to do so” (Cornier, Hassel & Lutterloh, 2016, p. 13). Finally, the researchers concluded “Additional indicators beyond graduation rates (e.g., ACT/SAT performance, measures of postsecondary success) are needed to provide a more complete picture of achievement gains in high schools” (Cornier, Hassel & Lutterloh, 2016, p. 13). Accordingly, teachers must critically examine their teaching practice to identify what is successful and what is not. This will help them maintain their self-efficacy to overcome challenges along the way to helping their students achieve at their fullest.
The final study which considers the importance of self-efficacy was conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University (Henry, Kho & Zimmer, 2017). The researchers noted that in recent years, the federal government has invested billions of dollars to reform frequently low-performing schools. To fulfill their Race to the Top grant agreement, Tennessee leaders implemented three turnaround strategies for low-performing schools. They placed some schools in the state-run Achievement School District (ASD), allowed others to be run by a charter management organization, and placed other schools in Innovation Zones (I-Zone) with additional resources and autonomy. The study examined the effects of each strategy on student performance on Tennessee’s standardized tests. The data collected spans from the 2010–2011 to the 2014–2015 school years and includes a unique student identifier with the school(s) students attend, the respective grades, student demographic characteristics, and test scores in English, mathematics, and science.

In the analysis, the data were compared as I-Zone vs. ASD and as I-zone vs. state-controlled ASD vs. Charter Management Organization (CMO)-run school. The effects on iZone schools were substantively and significantly larger than the effects on ASD schools across all subjects. In examining differences among CMO-run and ASD-run schools, the researchers did not find any statistically significant differences. The authors concluded it is possible to improve schools without removing them from the guidance of a school district. The data showed the I-Zone model yields better results and is less disruptive to the overall school management structure. Finally, the researchers conclude “the results provide promise for turnaround practices in which districts retain governance over schools, but schools are given greater managerial autonomy and use additional resources for recruiting and retaining effective teachers and implement other reforms required under the federal transformation model” (Henry, Kho &
This greater autonomy allows teachers the freedom to use more innovative practices they believe will best suit their students’ needs. This coincides with higher achievement scores which strengthens these teachers’ self-efficacy and improves the likelihood of student success.

In conclusion, the importance of self-efficacy is seen throughout several research studies concerning underserved students. These students are more likely to succeed when they have the confidence in their abilities to overcome challenges and improve their academic standing through a continuous internalization of goals, feedback, and planning. Research indicates “These cognitive self-evaluations influence all manner of human experience, including the goals for which people strive, the amount of energy expended toward goal achievement, and likelihood of attaining particular levels of behavioral performance” (Carey & Forsyth, 2019, para. 1). Studies have shown teachers can also benefit by taking control over their circumstances with an internal drive for success. Through preservice training, daily reflection, and evaluations, teachers learn to build their self-efficacy, which provides support for the work that must be done to allow their students to reach their full potential.

Summary

Despite the efforts of countless educators and leaders nationwide, American society has struggled to effectively teach underserved students for many decades. Student outcomes still vary greatly among subgroups and are not closing as rapidly as most would like. The research included in this report details the state of teacher effectiveness for underserved students in schools today. Several prominent studies have been conducted which outline effective and ineffective methods for working with underserved students on all levels – classroom, school, local government, national government, and private foundations. However, the results for
underserved students are still unsatisfactory in most cases nationwide. From school-based to broad-based measures, enormous amounts of time, energy and resources have been poured into addressing the low performance for underserved students with a special focus on teacher effectiveness. There have been a wide range of outcomes for these efforts – some yielding little to no results, more achieving moderate success, and a few producing strong results for students. The themes of motivation, modeling, and self-efficacy can be found in all these efforts as education remains a strong social learning experience for all students, teachers, and policymakers.

With its emphasis on engagement and sharing of information, Dr. Bandura’s social learning theory provides an authentic means to analyze the education landscape for teachers of underserved students. Educators learn and grow when they observe what has worked well and what has not. For the collective growth of schools, teachers need to take advantage of opportunities to share this practical information with others. This is critical for improving the educational outcomes for underserved students. It is evident more research is needed to understand what effective strategies for working with underserved students are working in 2019 in this dynamic environment full of ever-changing technological advances, societal pressures, and strict accountability for all educators. Students will benefit greatly when teachers take this learning and disseminate it at all levels to improve the teaching profession, which will yield enormous benefits to society.

Because of the academic hardships underserved students still face, the issue of defining and refining teacher effectiveness for all students is one which still needs much attention in communities today. History has shown changes come to society and schools on a frequent basis and effective teaching must be one step ahead in ensuring that students are fully equipped to
fully succeed. More research is needed to understand specifically what successful practices are for increasing student achievement in the dynamic educational environment that exists in 2019.

All students are counting on a strong education to help them become productive, satisfied members of society in the future. Educators must learn what is working in classrooms today and maximize the learning opportunities for all.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

As the previous research indicates, teacher effectiveness is an important component of student success. However, the concept of effective teaching is one that takes on many meanings for different members of society. In a global study by Pearson of students, educators, and parents of children in 23 countries, “the ability of the teacher to develop trusting, compassionate relationships with students was valued most” (Graybeal, Graybeal, McKnight & Yarbro, 2016, p. 6) was viewed as the most important characteristic of teacher effectiveness. Other important qualities for teacher effectiveness that ranked highly were professionalism and subject matter knowledge. In recent years, the ability of teachers to improve their students’ growth on academic tests is also viewed by some as a key indicator of teacher effectiveness. The research methods described in this chapter will help determine what factors contribute to the success of teachers in this East Tennessee school system.

Data Sources

For this study, each teacher’s principal’s recommendation served as the primary tool to determine effectiveness. Because the county I researched in did not allow me access to teacher evaluation scores, each principal was asked to provide the name of the most effective teacher at that school in terms of results and community standing. In recent years, Tennessee’s teacher evaluation model has come under criticism from some educators, leaders, and parents (Morrow, 2011). Having the principal consider the teacher’s entire body of work helped to alleviate relying primarily on the teacher evaluation. To answer the research questions on effective teaching for underserved students, an observation, a study of classroom artifacts, and an interview were utilized to provide a rich understanding of the strategies being implemented in the high-quality
teachers’ classrooms to produce strong student outcomes in traditionally low-performing schools.

To achieve the objectives, a case study approach was implemented for the research. This method allowed me to understand the process of teachers working with high-needs students in their native classroom setting. Utilizing case studies was ideal for this research because “they are particularistic (focused on a particular phenomenon, situation, or event), descriptive (providing as an end result a thick rich description), and heuristic (focused on providing new insights)” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013, p. 485). Case studies also fit the needs of this study as they “may employ multiple methods of data collection and do not rely on a single technique. Testing, interviewing, observation, review of documents and artifacts, and other methods may be used” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013, p. 486). This work built off other case studies which were cited in the literature review (Center on Education Policy, 2009; Gilmour & Kraft, 2017) Finally, Dr. Robert Yin’s case study definition guided my work. He views a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). My work included encountering these phenomena and providing the context and clarity for the results I witnessed.

Three main data types were used over the study’s course: classroom observations, teacher interviews, and artifact examinations. Observation was important in this study because “the use of one’s senses, as well as other data collection techniques, make observation a more holistic type of research that allows the researcher to gain a better understanding of insiders from their own perspective” (Baker, 2006, p. 187). Teaching at a school with a large percentage of underserved students gives these educators knowledge that is very specialized to their work. The
interviewer and those reading the research come to this situation not having this knowledge. Therefore, we act as the outsiders and the teacher is the insider. In the county I chose, all educators are observed under a Tennessee-approved evaluation system. A teacher evaluation rubric (Appendix A) will be used to conduct the observations.

Additionally, interviews were used throughout the study. Interviewing is useful as “a tool for social research as it facilitates obtaining ‘direct’ explanations for human actions through a comprehensive speech interaction” (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40). I had the opportunity to converse with the participants and ask them to clarify or expand on their thoughts as needed to get a true understanding of what is occurring in the classroom. Interviews were a useful tool as they allowed participants to describe “situations in their own words. They are used to help understand the experiences people have and the meanings they make of them rather than to test hypotheses. Interviews may provide information that cannot be obtained through observation, or they can be used to verify observations” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013, p. 466).

Lastly, artifacts from the classroom were studied because “they provide a concrete, tangible dimension to your evidence” (New York University, 2018, para. 2). These included lesson plans, learning targets, and teaching aids from the classroom that were utilized to provide an account of the work that was being conducted on that day in the classroom. The three data sources will be studied extensively for insight into effective strategies for working with underserved students. These contributed to understanding how these effective teachers can produce results in their specific learning environments with their unique sets of students while many of their peers do not achieve these results.
Population and Sample

The population for this study was highly rated Tennessee teachers who teach predominately underserved students. The teachers’ rankings of effectiveness by their principals were utilized to form a sample group. The goal for this study is for the remainder of the teaching population who all have a segment of underserved students to learn additional strategies used by these effective teachers. The sample was six highly ranked teachers with predominantly underserved students who work in a public-school system in East Tennessee. In this study, I focused on traditional classroom teachers for my participants. I sought to select two elementary, two middle school, and two high school teachers from different schools in different grades that teach different subject areas which allowed me to observe teaching strategies across multiple subjects. This provided a representative set of teacher participants at different school settings to conduct my study.

Description of Instruments

The artifacts I gathered from the participants are on a list of potential artifacts (Artifacts D) sent out in conjunction with the evaluation tool that was utilized. Lesson plans, posted lesson objectives, and teaching aids were the areas of focus. I collected lesson plans for that day along with any unit plans the teacher had created. Posted lesson objectives helped me gain insight into how that day’s learning fit into the larger school calendar. I made detailed notes of all the teaching aids that were posted around the classroom to help the students attain mastery of the material.

During the study, the participants responded individually to interview questions created by me (Appendix E) during an interview conducted at the teacher’s school or over the phone. The interview occurred after the observation had taken place. Each question was designed to
elicit teachers’ thoughts concerning their success with underserved students and the strategies
they believe are most effective in working with their students.

During the observation, I used one of the Tennessee-approved teacher evaluation rubrics.
As I scored the observation, I used the classroom management and delivery of instruction
domains. The other domains contained items I did not get to witness doing only one observation,
such as professional responsibilities or family and community. I calculated the individual domain
scores and the overall score for each teacher on the rubric’s four-point scale with 4: highly
effective, 3: effective, 2: improvement necessary, and 1: does not meet standards. This provided
insight into how an administrator might score each teacher.

Research Procedures and Time Period of the Study

During the research, I was the researcher responsible for data collection and analysis. I
submitted my work for IRB approval and had the consent of the school district to conduct my
research study. Upon approval, I reached out to six principals in the chosen school system with
high percentages of underserved students. They agreed to sign the Principal Consent Form
(Appendix B) to be a part of this study. I asked for five names of teachers who the principal
considered high quality teachers in terms of results with underserved students and community
standing. They were to be ranked in order of effectiveness in case I had some who chose not to
participate. Once I had six willing participants at the six schools who met my criteria, I provided
them with a copy of the Participant Consent Form (Appendix C) to ensure their full
understanding of the research in which they were to be the primary participants.

The first piece of data collection occurred during a full class period observation of each
participant. The observations were agreed upon beforehand for scheduling purposes. At each
observation, classroom artifacts were collected to provide information on the teaching and
learning practices that operate in the classroom. Lesson plans, objectives, and teaching aids were important components of artifact collection. Finally, one interview was conducted with each teacher during the study to determine how these teachers account for their high performance with underserved students. This was intended to be used to help educators recognize teaching expertise that can be shared with other educators across all grades, subject areas, and locations.

The period for the study was approximately three months. Data collection took place in April during the 2nd semester of the 2018-2019 school year in five different public schools in this East Tennessee school system.

During the study, I was mindful of ethical concerns which could impact everyone involved in the study. Dr. David Resnik affirms ethical research helps promote “social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law, and public health and safety. Ethical lapses in research can significantly harm human and animal subjects, students, and the public” (Resnik, 2015, para. 11). As I conducted the study, I consciously made decisions to promote trust, honesty, objectivity, respect for participants, and an adherence to the laws which govern the school system. My actions were purposefully restricted to observing and not interacting with the teacher or students. When I spoke with the participants, I treated them with the utmost respect and courtesy. I informed the teachers that their data would be given absolute privacy and that each participant would be assigned a pseudonym. Finally, I recognized my role as the researcher came with its own ethical responsibilities which I am bound to uphold to protect the legitimacy and integrity of this research study.

**How the Data are to be Analyzed**

As the data were collected, they were carefully recorded in written form, typed into a digital record, and preserved for the duration of the study. Observational notes were taken while
the teacher was leading the classroom. They were analyzed carefully for errors with the digital transcript. The transcript was coded for key words and ideas which led to common themes seen in underserved student research and the teacher evaluation model for both student and teacher actions.

The results from each teacher were analyzed in comparison with other teachers looking for common language and practices. In addition, I discovered unique actions that made each teacher successful. According to social cognitive theory, I expected to find considerable results on motivation, modeling, and self-efficacy. The interview answers were recorded and typed into a transcript. The answers were coded individually for each teacher and collectively as a group looking for common themes which emerged and any outliers that existed among the high-performing teachers. Tone, emphasis on key points, and persona displayed during the interview were recorded for consideration.

**Data Coding Process**

Classroom artifacts were collected after each visit. The participants knew beforehand the items I wished to collect. Each teacher’s artifacts were examined individually and collectively for their content and quality according to the teacher evaluation rubric. This tool gave the teachers a rating system where they can see criteria for what is expected from a high-performing teacher through modeling. This rubric has a unique effect on teachers’ motivation and self-efficacy, and it holds them accountable for the work they do in the classroom. Commonalities and differences of the data were noted through coding and in the results section. Each piece of data was coded into general and then specific categories, looking for themes which developed. I expected to start with the three categories from social cognitive theory (motivation, modeling, and self-efficacy) and then break these into subgroups. An example of a coding chart I used to
determine one of the themes of the study is included in Appendix F. The data from each participant were categorized in broad categories and then narrowed down to arrive at particular themes from the study.

As I analyzed the data, I was looking for trends that matched previous studies from the literature review and trends that were unique to this study. The domains of social cognitive theory and how teachers attributed their success were areas in which I compared my findings to those of other studies. Seeing how teachers attributed the success of their students was instrumental to the purpose of this study. Also, seeing what changes teachers would like to be incorporated at a district level was insightful as they had achieved success on their own smaller scale. I also created descriptions on each teacher’s classroom based on their three types of data (interview, observation, and artifacts). These were instrumental in determining how all three pieces of information worked together to shape each teacher’s practices and the students’ learning environment.

**Trustworthiness Techniques**

During the data analysis, multiple trustworthiness techniques were implemented. These methods help “to demonstrate that the methods used are reproducible and consistent, that the approach and procedures used are appropriate for the context and can be documented, and that external evidence can be used to test conclusions” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013, p. 536). Initially, triangulation was utilized. To increase the confirmability and reliability of results, at least three forms of data were utilized in the study. In addition, member checks were used where I presented the data back to the participants to ensure proper collection and interpretation of the findings. This occurred after the initial coding process and before the final product was
produced. All these methods helped to increase the reliability of the findings I presented in my research.

To further strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, detailed descriptions of context accompanied all research throughout the project for all research settings. Also, an audit trail was implemented as all data collected were preserved in their original form and a digital version during the study and kept afterwards for recordkeeping. Finally, I practiced reflexivity where I monitored and recorded my thoughts and state of mind every time I researched participants or analyzed the information gathered. I kept a research journal where I made entries reflecting on the work I did that day. In the journal, I indicated any ways my own bias may have impacted the research decisions I made on that day. This was referred to frequently to monitor my own thoughts regarding the research and increased the likelihood I conducted the study impartially. These steps to bolster trustworthiness helped my work withstand scrutiny from the public and contribute to the larger conversation of best teaching practices for working with underserved students.

**Summary**

The methodology described for this study helped guide the research to accomplish its stated goals. The case study approach was ideal for this research to fully examine what teaching and learning are like in highly effective teachers’ classrooms with large underserved student populations. Observations, interviews, and artifact collection were the main data sources for study that provided insight into the daily work of these successful educators. As the data were analyzed, key components of effective teaching practices emerged for consideration. This yielded significant results for understanding how these educators have been able to lead their students to success. The lessons learned can help all educators ensure that their classroom
practices are aimed at increasing equity in student outcomes and positive learning experiences for all students in their care.
Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

Introduction

This section will present the findings from the study that was conducted according to the methods described in Chapter 3. First, a description of the participants and settings for the study will be provided. Then, a brief overview will be provided for each type of data collected during the study – an observation of a full lesson, a study of relevant artifacts, and an interview with each participant. The data from the collective group of six teachers will be analyzed in detail according to themes which emerged from the study. Finally, a summary will be presented of the overall findings from the study centered around the original research questions:

1. How do teachers with high teacher evaluation scores in low-performing schools explain their success in the face of numerous challenges?
2. What specific techniques do teachers with high teacher evaluation scores in low-performing schools use to maximize student learning?

Participant Profiles

In total, five principals gave their consent to be a part of this study. They all lead schools within the same East Tennessee school district. Three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school are represented in this study. One of the elementary schools was represented by two teacher participants in different grade levels. This occurred because some schools declined the opportunity to participate, while others did not respond to my requests. These schools all qualify as Title I schools, according to federal guidelines. The principals chose a high-performing teacher who works with mostly underserved students for me to contact to be part of the study. Each teacher was the first one recommended at her school, and all participants agreed to the requirements of the study. All six teachers work in the same school system in East Tennessee with a significant percentage of underserved students. They are all white females with
multiple years of experience. To protect their anonymity, each teacher was assigned a pseudonym.

My first participant was Jane Simpson. She teaches 4th grade literacy at an inner-city school. Her 19 students are all non-white - 12 Latino and seven African American. Six of her students go to a special reading program during the day called RISE. Five of her students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - one is a gifted student while the other four have a learning disability. One of her students has a 504 plan. Finally, two of her students receive speech services, and nine students are served in the ESL program.

Second, I worked with Kathy Williams. Science is her subject area at a Title 1 high school. She teaches chemistry, physical world concepts, and an ACT prep class. This school has a mix of students of all races with African American and Latino students representing nearly half of all students. While Mrs. Williams noted her other classes are more culturally diverse, in the class of 17 students I observed there was one Asian student, one African American student, and the remaining students were white. Two of her students had an IEP.

Patricia Baker was my next participant. 3rd grade is her area of expertise. She works in a small, neighborhood school comprised mostly of African American students. Helping her in the classroom was a student teacher who had been working under her tutelage for the entire year. Her class includes 15 students who are all African American. One of her students receives special education services, and one has a 504 plan.

Next, Mary Stephens agreed to be a part of this study. 2nd grade is her current teaching assignment. Her school is an inner-city school that is a zoned magnet school. Her student population includes 15 African American students, one Latino student, and three white students.
Two of her students receive special education services, two are in the gifted program, and one student receives ESL services.

Another teacher in my study was Lucy Thomas. She works at the same elementary school as Patricia Baker. It represents a neighborhood with mostly African American students. Her field of expertise is 5th grade math. In the class I observed, there were 16 students - 15 African American students and one Latino student.

Finally, Sarah Rogers was my final participant. She teaches math enrichment courses at a neighborhood middle school which serves mostly African American students. Her students are in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The class I observed was comprised of 8th graders. There was one Latino student, and the remaining 10 were African American.

Data Presentation

The purpose of data collection in this study was to answer two research questions – one concerning how high-performing teachers attribute their success with underserved students and another focused on specific teaching strategies these teachers use to maximize student learning. The three sources of data (observations, artifacts, and interviews) all played a role in answering both questions and help to confirm the findings. They also contributed to the classroom experience that these teachers provide daily. To analyze the data, a coding process was used to determine connections among the participants regarding how they perform their jobs. As all three forms of data were analyzed, themes emerged among the six participants regarding how they work with underserved students. For each theme generated, a table was created to show the progression from the data collected among the participants to the themes generated from the data. A coding table for the first theme is provided in Appendix C. The themes were chosen
based on common occurrences that occurred with most of the teachers and were evident across all data types.

**Observations.** During the study, I conducted an observation of each teacher working with students over a full class period. In the course of six observations, I collected data on teaching strategies, behavior management techniques, learning targets, and the interactions among each teacher and her students. These findings were recorded firsthand in a research journal, typed in digital form, and analyzed carefully in a coding process looking for themes among the data. The observation data were also used to rate each teacher’s performance on the school system’s evaluation tool using the domains Classroom Management and Delivery of Instruction. The results of the evaluation tool are included in the discussion of themes.

**Observation rubric overview.** The same rubric the school system uses to evaluate its teachers was used to score each teacher’s observation in two categories – Classroom Management and Delivery of Instruction. Each domain is separated into subcategories with indicators to help the evaluator determine the proper score. For every subcategory, a one means “does not meet standards,” a two is “improvement necessary,” a three indicates “effective,” and a four signifies “highly effective.” These scores were used to compile an overall composite score for each teacher.

**Artifacts.** During the classroom observations, artifacts were recorded which may have contributed to the quality of learning taking place in the classroom. These included lesson plans, anchor charts, student work, and graphic organizers. These materials were analyzed according to the indicators of the evaluation tool including lesson goals, student engagement, and differentiation of instruction. Four participants (Simpson, Baker, Williams, and Stephens) submitted lesson plans, and two participants (Thomas & Rogers) did not submit lesson plans
after several requests. Another point of interest were any decorations or behavior management systems that may have contributed to providing a positive classroom environment. These materials were also analyzed according to indicators on the evaluation tool including environment, expectations, and relationships.

**Interviews.** After the observations occurred, the teachers participated in an interview to share about their roles in helping underserved students achieve. Mrs. Rogers did not participate in an interview after not responding to my requests. Each teacher gave insights into such topics as why she believes she has experienced success, effective teaching strategies, and advice she would give to teachers unfamiliar working with this student population. The data from the interviews were recorded into a research journal, typed into digital form, and analyzed during a coding process to identify themes that existed among the participants’ responses to the list of interview questions.

**Study Findings**

After the coding process was completed, five themes emerged among the data, which helped to answer both research questions. This section is divided according to each theme. The themes will be explored in the following section along with examples from all three data types which support the determination of each theme. After the themes are explored, answers to the research questions will be provided at the end of this section.

**Positive disposition.** The first theme was all the teachers displayed a positive disposition. During the observations, all teachers treated their students with respect and worked to provide them with a nurturing environment. For instance, Mrs. Stephens’ 2nd grade students heard positive phrases such as “this is a safe place to make mistakes” and “don’t give up.” Mrs. Williams spoke with a gentle voice and made it a point to interact with all students during the
construction of their balloon cars. The interactions were also positive between the teachers and other educators. Mrs. Rogers displayed a positive working relationship through her tone of voice and interactions with her assistant Mrs. Ortiz as she assisted in gathering materials and monitoring student understanding. Likewise, Mrs. Simpson was polite and receptive to the secretary who delivered paperwork on a student who was enrolling in another school. She used the opportunity to brag on the student’s kindness in front of his peers and express to the class how much of an impact he had made throughout the year.

Along with the observation, responses during the interview also signified the importance these teachers place on maintaining a positive disposition. Mrs. Williams attributes much of her success with undeserved students to providing enjoyable, authentic learning experiences which relate to concepts that students know from their lives outside of school. Some of the lessons Mrs. Thomas learned on the job include the importance of building relationships with students and understanding that many of them have experienced trauma in their lives which affect their daily living. Finally, all the teachers maintained a strong positive disposition and expressed their sincerity for their work in their communication with me in person, over the telephone, and through e-mail as part of this study.

Lastly, many of the artifacts on display in the participants’ classrooms also helped to convey a positive message to students. In Mrs. Baker’s room, she had pictures of all the students on the door. Beside the collection of photos was the word “Be” and many positive words including “amazing,” “outstanding,” and “wonderful.” Also, Mrs. Simpson featured the phrase “#Yet” in big letters on the wall by the door. She said this indicated that struggles were temporary, and success could be achieved with hard work. Similarly, there was a poster on Mrs. Thomas’ wall which said, “Cherish every memory, Love every moment, Embrace every
possibility.” Finally, in Mrs. Rogers’ room she featured a poster which said, “Be Excellent” above her door. These are some of the ways the teachers had intentionally incorporated their belief in maintaining a positive disposition in the ways they chose to arrange their classrooms.

**Focused instruction.** Another theme supported by the data is the teachers taught lessons that were centered on their stated learning goals. Artifacts studied from each teacher’s classroom highlighted the importance they placed on focused instruction. It was evident in studying the lesson plans that these teachers had spent time planning instruction that would meet the expectations of the academic standards. Along with listing the grade level expectations, Mrs. Baker planned for explicit instruction on finding text evidence and using details to make an argument, all part of the 3rd grade literacy standards. Also, all the teachers’ learning targets that were posted matched the activities the teachers selected for students to explore. For example, Mrs. Williams learning target was “I can review Newton’s 2nd/3rd laws. I can plan and carry out a design experiment using Newton’s laws.” The first half of her class focused on review with problem-solving and demonstration opportunities which covered Newton’s laws. The second half of her class featured the students constructing a balloon car using the knowledge they had gained about Newton’s laws through their previous learning.

During the observations, it was evident the actions of the teachers were intended to keep the focus on learning. For instance, Mrs. Stephens reminded the students throughout her lesson of their goal to beat the county’s average score on the last benchmark test in May, which they barely missed last time. Also, Mrs. Thomas reminded her 5th grade students “you learn something every day if you pay attention.” Lastly, Mrs. Rogers had a PowerPoint presentation which was focused on the learning target about finding reflections on a graph. To help reach this
goal, she provided her students with a cloze passage of notes on the topic which they were to fill in as they encountered specific items in the presentation.

During the interviews, Mrs. Stephens noted some ineffective strategies she has experienced including teaching too much whole group and teaching with a lack of focus on the standards. Good teaching strategies Mrs. Simpson practices include keeping the flow of the lesson moving, having flexibility in delivery, and fully preparing for the day’s needs. Finally, Mrs. Thomas attributes her success with underserved students to having consistency, following her students’ data, and finding holes in their learning. These examples highlight ways that these teachers explicitly work to implement focused instruction that is tailored to cover the academic standards and meet their students’ needs.

**Varied instructional techniques.** The data collected also support the idea that these teachers used a variety of instructional techniques in their lessons. These techniques were on full display during the classroom observations. Aside from Mrs. Rogers’ lesson which featured direct instruction and independent practice, the other lessons included a blend of activities in which the students participated. For example, Mrs. Williams’ class included videos, demonstrations, and project-based learning all centered on Newton’s laws. Group work, gallery walks, and class discussion were features of Mrs. Stephens’ math class. Finally, guided reading, literacy stations, and graphic organizers were highlights of my observation in Mrs. Simpson’s class.

In the interviews, I also gathered data which supported this theme. Mrs. Williams said effective teaching strategies she utilizes often are differentiation, incorporating activities from a mix of learning styles and fostering the use of technology. She notes it is typical in a week for her students to do a lab, take notes, analyze videos, collaborate with other students, and learn from direct instruction. During Mrs. Stephens’ interview, she noted doing the same activity too
many days in a row has been ineffective for achieving results with underserved students that she has taught in her career.

The artifacts studied from the participants’ rooms also indicated a variety of instructional techniques. While observing Mrs. Stephens and Mrs. Thomas, I noted them giving their students a model drawing math problem to solve along with independent work, group work, and class discussion. This strategy has been implemented by this school system in recent years and has a poster of accompanying steps students are expected to complete while solving the problem. In Mrs. Baker’s and Mrs. Simpson’s rooms, they had student expectations posted for literacy stations, including independent reading, word work, and independent writing. Finally, in Mrs. William’s class, she provided the students a choice of whether to film their group’s daily progress video about the balloon car using their Chromebooks assigned from school or their personal cell phones. These examples highlight the variety of ways that students were engaged in learning during my observations.

**Observation rubric - Domain 3: Delivery of instruction.** The scores from the observation rubric yield information regarding how the teachers performed in their delivery of instruction. A careful examination of the observations and artifacts in conjunction with each subcategory led to the scores. This domain had eight subcategories which were evaluated, all of which can be linked back to having a strong focus of instruction and using a variety of instructional techniques. This meant the total scores could range from 8-32. As seen in Table 4.1 below, the total scores from the six participants in delivery of instruction were 31, 26, 27, 30, 30, and 18. This indicated that all the teachers except one were rated in the effective or highly effective range for delivery of instruction according to the observation which was conducted. It is evident from the data
recorded that having a clear focus of instruction and using a variety of instructional techniques are focal points for these participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1</th>
<th>Rubric Scores – Delivery of Instruction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals/Objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repertoire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effective behavior management. Next, maintaining student behavior was a common theme evident in the data. As seen during the observations, each teacher had a repertoire of strategies that she used to encourage proper behavior and address misbehavior as needed. Some of them were whole group in nature. Mrs. Simpson had spoken phrases designed to elicit all the students’ attention including “1,2,3…eyes on me” and using a countdown approach. Also, all six teachers made it a point not to proceed until the students were demonstrating proper attention. Other strategies were targeted to individual students. When a student began to argue with Mrs. Rogers about having to move seats, she told him calmly “This is not a discussion.” At times, some behavior was not addressed initially, such as a few students having side conversations in Mrs. Williams class, but when it escalated, the teacher firmly said, “Focus up gentlemen.”

The teachers’ artifacts also showed evidence they wanted strong behavior management. In Mrs. Baker’s class, she used a management system called Bucket Filler, which was designed to recognize students who had done nice things for other students. As the buckets filled up, the
students could earn prizes to celebrate their positive actions. In Mrs. Rogers’ middle school class, a poster stated, “A successful student is 1. Respectful, 2. Responsible, and 3. Ready.” This was the standard to which she held her students accountable. Finally, Mrs. Stephens distributed sheets to students where they could keep up with the stickers that they earned for passing lessons on supplemental math programs on their Chromebooks. They could redeem these eventually for candy or other prizes.

Interviews from the participants also contained evidence of this theme. Mrs. Baker revealed it is important for her to build a relationship with all students to help them achieve academically and improve behavior management. Some effective teaching strategies which have worked well for her include providing her students adequate structure, positive reinforcement, and consistent consequences. Mrs. Simpson’s class motto is “Recognize that every voice is important.” She chose this phrase to support the sense of community in her classroom and keep all students engaged in learning. Finally, Mrs. Thomas strives to hold students accountable for their own learning. During her interview, she stressed that paying attention is key for students and part of their personal responsibility at school.

**Observation rubric scores – Domain 2: Classroom management.** The scores from the observation rubric highlight the performance of teachers regarding classroom management. A careful examination of data from the observation and artifacts in conjunction with the subcategories led to the scores. This domain had seven subcategories that were evaluated, which are all components of utilizing effective behavior management techniques. This meant the total scores could range from 7-28. As seen in Table 4.2 below, the total scores from the six participants in classroom management were 28, 22, 24, 24, 28, and 18. This indicates that all the teachers except one were rated in the effective or highly effective range in classroom
management according to the observation which was conducted. It is evident from the data gathered that maintaining strong classroom management is important to these teachers in their daily work with students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2</th>
<th>Rubric Scores – Classroom Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repertoire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Careful monitoring of student performance.** A final theme evident in the data collected was how the teachers monitored student progress carefully in their classrooms. I witnessed this first during the observations. Some of this occurred for the entire class. For instance, Mrs. Thomas told her class she noticed from the previous day some students were coming up with answers to math problems but not arriving at the correct solution. She told them “Do what the question is asking you to do. Some choices say ‘not.’ Read carefully.” Similarly, as Mrs. Stephens was monitoring her students’ work during problem-solving, she reminded them to label their models and the units for the numbers the students were using in the problems.

During the observations, I noticed each teacher had a definite time that she engaged with the students and monitored that they were making progress during individual observations of their work. In Mrs. Baker’s class, one student was not keeping pace with the rest of the group as they each wrote a paragraph comparing two stories. She told him “When I come back around, I want to see a strong hook to your paragraph” after which he worked at a faster pace. As Mrs.
Williams was monitoring her students’ work on their balloon car project, the students showed evidence that they were also evaluating their own ideas and those of others concerning the balloon cars. Groups of students were using their ideas and designs to critique the usefulness of certain building materials and how the car would operate under certain conditions.

Interview data also confirmed this theme. Daily progress is Mrs. Stephens’ goal for herself and her students. One way she checks for this is by frequently using exit tickets to monitor student understanding of content. A teaching strategy Mrs. Williams has found to be less successful is independent work because when she used this strategy too much, she observed that some students struggled but did not ask questions due to a perceived lack of experience or a reluctance to admit failure. Cooperative learning helps her monitor these students’ progress better and allows for students to help each other.

The artifacts that were studied also yielded data on how these teachers monitor students. Mrs. Baker’s lesson plan included multiple checks for understanding with opportunities for partner talk and independent practice. Also, there was a Big Four writing checklist (indent, capitalize, punctuate, and spelling) on each desk, which was a way for students to monitor their own writing before it was shared with a neighbor or checked by Mrs. Baker. In Mrs. Simpson’s room, there was a poster on the wall which communicated to students how she would check for their understanding at times. A four meant “Got it. I can teach someone else,” three signified “I understand. I can do it by myself,” two meant “Getting there. I need a little help,” and one indicated “I’m stuck. I could use some help.” These and other artifacts helped these teachers closely monitor their students’ understanding at various points of instruction.
Answers to the Research Questions

1. How do teachers with high teacher evaluation scores in low-performing schools explain their success in the face of numerous challenges? The results from the study show that there are multiple reasons for how high-performing teachers attribute their success working with underserved students. First, several of the teachers spoke of the importance of their principal in providing resources and strategies for improving student success. The teachers also expressed they have benefitted from the lesson structure and materials provided by their school system. Because their teacher education programs were largely not tailored to the needs of underserved students, many of the participants spoke of ways they had grown as educators in their current setting. These lessons included the importance of building relationships with all students, becoming an active participant in the school’s community, and collaborating with other teachers to share ideas for improving their practice and student outcomes. In this way, the teachers grow in developing their positive disposition and keeping their focus on providing the best instruction for students as they seek to do in their classrooms.

Also, the teachers indicated they hold their students to high expectations. They support this effort by helping the students develop and achieve goals. Helping students explore their curiosity with a variety of instructional techniques and prepare for the future were points of emphasis for several teachers. A key factor given for most of them attaining success was their work ethic and desire to improve as educators. Several teachers mentioned how they adapt their instruction to the needs of their students, which they admitted takes considerable time but is very worthwhile when students achieve. Finally, a key point for many teachers was maintaining consistency in and out of the
classroom, including student expectations and their own quality of work. This indicates that a key for these teachers is monitoring their own performance like they do with their students, so they can be in the best position to deliver high quality instruction for their students every day.

2. **What specific techniques do teachers with high teacher evaluation scores in low-performing schools use to maximize student learning?** According to the data, the participants used a variety of instructional techniques within the same lesson, including problem-solving, group work, computer programs, and project-based learning. The teachers demonstrated that their lessons were focused on the learning targets, which were created from the academic standards for their grade levels. Several teachers mentioned the importance of student engagement and provided opportunities for student discourse and sharing ideas. Also, the teachers carefully monitored their students’ performance during the instructional process and provided multiple opportunities for students to show their understanding of certain skills.

   Additionally, graphic organizers, public records, and anchor charts were features in most classrooms. The lessons observed had a strong emphasis on vocabulary and literacy standards in the form of spoken and written expression. In addition, a positive disposition was exhibited by the teachers in all interactions with students. The teachers exhibited effective classroom management techniques, which kept the focus on learning and not on student misbehavior. These techniques included using proximity control, calling on a variety of students during the lesson, using praise to recognize positive behavior, and using call and response measures to get the students’ attention. Finally, the
teachers used multiple means of formative assessment to ensure their students’ progress towards mastering the content.

Summary

The results from this study answer the research questions which guided the study. Observations, artifacts, and interviews all yielded valuable information for how these high-performing teachers achieve success with underserved students. Many reasons were given for how these teachers attribute their success working with underserved students. Also, the participants demonstrated and shared numerous teaching strategies which they use in their daily work with students. These findings largely fell under a collection of five central themes: positive disposition, focused instruction, effective behavior management, varied instructional techniques, and careful monitoring of student performance.

In conclusion, the results from this study will be added to the knowledge base of best practices for teaching underserved students. In the final chapter, I will assess the limitations of the study and the information that was gained from it. Also, I will discuss the findings and their place in the larger body of research that exists on working with underserved students. Finally, the implications of the findings for teachers, principals, and researchers will be explored to continue the work of improving outcomes for all students.
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this final chapter, I will interpret the data recorded in Chapter 4 and compare it to the findings of previous research. Second, I will examine the implications of my study on the education community in my area and at large. Then, the limitations of the study will be discussed in relation to the data that were collected. Finally, I will consider recommendations that I believe are worthwhile in continuing the research on improving academical outcomes for historically underserved students.

Conclusions

Many factors influence success. After conducting this study with six high-performing teachers, it is clear many factors contribute to why these teachers are successful. Their determination to succeed, commitment to their students, and support provided by their school system are instrumental in what they accomplish. Additionally, these teachers seek to form partnerships with the students’ families to strengthen the connections between home and school. Lastly, these participants seek ways to continually grow in their field by collaborating with other educators and implementing new strategies to help all students learn.

Plentiful instructional techniques. Also, the participants used a variety of instructional techniques within their lessons such as project-based learning, structured student talk, incorporation of technology, and problem-solving. These are among strategies recognized in research as having a strong impact on building student understanding (Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, 2016). By varying the instructional techniques within their lessons, the teachers ensure they are exposing students to content in multiple ways to address all modes of
learning. These teachers also are likely to keep the students engaged and challenged in their pursuit of knowledge.

**Commonalities with prior studies.** As discussed in Chapter 4, the analysis of the data collected led to the formation of themes which were seen across the observation, artifacts, and interviews - positive disposition, effective behavior management, focused instruction, varied instructional techniques, and careful monitoring of student performance. As my findings were compared to the studies from the literature review, I observed a strong relationship with many findings that were mentioned previously in Chapter 2. In a study on improving outcomes for underserved elementary students by Boyd, Chandran, and Hui (2016), they noted “Our interviews with high-performing schools also indicate the importance of positive reinforcement and providing students with a clear set of expectations” (Boyd, Chandran & Hui, 2016, p. 11). In my findings, I recognized the teachers as having a positive disposition and a significant command of classroom management. Concerning varied instructional techniques, Haynie (2010) studied high-performing teachers by comparing residual test scores of students, which were formed from the difference between actual and projected performance. She found “teachers with higher average WCPSS residuals do have a more complete package of instructional strategies than do their peers with lower residual averages” (Haynie, 2010, p. 29).

In a study by Ransdell, Rousseau, and Thompson (2005) on effective teachers in urban settings, the findings indicated “There appears to be a link between their focus on instruction and seamless classroom management” (Ransdell, Rousseau & Thompson, 2005, p. 31). I saw this connection as well comparing the observation scores across both domains and considering how the students’ engagement contributed to their behavior. Another theme I noticed during the observations was how the teachers carefully monitored student understanding and made
instructional decisions based on the information that they gathered. In a prior study by Lewis and Robinson (2017) on characteristics of effective teachers in urban environments, the participants were asked to describe qualities of instruction from effective educators. A key finding of the study was “Instructional approaches of effective teachers place heavy emphasis on, as Michelle states, the ability to be ‘flexible and willing to adapt their instruction’ to the needs of student” (Lewis & Robinson, 2017, p. 131).

**Evidence of social learning theory.** In the classrooms I visited, there was a strong social component to the learning I observed. During my observations, the students were frequently discussing ideas, problem-solving, and sharing their work with other students in the classroom. The participants’ interview responses also emphasized the importance they place on their students’ interactions with one another. The instructional decisions made by the teachers appear to contribute to their stated goals of building classroom environments that are inclusive and focused on learning. As discussed previously, Dr. Bandura’s social learning theory centers on three factors - modeling, motivation, and self-efficacy. These components were evident throughout the data collected from all six participants.

**Modeling.** Unique among behavioral theories, “Social learning theory emphasizes that behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors are all equal, interlocking determinants of each other” (Brown & Zhou, 2015, p. 20). While the environmental factors outside of school are harder to address, the teachers’ efforts in creating a positive classroom culture through their words and actions help to support the immediate classroom environment and can eventually have a broader reach as their behaviors are emulated. By praising their students’ efforts and helping them reach academic goals, the participants worked to build their students’ self-esteem and
increase the likelihood of them continuing their progress. These are ways the participants exemplified the power of modeling.

**Motivation.** In the data I collected, student motivation was a key component of the decisions by the teachers. By developing positive relationships with students and working with them individually to reach their goals, the teachers built a level of compassion and trust with the students. This increased the likelihood of the students being motivated to please the teacher. Also, the motivation to be a contributing member of the classroom was apparent. Most teachers allowed the students opportunities to share their work with others and work in cooperative groups. By giving them opportunities for social interaction but also holding them accountable for their work, the teachers were able to tap into this strand of motivation. Several teachers also offered individual or classroom rewards that could be earned for demonstrating desired behavior. It was clear these participants had a good understanding of how motivation plays a key role in the success each student will experience.

**Self-efficacy.** As a part of his studies, Dr. Bandura conducted significant research on the importance of self-efficacy in achieving desired outcomes. Concerning education, he stated when teachers view themselves as unable to help students achieve success, this view “can pervade the entire life of the school. In contrast, schools in which staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for development” (Bandura, 1995, p. 20-21). From the data I collected, I can conclude these teachers understand the importance of self-efficacy in fostering student achievement. In the interviews, several teachers encouraged new educators who will be working with underserved students to observe effective teachers as much as they can before having a classroom of their own to help them grow in their performance. In addition to the support
provided from administrators, all the teachers spoke of the importance of collaborating with other teachers to improve their practice and foster a community atmosphere among other teachers. Lastly, their responses also indicated they encourage ways for students to be productive, caring members of the classroom in order to build the students’ individual levels of self-efficacy and self-worth.

**Displays of culturally relevant teaching.** Along with social learning theory, the research findings underscore the importance of culturally relevant teaching as discussed by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings. The data I collected showed evidence the participants had built relationships with their students and were invested in their students’ success. Dr. Ladson-Billings said, “The stance of culturally relevant teachers is that what happens to students ultimately happens to me. If students fail and are unable to be productive in society, then the cause of justice is not served” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 122). As I observed during data collection, the success of each student was paramount to these participants.

**Academic achievement.** It is clear the participants in the study placed an emphasis on the achievement of all their students. Through their positive, intentional interactions with students, the teachers delivered “The message that the classroom is a place where teachers and students engage in serious work” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 135). In their interviews, several teachers mentioned the long hours they work to implement the right curriculum and gather the appropriate resources for their students’ needs. By working through the challenges of their jobs, the participants have developed a sense of perseverance which they can help foster in their students’ lives. During instruction, most teachers praised the effort of their students and celebrated with them when they had reached their intended goals. All students were both supported and challenged in their efforts to further their abilities.
Cultural competence. A primary goal of culturally responsive teaching is to foster cultural competence - “a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476). It was my impression that the participants fostered an environment where this could occur. While much of the work was teacher-directed, the students had multiple opportunities to interact with other students and engage in authentic activities to build their understanding. The data also highlighted the importance teachers placed on unity. Whether by having class mottos, using whole group behavior incentives, or utilizing call and response techniques, the teachers’ actions signified the importance they placed on building a sense of community in their rooms. This allowed for the students to feel comfortable expressing themselves within the proper context of learning.

Sociocultural awareness. A final component of culturally responsive teaching is sociocultural awareness. This is the belief that “students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 162). During my data collection, I did not observe evidence of this tenant of culturally relevant teaching. It is possible that the subject matter of the lessons I observed did not lend itself well to promoting sociocultural awareness. While I saw no evidence of tackling social inequities, I did note the teachers encouraging their students to think critically on the topics they studied and justify their thoughts with multiple forms of communication.

Implications

Teachers. This study can yield many positive implications for the larger education community. The first group affected by this research is teachers. As a result of this study, teachers can gain insights for improving their practice from highly successful teachers who work
with predominantly underserved students. While some schools have a lower percentage of underserved students than others, most teachers serve students who match at least one indicator, such as economically disadvantaged students or those with disabilities. Teachers can assess their own teaching strategies in comparison to those that were shown to be utilized by these effective educators. Additionally, as their professional learning communities meet, teachers can collaborate with each other on strategies they have utilized or have learned through professional development. Finally, the findings from this study can be distributed to teacher education programs, so aspiring teachers can begin to develop their own strategies for working with underserved students. By expanding the capabilities of teachers, they will grow more confident and provide better instruction.

**Principals.** Additionally, this study can benefit the work being done by principals. By understanding what successful teachers are doing in their work with underserved students, these leaders can assess how well the teachers in individual schools are meeting the needs of underserved students. Insights from this study can be incorporated into the feedback provided by administrators as they work with teachers to develop goals as part of the evaluation process. Also, principals can arrange times for inexperienced or under-performing teachers to observe and work with high-performing teachers to increase the capacity of all educators in their schools. To support this effort, opportunities can be provided during the school year for teachers to share with other teachers what practices are working well for their students. These can be compiled into a document for the entire school to access and benefit from as they work with many of the same students from year to year. Most importantly, this study can challenge principals to continue seeking best practices and resources that will help close the achievement gaps that exist with underserved students.
Researchers. Finally, this study can influence the decisions of researchers in the education field. First, by reading this study, researchers can gain an understanding of the successful strategies and factors for success described by the participating teachers. By conducting similar studies in different parts of the United States with similar demographics, the larger educational community will benefit from the accumulation and analysis of the data. As this research confirmed several of the findings of previous studies, a next step for researchers could be to study how well the teacher evaluation tools used by districts help facilitate the themes that were noted. Researchers could learn more about how evaluation rubrics and interactions with administrators contribute to the prevalence of these themes in schools. Finally, research can be done to learn about the attention that these themes are given during students’ teacher education programs at the collegiate level. An examination of textbooks, coursework, and students’ classroom experiences would provide data on how these themes are addressed at early stages of the careers of future educators.

Limitations

Representation of schools. While my study yielded significant data for my research questions, it was impacted by limitations. At the start of my research, I had intended to visit six different schools in which to work with six participants. My goal was to have two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools with a high percentage of underserved students. As I started to reach agreements with principals to research in their schools, a few schools declined the opportunity and several schools did not acknowledge my invitation at all. Compared to the middle and high schools, I had a much stronger response from the elementary schools in my district. Due to the nature of responses I received, I ultimately visited three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Because of a dropped commitment
from one elementary school, I decided to observe two teachers at one of the schools. On a positive note, the teachers at this school taught different subjects and grade levels.

**Pieces of data unavailable.** Another limitation of my study was the school system did not agree to release the observation scores of any teachers. This meant I could not ensure that the teachers I worked with had the highest scores in their schools. Instead, I trusted each principal to select the teacher known to have the greatest influence working with underserved students. I was able to reach an agreement with the first teacher recommended by each principal. Additionally, I was unable to gather all types of data from every teacher. One teacher did not grant an interview because she did not respond to several requests to set up a time. Also, two teachers, including the one who did not give an interview, did not provide a lesson plan in response to several requests. Overall, my study went as planned despite these factors.

**Transferability.** With the insight I gained from this study, it is important to place it in the proper context. The findings came from six participants who were each recognized as high-performing teachers by their principals. They each have a track record of helping underserved students make good academic progress at their schools. Because they work in the same East Tennessee system, the results may not be fully applicable to other teachers in different settings. Despite their limited scope, these findings can serve as a good starting place for stakeholders to analyze the results and decide for themselves how to utilize them to best meet their students’ needs.

**Recommendations**

After conducting this study, there are some recommendations I propose for further action in addressing the needs of underserved students. First, I recommend that the state of Tennessee conduct similar research with high-performing teachers in every school district with comparable
demographics as the setting for this study. The insights gained could be highly beneficial for student success and improving the effectiveness of all educators. The lessons we gain will allow the state to better address the challenges that exist in the state’s lowest-performing schools, many of which are stuck in a pattern of poor performance. It will also help teachers in Tennessee further their abilities in helping all students achieve. Better prepared teachers are critical because “Nearly one in five Tennessee teachers were in their first or second year of teaching in the state during the 2015-16 school year, according to data that schools reported to the federal government” (Bauman, 2018, para. 5).

The challenges associated with inexperienced teachers are even more prevalent at schools with large percentages of underserved students. Recent data shows “In schools with mostly students of color, almost half of teachers were inexperienced, compared with 8 percent of teachers in schools with few students of color” (Bauman, 2018, para. 8). This is far below the U. S. average of approximately 17% of inexperienced teachers working in high-minority schools (Learning Policy Institute, 2018). It is vital that leaders and stakeholders work to ensure that these teachers in challenging settings are prepared and supported in their work from day one. Continuing to explore and implement the strategies being used by high-performing teachers will be instrumental in these teachers’ careers.

To strengthen the success of underserved students, additional areas of research can be pursued. A key area of interest for teacher preparedness would be to research local colleges and universities to learn about the classwork they implement to address the needs of underserved students and compare those to the needs the teachers mentioned during this study. Additionally, researchers could interview leaders of school systems who are having success serving underserved students and discover what factors they believe influence the success they are
experiencing. Also, much could be learned by interviewing students and parents of high-performing teachers who work with predominantly underserved students to determine how they characterize the work these teachers are doing. Finally, similar studies could be conducted with special education teachers or ESL teachers to determine how they attribute their success and the strategies they use with students to help close the achievement gaps which currently exist. All these studies could make a positive impact on the lives of teachers and students.

Summary

This research project has provided insight into the work done by high-performing teachers who work with predominantly underserved students. It is evident that these teachers understood the social aspects of learning. Their focus on cooperative learning and positive interactions among everyone in the classroom helped to create a strong sense of community. Their lessons were also culturally relevant and created an environment in which students wanted to participate. These teachers understood “By supporting the academic community, teachers encourage the sense of belonging that young people crave” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 82). The knowledge gained from this study can have an impact on teachers, principals, and researchers as they continue raising the academic outcomes for underserved students.

While this study had its limitations, they did not significantly deter the intent of this study. Improving the education of underserved students is an important topic as achievement gaps continue to exist among Tennessee’s students according to factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and the presence of learning disabilities. Therefore, several recommendations were provided for further research studies of this topic, including studying teacher education programs, teacher evaluation tools, and the practices of ESL and special education teachers. Until the achievement gaps are closed between underserved students and the
rest of the population, our work will continue in seeing that all students receive the education they need to be successful.
References


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Appendix A

Project COACH Evaluation Rubric
# Project COACH Evaluation Rubric

## 1. Planning and Preparation for Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>4 Highly Effective</th>
<th>3 Effective</th>
<th>2 Improvement Necessary</th>
<th>1 Does Not Meet Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highly Effective</strong></td>
<td>Has an in-depth plan for the year that is tightly aligned with State standards and assessments.</td>
<td>Plans the year so students will meet state standards and be ready for external assessments.</td>
<td>Demonstrates little evidence of a plan that aligns with State standards and test requirements.</td>
<td>Demonstrates no evidence of a plan that aligns with State standards and test requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective</strong></td>
<td>Plans units backwards, aligned with high standards, State assessments, and all of Bloom's/Webb's levels in mind.</td>
<td>Plans most curriculum units backwards with standards, State tests, and some of Bloom's/Webb's levels in mind.</td>
<td>Plans with some connection to larger goals, objectives, and higher-order thinking skills.</td>
<td>Teaches on an ad hoc basis with little or no planning for long-range curriculum goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvement Necessary</strong></td>
<td>Consistently designs lessons/plans based on best practices with clear, measurable goals closely aligned with standards and/or unit outcomes.</td>
<td>Designs lessons based on best practices focused on measurable outcomes aligned with unit goals and state standards.</td>
<td>Plans lessons with unit goals/specific outcomes in mind.</td>
<td>Plans lessons aimed primarily at occupying students or covering textbook chapters. Minimal evidence of a plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does Not Meet Standards</strong></td>
<td>Consistently designs lessons involving an effective mix of well-matched, diverse and multi-cultural instructional and/or community resources.</td>
<td>Designs lessons that use an effective, multi-cultural, and diverse mix of instructional and/or community resources.</td>
<td>Plans lessons that involve a mixture of good and mediocre instructional and/or community resources.</td>
<td>Plans lessons that rely mainly on mediocre and poorly matched instructional and/or community resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a.</strong></td>
<td>Is consistently proactive in ensuring student schedules meet state credit and/or school requirements and individual needs.</td>
<td>Is proactive in ensuring student schedules meet state credit and/or school requirements and individual needs.</td>
<td>Occasionally is proactive in ensuring student schedules meet state credit and/or school requirements and individual needs.</td>
<td>Is not proactive, only reactionary, ensuring student schedules meet state credit and/or school requirements and individual needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## II. Classroom Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Environment</td>
<td>Strategically uses room arrangement, materials, and displays to maximize student learning and engagement.</td>
<td>Organizes classroom furniture, materials, and displays to support student learning.</td>
<td>Organizes furniture and materials to minimally support student learning.</td>
<td>Organizes the classroom with no consideration for student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Expectations</td>
<td>Is direct, specific, and consistent in communicating and enforcing very high behavioral expectations.</td>
<td>Clearly communicates and consistently enforces standards for student behavior.</td>
<td>Announces and posts classroom rules and consequences.</td>
<td>Comes up with reactive rules and punishments as events unfold during the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Relationships</td>
<td>Shows caring, respect, and fairness for all students and builds strong relationships.</td>
<td>Creates a mutually respectful classroom and builds positive relationships with some.</td>
<td>Is fair and respectful toward most students.</td>
<td>Is sometimes unfair and disrespectful to the class; plays favorites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Respect</td>
<td>Wins students’ respect and creates an environment where learning is key and potential disruptions are unusual.</td>
<td>Wins the respect of most students and addresses disruptions appropriately.</td>
<td>Wins the respect of some students but there are regular disruptions in the classroom.</td>
<td>Is not respected by students and the classroom is frequently chaotic and sometimes dangerous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Routines</td>
<td>Successfully embeds routines so that students maintain them.</td>
<td>Evidence of established procedures are in place and maintained by the teacher.</td>
<td>Some routines are evident but not maintained</td>
<td>Has to routinely remind and frequently prompt students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Repertoire</td>
<td>Has a highly effective discipline repertoire of strategies and can hold students’ attention at any time.</td>
<td>Has a repertoire of discipline strategies and can capture and maintain cooperative students.</td>
<td>Has a limited disciplinary repertoire and students are frequently not paying attention.</td>
<td>Has ineffective discipline strategies and constantly struggles to get students’ attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Efficiency</td>
<td>Maximizes coherence, pacing, seamless transitions, and connections.</td>
<td>Maintains academic learning time through coherence, pacing, and smooth transitions</td>
<td>Sometimes loses teaching time due to lack of clarity, interruptions, and inefficient transitions.</td>
<td>Loses a great deal of instructional time because of confusion, interruptions, and ragged transitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Social-emotional (Counselors only)</td>
<td>Implements a program that successfully develops positive interactions and social-emotional skills.</td>
<td>Fosters positive interactions among students and teaches useful social skills.</td>
<td>Often lectures students on the need for good behavior/decisions and makes an example of “bad” students.</td>
<td>Publicly berates “bad” students, blaming them for their poor behavior/decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### III. Delivery of Instruction (Omit for School Psychologists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Expectations</td>
<td>Conveys high expectations and determination and provides multiple opportunities for student mastery.</td>
<td>Conveys students can succeed and it is okay to make mistakes; effective effort, not innate ability, is the key.</td>
<td>Conveys mastery is the responsibility of the individual student.</td>
<td>Fails to demonstrate that all students can learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Goals/Objectives</td>
<td>Shows students exactly what is expected by posing and embedding essential questions, goals, rubrics, and exemplars within the lesson.</td>
<td>Gives students a clear sense of purpose. Posts the unit’s essential questions, objectives, and/or the lesson’s goals.</td>
<td>Tells students the main learning objectives of each lesson.</td>
<td>Begins lessons without giving students a sense of where instruction is headed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Connections</td>
<td>Consistently has students summarize and internalize learning to make connections to prior knowledge, experience, reading, and future learning to apply to real life situations.</td>
<td>Activates students’ prior knowledge and hooks their interest. Has students summarize and reflect on what they have learned.</td>
<td>Asks students to think about real-life applications that connect to what they are studying.</td>
<td>Moves on at the end of each lesson and unit rarely hooking students’ interest or making connections to their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Clarity</td>
<td>Consistently presents material clearly, utilizing effective questions, and well-chosen examples with vivid and appropriate language.</td>
<td>Uses effective questions, clear explanations, appropriate language, and relevant examples to present material.</td>
<td>Sometimes presents material that uses language and explanations that are confusing or inappropriate.</td>
<td>Often presents material in a confusing way, using academic language that is inappropriate or incorrect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Repertoire</td>
<td>Uses multiple effective strategies, materials, and classroom practices that involve and motivate students.</td>
<td>Uses effective strategies, materials, and classroom practices to facilitate student learning.</td>
<td>Uses a limited range of classroom strategies, materials, and practices with mixed success.</td>
<td>Uses only one or two teaching strategies types of materials; fails to reach most students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Engagement</td>
<td>Has students highly engaged in focused work as active learners and problem-solvers.</td>
<td>Has students explore, discuss, and apply the ideas and skills being taught.</td>
<td>Attempts to get students actively involved but some students are disengaged.</td>
<td>Mostly lectures to passive students or has them plod through textbooks and worksheets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Differentiation</td>
<td>Successfully differentiates, scaffolds instruction, and uses flexible groupings.</td>
<td>Differentiates, scaffolds instruction, and uses flexible groupings with some success.</td>
<td>Attempts to differentiate instruction with limited success.</td>
<td>Fails to provide for differentiated instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Flexibility</td>
<td>Skillfully adapts lessons and units to optimize teachable moments. Anticipates and corrects misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Modifies lessons and uses appropriate pacing to maximize teachable moments. Corrects misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Implements lesson plans, sometimes misses teachable moments and rarely corrects misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Is rigid and inflexible with lesson plans, rarely takes advantage of teachable moments and does not correct misunderstandings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Delivery System (Counselors only)</td>
<td>Implements all of the following: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive service, and system supports.</td>
<td>Implements 3 of 4 of the following: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive service, and system supports.</td>
<td>Implements 2 of 4 of the following: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive service, and system supports.</td>
<td>Implements 1 of 4 of the following: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive service, and system supports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### IV. Monitoring, Assessment, and Follow-Up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Diagnosis</td>
<td>Consistently gives students a well-constructed diagnostic assessment up front, and uses the information to adjust lesson/determine student needs.</td>
<td>Frequently diagnoses students’ knowledge and skills up front and adjusts lesson/programming as needed.</td>
<td>Does a quick diagnostic exercise before beginning a unit/lesson.</td>
<td>Begins instruction/meeting/sessions without diagnosing students' skills and knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Checks for Understanding (Omit Psychologists)</td>
<td>Uses a wide variety of effective methods to check for understanding; immediately identifies misconceptions and clarifies.</td>
<td>Uses formative and summative assessment to check for understanding and adjust instruction accordingly.</td>
<td>Uses ineffective methods to check for understanding during instruction or does not adjust instruction.</td>
<td>Rarely checks for understanding or uses only summative assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Self-Assessment (Omit Psychologists)</td>
<td>Requires students to set ambitious learning goals, continuously self-assess, and take responsibility for improving performance.</td>
<td>Monitors students as they set specific learning goals, self-assess, and know where they stand academically.</td>
<td>Urges students to look over their work, see where they had trouble, and aim to improve those areas.</td>
<td>Allows students to move on without assessing and improving problems in their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Recognition</td>
<td>Consistently shares students’ work/thinking with rubrics and commentary and uses it to motivate and direct student achievement.</td>
<td>Shares students’ work/thinking and celebrates their progress with respect to standards.</td>
<td>Posts/shares some ‘A’ student work as an example to others.</td>
<td>Posts/shares only a few samples of student work or none at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Analysis</td>
<td>Collaborates to use interim assessment data, fine-tune teaching, re-teach, and differentiate instruction.</td>
<td>Analyze data from interim assessments to adjust teaching, re-teach, and follow up with students.</td>
<td>Uses students’ assessments to see if there is anything that needs to be re-taught.</td>
<td>Gives tests and moves on without analyzing them and following up with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Support</td>
<td>Promptly identifies students who need additional support and follows through to ensure they receive immediate assistance.</td>
<td>Appropriately refers students for additional support in a timely fashion.</td>
<td>Frequently fails to refer students for additional support in a timely fashion.</td>
<td>Fails to provide and/or appropriately refer students for additional support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Reflection</td>
<td>Uses colleagues and self-reflection on instructional practice to continuously improve instruction.</td>
<td>Continuously reflects on effectiveness of lessons to improve instruction.</td>
<td>Notes some general patterns relating to what might have been taught better.</td>
<td>Fails to reflect on past performance to adjust instructional practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### V. Family and Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher:</th>
<th>4 Highly Effective</th>
<th>3 Effective</th>
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<th>1 Does Not Meet Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Communication</td>
<td>Is deliberate and diligent in informing parents of expectations, concerns or positive news about their children and deals successfully with parent concerns.</td>
<td>Informs parents of expectations, concerns or positive news about their children and responds promptly to parent concerns.</td>
<td>Seldom informs parents of expectations, concerns or positive news about their children and responds promptly to some parent concerns.</td>
<td>Does not inform parents of expectations, concerns or positive news about their children and/or does not respond to parent concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Reporting</td>
<td>Uses multiple opportunities and data sources to give parents feedback on their children’s progress and offers strategies for enrichment or intervention.</td>
<td>Uses multiple opportunities and data sources to give parents feedback on their children’s progress.</td>
<td>Uses report cards, progress reports, and school-wide conferences to tell parents the areas in which their children can improve.</td>
<td>Only uses report cards and progress reports expecting the parents to identify and address areas that need improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Technology</td>
<td>Consistently maintains electronic data and proactively communicates with stakeholders in a timely manner.</td>
<td>Maintains electronic data and communicates with stakeholders in a timely manner.</td>
<td>Inconsistently utilizes current technology to keep stakeholders informed of student progress.</td>
<td>Only utilizes current technology on designated reporting periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Respect</td>
<td>Promotes respect for students’ families and honors their culture, values and beliefs.</td>
<td>Communicates respect for students’ families regardless of different culture and values.</td>
<td>Tries to communicate with respect to the culture and beliefs of students’ families but sometimes is unsuccessful.</td>
<td>Is often insensitive to the culture and beliefs of students’ families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a. Reliability</strong></td>
<td>Completes all professional duties in a punctual and highly efficient manner and maintains meticulous records.</td>
<td>Is punctual and reliable with paperwork, duties, and assignments; keeps accurate records.</td>
<td>Occasionally skips assignments, is late, makes errors in records, and misses paperwork deadlines.</td>
<td>Frequently skips assignments, is late, makes errors in records, and misses paperwork deadlines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Judgment</strong></td>
<td>Uses impeccable judgment, and respects confidentiality while observing appropriate boundaries.</td>
<td>Uses good judgment, and maintains confidentiality while maintaining appropriate boundaries.</td>
<td>Sometimes uses questionable judgment and/or discloses confidential information.</td>
<td>Acts in an ethically questionable manner, uses poor judgment, and/or discloses confidential information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c. Extra duties</strong></td>
<td>Supports the school community by attending after school extra-curricular activities above and beyond minimum requirements.</td>
<td>Attends all required after school extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>Attends some but not all required after school extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>Attends less than 1/2 of the required after school extra-curricular activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d. Teamwork</strong></td>
<td>Takes an active leadership role with multiple teacher teams and/or committees.</td>
<td>Shares responsibility for and contributes to grade level, department and/or committees.</td>
<td>Seldom contributes to teams and/or committees.</td>
<td>Does not contribute to and/or attend required school day meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>e. Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Frequently contributes time, valuable ideas, and expertise that further the school’s mission and the teaching profession.</td>
<td>Is a positive team player and contributes ideas, expertise, and time to the overall mission of the school.</td>
<td>Occasionally contributes in ways aimed at improving the school.</td>
<td>Rarely, if ever, contributes to help improve the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>f. Communication</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates exemplary communication skills in all contexts.</td>
<td>Consistently uses appropriate written and verbal communication.</td>
<td>Inconsistently uses appropriate written and verbal communication.</td>
<td>Frequently uses incorrect grammar, spelling, and inappropriate language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>g. Receptive</strong></td>
<td>Actively seeks out feedback and suggestions and uses them to improve performance.</td>
<td>Listens thoughtfully to other viewpoints and responds constructively to suggestions and criticism.</td>
<td>Is somewhat defensive but open to feedback and suggestions.</td>
<td>Is very defensive about criticism and resistant to changing classroom practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>h. Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>Actively seeks out opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and other stakeholders to improve teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Collaborates regularly with colleagues to plan units, share teaching ideas, and review student work.</td>
<td>Meets occasionally with colleagues to share ideas about teaching and students.</td>
<td>Limits interaction with colleagues and rarely focuses in educational topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>i. Professional Development</strong></td>
<td>Leads and facilitates in best practices to further develop self and others in the teaching profession</td>
<td>Seeks out and applies best practices from colleagues, workshops, professional literature, and other sources.</td>
<td>Occasionally seeks out new ideas for improving teaching and learning but implements on a limited basis.</td>
<td>Rarely, or never, seeks ideas for improving teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>j. Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Is expert in the content area and has a cutting-edge grasp of how students learn.</td>
<td>Knows the content well and has a good grasp of how students learn.</td>
<td>Is somewhat familiar with the content and has a few ideas of ways students develop and learn.</td>
<td>Has little familiarity with the content and few ideas on how to teach it and how students learn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Principal Consent Form
Principal Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT “The lessons learned can help all educators ensure that their classroom practices are aimed at increasing equity in student outcomes and positive learning experiences for all students in their care.”

INTRODUCTION Your school has been chosen as a possible site for research on impactful teaching strategies used by highly effective teachers for historically underserved students (minorities, low-income, English learners, special education students). Each teacher who agrees to participate will take part in a three-step data collection process. The first step will come from a single class period observation utilizing the Project Coach evaluation rubric. The second step will come from examining artifacts from the lesson (lesson plans, student work samples, and classroom teaching aids). The final step will occur during a face-to-face interview to be conducted either during the teacher’s planning period or after school.

PARTICIPANTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY I would like each principal to select five teachers with a track record for student achievement who are also considered high-quality among the school community and rank them by effectiveness. I would like the teachers to be identified by subject(s) and grade level(s) taught. This will give me a diverse pool of teachers to choose from for my 1 participant as there may be some who choose not to participate.

RISKS There are no known physical risks to participating in this research study. A minimal amount of stress may occur as you formulate the list of possible teacher candidates.

BENEFITS The benefit of participating in this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding instructional strategies that are instrumental in improving the educational outcomes of historically underserved students.

CONFIDENTIALITY The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study and his advisor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym of your choice which will be used to refer to you throughout the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Travis Jolley, at (423)315-2273 or tnjolley@cn.edu.

CONSENT I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant’s Signature _______________________________ Date ______________
Investigator’s Signature _______________________________ Date ______________
Appendix C

Participant Consent Form
Participant Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT “The lessons learned can help all educators ensure that their classroom practices are aimed at increasing equity in student outcomes and positive learning experiences for all students in their care.”

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in a short research study. The purpose of this study is to determine impactful teaching strategies used by highly effective teachers for working with historically underserved students (minorities, low-income, English learners, special education students).

PARTICIPANTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY Your participation in the study will be documented through an observation of one class period utilizing the Project Coach rubric, an examination of artifacts related to the instruction (lesson plans, teaching aids, and student work samples), and a face-to-face interview with 8 questions about teaching strategies for working with underserved students. Once the interview is complete, you will be asked to affirm whether the summaries provided by the researcher fit or did not fit your experience.

RISKS There are no known physical risks to participating in this study. A minimal amount of stress may occur during data collection due to the nature of the study.

BENEFITS The benefit of participating in this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding instructional strategies that are instrumental in improving the educational outcomes of historically underserved students.

CONFIDENTIALITY The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study and his advisor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym of your choice which will be used throughout the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Travis Jolley, at (423)315-2273 or tnjolley@cn.edu.

PARTICIPATION Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.
Participant’s signature __________________________________ Date ___________________
Investigator’s signature __________________________________ Date ___________________

CONSENT FOR RECORDING I agree to allow audio recording of my face-to-face interview with the researcher.

Participant’s signature __________________________________ Date ___________________
Appendix D

Potential Artifacts for Project COACH
Potential Artifacts for Project COACH

Domain I: Planning and Preparation for Learning

- Lesson plans
  - Incorporates brain-based learning strategies
  - Incorporates levels of Blooms/Webb’s
  - Consistent and timely submission
- Unit plans
- Attendance and Participation in all planning sessions
- Curriculum Maps
- SMART Goals
- Formative Assessments (that incorporate Blooms/Webb’s)
- Plans for student engagement
- Learning styles inventories
- Notes from grade level meetings
- Alignment with State standards
- Standards checklists
- Plans for room arrangement

Domain II: Classroom Management

- SWPB Support – adhering to plan
- Classroom management plans / log of strategies used to foster positive classroom climate
- Evidence of positive student referrals
- Student job assignments
- Discipline plan
- Incentive plans
- Classroom rules
- Individual student behavior plans
- Parent complaints that have been shared with teacher
- Discipline referrals/frequency / Office Calls
- Letters of commendation

Domain III: Delivery of Instruction

- Posted essential questions
- Posted lesson objectives and agenda
- Rubrics
- Exemplars of student work posted monthly
- IEP Implementation and collaboration
- How are student groupings determined?
- Implementation of pacing guides
- Instructional calendars
- Plans for differentiation
- Evidence of strategies implemented to support school wide goal to improve literacy skills
- Plans for various levels of questioning
Appendix E

Teacher Interview Questions
Teacher Interview Questions

1. How long have you worked at schools with a high percentage of underserved students?

2. As a high-performing teacher, how do you attribute your success in these schools?

3. Which strategies have you found to be the most successful when working in the classroom with underserved students?

4. Which strategies have you found to be the least successful when working in the classroom with underserved students?

5. How well did your teacher education program prepare you for the realities of your current job?

6. How effective have the supports provided by your school and school system been in shaping your success?

7. What supports do you feel are the most pressing for ensuring better outcomes for underserved students to achieve equity?

8. What advice would you give for teachers unfamiliar with working with underserved students?
Appendix F

Data Coding Chart – Positive Disposition
Data Coding Chart – Positive Disposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
<th>Secondary Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • The teachers were receptive and cordial in agreeing to participate in the study through e-mail  
• The teachers’ responses in the interview were sincere and upbeat in nature  
• Mrs. Simpson was welcoming to the secretary who showed up to tell her a student was moving  
• Mrs. Rogers had a pleasant tone of voice and respectful interaction with Mrs. Ortiz as she assisted in gathering materials.  
• Mrs. Simpson used her opportunity to tell her entire class how much this boy who was moving had meant to her this year  
• Mrs. Williams always spoke with a gentle voice  
• She interacted with all the students in a kind, helpful manner while they were building balloon cars  
• The teachers treated all students with respect  
• Mrs. Stephens said, “this is a safe place to make mistakes” & “don’t give up.”  
• Mrs. Thomas said, “you learn something every day if you pay attention” | • Respectful communication with the researcher  
• Gracious behavior with coworkers in presence of students  
• Took advantage of opportunity to turn an interruption into a positive moment  
• Modeling of proper behavior for students  
• Equal treatment with high standards  
• Encouraging words to students  
• Enforcing the concept the teacher is caring | • Culture of kindness developed and practiced in the classroom  
• Positive climate can prevail in all situations  
• Motivating and engaging environment for students to learn and grow |
| Mrs. Williams’ success - providing enjoyable, authentic learning |
| Mrs. Thomas learned the importance of building relationships with students and recognizing trauma |
| Mrs. Baker - pictures of all students on door. Beside photos was the word be and many uplifting words |
| Mrs. Simpson - “#Yet” in big letters on wall. She said this indicated that struggles were temporary & success can happen |
| Mrs. Thomas’ poster - “cherish every memory, love every moment, embrace every possibility.” |
| Mrs. Rogers’ poster - “Be Excellent” above her door. |
| Teachers used praise to recognize students who were showing good behavior |
| There was considerably more praise in the classrooms than calling down students’ misbehavior |
| Instilling a personal responsibility for learning in a positive manner |
| Capturing student attention in a positive way |
| Concerned and caring educator leading the classroom |
| Students reminded of positive goals in the classroom |
| Showing students that learning is a journey that is not always quick or easy |
| Teachers wanted to give attention to students doing the right thing |
| Teachers choose praise over calling down students but did this when praise did not correct actions |
| Positive reinforcement is the method of choice to maintain a positive classroom culture |
| Every student is treated with value and expected to take on responsibility for learning |
| The teacher is leading students to positive outcomes for their well-being |