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A LOOK AT THE BEGINNING: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND THE SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR NEW TEACHERS FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

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Scott Merkel
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I clearly remember the excitement of beginning my career as a teacher. I approached my first school year with energy, optimism and the passion to make significant differences for students. I imagine and hope that every new teacher similarly enters the profession. Not far removed from these positive emotions lurked fear, held behind only by naivété. Through reflection I am now able to see how challenging it was to be a new teacher and how much I learned from experience and many mistakes.

My first year began with a four-day induction program run by district leaders. Surrounded by other new employees, mostly teachers, we sat and were bombarded with information from a variety of departments, mostly dealing with district specific policies and procedures. We were given instructions on logging into the computer network and how to call for a substitute when necessary. Like most new teachers, I was also assigned a mentor, who was open to provide help, whenever I had a question or needed help with curriculum. Much of that possibility of assistance was eliminated by the fact that I did not realize what questions I needed to ask. In the end, I just learned on my own.

Certainly much of my personal beginning experience as a new teacher was common and necessary. Teachers need to learn policies and procedures. Little, if any time at all, however, was devoted to curriculum, instruction or student achievement. I can only imagine the belief existed that the mentor would help in these areas, but know that this person was not trained in any way or given expectations for this focus. As we continue in the era of No Child Left Behind and high stakes testing, schools, teachers and
students will not have a cushion of time to learn from experience. It is imperative that teachers enter the classroom, experience or not, prepared to educate all students. This task is becoming increasingly challenging.

**Problem Statement**

The impact of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers reaches well beyond the individual classroom and school of the teachers themselves. A failure to support new teachers and address weaknesses appears to create a cycle that leads to higher levels of teacher attrition causing districts to spend money to recruit and hire additional new teachers. In the end, students lose through repeated time with inexperienced teachers and districts funneling money away from the classroom.

Teacher success with student achievement has been identified as a major factor influencing teacher attrition. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2008), a teacher's decision to leave a particular school is influenced by a variety of factors, but one consistent key is the level of success teachers encounter in raising students' academic performances. Teacher attrition rates have been identified to be around 30% within the first three to five years of entering the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

In the current era of high stakes testing and accountability, this teacher success with student achievement is increasingly imperative. Under No Child Left Behind schools are responsible for demonstrating student achievement and annual yearly growth. Schools need immediately effective new teachers to help decrease achievement gaps and assure school success in meeting annual yearly progress goals. It is estimated that it takes up to five years for new teachers to maximize student learning (Alliance for Excellent
This creates a two step issue for educational leaders: 1) they need to support new teachers for immediate student success and achievement and, 2) as noted, supporting new teacher success can aid in the retention of those teachers. Subsequently, if those new teachers are not finding success with student learning, they become more likely to leave the classroom. This, in turn, creates a cycle negatively impacting student achievement. Continuous turnover of classroom teachers reintroduces the issue of strengths and weaknesses and starts the clock of one to five years for teachers to gain maximum learning over for new teachers to gain the experience to maximize student learning.

Not all teacher attrition is bad, nor are all new teachers ineffective. Teacher attrition at the rate it exists, however, is an expensive issue for school districts (Harrell, Leavell, van Tassel, & McKee, 2004). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimates that urban school districts spend $70,000 a year on costs associated with teacher transfers, whether they leave the district or not, and that nonurban schools spend $33,000 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). These are school level costs. It is estimated that at the district level, urban schools spend another $8,750 and nonurban schools spend $6,250 on teacher recruitment, hiring and induction for each teacher who leaves the district (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Altogether the cumulative costs to hire, recruit and train replacement teachers, for all schools and districts across the country exceed $7 billion.

Concern over new teacher assimilation into the profession has not gone unnoticed. It is widely recognized that support is necessary for new teacher success (Kaufman, 2002; Ward, 2001; Wong, 2002). State legislatures have even taken action to mandate support
for new teachers. The State of Michigan passed PA 335 (1993), amended by PA 289
(1995) with Section 1526 requiring all new classroom teachers to be mentored by an
experienced teacher for their first three years in the profession. School districts have
taken a two-step approach, mandating thorough induction programs for new employees
followed by such mentor assignments for those new to the profession. Due to the
differences that exist between school districts, contractually and functionally, induction
programs are logical seminars to acclimate new employees to a system (Wong, 2002). In
addition, individual mentors for new teachers provide a comfortable resource where a
veteran teacher can provide answers and support, easing the load of a school principal.

Despite such implementation and continued development of these programs,
research indicates that additional support for new teachers is necessary. According to
Harry Wong (2000), mentors need to fill the role of a “tutor” who can more closely guide
new teachers through their initial year (p. 46). This focus is not contained only to school
district policies. Researchers also criticize new teacher preparation regarding theory and
curriculum. David Kaufmann, et al. (2002), emphasized that new teachers received little
or no guidance regarding statewide curriculum and required assessment procedures.
Additional studies report that new teachers lack the ability to “bridge theory and
practice…” in the creation of high level learning environments (Freiburg, 2002, p. 56),
and Helen Ward (2001) goes so far as to suggest that many new teachers require a
“survival guide”(p. 13). These studies show much more for new teachers to understand
and implement than is currently, or possible, for local district programs to address. If
educators truly receive quality pre-teacher training, why is such intense induction and
continued development and support immediately necessary for new teachers?
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the patterns and similarities of K-12 administrator perspectives of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Three primary questions directed this study:

1. How do principals supervise and evaluate new teachers?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers as perceived by principals?
3. How do principals perceive the adequacy of professional support for new teachers?

For each question, the same sub-question was asked: What differences exist between rural, urban and suburban administrators? The following diagram depicted in Figure 1 conceptually illustrated the study.

![Diagram of Influences of New Teacher Skills Conceptual Model]

Figure 1: Influences of New Teacher Skills Conceptual Model
Determining the extent to which new teachers can help students achieve local, state, and federal benchmarks and their readiness for teaching is not easy (Williams, 2001). Understanding the strengths and weakness, however, from the perspective of those who hire and evaluate, may guide the development of teacher training curriculum and experiences, as well as the necessary content of school districts’ induction programs. Extensive research exists to highlight, evaluate and outline necessary ways to support new teachers (Halford, 1998; Johnson, 2004; Keller, 2006; Klausmeier, 1994; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Schlichte, Yssell, Merbler, 2004; Textley, 1996; Watkins, 2005; Weasmer & Woods, 2000). A similar body of literature exists promoting areas to improve teacher training (Allington, 2005; Andrew 1997; Athanases & Martin, 2006; Ball, 2000; Clark & Rust, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fecho, 2000; Hess, 2005; Hunt, Simonds, & Cooper, 2002; Korthagen, 2003; Mueller & Skamp, 2003; Nieto, 2000; Pietig, 1990; Shulman, 1990; Stotsky, 2006; Wineburg, 2006; Zeichner, 2006). Awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers can help empower administrators and teacher educators to improve upon the training and existing support structures for these professionals. Empowerment can be an essential element in the purpose to undertake research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Addressing this issue can serve educators and students in a variety of ways, creating a domino effect of other positive outcomes. The most important and immediate effect may be increased student learning, defined as annual yearly growth in achievement, in the classroom of new teachers. This increased success may lower attrition rates among teachers and then lower the necessary spending on support for additional new teachers. In the end, the money saved could be diverted back to the classrooms for students.
Theoretical Framework

This study used a qualitative approach to focus on perceptions of elementary principals' of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. One major appeal of qualitative research was that it can create a more detailed picture of human life than any other type of research (Charles & Mertler, 2002). In conjunction with exploring the perceptions of strengths and weaknesses I looked into their perceptions of the existing support structures for new teachers and the ways they supervise and evaluate the new professionals. According to Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (2000), qualitative researchers are more interested in identifying the social process underlying a social phenomenon and by which results are created, rather than simply measuring and describing such results. The combination of these three areas allowed for a complete look into not only what principals see as strengths and weaknesses, but also the extent to which principals use evaluation procedures are used to support and improve instruction.

A phenomenological approach guided this qualitative study. Phenomenological studies are for the purpose of examining the people's lived experiences surrounding a central phenomenon (Hatch, 2002), and to describe the experiences of several individuals around this phenomenon (Creswell, 1999). Researchers believe that understanding these "lived experiences" help develop understanding of patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakis, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2003).

According to Giorgi (1997), phenomenology categorizes the consciousness of individuals and in its most complete sense, gives a complete picture of the lived experiences of that individual as it relates to the phenomenon. Anything related to
consciousness is of interest to phenomenological research, whether the object is real, imagined, tangible or measurable (Van Manen, 1990). This study began with the principals perceived strengths and weaknesses of new teachers, then hoped to use teacher evaluation instruments and completed new teacher evaluations to complete and support their perceptions. Due to limited number of returned evaluation instruments and completed evaluations, the study focused on the perceptions of the principals. This is discussed further in chapter 3. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the complete picture of the experience, examining from a variety of angles and perspectives until a complete understanding of the experience is achieved (Moustakas, 1994).

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of elementary principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers, their methodology of supervision and evaluation, and perceptions of support structures within their respective districts to assist them. Principals were selected using a purposeful and criterion sample based on three criteria: minimum experience, supervisory skill and student achievement.

To fit the experience category, for example, principals must have had at least five years of administrative experience. It was expected that a participant of the study meeting this criteria with five years of administrative experience would have different views than one having 20 years of experience. The availability of administrators with matching or even similar years of experience severely limits the possible pool of participants. Therefore, five years was decided as a minimum requirement.
The category of supervisory skill opens participant recommendation for subjectivity. While there is no universal measure of skill of an administrator, all principals are evaluated by a superior. It may be assumed that those administrators with experience have performed well enough to maintain their positions. Further, it was assumed, for this study, that those who supervise and evaluate these principals have sufficient knowledge of quality leadership and the performance of their employees. To qualify a candidate for this category, therefore, recommendations were sought by the school district leader responsible for supervising elementary principals. Certainly this allowed for variance in the judgment of such leaders and can create a limitation of that study worth noting.

The final category of participant selection presenting limitation was a minimum level of student achievement on state math and language arts assessments. Only schools meeting a minimum performance of 80% were considered. While it is expected that the principal has influence over the achievement levels of students, there are other factors that contribute to this success as well. These were expected to vary among the schools from which the participants for the study come.

Another possible limitation of the study came in the possible collection of completed evaluations for new teachers. The researcher requested these, with names and any possible identifiable markings removed, from the participants at the time of the interview. The collection of these documents as data for the study depended upon the participants’ willingness and comfort in providing them. It was possible that one example may not be collected from each participant, limiting the number of documents to be used in comparison and data analysis. In fact, only two completed evaluations were
returned by the time of the data analysis. To avoid assumptions made on limited data, and because they were secondary pieces of data, they were not included in the discussion and analysis. The sample of this study presented limitations on the ability to generalize findings to a broader context. Each of these categories allowed for variation and possible extraneous variables.

Definition of Terms

The purpose of this section was to clarify for the reader terms that were used throughout this study.

**Evaluation Forms**—the structure or format for measuring and/or reporting teacher performance as required by district policy or Association agreement (Ponticell & Zepeda, 2004).

**Mentor**—colleague who is assigned to assist a new teacher in adapting to their new job. Assistance is advocated for a variety of areas from curriculum integration and general pedagogy to adjusting to and learning school building and district procedures and cultures (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Halford, 1999; Klausmeier, 1994; Littleton, Tally-Foos & Wolaver, 1992; Wong, 2001).

**New Teacher**—new teachers are referred to as those teachers who are in their first three years of teaching following a teacher education program (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Kaufman, 2002; Ward, 2001; Wong, 2002).
**New Teacher Support**—programs and strategies utilized by schools and school districts to help new teachers improve their performance in classroom instruction and increase job satisfaction (See Table 2).

**Student Learning**—the measure of a student’s growth of knowledge and/or ability, usually through formalized, standard assessment (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

**Supervision and Evaluation**—the processes by which an administrator determines the effectiveness of a classroom teacher with the intent on providing constructive feedback for professional growth (Bernstein, 2004).

**Teacher Attrition**—teachers who leave their position or profession within the first three to five years (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Harrell, et. al., 2004).

**Urban, Rural and Suburban Schools and School Districts**—these categories of schools and school districts was applied using the 2000 US Census definition of urbanized and rural areas.

a. **Urban School and School District** - according to this definition, “an urbanized area generally consists of a large central place and adjacent densely settled census blocks that together have a total population of at least 50,000 for urbanized areas” (Census 2000 Urban and Rural Classification, 2002). Urban schools and districts, therefore, was any whose corresponding location has a corresponding urban population above 50,000.

b. **Suburban School and School District** – the US Census does not directly define or identify suburban areas. For the purpose of this study, a suburban school was identified as one located in a district that is adjacent or close in geographic
proximity, within 20 miles, to an urban area and having population inside urbanized areas, but falling short of the 50,000 population criteria. The selection of the distance from an identified urban area was a subjective choice of the researcher.

c. Rural School and School District – the US Census defines rural areas as “territory, population and housing units not classified as urban” (Census 2000 Urban and Rural Classification, 2002). Schools and school districts for this category was selected based on areas that fit the Census rural area and are at least 20 miles away from the nearest urban area.

Organization of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. This chapter presented background information on the problem, the purpose of the study with research questions, the theoretical framework of study, limitations and definition of terms. Chapter two outlines and synthesizes current literature relevant to the study. This literature focused on quality of teacher training programs, traits of effective instruction and support structures for new teachers. Chapter three drafts the methodology for the proposed study including details of the sample to be selected, data collection methods, and a plan for data analysis.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In exploring the literature related to strengths and weaknesses of new teachers, there were a variety of topics upon which researchers focus. The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of school administrators regarding these strengths and weaknesses. The literature, however, was not as direct. Topics related to the capabilities, successes and challenges of new teachers, varied based on areas upon which researchers believe changes should occur. The effort to review the literature concerning teacher education, specifically the effectiveness of new teachers was immense. The effectiveness of new teachers could not be separated from the effectiveness and quality of teacher training programs themselves. Due to the political mandates for reform of teacher training, highly qualified status and the accountability on demonstrating positive impact on student learning, the political aspect of the issue could not be avoided (Berry, 2005). Battles over improvement in teacher education manifested themselves in debates over training in general instruction versus specific subject areas, impact and structure of practicum and field experiences and teacher training program accreditation. Much of the literature was philosophical debate over the best way to meet the demands for accountability and measuring this positive impact.

There were few studies, in support of this current research, that seek input from K-12 administrators regarding the strengths and weakness or effectiveness of new teachers. Due to the challenge of defining teacher quality, there was little research
measuring this effectiveness. The challenges and role of a new teacher to adjust to immersion in one’s own classroom was equally daunting (Kaufman, 2002; Ward, 2001; Wong, 2002). Success of new teachers and success of teacher training was not limited to the measure of test scores and student achievement (Cochran-Smith, 2005). In an attempt to address these challenges and support new teachers, school districts are faced with the need to understand the competencies of new teachers. Understanding the general strengths and weaknesses of new teachers and support structure options to promote new teacher success can allow school districts to positively guide and impact a teacher’s first years. This can increase student achievement and help save district money associated with teacher attrition and turnover (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Harrell, et. al., 2004).

Chapter two presents the literature by topic. Research and debate over necessary development to teacher training programs are outlined. This is broken down by subtopic. These sub-topics are pedagogy versus subject matter debate, cultural awareness and responsiveness, and general teacher education reform. Next, the literature used to develop the background and coding for effective instruction is presented, followed by the research for the research question dealing with support structures for new teachers.

Teacher Training: General Pedagogy vs. Subject Matter Knowledge

One of the most common and basic debates in improving teacher education was whether to increase subject matter knowledge or teacher pedagogical skill. There was a body of research that suggests increased subject matter knowledge may increase student achievement (Shulman, 1990), or was the most important component of what beginning
teachers need to know (Stotsky, 2006). Jeanne Pietig (1997) also refuted the claims of subject matter influence, believing that this defined education too narrowly.

Bob Fecho (2000) supported the pedagogy argument advocating for more emphasis on critical inquiry. Fecho (2000) presented four vignettes demonstrating the need for new teachers to be able to not only reflect critically on their own practices and student learning, but to also look upon traditional norms of teaching. To do this, schools of education need to restructure relationships with P-12 schools, as well the traditional structures of coursework (Ball, 2000). These new relationships allowed student teachers who were benefiting from a more intense pre-service experience to be placed in a setting that supported their struggle to develop critical theory skills.

Fecho (2000) was not the only teacher educator researcher to advocate for modifications to the student teaching field experience. A group of teacher educators from Brigham Young University, collaborated with teachers from a local district, presented a study to support a system of student teaching partnership, rather than individualized placement (Bullough, et. al., 2002). Their study was conducted with teacher education students in their second semester who were assigned to urban schools to teach on Thursdays and Fridays for thirteen weeks. Students were randomly assigned to one of two groups. The first group had students assigned to a single mentor for the duration of the internship. Students in the second group were randomly placed in partnerships and each set was assigned to a single mentor (Bullough, et. al., 2002).

Three types of data were gathered for the study, mentor and pre-service teacher interviews, pre-service teacher time logs and transcripts of planning sessions (Bullough, et. al., 2002). The authors found that all mentors and pre-service teachers had positive
experiences. The data indicated, however, that those who participated in the partner
placements had more positive experiences (Bullough, et. al., 2002). According to the
researchers, the partner placed student teachers enjoyed greater control over not only how
they would teach, but what they would teach as well. Partner teachers were more
engaged in planning than single placed teachers. Partner teachers engaged in a greater
variety of roles within the classroom, where single placed teachers occupied a more
intense role of direct instruction. Possibly the greatest difference, the authors noted, was
the kind and quality of support available to partner teachers. “Not only did they give
emotional support to one another, they became interested and invested in one another’s
success” (Bullough, et. al., 2002, p. 74).

While the authors of this study recognized that the partner assignments might not
be realistic training for the isolated role of direct instruction they will encounter entering
the teaching profession, the benefits outweighed any limitations (Bullough, et. al., 2002).
The final advantage of this internship format they believed that justified further
exploration was the reduction of numbers of required mentors. This allowed for the
concentration of the energy and support required in any mentor and supervision program
(Bullough, et. al., 2002). Andrea Mueller and Keith Skamp (2003) completed a two year
longitudinal study of student teachers with a very different focus. They utilized the
extensive data from interviews with pre-service teachers as a direct reflection of ways to
improve their instruction (Mueller & Skamp, 2003). The presentation format of the
article directly addressed and reflected this intention. The authors divided the transcripts
into categories and highlight examples from the interviews that they have interpreted as
particularly relevant. Following each participant quotation was analysis from the

16
researcher, which is then followed by a section titled: “How These Reflections Inform My Practice” (Mueller & Skamp, 2003). Some of the categories identified by the authors included Learning to teach through coursework, Learning to teach through experience in classrooms, and the challenges of my own classroom (Mueller & Skamp, 2003). While the clear focus of this study was to provide direct reflection to the authors’ immediate practice as a teacher educator, they finished their writing drawing broader conclusions for teacher education at large (Mueller & Skamp, 2003). Four topics were identified targeting the improvement of teacher training: 1) teacher educators play an important role in facilitating discussions of what it means to teach early on in teacher training programs, 2) it is absolutely vital for teacher educators to solicit regular feedback from teacher candidates about their coursework learning, 3) it is important for teacher candidates to share experience upon returning from fieldwork placements and learn from listening to one another, and 4) it is critical for teacher educators to gauge the confidence and feelings from teacher candidates as they enter their first year of professionalism and to find ways to maintain feedback from them to improve the training for future students (Mueller & Skamp, 2003).

Within practicum experiences, Christopher Clark and Frances Rust (2006) have developed a “heuristic device” they helped teacher educators and New York University design and administer assessments for learning. The focus was on learning-centered assessment, premised that every assessment event should be analyzed for its potential as a learning opportunity (Clark & Rust, 2006). Each assessment event was broken down into three sub-events: preparing for the assessment, during an assessment and reflection on an assessment. For each of the assessment phases instructors outlined the role that all
stakeholders have in the assessment. These stakeholders were the student teachers, college faculty, college administrators, cooperating teachers/supervisors, and schoolchildren (Clark & Rust, 2006). The faculty collaborated regarding the assessments and the objectives outlined through the device. If disagreements exist, assessments were modified and revised to meet the learning and curricular goals (Clark & Rust, 2006).

Focusing on the need for a specific course addition to enhance teacher training, Stephen Hunt, Cheri Simonds and Pamela Cooper (2002) outlined the necessity for a communication skills course for all pre-service teachers. To support their argument, they presented three major functions that teachers perform in the classroom; they manage the classroom, facilitate learning and make decisions. They also highlighted four content standards from national accreditation organizations that require the ability to communicate effectively (Hunt, Simonds, & Cooper, 2002). “Notice how many of these are communication skills or are skills dependent on an ability to communicate effectively such as presenting information in a way students understand, using a variety of instructional strategies…for a diverse audience, and communicating with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents” (Hunt, Simonds, & Cooper, 2002, p. 83). The authors presented a specific course outline that could be added to the curriculum of a teacher education course (Hunt, Simonds & Cooper, 2002).

Deborah Ball (2000) approached this debate from both perspectives and outlined three problems necessary to meet the challenge of preparing teachers who adequately know the content as well as the ability to help students learn. The first problem was identifying the content knowledge that matters for teaching. According to Ball, this was not as simple as modifying or updating curriculum (2000). She contended that
understanding the knowledge that matters to teach must begin with the practice of teaching. “To improve our sense of what content knowledge matters in teaching, we would need to identify core activities of teaching, such as figuring out what students know...and deciding among alternative courses of action” (Ball, 2000, p. 244).

The second problem Ball identified was assuming that those with superior content knowledge are able to use it in teaching (2000). The pedagogical skill is necessary to deconstruct one’s own knowledge to see the critical components and understand how they themselves came to understanding (Ball, 2000). She further stressed this self understanding because teachers must assess student growth and understanding and work backward when student challenges arise (Ball, 2000).

The third issue needing attention was how to create learning opportunities to increase content knowledge that allows teachers to learn how to teach it as well (Ball, 2000). Ball questioned “How can teachers be prepared to sufficiently know content flexibly so that they are able to make use of content knowledge with a wide variety of students across a wide range of environments?” (2000, p. 246).

Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) addressed Ball’s (2000) questions regarding the need for a stronger link between content and pedagogy. She called for “a tight coherence and integration among courses and between course work and clinical work in schools...” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 306). Collaboration between content and pedagogy allows students to learn how specific teaching methods are connected. It would not be the student’s responsibility alone to figure out how to apply theory to content material (Darling-Hammond, 2006). A second feature of an advanced teacher education program, according to Darling-Hammond (2006) was “extensive, well-supervised clinical
experience linked to course work using pedagogies that link theory and practice” (p. 307). This would allow students to practice linking theory and experience, but would require major changes to the standard practicum experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006). While most traditional teacher training programs are front loaded with class work and study of theory, followed by a field experience for application, this recommendation required extensive time in the field to observe and test theory throughout the entire program. This would be followed by at least a full year of highly supervised student teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This cannot happen without a progressive relationship with schools (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Consistent with Fecho’s (2000) recommendation, Darling-Hammond’s (2006) ideas called for teacher candidates to be studying and implementing current and innovative pedagogy. This requires a close relationship with schools to assure that those supervising teachers are familiar and utilizing these methods so they can support the pre-service teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Fred Korthagen (2004) simplified this debate and presents two questions central to determining the pedagogy of teacher education: 1) what are the essential qualities of a good teacher, and 2) how can teacher preparation programs help people become good teachers? He outwardly stated that his purpose is not to answer these questions, but rather to present a framework for discussions of a norm for educating teacher candidates (Korthagen, 2004). Korthagen (2004) presented a model of levels and values within people that can be influences and are necessary for decision making in education. These layers were presented as an “onion model”, moving from external to internal competencies. They were environment, behavior, competencies, beliefs, identity, and
mission (Korthagen, 2004). This complicated example was relevant here because these competencies are, or should be according to Korthagen (2004), involved in every decision a teacher makes. In addition, he writes, “We should not forget, however, that a ‘good teacher’ will not always show ‘good teaching’” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 87).

According to this philosophical argument, more emphasis on the inner levels of professional identity and mission will reduce friction and allow teachers to apply more consistently to all decisions they make when teaching. In addition, according to Korthagen (2004), little attention has been devoted to them.

Cultural Awareness and Responsiveness

Current literature recognized that improving the quality of teacher training and future teachers was not as simple as adding courses or increasing subject matter knowledge. One complexity of teaching and education was the dynamic nature of society and the diversity of students enrolled in American schools. According to Linda Darling-Hammond (2006):

In the classrooms most beginning teachers will enter, at least 25% of students live in poverty and many of them lack basic food, shelter, and health care; from 10% to 20% have identified learning disabilities; 15% speak a language other than English...and about 40% are members of racial/ethnic ‘minority’ group... (p. 301)

Due to these intense societal and cultural dynamics, the colleges of education must prepare students to teach content, but pedagogy takes on a new role within cultural contexts. Teachers must foster learning within complex classrooms serving increasingly diverse students (Darling-Hammond, 2006).
Carl Grant and Maureen Gillette (2006) presented their ideas of characteristics necessary for teachers to be effective teachers for all students. They advocated for schools of education to make social justice part of their teaching and for "culturally responsive" teaching (Grant & Gillette, 2006). This means that all teachers believe that all students can learn and hold high expectations, build a "community of learners" and connect with families, be learners themselves and vary instruction for different needs, know that students have different skills, and be willing to be introspective about themselves and their teaching and not afraid to address -isms in monitoring beliefs and action regarding prejudice (Clark & Gillette, 2006). Grant and Gillette (2006) further outlined a number of skills for teacher candidates to learn to be "culturally responsive" and to create a learning environment that embraces it. This begins with learning a multicultural pedagogy that is different from traditional ones developed by those with a White, male psychology. In addition, they advocated that teachers and teacher candidates develop a knowledge base about the community to help them understand the learners they serve (Clark & Gillette, 2006). While it was not stated directly, these skills and experiences are such that they should be transferable to any school and community.

Grant and Gillette’s (2006) ideas paralleled that of a group of teacher educators from the University of California, Los Angeles for social justice in education. “An effective urban teacher cannot be skilled in the classroom but lack skills and commitment to equity, access, and democratic participation” (Oakes, et. al., 2002, p. 227). These authors, however, focused more specifically on targeting education of urban teachers as a choice for those willing to seek a career in urban areas (Oakes, et. al., 2002). This clearly focused the education of these future teachers on skills necessary to teach urban students,
rather than a general reform to teach diversity to all teacher candidates. In targeting those
destined for urban education, they advocated an educational program structured much
differently than the traditional teacher training (Oakes, et. al., 2002). “Accordingly, we
have structured our University of California, Los Angeles, pre-service program so that
teacher learning can be situated within the larger context of urban schools and
communities…” (Oakes, et. al., 2002, p. 230). The authors recognized this course of
study requires a commitment to urban teaching and that due to the challenges of teaching
in these environments many teachers leave these schools or the profession altogether.
“The first and one of the most crucial sites for urban teacher learning exists in the
interactions around the decision to choose a teaching career in urban schools” (Oakes, et.
al., 2002, p. 230). Based on this recognition, they advocated deliberate efforts to recruit
those teachers committed to this calling. Once recruited the authors reported that
involvement in creating professional learning opportunities, where supported
opportunities for practice develop, can influence teachers to remain teaching in urban
schools (Oakes, et. al., 2002).

A study of a five year teacher training program targeting the teaching of diversity
supported the ideas of the UCLA group (Athanases & Martin, 2006). This study used
focus groups to highlight their feelings of preparedness to teach in diverse classrooms
following a diversity immersion preparation program (Althanases & Martin, 2006). The
students in the program completed a cross-cultural language and development program or
a bilingual cross-cultural language and academic development program designed to
increase knowledge of cultural diversity and prepare students to effectively teach diverse
populations with developing English proficiency (Althanases & Martin, 2006). Data
were triangulated from year-end assessments, surveys, interviews, and coursework. Participants consistently reported that the teacher education coursework provided a strong foundation to advocate for equity (Althanases & Martin, 2006). Participants specifically noted that the coursework repetition of and attention to theory and practice in equity and diversity helped them in the classroom (Althanases & Martin, 2006). In direct support of Oakes, et. al., 14 (37%) of the teachers in the program reported the program’s development of cultural knowledge and sensitivity as key to being advocates and a community study was praised to help new teachers learn perspectives on school’s local cultures (Althanases & Martin, 2006). The authors concluded that this study served as a marker of what can be accomplished when a program offers an integrated approach to preparing teachers who are heading toward a profession in an urban or multi-cultural area (Althanases & Martin, 2006). This reinforces, however, the emphasis by Oakes, et. al. (2002), of the necessary commitment to urban teaching.

Sonia Nieto (2000) presented broader ideas to place diversity as an emphasis for teacher education programs for all students. She suggested, like the other articles presented, that programs first take a stand on social justice and diversity. She recognized that most school mission statements include lofty statements regarding diversity, but then criticized them for failing to put them into daily practice (Nieto, 2000). She believed that when schools begin to focus on these issues and directly have students confront the challenges of a pluralistic and changing society, they are more likely to have a program that promote equity to all students (Nieto, 2000).

Her second recommendation was to make social justice ubiquitous in teacher education. According to Nieto (2000), when all issues are viewed through a lens of
social justice with a focus of teaching students of all backgrounds, then diversity gains a place of prominence within every aspect of the teacher education curriculum. Within this point, however, Nieto (2000) contradicted the ideas of Oakes, et. al. (2002) and Althanases & Martin (2006). She writes that “as a profession we can no longer afford to teach only specialized teachers about children of diverse backgrounds. All courses need to be infused with content related to diversity…” (Nieto, 2002, p. 183).

Nieto’s (2002) final recommendation was that programs promote teaching as a life-long journey of transformation. She broke this down further stating that future teachers need the opportunity to face and accept their own identities, become learners of their students’ realities, develop strong and meaningful relationships with their students, become multilingual and multicultural, learn to challenge racism and other biases, and develop a community of critical friends (Nieto, 2002).

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) specifically advocated for more teacher education programs to specifically meet the needs of African American students. She contended that although some programs attempt to train teachers for urban education, like those later presented by Oakes, et. al. (2002) and Althanases & Martin (2006), they rarely address the significance of African American culture (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Like the other authors, however, Ladson-Billings (2000) recognized that no single course or field experience can fully prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners. Calling for a more systematic and comprehensive approach, she outlined work using the strategies of autobiography, restructured field experience, situated pedagogies, and returning to the classrooms of experts to train teachers to effectively teach African-American students (Ladson-Billings, 2000).
Much of the effort for reform in teacher education was in direct response to pressure from political mandates, criticism over student achievement and standardized test scores. Teacher education in the first decade of the 2000's was fundamentally about outcomes, results of testing, and the effectiveness of teaching based on testing (Cochran-Smith, 2005). According to Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2005) this focus on outcomes was a trap for teacher education and the only way to avoid it is to make the issue of social justice and the broader purposes of education in society a priority. The outcome trap and narrow view of education exists when teacher quality was measured through pupil tests scores and leads to the belief that teachers alone can save the schools (Cochran-Smith, 2005). The broad purpose of education, Cochran-Smith (2005) wrote, "must be understood as preparing students to engage in satisfying work, function as lifelong learners who can cope with the challenges of a rapidly changing global society, recognize inequalities in their everyday contexts, and join with other to challenge them" (p. 416), not to produce students who can pass a test.

It seems logical to think that if education, through the social justice theories or other ideas previously presented, delivered improved curriculum with pedagogy that meets the individual needs of students that test scores would improve. In addition to these efforts current literature was overrun with ways to meet political mandates for demonstrating teacher effectiveness and increase student achievement. These not only addressed the outcomes issue, but also focused on improving teacher quality through
national standards, accreditation and licensure, as well as the attempt to measure teacher quality following teacher training.

Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2001) described three agendas driving national and state reforms in teacher training: the professionalization agenda, the deregulation agenda, and the overregulation agenda. The professionalization agenda called for collaboration of key professional organizations toward a national system of teacher preparation based on national standards, initial teacher licensure and board certification (Cochran-Smith, 2001). The deregulation agenda promoted alternative paths to teacher credentials and certification with high-stakes, state-level tests as the final key (Cochran-Smith, 2001). The current study was concerned with the qualifications of teachers through university preparation programs, so no additional literature and research regarding alternative teacher preparation will be discussed. The overregulation agenda was driven by additional new regulations in most states to reform curricula, programs and policies for teacher preparation and certification (Cochran-Smith, 2001).

The basis and underlying notion of these reform agendas were differing beliefs on evaluating teacher education, including the appropriate outcomes for teacher candidates as well as differing ideas about teacher education curricula and programs (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Cochran-Smith (2001) recognized that despite the nature, amount and fervor of the claims being made about each of these agendas, little was actually known about their effects and effectiveness. Frederick Hess (2005) narrowed this recognition of limited knowledge of effectiveness to the impact of teacher licensure. He asserted that because of this scarcity of reliable information, the debates have taken on a personal dimension (Hess, 2005).
Through this debate over teacher quality and standards for teaching effectiveness, two major accreditation organizations oversaw the credentials of teacher education programs. The oldest, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), was established in 1954 to develop a consensus for what new teacher should know (Wise, 2005). The newer, The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), was officially recognized as a valid organization in 2003 (Murray, 2005). They each take a very different approach to accreditation of teacher education programs (Murray, 2005). Frank Murray (2005) outlined the difference between the two organizations and highlighted the components of a unified accreditation system. The newer, TEAC, system is based upon evidence that the quality control system functions as it was designed and that it improves the program (Murray, 2005). In a response to the establishment of TEAC, Arthur Wise (2005) wrote his comparison of the new system to the older NCATE. He claimed that accreditation, under common and unified national standards, is the only way to increase the professionalism of teaching (Wise, 2005). The outcome of this not happening is increased governmental regulation “that imposes its own brand of uniformity on teaching practice” (p. 319). Following these claims that uniform accreditation is the only way to avoid future and additional governmental interference in education, he outlines why NCATE is better than TEAC, declaring that “TEAC’s approach seems destined to move the field toward fragmentation and away from the creation of a profession” (p. 326).

Barnett Berry (2005) supported Wise’s statement that teacher educators must take action to eliminate political involvement and interference with teacher training programs. He believed that the political agenda and resistance is premised on the perception that
teacher educators are not responsive to the challenges and needs of the most at-risk students in America (Berry, 2005). Part of the problem lies with the fact that most teacher education programs do not have the resources and clinical settings necessary to train teacher candidates to effectively work in these settings (Berry, 2005). Berry (2005) encouraged the teacher education community to take accountability and ownership for improvement and recognize effective programs that can be used as models for others.

Other writings paralleled these ideas of misperception of teacher education, but attributed it to the lack of interaction and understand that the general public has with teacher educators and teacher candidates (Lippincott, Peck, D’Emidio-Caston & Snyder, 2005). According to Lippincott, et. al. (2005) this limited direct interaction led to perceptions of teacher training that is filtered through a variety of lenses. The authors developed and described a capstone event they call a “Public Conversation” as a way of introducing teacher candidates and their work with current issues in education to the community and educational stakeholders (Lippincott, et. al., 2005). Through their study of the process they found that in 2002 87% of community respondents agreed or strongly agreed they were provided with ideas they could transfer to their own work context and by 2004 this had risen to 98% (Lippincott, et. al., 2005). In addition, many of the participants who were not working directly in schools came away with new insights and understandings of the complexity of issues in education. In 2002 92% of respondents noted that this experience improved their understanding of the work teachers do, and this rose to 100% in 2004 (Lippincott, et. al., 2005).

It was recognized that historically accreditation of teacher training programs has not been viewed favorably and important to note that accreditation is not required for
licensure or certification in many states (Murray, 2005). This was a growing argument. It was an important point within this study as a reaction to the pressure to improve teacher training programs, particularly because of government mandates. In 1996 The National Commission on Teaching for America’s Future (NCTAF) concluded that one way to ensure that all American school children had qualified teachers was through the accreditation of all teacher training programs (Murray, 2005).

One major argument against unified accreditation was the inability to accurately measure the quality of teaching through a test (Andrew, 1997; Zeichner, 2006). The NCTAF was also criticized for placing too much emphasis on standards and the assessing of the standards as a way of measuring a quality teacher (Andrew, 1997). It was also argued that teacher testing for quality and knowledge will not have the desired effects, particularly when implemented with high passing scores (Gitomer & Latham, 2000). This can lead to shortages of those entering the programs, particularly minority candidates. In such cases, the profession reacts by assigning emergency permits to people with little or no training (Gitomer & Latham, 2000). According to Gitomer and Latham (2000) “licensing does not guarantee a job or even warrant effective practice...we must always keep in mind that licensure is only an intermediate step in the quality-control process” (p. 218).

Michael Andrew (1997) criticized accreditation and state licensure of new teachers because they can only perform a limited scope of assessment on subject matter, pedagogy and general literacy. This, he claims, was more of a political agenda than anything else (Andrew, 1997).
Richard Allington (2005) wrote that this political agenda was more likely to undermine and weaken teacher quality, rather than improve it. Accreditation is part of this atrophy, creating minimal standards for teacher candidates to meet (Andrew 1997; Allington, 2005). In addition to this, Allington pointed to the amount of time and energy involved in the accreditation process. This distracts from time that could and should be spent developing and improving programs (Allington, 2005). "My primary concern," he writes, "is that by participating in state and national accreditation processes, we are eliminating our best opportunity to develop programs that produce effective teachers even more reliably" (p.200-201). He estimated the cost of pursuing NCATE accreditation at his institution cost between $100,000 - $800,000, without accounting for faculty time spent preparing standard forms and documents (Allington, 2005). He further questioned what could have been researched, studied and learned about the effectiveness of teacher education with those resources (Allington, 2005).

Linda Valli and Peter Rennert-Ariev (2000) looked specifically at each reform document included in the National Commission on Teaching for America's Future to identify consensus among the recommendations. Based on their quantitative research, two recommendations received the strongest agreement: 1) ensure strong disciplinary preparation and 2) develop multicultural competence in their students (Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2000). The first recommendation was not mentioned in any of the literature reviewed for this study as a necessary component of reform. The second has been highlighted through the social justice and diversity reform, but is absent when looking at politics and policy reform.
Teacher education programs were unable to escape the political and policy reform surrounding improving teacher quality. Through federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind (2001) high stakes student achievement testing has been introduced as a measure of teacher quality (Wineburg, 2006; Zeichner, 2006). More specifically Title II under the Higher Education requires education programs to demonstrate that teacher candidates have a positive impact on student learning (Hamel & Merz, 2005). Examples in the current literature highlighted how schools of education have approached this challenge. One university in the state of Washington struggled with maintaining their academic and philosophical focus if they conform too much to the frame of the state guidelines (Hamel & Merz, 2005). “We wonder whether, in adopting the state’s language of ‘positive impact on student learning,’ we are co-opted into an agenda not of our own choosing” (p. 158). They again echoed the beliefs of others (Andrew, 1997; Zeichner, 2006) that standardized test scores for measuring teacher preparation was problematic (Hamel & Merz, 2005). They saw the dilemma as a question of merging their current beliefs and efforts at teacher evaluation with emerging policy? In addressing this question, they outlined a two step process. First they asked what are possible ways of measuring and documenting the results of student efforts? Second, they used their accreditation process audit to see what they were already doing that would demonstrate compliance with the reform (Hamel & Merz, 2005).

The specific process Hamel and Merz (2005) outlined in Washington involved surveys of students, curriculum self-studies and reframing learning opportunities to embed opportunities to demonstrate this positive impact on student learning. Their article, however, raised a more significant issue. Through this process and the evident
conflict between their academic philosophies and the political agenda they were addressing, was an intense feeling to advocate for novice teachers as learners, particularly in the face of policy that mandates fast results (Hamel & Merz, 2005). They question, “to what extent should we mediate ad reinterpret policy to protect teaching candidates from regulation insensitive to their learning needs?” (p. 164). They further admitted that their role is not in accepting policy and aim to involve teachers in the process of questioning, interpreting and creating resistance to such policy in hopes of shaping future political agendas and policy (Hamel & Merz, 2005).

Sandra Stotsky (2006) used the example of teacher licensure testing in Massachusetts to highlight the need for a major restructuring of teacher licensure. She explained three sets of knowledge and skills that beginning teachers should acquire during their preparation programs: academic content knowledge, generic professional skills, and license specific professional knowledge and skill (Stotsky, 2006). With the current policy movements for accountability, Stotsky (2006) believed that the wrong people are held accountable when any of the three sets of knowledge or skills are not met.

The Massachusetts example revolved around a subject matter subtest. In response the Title II of the Higher Education Act, requiring states to report on teacher preparation and passing rates of candidates on licensure/certification tests, the Massachusetts State Board of Education proposed plans to decertify teacher training programs that had a passing rate below 80% (Melnick & Pullin, 2000). With teacher candidates tested in content knowledge areas Stotsky (2006) questions “why the pedagogical faculty rather than the academic faculty at our institutions of higher education has consistently been
held responsible the academic content knowledge of our teaching force at the state and federal level” (p. 261).

Problems with testing and licensure not only fell within the content tests. Regarding Stotsky’s (2006) second necessary skill for new teachers, professional knowledge, she found it problematic that there is no systematic information on the credentials of supervisors of student teachers. Most of the evidence of effective teaching for teacher candidates came from the evaluations of their supervisors during their field practicum (Stotsky, 2006). Similar to the content knowledge accountability, the responsibility of the third skill outlined by Stotsky (2006), license specific skills, also fell on the pedagogical faculty, rather than a logical combination of the content and pedagogical faculty.

To reform accountability for academic content, Stotsky (2006) recommended that it be shifted from the schools of education to the department of that content. In addition, discipline specific pedagogical faculty should be attached to each department for the supervision of student teaching and field experiences (Stotsky, 2006). The formal recommendation for licensure, then, should come from the school in which the practicum takes place and require the signatures from a member of the academic department, a discipline-specific teacher educator, and the teacher of the class in which the student teaching took place (Stotsky, 2006).

A study from the University of Missouri supported Stotsky’s (2006) call for collaboration among faculty and an integrated curriculum. Survey data was collected from students completing a major-required exit course prior to student teaching experiences (Kim, Andrews & Carr, 2004). Quantitative data analysis suggested
significant difference in the preparation level relating to thirteen professional
competencies (Kim, et. al., 2004). The authors recognized that one major limitation of
this study is the use of self-rated student responses, but still believed that candidates
feelings and responses about profession preparation can be an important indicator of their
learning and future success (Kim, et. al., 2004).

In response to such policy mandates to use standardized performance assessment
in making credentialing decisions, a coalition of California colleges and universities for
the Performance Assessment for California Teacher (PACT) was formed. Because many
teacher educators were unsatisfied with the state's performance assessment, their goal
was to develop an alternative standards-based assessment method with which to use in
the credential process for prospective teachers (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Pecheone and
Chung (2006) presented data from the first two pilot years of the PACT. In contrast to
the state assessment, which was designed as a generic format that applied across all grade
levels and subject areas, the PACT assessments use multiple sources of data (teacher
plans, teacher artifacts, student work samples, video clips of teaching and personal
reflections and commentaries) that were organized into four categories of teaching:
planning, instruction, assessment and reflection (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). The PACT
project focused on two assessment strategies: 1) the formative development of preservice
teachers through coursework assessments and 2) a summative assessment of teaching
knowledge and skills during a student teaching placement (Pecheone & Chung, 2006).
Rubrics and scoring models were developed in the first year of the pilot and scorer
training was conducted (Pecheone & Chung, 2006).
In comparing the data from the two years, the authors did not feel that strong conclusions could be made from only two years of data and believe a variety of factors could account for the difference in scores from year to year including program improvements, smoother implementation, revisions of rubrics, or the shift from a centralized scoring model to a local campus scoring model (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Rather than focus on the numbers themselves, Pecheone and Chung (2006) focused on the validity and reliability of the assessments as effective measures of teaching ability of prospective teachers. To assess the validity, the content of the PACT assessments were compared to the California TPE’s that were established by policy makers, teachers, teacher educators and administrators as the basis for credentialing teacher candidates. The conclusion following this comparison suggested a strong linkage between them (Pecheone & Chung, 2006).

While the evidence of the PACT as an alternative to licensure and certification testing is positive, some limitations were recognized. First, the authors indicated that additional testing for reliability and validity of the evaluation of the student teaching experience be further explored and established (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). In addition, the costs of the PACT were significant (Pecheone & Chung, 2006).

In addition to the use of the PACT assessments to demonstrate teacher effectiveness and influence to meet state mandates, Linda Darling-Hammond’s (2006) research detailed assessment strategies used to evaluate a 5 year program redesign of the Stanford University Teacher Education Program. Data collected included perceptions of what candidates felt they learned over the course of the program, through surveys and interviews, as well as independent measures of learning through pre and post-tests,
performance assessments, work sample surveys and observations of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The redesign of the program was intended to more completely integrate theory and practice and develop strong relationships with a smaller number of placement schools that were committed to diversity and equity-focused practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Similar to this study with surveys rather than in-depth interviews, Darling-Hammond (2006) presented data from employers; 97% of the employers gave the program a top rating on the question of their feelings of overall STEP preparation of future teachers and 100% said they were likely to hire STEP graduates in the future (Darling-Hammond, 2006). These surveys did include area for comment on program strengths and weaknesses, which is a direct focus of this study. Program strengths frequently listed include strong academic and research training for teaching, repertoire of teaching skill and commitment to diverse learners and preparation for leadership and school reform (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Another program reform was the establishment of professional development schools (PDSs). PDSs were clinical field site partnerships between a school and university for the purpose of improving teacher training and the professional development of practicing teachers, as well as increasing student achievement and conducting research (Castle, Fox & O’Hanlan Souder, 2006). This supported the philosophical ideas of many researchers to improve existing relationships between schools and teacher education programs.

One study suggested that PDS schools may have a more positive impact on the training of teacher candidates than non-PDS schools (Castle et. al., 2006). This study
utilized the postgraduate PDS and non-PDS settings at George Mason University. The PDS program involved two semesters of coursework followed by a full year of student teaching. The non-PDS program was four semesters of coursework followed by a traditional semester of student teaching. The two primary data sources were student teaching evaluations and tapes of student teaching portfolio presentations (Castle, et. al., 2006).

The quantitative data analysis of student teaching evaluations revealed that PDS candidates scored significantly higher than non-PDS candidates on items related to instruction, management, and assessment (Castle, et. al., 2006). The qualitative analysis of the portfolio data also indicated considerable differences between the candidates. The authors concluded that by talking in the present tense and using personal possessive adjectives, PDS teacher candidates demonstrated more ownership in their students, classrooms, and teaching (Castle, et. al., 2006). They further concluded that the PDS candidates verbalized nine of the INTASC standards of teaching in highly integrated ways, where the non-PDS candidates only referenced six in more isolated examples (Castle, et. al., 2006). One important conclusion in an era of student testing and achievement as a measure of teacher effectiveness, the authors logically believed that the combination of increased instructional and assessment skill may enable PDS teacher candidates to have a positive impact on student learning more quickly than traditionally trained new teachers upon entering the profession (Castle, et. al., 2006).

In response to all the mandates and reform initiatives discussed, Mona Wineburg (2006) conducted a survey for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) to learn what types of data colleges and universities were
collecting to meet the demand for evidence. The data suggested that people within and around teacher preparation programs are using an extraordinary amount of energy and resources assessing prospective teachers and compiling data about their programs (Wineburg, 2006). Wineburg (2006) noted that despite all the effort by teacher training institutions, action is taken in isolation from one another. She recommends a transparent framework, placing student learning at the center, to clearly demonstrate to all stakeholders their effectiveness and the positive impact they have on P-12 education (Wineburg, 2006).

Effective Teaching and Instruction

A review of current and recent literature on effective teaching and instruction yielded a variety of perspectives. It was my intent to use a synthesis of this literature to create the coding categories for the second research question in the study, addressing perceived strengths and weaknesses in new teachers. Using the established research to highlight the existence and frequency of these elements would demonstrate strengths through higher frequency and conclude weaknesses through lower frequency or absence of strategies. Initial synthesis of the literature obtained produced seven general categories of effective instruction. These codes and the authors from whom they came are presented in the Table 1.

Analysis of these studies and articles revealed two noteworthy characteristics. First, many of the articles presented valuable categories for effective instruction, but their foundation for presentation comes from higher education. Of the twelve authors listed in Table 1, the first six contained a focus on post high school education. Application of
these strategies to an elementary classroom and younger students was not an unreachable stretch. It did, however, present an age and developmental gap between the students upon which they focus and this study. In the end, this could open a door allowing question of application to the study at hand.

The second important characteristic is that much of the literature already presented a synthesis of previous studies on effective instruction. Michael Jackson (2006), for example, summarized the elements of “good teaching” in his study of the relationship between good and bad teaching from the memories of recent college graduates. His study focused on higher education. To support his topic, Jackson highlights the work of Ramsden, Margetson, Marten and Clark (1995) summarizing 22 other sources, five from empirical studies he notes (Jackson, 2006). They provide a list of features of good teaching. Jackson (2006) also cites Brodie and Dorfman (1994), Smith and Cranton (1992), and Ballantyne, Bain and Packer (1997) to compare and support with Ramsden et al.’s (1995) list.

The codes and noted authors on the following page were the beginning in the review of literature on effective teaching. In beginning to review all the original studies that previous authors summarized and compared, it appeared arduous and repetitive. It does not seem practical or valuable to repeat existing summaries. The value, however, in looking at work like Jackson’s (2006) was to find a source more connected to this study, presenting characteristics of effective instruction for elementary school teachers. While this may have had application to the realm of K-12 classroom instruction,
Table 1: Initial Codes for Effective Teaching

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<th>Enthusiasm for Subject/Teaching</th>
<th>Respect for Students – Positive Relationships</th>
<th>Organization, Goal Setting &amp; Planning</th>
<th>Adjustments to Students’ Individuality</th>
<th>Gaining Student Interest</th>
<th>Relevance of Learning – Real World Application &amp; Interdisciplinary Connectedness</th>
<th>Offers Feedback</th>
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<td>Jackson, 2006)</td>
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<td>Smith &amp; Cranton, 1992</td>
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<td>Ramsden, Margetson, Martin &amp; Clarke,</td>
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<td>Patrick &amp; Smart, 1998 (in Jackson, 2006)</td>
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<td>Bain, 2004</td>
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<td>Ellis, Worthington &amp; Larkin, 1994</td>
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<td>Darling-Hammond, 2006</td>
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<td>Garnet &amp; Gillette, 2006</td>
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<td>Cobb, 2003</td>
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<td>Guskey, 2003</td>
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more specifically elementary school classrooms as this study addresses, the researcher has moved to rely on the research synthesis of James Stronge in *Qualities of Effective Teachers*.

Stronge has taken research on K-12 classroom instruction and put together six areas for effective instruction. Stronge's (2002) work was "Based on a comprehensive review and synthesis of research related to effective teaching" (vii). These have been developed into five codes that will be used for research question two and are presented in Appendix B. For each general code, specific details have been included. The characteristics and strategies presented by Stronge's (2002) synthesized research are similar to those outlined in Table 1 and authors writing from the higher education perspective. The first code extracted from Stronge (2002) of *Personal Characteristics* closely parallels the category of *Respect for Students — Positive Relationships*, and the code of *Organizing for Instruction* from Stronge (2002) is similar to the category of *Organization, Goal Setting, and Planning*.

Such similarities can strengthen the rationale for Stronge's (2002) synthesis as the platform for developing the codes for research question two. In addition, the target audience for his text is all educators and appears to speak directly to K-12 teachers. He writes in his introduction that: "The focus for this book is the teacher" (Stronge, 2002, vii).

**New Teacher Support Structures**

Synthesis of current literature regarding necessary support for new teachers revealed six major areas for emphasis: building administrative support, comprehensive
induction program, clearly established and communicated curricular expectations, school-university collaboration, a supportive collegial environment, and a formal mentor. Not all topics were presented by all authors and no consensus exists regarding the impact each or any may have. The common bond of the need to support new teachers, however, was clear. Table 2 presents the breakdown of authors and the categories to which devote attention.

The category of administrative support focused primarily on the support offered by a building principal. According to Weasmer and Woods (2000), a prudent principal should anticipate and intervene against possible threats to the success of a beginning teacher. A study by Quinn and Andrews (2004) confirmed the important role that principals play in establishing support for first year teachers. They surveyed all first year teachers in a school district serving nearly 60,000 students about the amount of support they received. The found a strong relationship between support provided by the principal and total amount of support reported.

The principal’s role in providing support for new teachers naturally includes those over which they have control. One example of this is through class assignments. Principals can aid new teacher success by carefully considering their schedules and teaching loads and assigning one that avoided setting a new teacher up for failure (Halford, 1998). Another to support new teachers was through formative performance assessment (Weasmer & Woods, 2000). Principals can and should provide teachers with feedback throughout the year. According to Weasmer and Woods (2000), informal acknowledgement of effective practice can boost confidence and build rapport. This rapport between a new teacher and principal is essential. Without a positive relationship,
teachers were likely to seek advice elsewhere when problems to arise, project a negative tone for the school culture and lead to teacher burnout (Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005).

In addition to the support provided by building principals, some districts were developing induction programs for new teachers. Induction programs were intended to help beginning professionals make the transition from students to teachers of students (Brewster & Railsback, 2001). According to Paul Watkins (2005) a strong induction program involved three significant activities: assigns a coaching mentor for professional growth, supports innovative practice through active research, and supports collegial discussion via study groups including all staff and administrators. The NEA (2008) supported induction programs as a way to meet mentors, other new teachers, administrators and to learn about the culture of the school, district and community.

While induction was intended to introduce new teachers to district policies and procedures (Brewster & Railsback, 2001), clearly communicated curricular and behavioral expectations are also needed as a support for new teachers (Johnson, 2004). In the era of high stakes testing and accountability, the issue of curricular expectations and alignment to state and national standards cannot be overlooked. It is worth noting, however, that clearly communicated expectations as a separate category was limited in the current literature. In most cases, issues of instruction were mentioned or merely implied as a responsibility of a mentor or building administrator, rather than a formal process or procedure.
Table 2: Categories of New Teacher Support Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear Expectations: Administrative organized curriculum &amp; behavioral expectations</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Networking &amp; Supportive Environments</th>
<th>Comprehensive Induction Program</th>
<th>School - University Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weasmer &amp; Woods, 2000</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn &amp; Andrews, 2004</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watkins, 2005</td>
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<td>Johnson, 2004</td>
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<td>Textley, 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halford, 1998</td>
<td>•</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schlichte, Yssel &amp; Merbler, 2005</td>
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<td>Keller, 2006</td>
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<td>Littleton, Tally-Foos &amp; Worlaver, 1992</td>
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<td>Klausmeier, 1994</td>
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<td>Brewster &amp; Railsback, 2001</td>
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<td>NEA, 2000</td>
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</table>

The categories of supportive collegial environments and mentoring, for the purpose of this study, have been separated. The reliance on formal mentor programs for new teachers was the most common found in the current literature and assumed, therefore, in practice. In most mentor programs new teachers are paired with a veteran teacher that are available to them to answer questions, problem solve and offer general
guidance and support (Brewster & Railsback, 2001). Mentor teachers were relied upon to ease the acclimatization of new teachers by introducing them to other faculty and explain procedures of the school (Weasmer & Woods, 2000). As the main support resource for new teachers, it was recognized that mentors need to be carefully selected and assigned (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Halford, 1999; Klausmeier, 1994; Littleton, Tally-Foos & Wolaver, 1992).

While there was agreement in the importance of mentor programs, the literature presented some variation, however, in the advocacy of how mentor programs should be organized and implemented. One major area of contention was that mentors need proper training (Ganser, 2002; Halford, 1998; Klausmeier, 1994). As part of this training, mentors should become familiar with the goals, objectives and structure of the teacher training programs that produced their apprentices, as a way to better understand their possible needs (Klausmeier, 1994). Littleton, Tally-Foos, and Wolaver (1992) advocated so strongly for the training of mentors that they believed the lack of effective training was the leading cause of mentor program failure. Ganser (2002) added that programs should not simply be started, but recommended that leaders familiarize themselves with successful programs and plan the program carefully prior to implementation.

Despite the accessibility to an experienced mentor, a supportive collegial environment had also been identified as a necessary category for the support of new teachers. While the formally assigned mentor was intended to be the go-to person for support, Yee (1996, as cited in Weasmer & Woods, 2000) concluded that teachers consider collegiality to be the most valuable of all sources of professional stimulation. In the total support of new teachers, it was essential that they have a supportive environment
in addition to their mentor and administrator. Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler (2005) following their study of first year special educators suggested that while mentoring was an important element, novice teachers should not need to rely on a single source of support, such as their mentor teachers. Positive relationships with students, administrators and other staff members played a significant role in the success of first year teachers and attrition (Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005).

The final category identified in the literature necessary for the support of new teachers was school – university collaboration. The call for universities to continue to work with schools and the new teachers they have produced incorporated components from the other categories, offering assistance to facilitate their development and implementation. The specific areas targeted for university assistance with new teachers were offering training for and providing mentors, assistance in developing and implementing effective induction programs, and professional development for new teachers (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Halford, 1998; Weasmer & Woods, 2000). Limitations to the development and ability to sustain such a partnership were recognized. The literature noted that time and funding were key ingredients in the success of such collaboration (Brewster & Railsback, 2001). Unfortunately, those are two things that are in high demand in schools and other priorities often take precedent.

Summary

Inquiry into the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers opened doors to a variety of topics, research based analysis and philosophical debate. Passionate debates existed advocating changes in teacher training programs that focused on whether more
instructional methodology or subject matter knowledge should be taught, implications of field experiences and student teaching and modifications to accreditation and teacher licensure. The literature was also rich with recognition and advocacy of a variety of support structures for new teachers. From mentors and district induction programs to continued university collaboration, the common element recognized the need for new teacher support. The link between effective instruction and new teachers was not as powerful, however. While much literature existed to highlight elements of effective instruction, it did not clearly focus on success and shortcomings of new teachers. This research sought to begin to add some clarity to that topic.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to analyze the patterns and similarities and differences of elementary school administrators’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Three primary questions directed the study: (a) How do principals supervise and evaluate new teachers? (b) What are the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers as perceived by principals? (c) How do principals perceive the adequacy of professional support for new teachers? One common sub-question underlined all primary research questions: What differences exist between rural, urban and suburban administrators?

Sample

Sample Overview

The sample for this study was 12 elementary school principals, fitting three categories: experience, perception of supervisory skill, and student achievement effectiveness. In phenomenological studies, the question of number of participants needs to be balanced with concerns about details the researcher desires (Hatch, 2002). Participants were selected using a combination of purposeful and criterion sampling (Creswell, 1998). Participants were considered experienced with at least five years experience as a school administrator with responsibility of supervising and evaluating new teachers. The perception of supervisory skill came in the form of a recommendation
from their direct supervisor. As an educational leader, much of a principal's responsibility deals with observing, evaluating, and fostering growth in teachers. As their direct supervisor, a superintendent, assistant superintendent, or director should be able to evaluate their ability in this area. The category of leadership effectiveness with regard to student achievement was determined by performance on federally-mandated annual testing. The Standard and Poor's analysis on school performance, www.schoolmatters.com, will be utilized as a determining factor for academic excellence. Only schools averaging 80% on ELA and Math MEAP tests over the last three years were considered.

The twelve principals were sought from different school districts, fitting three categories: rural, urban, and suburban. These categorical definitions were applied using the US Census criteria. Four principals were selected who work in schools from each of the three categories. This allowed comparison among the principals from within a particular category, as well as contrast between the categories, targeting the sub-question for each of the research questions: What similarities and differences exist between administrators from rural, urban and suburban schools?

Sample Selection

The researcher began by identifying four accessible school districts from each of the three Census categories. Using the definition of size categories from the US Census and information from the 2000 US Census found at www.census.gov, four school districts were selected from each category.

The researcher contacted the superintendent of each school district to explain the purpose of the study and seek their approval to include the district in this study. In some
cases the office of the superintendent directed me to a subordinate central office administrator for approval. The superintendents, or designee, were assured that the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of the district and each respondent, that the name of the district and principal would not be reported and procedures to maintain and protect this confidentiality were explained. The contact with the superintendent was also be used to learn the district leader responsible for supervision and evaluation of principals. With the superintendent’s, or other directed district leader’s, approval, the researcher then contacted principals with effective teacher supervisory skills and who has a minimum of five years administrative experience. They were then, by their matter of preference, mailed, via email or standard mail a summary of purpose and description of the study. Again participating principals were assured that their responses, along with the name of their school and district, will be held in strict confidence at all times. Information sent to participants included format for providing recommendations, either through email or traditional mail. Superintendents, or appropriate district official, was faxed a consent to collect data form to be signed and returned to the researcher. Once recommendations were secured, the researcher will access student achievement scores from the Michigan Department of Education website and/or Standard & Poor’s School Matters website.

Principals of schools meeting all three categories for participation were then contacted by the researcher soliciting participation. The researcher called each principal on the telephone to explain the study, obtain initial agreement of participation and set up an interview. HSIRB approval was obtained through the university and all protocols were strictly followed. Principals were emailed a copy of the interview questions, a
project summary and a copy of HSIRB consent forms to preview prior to the interview. Consent forms were signed at the interview, following HSIRB protocol. Districts who provided multiple principal recommendations fitting the first two categories, whose schools also met the minimum student achievement criteria, one was selected randomly and contacted for participation. In cases when the researcher was unable to find a principal from one of the identified districts, another district from that census category was selected and the participant identification process will began again. Hatch (2002) recommends keeping the number flexible in case more information is necessary and more participants selected.

Data Collection

Overview

There are a variety of data collection methods that are recommended for phenomenological studies (Hatch, 2002). In developing the strategy the researcher should consider the adequacy of the information and efficiency of the data to be collected as well as ethical considerations (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Data collection for this study relied mainly on in-depth interviews, supplemented with analytic journals. Researchers advocate the triangulation of data, or collection with multiple methods (Patton, 2002). This gives the researcher a clearer and more complete picture of the experience being studied and limitations in one method can be compensated for in another (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Strengths of interviews are that they yield data in quantity quickly, there can be immediate follow up and clarification is possible, and they
allow the researcher to understand the meaning that everyday activities hold for people (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

**Interviews**

Each principal was interviewed for sixty minutes by the researcher and was audio recorded, with the permission of the participant. Patton (2002) claims that a tape recorder is indispensable to interview fieldwork. Tape recording can avoid changing the conversation to finish note taking and gaps that may exist in notes due to speed of speech and other factors (Patton, 2002). All participants agreed to allow the interview to be recorded. The audio recordings were then typed into transcripts. All interviews took place in the offices of the participants, except one who was interviewed in the office of the researcher out of convenience for the participant. Interviews were also scheduled at the convenience of all participants.

Each research question had specific interview questions to use to begin and guide the interview (Appendix D). The researcher took notes to guide the question direction and used Thomas’s (2003) response-guided approach, where follow up questions were used to elicit more directed, focused and detailed responses (p. 64). At the beginning of the second set of questions, addressing the second research question, the researcher asked the participant rank the importance of an established list of characteristics of effective instruction (Appendix B). This list was developed with a synthesis of current literature and has been discussed in the literature review. At the beginning of the third set of questions, addressing the third research question, the researcher asked the participant rank the effectiveness of an established list of support mechanisms for new teachers
(Appendix C). This list has also been developed through synthesis of current literature and has been discussed in the literature review.

The interview questions used as the instrument to guide the process were created purposefully broad to allow for participants to share without any leading or direction from the question or the researcher. Creswell (2003) noted that in-depth interviews often contain a limited number of open ended questions and are intended to draw out participant opinions. While broad, the questions were created with careful consideration of the research questions. Van Manen (1990) cautioned beginning researchers against rushing into open ended interviews haphazardly without considering the purpose of the interview and the needs of the information to be gathered. The exploratory questions for the interviews were, therefore, carefully and purposefully designed to give direction to the interview.

The instrument for interviews had been field-tested through two practice interviews with elementary principals in which the researcher is currently employed. This allowed for the recognition and addition of one necessary follow up question, asking why in response to the fourth question regarding support structures for new teachers (Research Question #3). Other follow up questions were not common and guided by each individual interview.

**Document Analysis**

Two forms of documents were intended to be used for analysis, if available: blank copies of the districts’ teacher evaluation form and completed evaluations for new teachers. Data obtained through documents is unobtrusive and rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in a particular setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). At
the end of each interview the researcher asked the participant for two copies of completed evaluations for new teachers. The requested completed evaluations were to be, if possible, evaluating a first year teacher. Any identifiable markings were to be removed or blackened out to protect the identity of the person evaluated. Principals were given an anonymous consent form to give to teachers whose evaluation forms could be used. They were asked to distribute them to those teachers, explaining their possible participation and conditions of confidentiality. From those teachers who consent to participation, principals were asked to make a copy of two evaluation forms, with all identifiable markings removed, and return them to the researcher in a stamped and addresses envelope that was provided. Unfortunately only two of these documents were returned to the researcher. Due to the limited amount of data provided by the documents and the fact that they were a secondary piece of data, they were not included in analysis.

*Analytic Journals*

Between each interview the researcher completed analytic journals, reflecting on the interview and topics revealed. Writing, thoughts, notes and reflective memos is invaluable for the researcher to move their analysis from ordinary and obvious to creative and insightful (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

*Summary*

While the main source of data for this study was collected through the in-depth interview process, additional data sources were intended to be utilized for additional analysis and triangulation. The following Table 3 presents a crosswalk of the data streams that were to address each of the research questions.
Table 3: Crosswalk of Data Streams for this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Elements Addressing Each Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ #1</td>
<td>• Evaluation Forms: blank and completed&lt;br&gt;• Interview transcripts&lt;br&gt;• Analytic Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ #2</td>
<td>• Evaluation Forms: completed for new teacher&lt;br&gt;• New Teacher Skill Ranking Cards&lt;br&gt;• Interview Transcripts&lt;br&gt;• Analytic Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ #3</td>
<td>• Evaluation Forms: completed for new teacher&lt;br&gt;• New Teacher Support Ranking Cards&lt;br&gt;• Interview Transcripts&lt;br&gt;• Analytic Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different pieces of the data were collected at different times throughout the collection process. In order to clarify the collection process, Table 4 presents a progression of the data collection to take place during the study.

Table 4: Progression/Timeline of Data Collection

At each interview:
- Interview questions for research question #1
- New teacher skill ranking cards sorted, research question #2
1. Interview questions for research question #2
- New teacher support ranking cards sorted, research question #3
- Interview questions for research question #3
- Blank copy of evaluation took and completed new teacher evaluation, if participant is willing

2. Analytic journals were written following each interview

3. The interview process and steps 2 and 3 repeated for all 12 interviews
Data Analysis

*Research Question #1*

Analysis of data began once it was collected (Hatch, 2002). The plan for analysis followed Creswell's (2003) six steps for reviewing data: reading, highlighting, coding, description, representation/presentation and interpretation. It was essential that the researcher become intimately familiar with the data through multiple readings of the interview transcripts (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly by the interviewer for familiarity. Codes for the first research question were developed *a priori*, based on common elements and methods of effective instructional supervision and evaluation (Appendix A), and applied to the transcripts. This identification and categorization was one of the most fundamental operations in the analysis of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Transcript data was then be organized by theme and code, using direct quotes to support similarities among and between principals. Themes and categories from the data were presented and supported through specific and detailed participant quotations to give a rich description of their experiences (Creswell, 2003). Moustakas (1993) emphasized that phenomenological research uses the analysis of specific statements to support themes and categories (as cited in Creswell, 2003). Analysis follows in the form of written discussion.

*Research Question #2*

Review of the transcripts from the interview questions relating to research question #2 followed the process outlined for the first research question. Transcripts were again reviewed repeatedly for familiarity and *a priori* codes were once again applied. The codes for this second research question, relating to good teaching, have
been developed through a review and synthesis of related literature (Appendix B).

Research question #2 had a two stage coding process. The first level of coding was general elements of good teaching, as synthesized from the literature. The second stage of coding was more specific categories and examples of the first level. The use of the first level codes in the interview was presented in a table template. This showed possible emerging themes. The second stage of codes was then also presented in a form of a table, with each sub-code listed. One table was presented for each of the first level codes. Transcript data was then organized by theme and code, using direct quotes to support similarities among and between principals. Analysis followed in the form of written discussion.

Ranking cards for research question two was collected from each participant and recorded by the researcher. The results of the rankings were presented in table template. Possible similarities and differences were discussed. Codes were also given a number for each corresponding ranking. For example, the code ranked as the strongest was given a one, the second a two, and so on. The numbers were totaled for each code and a mean score computed. Means were presented in table. This table allowed for additional discussion of possible similarities and differences between the three groups of administrators.

*Research Question #3*

Analysis of the data for the third research question mirrored that of the previous question. Review of the transcripts from the interview questions relating to research question #3 followed the process outlined for the first two research questions. Transcripts were again reviewed repeatedly for familiarity and *a priori* codes applied.
The codes for this third question, relating to supports for new teachers, had also been developed through a review and synthesis of related literature (Appendix C). The use of these codes in the interview was presented in a table format. This revealed possible emerging themes. Transcript data was then organized by theme and code, using direct quotes to support similarities among and between principals. Analysis followed in the form of written discussion.

Ranking cards for research question three were collected from each participant and recorded by the researcher. The results of the rankings will be presented in a table format. Possible similarities and differences were discussed. Codes were also given a number for each corresponding ranking. For example, the code ranked as the strongest will be given a one, the second a two, and so on. The numbers were totaled for each code and a mean score computed. Means were presented in a table format. This table allowed for additional discussion of possible similarities and differences between the three groups of administrators.

Research Bias and Data Validation

One challenge for the researcher is to make sure that their personality and personal interest will not bias any form of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It was necessary for the researcher to “bracket” his or her experiences and background to maintain the integrity of the data and analysis (Creswell, 2003). As an elementary principal, I needed to recognize any possible beliefs I had about the topic of study to assure the removal of any bias.
In addition to the researcher bracketing his or her experiences and the triangulation of multiple methods mentioned earlier, other forms of data validation took place. Member checking was used to validate interview transcripts (Creswell, 2003). Following the interviews, the transcripts were sent to the participants for review and comment. No discrepancies were reported by any of the participants responding to the transcript receipt. In the presentation of the report, specific quotes and rich descriptions from interviews have been used. This may involve the reader more deeply in the study and convey accuracy of the descriptions (Creswell, 2003). Finally, any negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the major themes has been presented and discussed. This may add to the credibility of the report with the reader (Creswell, 2003).
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF
THE DATA FROM INTERVIEWS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the patterns and similarities of K-12 administrator perspectives of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Three primary questions directed this study:

1. How do principals supervise and evaluate new teachers?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers as perceived by principals?

3. How do principals perceive the adequacy of professional support for new teachers?

For each question, the same sub-question was asked: What differences exist between rural, urban and suburban administrators? This chapter presents and analyzes the data to respond to answer these research questions. Analysis is broken down by research question with themes and sub-themes identified and discussed. Additional themes and a summary of the data analysis follow the discussion of research questions.

Research Question #1: How do Principals Supervise and Evaluate New Teachers?

Summary of Evidence of Codes

Of the 12 principals interviewed for this study, consistent methods appeared for evaluating new teachers. Table 5 presents evidence of the pre-established codes in the interview transcripts.
Table 5: Presentation of Evidence of Codes in Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WALK</th>
<th>OBSERV</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>PORT</th>
<th>ACHV</th>
<th>INPUT</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Codes referenced in at least eight of the 12 interviews were explored for possible themes.

As seen in Table 5, these are walk-through observations (WALK), classroom
observations (OBSERV), and goal setting (GOAL). Table 6 presents a more detailed breakdown of these methods.

Table 6: Summary of Information from Research Question 1: How Do Principals Supervise and Evaluate New Teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods Dictated by Contract</th>
<th>Methods Utilized for New Teachers</th>
<th>Flexibility to Include Other Data Elements</th>
<th>Examples of Other Data Collection Methods</th>
<th>Impact of Evaluation on Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1: Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Complete Individual Development Plan (2 performance goals) 
- 2 observations per semester 
- Post-observation conference per observation 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure 
- Pre-conference meeting (goal setting) 
- 2 observations per semester 
- Walk through evaluations 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure 
- Individual Development Plan 
- 2 observations per semester 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure | No | 
| Rural Principal #2: Yes     | 
- Complete Individual Development Plan 
- 3 observations 
- Post-observation conference 
- 1 written evaluation per observation 
- Annual evaluation until tenure 
- Pre-conference meeting (goal setting) 
- 2 observations per semester 
- Walk through evaluations 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure | Yes | 
- Feedback from parents, students, teachers 
- Meeting participation 
- Walk through observations 
- Lesson plans 
- Self-evaluation tools 
- Self-reflection tools 
- Product based artifacts | Very little |
| Rural Principal #3: Yes     | 
- Pre-conference meeting (goal setting) 
- 2 observations per semester 
- Walk through evaluations 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure | Yes | 
- Walk through observations | Significantly, especially non-tenured teachers, but not the greatest factor |
| Rural Principal #4: Yes     | 
- Pre-eval meeting 
- Self goal setting 
- 3 observations per semester 
- Self-reflection each semester 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure | Yes | 
- Walk through observations 
- Informal interaction observations, i.e. hallway, passing time, etc. | Depends on openness of teacher. Non-tenured teachers are more open to feedback than more experienced teachers. |
| Urban Principal #1: Yes     | 
- Pre-eval meeting 
- Self goal setting 
- 3 observations per semester 
- Self-reflection each semester 
- 1 written evaluation each semester 
- Annual evaluation until tenure | Yes |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Observations &amp; Evaluations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 observations per semester, 1 written evaluation each semester, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pre-eval meeting, 2 observations per year, 1 year-end written summative evaluation, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 observations per semester, 1 written evaluation each semester, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 observations per semester, Pre-observation conference, 1 written evaluation each semester, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pre-observation conference, 1 written evaluation each semester, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pre-observation conference, 1 written evaluation each semester, Individual Goal Setting (performance goals), 1 observation per semester, Pre-observation conference, 1 written evaluation per observation, Year-end goal review, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pre-observation conference, 1 written evaluation per observation, Year-end goal review, Annual evaluation until tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64
All 12 participants stated that these procedures were dictated by contract or master agreement with their teacher unions. Eight of the 12 participants noted some form of goal setting procedure at the beginning of each evaluation year. All 12 principals are required to utilize classroom observations to gather data reported on the evaluation. Variation appears in the numbers of classroom observations required, the number of formal written evaluations and whether principals are permitted to include data collected outside of formal observations in the written evaluation. Six principals, for example, are required to conduct two evaluations and write one formal evaluation each semester. Two principals are required to write one summative, year-end evaluation, based on two classroom observations over the course of the year. The other four principals are required to write a formal evaluation for each classroom observation conducted, and this number varies between two or three over the course of the school year. These differences do not appear to be broken down by rural, urban or suburban category. Each of these breakdowns contains principals from different category of district. Of the six participants required to write two evaluations, for example, three from school districts defined as urban, two from districts defined as rural and one from a suburban school district. Nine of the 12 participants are permitted to include data gathered outside classroom observations on formal evaluations. Of the three that are only contractually restricted to report on classroom observations only, one represents each of the categories of school districts, reinforcing lack of difference between rural, urban and suburban school districts.
Impact of Classroom Observations

Analysis of discussion regarding formal classroom observation and alternative data on teacher performance reveals a theme of a principal’s ability and desire to report on the true effectiveness and skills of a new teacher. This difference between the numbers of formal classroom observations discussed by participants goes slightly deeper than the number of observation visits conducted during the course of the school year. Three principals identified specific requirements of scheduling classroom observations versus those that can be drop-in, or unannounced.

Principal S-3 clearly articulated that he is only able to report on an evaluation what he observes through a formal classroom observation and that all observations must be scheduled. He feels this contractual prohibition limits the impact of the evaluation process on instruction because you do not get a true picture of what happens regularly in the classroom. “I think …they’re putting on a show for you that day, and if you want it to be true instruction, you need to be able to walk into the classroom…You should be able to give them feedback on a regular basis.” Principal S-3 is not allowed to give any suggestions or feedback to teachers formally or in writing that are outside of the formal observation. “We can do walk throughs. We can give suggestions, but it can’t be in writing.”

Principal U-3 also has the requirement of formal and scheduled observations and agrees that there can be a falseness of prepared lessons for observations. She circumvents this by spending significant amount of time in teachers’ classrooms. “In between those two formal observations and the final evaluation…I’m probably in there 50 or 60 times. I go in, I might sit down. I might stay five minutes. I might sit and watch
a lesson...talk with a student at the tables doing work. I'm in there as much as I possibly can.” She feels that this allows her to get a better picture of what happens on a regular basis and whether her observation is an accurate picture of the skills and abilities of that teacher. “I'm in there enough that I can see a dog and pony show a mile away...I don’t think it’s realistic and I, you can even see it on the students’ faces.” It is important to note that while she feels she gets a better picture of what teachers do on a regular basis and can compare that to the formal, scheduled observation, unlike principal S-3, principal U-3 is allowed to include data collected outside the formal observation in her evaluation. So if there were obvious differences between observations on a walk through and the formal observation that could be documented on the summative evaluation.

While not one of the three with contractual, scheduled observation requirements, Principal S-1 supports the idea that scheduled observations can be an unrealistic picture of classroom instruction. “Because everybody can sit down and write a fabulous lesson if you’ve got three hours to prep it and another two hours to gather all kinds of fancy materials and everybody can do that, but we don’t have time to do that in a normal day.” Not all principals, however, share the belief that scheduled observations are not valuable. Principal S-4 has the requirement of one scheduled observation, then the discretion of an unannounced visit for her second. “I always do announced. I don’t feel a huge benefit, um, with unannounced.” Again, it is important to note that principal S-4 also has the ability to include data collected outside the formal interview in written evaluations, if necessary. This may explain the difference between her more laid back viewpoint of the scheduled observation than principal S-3, who can only include data from the formal observation, which must be scheduled.
Despite the inconsistency of whether teachers can include outside data on a formal observation, it is apparent that their intent is not to focus on negative or damaging documentation on a summative, year-end evaluation. Another theme that emerged in the interview data is that principals are focused on the genuine improvement in the skills of new teachers. They are not looking for data, whether in scheduled observations or outside data gathered at more informal times. Principal R-4 articulated that "...if we can get into that mode of, you know, it's not punitive, it's not sitting back in judgment...it is what you are doing for these kids..."

Of the nine principals permitted to include other data in their written evaluations, five specifically noted that their first action would be to bring it to the teacher's attention so they could improve. Principal U-1 said, "...if I were walking by a classroom and hear a teacher raising their voice, I would pull that teacher aside and tell them that this is what I observed. I would not put any surprises in there." Principal R-4 addressed specifically where it would go in their evaluation and also mentioned that it should not be a surprise:

At the end of the evaluation form, there's always recommendations and I would incorporate that into the recommendations, but I would make sure that once they got that in writing that it was something they have heard dozens of times, that it's no surprise.

It is clear that there is no intent to misrepresent or target any collection of informal data for inclusion on written evaluations.

**Impact of Evaluation on Instruction**

Another category or theme that emerged through analysis of the interview transcripts is that the formal process of evaluation is not felt to have a significant or positive impact on instruction. Of the 12 principals interviewed, six clearly indicated that the evaluation process had no or little impact. Of the six that spoke of some favorable
impact, they all mentioned that positive change comes with self-reflection of the teachers being evaluated and openness to the feedback of the principal.

Principal R-2 believed the evaluation process “does relatively little to really impact a teacher’s instruction.” He separates the difference between coaching and evaluating teachers and that self-reflection and desire to improve is an essential component of the coaching. “There’s some teachers who are not ready to be coached. There’s some teachers who need to be evaluated and there’s a difference.” According to him, self-reflection and a desire to improve are essential components for professional development, “…you know, true change comes when someone wants to make that change, not me telling you to make that change.”

The concept of self-reflection and continuous improvement is so significant to Principal R-4 that she tries to build her entire building culture around it: “…I try to, you know, the whole goal and the whole culture I try to build is, we’re all trying to get better every day, even me.” She believes that the evaluation process is a tool for guiding that improvement.

I feel like it’s a tool that is sort of legalistic, that we need to do it. If it was not there, I think we would miss it. It is a good tool. How much does it improve instruction? I’m just not sure. I think, um, focused staff development, me as the leader of the school, setting a climate and a culture that we’re all learning, we’re all trying to get better, um, certainly the evaluation helps me, but it’s just one tool.

Principal R-3 was also one of the six who had a more positive outlook on evaluation, but still focused on self-reflection. He specifically uses the evaluation process to encourage the positive reflection:

…there’s the pre-conference meeting and the goal setting as part of that and…healthy shop dialogue…you know, the open ended questions that stem from the observations as well as the walk through feedback…the
classic question is, let’s say you have a separate set of kids that come in after lunch for this lesson, tell me what you’d do a little different.

It is important to note, that even for those teachers who have a more favorable view of the evaluation process, they both mention a limited impact. Principal R-4 stated that while it is a tool, “it is not the most important tool.” Principal R-3 echoes that saying, “...is it the most significant, I don’t know. If I had to put $20 down and say, for the most part what’s the greatest influence on the quality of their teaching, I’d say there are other factors.” Principal R-1 also related some uncertain feelings about the impact of the evaluation process and creates emphasis on the self-reflection by deemphasizing the evaluation process: “…I think it has some impact, although I think, um, most teachers have that motivation from within....I know I try to, um, downplay, the importance of evaluation...stress the importance of the teacher really establishing himself or herself in their role, establishing what they feel is important.”

As part of this self-reflection and any positive impact of the evaluation process, participants noted that self-motivation openness to a principal’s feedback is essential. Principal R-2 spoke specifically about this:

You know, I can work with...a teacher who’s willing to listen and be receptive to a lot of feedback, um, and likely is going to initiate whatever you talk to them about...I can take someone who’s interested in something and help them foster that and develop it, but for me to say this is what you need to work on, it’s just, the impact is different because it’s likely to be short term.

Principal S-2 articulated this same idea with a specific example:

...I had someone sit at this desk last week and she said she really valued the feedback and what I was really pleased with...was every idea I gave her, she incorporated. Everything I said I’d like to see at the last lesson, she did it and it worked beautifully, so to me that was the beauty of it, that she was eager for knowledge and not too arrogant and that she could accept feedback and wanted to try it and it worked well. Those
teachers that do so well are those who have been willing to do that, have been willing to listen to the feedback and try it.

Supervision Outside the Evaluation Process

Despite the clear beliefs of the participants that the evaluation does little to impact instruction, there is a theme that they are very positive and involved in supervisory processes to utilize the self-reflection and intrinsic motivation to positively impact teaching and learning. This seems to run parallel to the evaluation process and includes informal components of supervision and feedback. Principal U-2 articulates how this varies from the evaluation process:

Everybody knows it’s (evaluation) just a formality. It’s more of the informal, I think the informal is more powerful, when I can walk back and say, I really liked seeing that guided reading lesson. I can tell you were working on prediction. I can bring a teacher in and say, you know, I was watching this for a few minutes and I guess I couldn’t tell what you were working on. Can you explain to me what your lesson plan was? What was the GLCE you were working on? And there are times that they can’t. And that puts it back onto the teacher. I kind of feel that the evaluation process is all owned by the principal, where informal conversation that we have is more owned by the teacher.

Dialogue such as this operates outside of the evaluation process for some teachers and does not seem to need to be included in the formal evaluations when effort and/or improvement is taking place. This allows some principals to be involved informally, where their contract may not allow it for evaluation. Principal S-3, for example, is not allowed to include any documentation outside formal, scheduled observations, but he uses informal feedback to recognize and encourage positive elements he sees walking through the building. “It doesn’t always have to be negative. A lot of things would be to build in a positive, so, what I find myself doing is that I can do walk throughs, I’ll just praise my teachers.”
Principal U-4 purposefully aligns these informal methods with her evaluation process. A major part of her evaluation is reporting on teacher goals. She cannot dictate what goals teachers write or that align with school improvement goals. By encouraging teachers to do this, they have more access to data to support progress on their goals, such as meeting minutes. “I can see the minutes and it’s documented that you’ve tried to put forth some effort for collecting data throughout the year which will only help the documentation process that you’re working on your goals.” Empowering teachers to set goals and dictate some of the data collection to support them has led to increased instructional change. “Now, what I’ve found is when I encourage teachers to align their individual goals with the school improvement goals and the grade level meetings because their peers are in there with them and it’s very non-threatening, I’ve seen the instructional change.” She is able to connect this informal component of supervision with the formal evaluation by shifting the burden of data collection and not violating contract language of her administrative requirements.

She takes this goal setting and documentation by teachers a step further to increase collaboration among teachers, as well. Teachers are encouraged to not only align their goals with school goals, but also to work together to set their goals. In some circumstances she encourages teachers to share goals, especially with new teachers. It makes sense if she’s mentoring you, to work on the same things at the same time. The times you’re together, document it, you know, give me the minutes back, you know. And they did that, and, you know, they’re working together. I’ve seen huge growth. So it becomes a partnership and instead of my room, your room, it becomes our goals that we’re working on together.

According to her, this encouragement to connect individual objectives to school goals and one another has increased collaboration and connection to school goals, but she also
recognizes that it is not part of the contract and requires teacher agreement. “I cannot mandate it, but it has worked well...they know that other teachers are there to support them then and it’s already documented.”

One final theme that emerged from the interviews is that the relationship between the teacher and building principal significantly influences the impact that feedback has on instruction, through both the formal evaluation process and the more informal conversations. Principal U-3 begins her discussion of evaluation and feedback with trust.

I, my very first thing is to build a relationship...it really does boil down to the trust issue, because when you deal with people about evaluation, they have to know...your comments to them can’t be taken in a personal, but rather need to be taken in a professional, collegial way. Um, you have to let them know that they can trust you. They shouldn’t be afraid of you.

Principal U-2 feels she is able to be more informal and remain effective based on her relationship with teachers. “I was media specialist before (being principal). So, anyway, I have a different relationship here. So a lot of my evaluations are a little more informal.”

Principal S-3 is in a new building and recognized that he needs to build a positive relationship before feedback can be effective. “Right now I’m focused on building that relationship...If once they can trust, they’re going to be able to open up and take criticism and be able to, you know, you should be able to sit down and have a great conversation with them about the instruction their giving.” Principal S-1 uses the feedback process to develop trust with new teachers:

With the new teachers, it is a good opportunity to build trust with them, in terms of how I frame the conference and how I talk through conferences. And then when we get done, I try to end with, okay what can I do now to help you?
Principal U-4, who as noted takes the most liberty with contractual restrictions recognizes that it is a positive relationship that allows her not be challenged on it.

I’ve gotten away with it, so I’ve kept it going. And maybe it’s because it’s not a punitive thing. I’ll have them bring down their data and how’s it going, you know. So it’s not a formal observation that I go in and watch, I just check in with them and see how their goals are going and how much progress they’ve made.

Summary

In response to questions regarding methods of supervising and evaluating new teachers, all participants noted that they were guided by contractual requirements from their master agreements with teacher unions. While there were some differences in frequency and numbers, participants similarly identified that formal evaluations were written based on formal classroom observations. Differences existed among participants regarding whether observations were required to be scheduled or could be unannounced and if principals were permitted to include data collected outside formal observations in written evaluations. The major themes that emerged from the interview data revealed that 1) despite whether principals could include alternative data sources, their main goal was to inform the teacher with the sole intent of improvement, 2) most participants felt that the formal evaluation process had little to no impact on instruction and that improvement comes through self-reflection and motivation and informal methods of feedback from the instructional leader, 3) many principals use informal methods of supervision to elicit instructional change, rather than the evaluation process, and 4) a positive relationship and trust are recognized as being necessary for feedback to be positive and constructive.
Research Question #2: What are the Strengths and Weaknesses of New Teachers as Perceived by Principals?

*Ranking Categories of Effective Instruction*

Table 7 presents the categories of effective instruction utilized as codes for the study as ranked by each participant.

Table 7: Ranking Categories of Elements of Effective Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongest Skill Code</th>
<th>Weakest Skill Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td>IMPLEM, INSORG, RPRT, FDBK</td>
<td>MGMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td>RPRT, MGMT, INSORG, IMPLEM</td>
<td>FDBK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
<td>INSORG, RPRT, FDBK, MGMT</td>
<td>IMPLEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
<td>INSORG, IMPLEM, RPRT, FDBK</td>
<td>MGMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
<td>RPRT, IMPLEM, FDBK, INSORG</td>
<td>MGMT</td>
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<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
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<td>MGMT</td>
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<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
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<td>IMPLEM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
<td>IMPLEM, RPRT, INSORG, FDBK</td>
<td>MGMT</td>
</tr>
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<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
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<td>FDBK</td>
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<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
<td>RPRT, INSORG, FDBK, IMPLEM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
<td>MGMT, INSORG, RPRT, FDBK</td>
<td>IMPLEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
<td>IMPLEM, INSORG, FDBK, MGMT</td>
<td>RPRT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75
Each category was assigned a value of one through five based on the ranking by each principal. The strongest code was given a one and the weakest a five. Mean scores were figured for each population category of principal as well as the overall mean for code. The mean scores are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Template for Mean Code Scores for Effective Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean for Rural Principals</th>
<th>Mean for Urban Principals</th>
<th>Mean for Suburban Principals</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPRT: Rapport and Relationships</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGMT: Classroom Management and Organization</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSORG: Instructional Organization</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPLEM: Implementing Instruction</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDBK: Monitors Student Progress and Offers Feedback</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The breakdown of categories into mean scores reveals some variation among the participant groups. Rapport and relationships (RPRT) ranks as the strongest by overall mean, 2.0, but is not the strongest for all groups of participants. In fact, as illustrated in Table 8, rapport and relationships ranks first for urban principals as a group only with a mean of 1.25. Table 7 reveals that three of the four urban principals ranked it as their strongest category. It ranks second for both suburban and rural principals, with mean scores of 2.5 and 2.25 respectively. For those two population groups of principals,
instructional organization (INSORG), ranked as their strongest category. For urban principals, instructional organization ranked third, with a mean score of 3.25.

The perception of strengths of new teachers of urban principals clearly differs from those defined by this study as suburban or rural. Table 9 presents the rankings by skill category for the participant groups.

Table 9: Code Ranks by Participant Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongest Skill</th>
<th>Weakest Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principals</td>
<td>Suburban Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPRT</td>
<td>IMPLEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSORG</td>
<td>RPRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSORG</td>
<td>RPRT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strongest skills are the only ones to show obvious pattern among or between participants. While implementation of instruction (IMPLEM) was ranked second for urban principals, it was third for suburban principals and fourth for rural principals. Classroom and student management (MGMT) scored low for most principals, from all groups, ranking highest among rural principals at third. Monitoring student progress and offering feedback was another consistently weak skill noted by principals of each category.

Evidence of Strengths and Weaknesses and Themes from Interviews

Interview transcripts were analyzed for evidence of strengths and weaknesses of new teachers and themes were identified. Transcripts were coded for each pre-established category of effective instruction. A second level of coding was next utilized to identify specific examples of these codes and analyzed for possible themes. Table 10 presents a
breakdown of discussion of each category within each interview. A discussion of each code, identified sub-categories and emerging themes follows. Possible themes for each coding category were identified using a standard of 8 different examples from the 12 participants. Of that minimum of eight people referencing a code, a minimum of five examples were needed for a sub-category theme. Four of the five codes met the minimum requirement of eight participant comments. Interestingly these codes did not polarize themselves around highest and lowest scoring codes. There was variation among participants in speaking about specific examples of strengths and weaknesses within the codes. In some cases, participants even gave examples of strengths and weaknesses within the same code. This is shown in Table 10. The code category of monitors student progress and offers feedback was the only category to not meet the minimum of eight participant references, despite being the second highest scoring code, or second weakest.

*Rapport and Relationships*

Ten of the 12 principals interviewed noted specific examples of rapport and relationships within their interviews. Eight of the 10 who gave specific examples fitting this code mentioned it as a strength, five of the 10 mentioned specific weaknesses, and three gave examples of both strengths and weaknesses. Specific sub-categories discussed within this code are presented in Table 11.
Table 10: Evidence of Strengths and Weaknesses from Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RPRT</th>
<th>MGMT</th>
<th>INSORG</th>
<th>IMPELM</th>
<th>FDBK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RPRT</th>
<th>MGMT</th>
<th>INSORG</th>
<th>IMPELM</th>
<th>FDBK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RPRT</th>
<th>MGMT</th>
<th>INSORG</th>
<th>IMPELM</th>
<th>FDBK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. S = Strength, W = Weakness*
Table 11: Second Stage Coding for RPRT: Rapport and Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Student Relationships</th>
<th>Willing to Seek Help</th>
<th>Interaction with Staff</th>
<th>Team Attitude</th>
<th>Friendliness</th>
<th>Parent Situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. S = Strength, W = Weakness.

The most common example discussed by principals regarding rapport was the element of enthusiasm of new teachers. Five of the ten principals who spoke specifically of rapport and relationships targeted enthusiasm of new teachers as a strength. Principal
U-1 said, “What I love about new teachers is their enthusiasm...their willingness to try anything...you can just see the excitement. It oozes out of their pores.” According to principal U-3, “They are able to build relationships because of enthusiasm. They’re fresh. They’re not tired.” Principal R-2 noted, “certainly I think the rapport with students, enthusiasm and the excitement for teaching are certainly strengths that I’ve seen. They really think they can change the world.”

Despite ranking first as the strongest category, not all the participants spoke of rapport and relationships as a strength. As noted, five participants mentioned examples of this category as a weakness. Within those five, no examples were common enough to be noted as a theme. All categories are listed in Table 11.

*Instructional Organization*

Ten of the 12 participants also gave specific examples in their interview of instructional organization of new teachers. This was discussed with more decisiveness than rapport and relationships, in that none of the participants spoke of examples of both strengths and weaknesses. Eight of the 10 speaking of this category mentioned strengths, while only two mentioned weaknesses. There is more of a theme within this code among the participant population breakdown, as well. All four suburban principals mentioned specific strengths relating to instructional organization, as did three of the four rural principals. Only one of the four urban principals noted instructional organization as a strength, and both examples of a weakness is this area came from urban principals. This supports the difference in mean scores from the ranking activity presented in Table 4. Rural and suburban principals see instructional organization as more of a strength in new teachers than urban principals.
While instructional organization shows differences among the population groups defined in this study, the sub-categories identified through second stage coding vary. Of the eight participants giving specific examples of instructional organization, six different sub-categories of examples were given. These sub-categories are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Second Stage Coding for INSORG: Instructional Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizing material</th>
<th>Time in planning</th>
<th>Use of technology</th>
<th>Finding resources</th>
<th>Focused on instruction</th>
<th>Writing lessons</th>
<th>Organization, time management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. S = Strength, W = Weakness.
Six of the eight principals gave examples related to lesson planning. This is difficult to identify as a theme, however, because the specific examples can be broken further into two specific categories of planning. Three of the eight spoke specifically of time in planning lessons as a strength. Principal U-1 said, “Just the amount of time, they spend in their classroom preparing” is a strength. Principal R-2 supported this by saying, “certainly time dedication...you’ve got to kick them out a lot of the time.” Three others spoke of planning lessons as a strength. Principal S-1 said, “I think they do come with a really good concept of how to write a lesson, what components should be included in a lesson.” Principal S-3 also felt that lesson preparation was a strength, saying, “I think their lesson plans are always right to the T...they do a good job preparing teachers for that.” These categories are separated on Table 12.

The two weaknesses noted by principals under the category of instructional organization focused on organization of a lesson. This was mentioned only by two principals and was not enough to be considered for a possible theme.

Implementation of Instruction

When asked about specific strengths and weaknesses of new teachers, 11 of the 12 participants referenced the category of implementation of instruction. Of those 11 the split between those examples given as strengths and those as weaknesses was nearly equal, six strength and seven weakness references, with two principals giving examples of both a strength and a weakness. This is depicted on Table 10. This supports the overall mean for the category to be the middle skill of five with a mean score of 3.1. It is worth noting that despite the overall mean placement as the third strongest skill for new teachers, this was not the case for all participant categories. It was the second strongest
skill for urban principals and the forth, or second weakest, skill for suburban principals.

The score for rural principals was consistent with the overall mean, 3.1 for the rural participants, ranking third strongest.

Table 13: Second Stage Coding for IMPLEM: Implementing Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategies, best practice</th>
<th>Desire to reach every student</th>
<th>Knowledge of state benchmarks</th>
<th>Use of technology</th>
<th>Differentiating instruction</th>
<th>Risk taking</th>
<th>Use of higher thinking strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
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<td>S</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. S = Strength, W = Weakness.
Second stage coding was again used to break the category down into sub-topics and examples. Table 13 presents these categories. Only the sub-category of instructional strategies as a strength meets the minimum criteria of five examples to be noted as a theme. The references given by principals to positive instructional strategies is vague. All five mention new teachers being skilled in the area, but do not give specific examples of what that looks like in the classroom or specific instructional techniques new teachers use. S-1, for example, said, "I'm finding they come more and more with a reasonable sized tool bag of ideas, instructional ideas to use." U-4 said, "They usually have the latest teaching strategies." R-4 commented that they, "have the latest things."

Only two of those noting instructional strategies as a weakness were much more specific. Principal S-2, for example, said, "...what instructional techniques are the latest and greatest, what do we know about the good brain research, you know...are they current with that...do they know Understanding By Design." Principal R-1 was also more specific with the weakness saying weaknesses come, "When we get into things like flexible groups, you know guided reading groups." Again, he was more specific with the listing of weaknesses in the sub-category.

Classroom Management

Eight of the 12 participants referenced the coding category of classroom management. Sub-categories identified are presented in Table 14. None of the sub-categories defined meet the criteria of five participant references to be considered as a theme. The largest reference was a general statement of classroom management weakness without specific classroom examples.
Table 14: Second Stage Coding for MGMT: Classroom Management and Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Understanding of management programs</th>
<th>General mention of classroom management</th>
<th>Classroom organization and procedures</th>
<th>Student behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. S = Strength, W = Weakness.
Most Important Skills

The final question asked participants in the interviews for the skills they felt were most important for new teachers. The coding category of rapport and relationships was noted by nine of the 12 participants, meeting the criteria for an emerging theme. Of those nine, three participants focused on enthusiasm and energy. Principal R-4 said, "Mostly I'm looking for energy because this job takes a lot of energy." Principal U-1 said, "I want someone with enthusiasm...I want someone to come in with fresh ideas." The third, principal S-1 said, "...they need to come in with an insatiable palate. That's what I'm looking for when I'm interviewing, those things that are harder to teach. Their love, their passion, their excitement, their eyes dancing when they're talking about kids...because you don't teach that. You either have it or you don't."

The other six principals focused specifically on relationships with students. Principal R-2 said, "...seeing people with kids, interactions with kids, relationships with kids, I look for first and foremost." He, like principal S-1, felt this is important because other skills can be learned by new teachers. According to him, "Content can be taught. All the skill stuff can be taught, but you cannot really teach someone to connect."

Principal S-4 connected the importance of the student relationship with achievement, "The kids have to know, really do, have to know that I care about you beyond you completing this math assignment. So I think that's key."

Summary

Analysis of the ranking of strengths and weaknesses of new teachers by the elementary school principals participating in this study reveals some noteworthy similarities and differences among participants. Of the five codes of effective instruction,
rapport and student relationships was the strongest skill noted by all 12 principals when a mean score for the codes was figured for the rank given by each. This was not consistent for each of the identified participant group. In fact, only one of the three participant groups, the urban principals, ranked rapport and student relationships as their strongest skill. There was a difference between urban principals and rural and suburban principals. For both the rural and suburban principals, instructional organization was the strongest skill and rapport and student relationships ranked second. For urban principals, instructional organization ranked third.

Investigation of interview transcripts revealed themes within three of the five coding categories relating to the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. A two stage coding process was applied to interview transcripts. Possible themes were identified when a minimum of eight of the 12 principals referenced the initial pre-established code. A second stage of coding was applied to identify sub-categories and specific examples within the initial code category. Within the rapport and relationship category, enthusiasm was identified as a strength.

Within the instructional organization category, there were no specific examples mentioned enough to note as a sub-category theme. It is noteworthy, however, that the examples given by participants supported the ranking of categories, where rural and suburban principals noted more strengths in this area than urban principals. Rural and suburban principals ranked instructional organization as their strongest skill, where urban principals ranked it as their third strongest skill. The code of classroom management and organization was the last that had a theme emerge from a second stage analysis.
Participants referencing this code, however, simply mentioned general classroom management as a weakness.

Research Question #3: How do Principals Perceive the Adequacy of Professional Support for New Teachers?

**Ranking Support Structures for New Teachers**

Table 15 presents the categories of support structures for new teachers as ranked by the participants.

**Table 15: Ranking Categories for Research Question 3: Support Structures for New Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Effective Support Code</th>
<th>Least Effective Support Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #1</td>
<td>MNTR ADSUP NTWRK EXPEC INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #2</td>
<td>NTWRK INDUC ADSUP MNTR EXPEC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #3</td>
<td>MNTR NTWRK EXPEC ADSUP INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principal #4</td>
<td>ADSUP MNTR EXPEC NTWRK INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #1</td>
<td>ADSUP MNTR NTWRK EXPEC INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #2</td>
<td>MNTR ADSUP NTWRK EXPEC UNIV INDUC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #3</td>
<td>MNTR NTWRK ADSUP EXPEC INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principal #4</td>
<td>ADSUP EXPEC MNTR NTWRK INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #1</td>
<td>MNTR ADSUP EXPEC INDUC NTWRK UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #2</td>
<td>ADSUP MNTR EXPEC NTWRK INDUC UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #3</td>
<td>UNIV MNTR ADSUP EXPEC NTWRK INDUC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principal #4</td>
<td>MNTR EXPEC ADSUP INDUC NTWRK UNIV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each category was assigned a value of one through five based on the ranking by each principal. The code ranked as most effective was given a one and the least effective a five. Mean scores were figured for each population category of principal as well as the overall mean for code. The mean scores are presented in Table 16.

Table 16: Template for Mean Code Scores for New Teacher Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean for Rural Principals</th>
<th>Mean for Urban Principals</th>
<th>Mean for Suburban Principals</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADSUP: Administrative Support</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNTR: Mentoring</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTWRK: Networking and Supportive Environments</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDUC: Comprehensive Induction Program</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIV: School-University Collaboration</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPEC: Curricular and Behavioral Expectations</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ranking of the categories of support structures reveals similarities among defined groups of participants, particularly at the ends of the ranking scale. Table 17 illustrates the ranking breakdown by category for all the participant groups. The category of mentoring (MNTR) had the lowest overall mean and was ranked the most effective by all groups and the category of administrative support (ADSUP) was second in all groups, with a tie for rural principals for networking and supportive environments (NTWRK).
Table 17: Code Ranks by Participant Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Category</th>
<th>Most Effective Support</th>
<th>Least Effective Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Principals</td>
<td>MNTR, ADSUP/NTWRK, EXPEC, INDUC</td>
<td>UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Principals</td>
<td>MNTR, ADSUP, NTWRK, EXPEC, INDUC</td>
<td>UNIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Principals</td>
<td>MNTR, ADSUP, EXPEC</td>
<td>NTWRK/INDUC/UNIV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the least effective end of the spectrum, school-university collaboration (UNIV) and comprehensive induction program (INDUC) ranked least effective respectively for all groups, with a tie among the suburban principals. Networking and supportive environment (NTWRK) and curricular and behavioral expectations (EXPEC) ranked in the middle for all groups.

Evidence of Support Structures and Themes from Interviews

Interview transcripts were analyzed for evidence of support structures for new teachers and themes were identified. Transcripts were coded for each pre-established category of support structures. A second level of coding was then utilized to identify specific examples of these codes and analyzed for possible themes. Table 18 presents a breakdown of discussion of each category within each interview. A discussion of each code and emerging themes follows. Themes for each coding category were identified.
using a standard of 8 different examples from the 12 participants. Only two categories met this criterion, mentoring (MNTR) and administrative support (ADSUP).

Table 18: Presentation of Evidence of Codes in Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ADSUP</th>
<th>MNTR</th>
<th>NTWRK</th>
<th>INDUC</th>
<th>UNIV</th>
<th>EXPEC</th>
</tr>
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Within each category, a standard of five minimum references to sub-categories or examples was once again used to identify themes within the second stage of coding. The
categories of curricular and behavioral expectations (EXPEC) and comprehensive
induction program (INDUC) were close to the first stage coding level with six.

Mentoring

A mentor and mentoring program was ranked by all participant categories as the
most effective structure in supporting new teachers. In addition, it was specifically noted
by all participants as a utilized support structure. This should not be a surprise, as the
assignment of a mentor is required by state statute. Of the 12 participants interviewed, 10
specifically mentioned careful selection of the mentor. According to principal R-3 it is
effective because of the care put into the selection. The effectiveness is “because the
pairing is so good. There’s nothing arbitrary about it, you know. The person that’s
coming in might be a math minor...so we might pair them with a language arts guru
around here. There’s some nice complementary type of things.” Principals R-1, R-4 and
U-1 also noted the thought of a “good fit” when pairing up new teachers with mentors
and try to align them within the same grade level, when possible.

The fit of mentor assignments are not limited to subject area and grade level.
Principal U-2 centered her comments of choosing a mentor around someone who will
provide “guidance.” She looks for someone that will share ideas with the intent on
helping the new teacher learn and develop independence.

I think if you have a good mentor, somebody who will share their plans
with you and explain why, not make you do them, but will help you, will
take time to work with you, to guide you. It’s guidance. I think that’s the
most important, not just giving information.

Principal U-3 also spoke of fostering independence for new teachers with someone who
will be a good role model for them.

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I give some thought to who I am going to ask… Whose style would it fit and who would be willing to do it because it fits well? Second, and really second and first, who would be a positive deviant? Who is somebody that I think, you know, just oozes that dedication? That assignment is key. You want somebody who’s energetic, who’s a teacher-leader, who loves what they do and exudes that to the other person and shows them the ropes a little bit, hold their hand a little it, until their ready to do it on their own.

*Administrative Support*

The category of administrative support was the other where a clear theme emerged from the interviews. Eleven of the 12 principals interviewed noted specific examples of how they, as principals, offer support to new teachers. Of those 11, nine spoke specifically of establishing a positive relationship with the new teacher. Many principals discussing supporting new teachers as the principal spoke of needing to be visible and approachable. Principals R-1 and U-3 spoke of an “open door” policy.

According to principal R-1:

I try to support my new teachers, and all the teachers, if there are questions, you really have to emphasize the importance of an open door policy and open discussion, with the thought that that’s healthy, rather than looking at that as part of the evaluation piece. I try to meet with those teachers regularly…just try to have good interaction and make it seem clear to those teachers that it’s really important.

Principal U-3 noted:

Supporting a teacher is letting them know that in my sense, that my door is always open, that I’m in their classroom because I want to support them, that I know the names of the kids in their class, that I know who has special needs in that classroom. So that those are things, knowing as much as I can as an administrator about what’s going on in a teacher’s classroom allows them to realize that they are supported both by other teachers at their grade level, as well as this level and things that I can do to help.

The evident theme of desire to support new teachers as principals ran throughout the participants’ discussion of new teacher supports. Principal S-1 also spoke of establishing
approachability and the importance of feeling comfortable asking questions and receiving feedback. “I...get a good, positive relationship, so they can ask me questions, they don’t feel intimidated, just by being confused and they don’t get it. I try to give them the things, pay attention to this, don’t pay attention to that, just get that positive relationship going.” Principal U-l spoke of approachability directly. “Making myself approachable and welcoming to those new teachers, that’s the image that I want to get across.” This allows her to convey that idea of support to new teachers. It helps them understand “that you’re not alone. I never want my new teachers to feel like they’re an island and they’re in this alone, that I’m here to help and support them in any way that I can.”

This positive relationship with the principal clearly targets supporting new teachers with the goal of helping them succeed with their transition into the profession. It is evident that principals understand the difficulty for new teachers. The support offered by principals can fill gaps of the support offered by mentors discussed previously. Principal S-l purposefully uses her relationship in conjunction with the mentor assignment. “The first thing I like to do is pair them up with a mentor teacher. I think that they will run kind of parallel and get a good positive relationship...so they can ask me questions.” According to principal R-4, the combination of these relationships is the most important factor in supporting new teachers.

I would say support (is most important)...that relationship that you build with people, I mean, you can go to staff development, you can learn a lot. You can read books. You can observe other teachers, but unless you have people who are, you know, engrained in this profession, and guiding you and saying it’s okay to feel overwhelmed, it’s okay to feel this way or that or you’re gong in the right direction, I would say that support from professionals is the most important.
The positive relationship between principal and new teacher is clearly intended to support the teacher and help them be successful. This approachability and visibility by principals aims to allow new teachers to seek guidance proactively. Principals U-2 and S-3 both note the importance of support being initiated by the new teacher. According to principal U-3, "you need to build rapport in order to have those people feel comfortable with you in their room...that rapport with your staff in order to be able to not be threatening and offer suggestions before it gets to a point where you need to offer suggestions." Principal S-3 took this idea a step further.

I always tell my teachers that it’s better for them to come to me with concerns they have that I can support them with than for me to walk into a classroom situation and talk to them several times in a row about it and never see it get taken care of.

Principals clearly want to support new teachers, but these examples highlight the expectation for self-reflection within teachers and the willingness to seek help independently.

The establishment of a positive relationship with new teachers was the overwhelming theme discussed by participants in the interviews. Other sub-categories noted were scheduling considerations, to avoid over burdening new teachers and allow time to meet with mentor teachers during scheduled prep time, providing opportunities for new teachers to observe mentor teachers and other skilled veterans, and providing access to necessary materials and resources. None of these sub-categories, however, met the established criterion of five references to establish it as a sub-theme.
Additional Themes from Interviews

*Support Responsibility*

Of the 12 participants interviewed, eight noted that at least half of the existing support for new teachers comes from the building level and is their responsibility as building principal. Of these eight, six noted that an induction to district policies and procedures occurred at the beginning of the teacher’s first year was run by the district. This induction ranged from one to three days. Principal R-2 describes their district induction as, “a very surface, kind of program. They meet at the beginning of the year and get the district overview.” Principal U-4 spoke similarly of their induction. “Usually the one day is, you know, here’s your materials, here’s your contract, here’s the district policies, here’s the curriculum, there you are. See you later, bye.”

Those principals that did speak of additional district support noted providing some professional development or access to resources outside the district. Principal S-2 said the district provides “our professional development days, they would give, um, opportunities for professional development that would help guide our new teacher, too.” Principal R-4 also noted access to professional development, “…I would say any kind of staff development that comes up, you know, that the ISD provides. If something comes up in our meetings that the teacher feels like…I’m not real comfortable in, I’ll look at things or our assistant superintendent will look at things from the ISD and shoot them over.” Even in this example, however, the topics stemming from discussion with the new teacher are initiated by the principal and the support she offers the teacher.
Improving Support for New Teachers

One final theme emerging from interview discussions of support for new teachers is the desire for additional time to help support new teachers. Principal S-4 noted that one major challenge for new teachers, and principals supporting them, is the amount that new teachers need to learn on the job. "I think the biggest barrier is that it’s such an overwhelming job, and the first year teacher comes in with such a learning curve ahead of them. It’s such an overwhelming job and you have so much to learn in such a short period of time." Nine of the 12 participants specifically referred to additional time as something they would like to add in supporting new teachers.

Principals R-3 and S-2 specifically mention the desire for time for new teachers to get acclimated to the school before students begin. Principal S-2 said,

More time before they start to get it all clarified. It’s my experience that we’ve hired them very late, just before school started and that was just survival and if they would be hired in June, you know, we could have two days to talk about these things and you would have a much more relaxed time to learn and process it and they could read and get ready for their new class and get the focus going.

Principal R-3 also mentioned time before school, but focused that time for the new teacher to meet with the mentor. “I would think, to have the hire in place, to have the mentor-mentee, to give them some designated time to have them meet before school even starts, you know the summer.”

Time dedicated to meeting with the mentor was also mentioned by principals S-1, R-4, U-4, and R-2, but not restricted to summer. Principal S-1 would like, “A time component where they can sit down with their mentor teacher uninterrupted and really work through some curriculum things.” Principal U-4 targeted some structured time within the school day, “maybe shorten up the grade levels and the last hour of the day is
for the mentor and mentee. Somehow build that in so they’re not working, you know, because every new teacher I have here, even with the support I give them, is in working on weekends.”

Participants were asked to rank the effectiveness of existing support structures for new teachers and elaborated on their experiences in the interview. Participants consistently ranked mentors and administrative support given by the principal as the most effective supports and district induction programs and school university collaboration as the weakest. Themes emerged within the coding categories of mentoring and administrative support. Within the mentoring category, participants noted the importance of selection of the mentor. Within the administrative support category participants focused on the theme of a positive relationship between the principal and new teacher. Two final themes outside of the coding categories emerged. Principals articulated that a majority of the support for new teachers fell on their shoulders, as building administrator. Little support was offered at the district level. The last theme referenced by principals was the desire for additional time to support new teachers. Participants gave specific examples of ways they would use this time before school starts to help prepare new teachers and time for teachers to meet with mentors, both before and during the school year.

Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed the data gathered to address three research questions:

1. How do principals supervise and evaluate new teachers?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers as perceived by principals?
3. How do principals perceive the adequacy of professional support for new teachers?

For research question #1, participants were interviewed to gain insight into the methods used to supervise and evaluate new teachers. All the principals noted that contracts with their teacher unions dictated evaluation methods they are allowed to use. Principals relied primarily on classroom observations. Differences within observation protocol were evident. Some principals were restricted on only formal, announced and scheduled observations, while others are permitted to use unscheduled and drop in observations. The number of observations required differed as well. Another difference among principals was whether they are able to utilize alternate forms of data gathering in formal, written evaluations. Four major themes emerged from the interviews: 1) the main goal of principals was to give teachers feedback for professional growth, 2) most participants felt that the evaluation process had little impact on instruction and that improvement comes through self-reflection and informal methods of feedback, 3) many principals utilize informal methods of supervision to motivate instructional change and 4) a positive relationship and trust are recognized as necessary for feedback to be constructive. No major differences emerged among the participant groups of rural principals, suburban principals and urban principals.

Research question #2 explored the perceptions of participants surrounding the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Principals ranked the skills of new teachers. Overall rankings revealed that rapport and relationships with students as the strongest skill and classroom management and organization as weakest. Within these rankings, however, a difference appeared between the participant groups. Urban principals was the
only group that ranked rapport and relationships with students first. Despite the overall ranking of first, suburban and rural principals instructional organization was ranked first and rapport and relationships was second. Within the categories, rapport and relationship was identified as a theme, specifically citing enthusiasm as a strength. Classroom management was also a theme, but reference by participants in a general way, without specific examples or sub-categories.

Research question #3 asked principals to rank effectiveness of support structures for new teachers and explored their experiences supporting new teachers. Participants ranked mentoring as the most effective support structure for new teachers and school-university collaboration as the least effective. This was consistent among participant groups, showing no differences between urban, rural and suburban principals. Themes emerged within the coding categories of mentoring and administrative support. Participants noted the importance of the careful selection of a mentor and focused on a positive relationship for administrative support. Two other themes were evident outside the coding categories. Participants noted that a majority of the support for new teachers was the responsibility of the building principal. The final theme was the desire for additional time to support new teachers through time to offer support as an administrator and time for the new teacher to access support from the mentor teacher.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences and perceptions of elementary school teachers regarding the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Exploration of this topic specifically analyzed ways that principals supervise and evaluate new teachers, their perceptions of new teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and the effectiveness of the structures used to support new teachers. Twelve elementary school principals were selected depicting three population groups: urban, suburban and rural schools. Four principals from each group participated. Perceptions of principals were compared for overall themes, as well as a comparison of the similarities between the population groups of participants. This chapter is divided into five sections. These include (1) a discussion of each research question, (2) limitations, (3) suggestions for further research, (4) implications on current practice and (5) overall conclusions.

It is estimated that it takes up to five years to maximize student learning (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). In the current era of high stakes testing and accountability, immediate and positive teacher influence on student achievement is imperative. Unfortunately, teacher attrition rates approach 30% within the first three to five years of beginning the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Cost for recruiting, hiring and initiating new teachers is estimated to exceed $7 billion annually nation wide. Teacher attrition creates a costly cycle that negatively
impacts student achievement. It is widely recognized that new teachers require support and on the job training (Kaufman, 2002; Ward, 2001; Wong, 2002). One consistent influence impacting the decision of new teachers to leave is student academic success (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Deeper understanding of the needs of new teachers can direct the support school districts and administrators provide new teachers and work to limit the cycle initiated with teacher attrition.

The major themes emerging from the data are related to the research questions. In looking at ways that principals supervise and evaluate new teachers, all 12 participants noted that they were guided by the contract of the teachers’ union and the methods by which they could gather data to evaluate varied slightly through formal classroom observations, walk-through observations, and informal collection (i.e. parent conversation/communication, student reference, etc.). One major difference was whether informal data collected outside formal observations could be included in formal observations. A significant theme discussed by principals surrounding data for evaluations was that their main goal was not to include such information in formal evaluations, but rather to give new teachers awareness through feedback with the foremost intent of improvement. A second major theme related to data collection and evaluation was that principals felt that the evaluation process had little impact on instruction. Because of this and the restrictions placed on them by union contracts, participants discussed supervision and constructive feedback running parallel to evaluation. The evaluation process was viewed as a formality and supervision to improve instruction often occurs outside and in spite of the evaluation process and requirements.
No noteworthy differences existed between the population groups of urban, suburban and rural principals.

Interesting results surrounded the examination of the perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Categories from James Stonge’s book, *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2007), was used as a framework for ranking and analyzing skills of new teachers. The category of *rapport and student relationships* was found to be the strongest skill for new teachers when skills were ranked for all participants. There was a difference between urban principals and the other two groups, rural and suburban principals. Rankings by participant category revealed that only the urban principals were consistent with this, ranking rapport and student relationships strongest. Both suburban and rural principals ranked instructional organization as the strongest. The weakest skill differed for participant grouping as well. The overall weakest skill, as determined by calculating mean scores, was classroom management and organization, but this was only consistent with urban and rural principals. Suburban principals ranked monitors student progress and offers feedback as the weakest. Interview data analysis revealed sub-themes within the category of *rapport and relationships* with students, where enthusiasm and energy was identified as a specific strength and within the category of classroom management and organization, which was identified as a general weakness.

Examination of the support structures for new teachers revealed consistent rankings of mentoring and administrative support as the most effective ways to support new teachers. Themes emerged from within each of these categories. Within the mentoring category, participants noted the importance of selection of the mentor. Within the *administrative support* category participants focused on the theme of a positive
relationship between the principal and new teacher. Two final themes outside of the coding categories emerged: a majority of the support for new teachers was the responsibility of the building principal and that they desired more time for new teachers to access assistance offered.

Review of Research Questions

Research Question #1

How do principals supervise and evaluate new teachers? What differences exist between rural, urban, and suburban administrators?

Data provided by the participants of this study support the position of Sullivan and Glanz (2000) that separate the bureaucratic function of evaluation from the democratic function seeking to help teachers grow professionally. Berube and Dexter (2006) believe that separating instructional supervision from evaluation is a challenge for school administrators. This separation, however, was a consistent theme among the participants of this study. Participants noted themes following recommendations of Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002), who advocate a less formal procedure when the goal of evaluation is professional growth and more formal and documented when the purpose is for summative evaluation. For the participants of this study, the separation of supervision and evaluation is due to the restrictions placed on their formal evaluation process by union contracts.

All 12 participants of this study stated that their evaluation process and methods are dictated by union contract. The methods by which they are directed to use in evaluation were somewhat consistent. A summary of evaluation requirements and
restrictions is presented in Table 6. All principals were required to complete formal classroom observations, but the number of observations required over the course of the year varied, as did the length of the observations. One theme and difference that emerged from exploration of evaluation methods revolved around the principal’s ability to gather data outside of formal observation times. Nine of the 12 participants were permitted to include data outside of formal classroom observations. This gave them the ability to write evaluations of a more complete picture of teacher performance. This ability does not appear to influence a principal’s view of the impact of evaluation.

The impact of evaluation on instruction was another theme discussed by principals. Nine of the 12 participants had a skeptical or negative belief that the evaluation process impacts classroom instruction. Rationale for this varied. Some participants felt that the contractual restraints limited their ability to give constructive feedback. Participants who were required to conduct scheduled classroom observations and could not report on observational data outside formal observations reported more of these feelings.

Nonetheless, despite the negative view of the impact of evaluation on instruction and the restrictions placed on them by contractual agreements, principals continue to use supervisory methods with the intent on improving instruction and the skills and abilities of their teachers. This supports the idea that supervision as a focus on improving student learning through the engagement of teachers in instructional dialogue (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Participants consistently spoke of utilizing walk throughs and frequent visitation to teachers’ classrooms to gain solid understanding of teachers’ abilities. Whether they were permitted to put feedback into writing, they perceived that this feedback, coupled
with the teacher’s desire to improve made more of an impact than a formal, written evaluation. Even those who had the ability to include alternative forms of data in evaluations, such as hallway interactions and observations, parent, student and staff feedback, etc. specifically noted that their intent would be to discuss issues with teachers with the intent on improvement. Written evaluation would be utilized as a last resort if awareness and feedback were not effective. Even in those cases, principals said they would have discussed it many times, “at least a dozen times” according to one principal, before putting it in a written evaluation.

Ponticell and Zepeda (2004) found that supervision meant evaluation for principals, when evaluation was narrowly defined as fulfilling the required legal requirements. The findings of this study contradict their conclusions and separate supervision and evaluation. There appears to be a limited connection between new teacher evaluation and supervision, with the two running parallel to one another. Evaluation was discussed as a formality, due to the contractual restrictions placed on principals. Despite or even because of these restrictions principals find ways to focus instructional supervision on improving teaching and learning within their buildings. No differences emerged between urban, suburban and rural principals.

Research Question #2

What are the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers as perceived by principals? What differences exist between rural, urban and suburban administrators?

Analysis of data surrounding the second research question may have produced more questions than answers. Participants began addressing this issue by ranking the pre-established categories of strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. Rankings were
determined by calculating a mean score. The total mean was compared across the following participant groups: rural, urban and suburban principals. The ranking scores revealed differences across groups.

The overall rankings showed the category of *rapport and student relationships* as the strongest skill for new teachers. Urban principals were the only participant group that was consistent with this ranking. Rural principals and suburban principals identified instructional organization as the strongest skill for new teachers and ranked rapport and student relationships as second. Urban principals also ranked instructional organization as their third strongest skill.

*Rapport and student relationships* emerged as a theme through the interview data for all groups. A minimum standard of eight references to a code was established to identify possible themes within the interview data. As second stage coding was applied to the categories to identify sub-themes within the pre-established codes: 10 of the 12 principals interviewed referenced *rapport and student relationships* in their interviews. A minimum standard of five of the eight participants was established for identification of sub-themes. Enthusiasm and energy of new teachers emerged as a sub-theme within the *rapport and student relationships* category. Eight of the ten participants referring to that category referenced energy and enthusiasm specifically. This clearly supports the ranking of the category as a strength for new teachers and was mentioned more than any other category by the participants. Even though rural and suburban principals ranked instructional organization as their strongest skill, the examples of strengths given during the interview did not reference *instructional organization*. 
The category of *classroom management* was the only one consistently identified as a theme of weakness for new teachers. It met the criteria for a theme with eight references. Two references to this code were as strengths and six were weaknesses, so it met the minimum standard for a possible sub-theme. References were not specific. When mentioned by participants, they noted general *classroom management* as a weakness.

Two other code categories were mentioned enough to be considered for possible themes. The identification of sub-themes was problematic because references were split between strengths and weaknesses or did not have enough references to a specific sub-category to represent a sub-theme. *Instructional Organization* was referenced by 10 of the 12 principals participating and eight of those 10 were strengths. The examples provided during the interviews which would represent possible sub-themes were diverse. The largest of those was referenced three times and not enough to meet the minimum of five. The category of *instructional implementation* was referenced by 11 of the 12 participants and identified as a possible theme. Examples for this category were split between strengths and weakness, with two participants giving examples that were categorized as both strengths and weaknesses.

The category of *rapport and student relationships* appeared as a theme once again with reference to skills that principals look for in new teachers. When asked questions relating to the skills they feel are most important in new teachers, nine of the 12 principals referenced examples falling into this category. Three gave examples of energy and enthusiasm and six spoke of the ability to develop positive relationships with
students. It is significant to note that the skills which the principals participating in this study feel are most important for new teachers are those that they see as their strongest.

In analyzing and drawing conclusions from data targeting research question 2, the differences and variance among principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers is puzzling. An additional challenge stems from the limited research or information on the topic. The current body of research regarding new teachers focuses on debates over stronger instruction in subject area matter versus pedagogy within teacher training programs (Ball, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fecho, 2000; Hunt, Simonds, & Cooper, 2002; Mueller & Skamp, 2003; Pietig, 1997; Shulman, 1990), cultural awareness to meet diverse student needs (Althanases & Martin, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Nieto, 2000), and improving teacher quality through political reform (Allington, 2005; Berry, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Hamel & Merz, 2005; Hess, 2005; Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2000; Wineburg, 2006; Wise, 2005). There seems to be a void regarding new teacher strengths and weaknesses as they enter the profession. This study may begin to fill that void. The variety with which the participants discuss the strengths and weaknesses, however, does raise questions.

One possible explanation for this discrepancy may be related to principal perspectives in approaching the hiring of a new teacher. While not enough to be noted as a theme, four of the principals commented that they look for a new teacher that will fit specifically within a particular position, to “fit into our team” or will be a “good fit,” or within school initiatives. Principal R-3 noted that if they have a teacher in a complementary position that is good in language arts, they may look for someone strong in math, or if others in the building have strengths in instructional strategies, they are not
as worried about that in the new teacher. Having teachers to support a new colleague in their recognized weak areas may allow them to improve more quickly or possibly make them less noticeable. In addition, principals who may be looking for specific skills to fill a position may be more likely to scrutinize the new teacher’s ability of those skills, rather than a panoramic view of their capabilities.

As noted, rapport and student relationships was an evident theme in skills that principals value highly in new teachers. Related to that, but not enough to be considered as an independent theme, principals mentioned that they look for this skill because it is something that cannot be taught. According to principal R-2, “I can teach them the other things. You cannot teach someone to relate to kids. Either you have it or you don’t.” As with situations of specific fit, principals expecting to teach skills to new teachers are likely to have preconceptions of what they feel is more significant in impacting student learning. This may explain some of the variance in views over strengths and weaknesses, as well. Increased or intensified focus on particular skills as more valuable or important may magnify the scrutiny a principal places over certain skills. This could lead principals to view some skills as stronger or weaker based on the amount of attention they give them.

Research Question #3

How do principals perceive the adequacy of professional support for new teachers? What differences exist between rural, urban and suburban administrators?

Examination of the support structures from the perspectives of the participants of this study began with participants’ ranking common support structures by effectiveness. Mentoring and administrative support were consistently ranked as the most effective
support structures and induction programs and school-university collaboration were ranked as the weakest. Table 14 shows the overall rankings and the rankings broken down by participant groups. There were no noteworthy differences between the rural, urban and suburban principals within the rankings of these support structures. These rankings are not consistent with the findings of Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin (2006), who found that teachers most value the opportunity to observe, collaborate and learn from other teachers.

Interview transcripts were once again relied upon as evidence of specific themes and sub-themes within categories. One sub-theme emerged within the interviews from each of the two categories ranked as most effective by participants. As before, a minimum standard of eight participant references within the pre-established support structure categories was utilized for emerging theme recognition and a standard of at least five common examples or topics within a category was used to identify a sub-theme. All 12 participants referenced mentor programs within their interviews. This is not a surprise, however, because the existence of a mentor program is required by Michigan state statute. Examination for sub-themes revealed common elements among participants. In support of the ranking as the most effective support structure, all 12 principals spoke of the effectiveness of their programs. Mentor programs discussed by principals parallel the definition provided by Brewster & Railsback (2001), where the mentor is a veteran teacher who is available to offer general guidance and support and act as a resource whenever the new teacher has questions. Ten of the 12 participants referenced the careful selection of the mentor and the positive impact it has on the ability to support a new teacher. This is a commonly advocated for theme throughout the body of literature on
new teacher support structures (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Halford, 1999; Klausmeier, 1994; Littleton, Tally-Foos, & Wolaver, 1992).

Eleven of 12 participants referenced the support they offer new teachers as the building principal. Within this category of administrative support the sub-theme of the relationship between the principal and new teacher emerged. Nine of the 11 who referenced administrative support gave specific examples of the priority they place on establishing that relationship with the new teacher and ways that they attempt to do it. This perspective as an effective support structure is supported by studies citing positive relationships as a major factor in the success of first year teachers (Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). This type of support by the principals participating in this study should also have a positive impact on the culture of the school and reduce teacher burnout (Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005).

Two additional themes emerged from the data outside the pre-established coding categories. Principals articulated that a majority of the support for new teachers was their responsibility as the building principal. Eight of the 12 participants noted that at least half of the support provided for new teachers came at the building level. Six of those eight referenced district induction programs at the beginning of the teacher’s first year, but examples of these programs were not favorable. They were described as “surface level” or “basic.” Current practice of induction for new teachers, as described by the participants of this study is at odds with the advocacy within the literature. Brewster and Railsback (2001) stated that induction programs are intended to help beginning professionals make the transition from students to professionals. Watkins (2005) suggested that it involves assigning a coaching mentor, introduces and supports action
research and begins collegial discussion. Examples given by principals focus on one
time, rather than sustained professional focus, and are more policy management than
professional growth.

The final theme evident in the data is that in order to better support new teachers,
principals wish they had more time to devote to new teachers. Nine of the 12 participants
referenced the desire for time. Specific examples ranged from more time prior to the
beginning of school to more time during the school year to allow the teacher to observe
and meet with the mentor teacher. So, while the participants clearly understood that they
burdened most of the responsibility for supporting new teachers and spoke unfavorably of
the support at the district level, they wish they could do more. The desire to do more to
support new teachers may come from the fact that they currently shoulder much of the
responsibility. They are, therefore, looking at what they can do more of, rather than
looking at how support might come from elsewhere because it is what they can control.

Overall, these qualitative research findings reveal consistencies in the methods
utilized by elementary school principals to evaluate new teachers, which are clearly
dictated by union contract. Despite these restrictions, principals utilize methods of
instructional supervision to focus new teachers on improving teaching and learning
within their schools. While the results of this study do not clearly illustrate common
perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers, it does highlight a
difference between urban principals and rural and suburban principals. Regardless of
these differences, consistencies were found in the ways that urban, rural, and suburban
principals perceive the support for new teachers and the ways they work to influence that
support.
Limitations

There are two possible limitations that may impact the application of the findings to the general education community. The sub-question for each of the research questions asked for exploration of possible differences between rural, urban and suburban principals. The method of definition of these population groups of participants requires attention. As noted in the definitions, each group was defined strictly by population, using the U.S. Census definition of rural and urban areas. This definition relies on the census population counts by city or area. Because school district boundaries are not consistent with these city or area borders, it is possible that some parts of a district could be one category and others another. This also leaves out any identified characteristics of such populations and areas. It is possible that schools defined by population as rural, urban or suburban may not fit these categories if defined by characteristics instead.

The coding categories also represent another possible limitation of the study. This is particularly noteworthy for the second research question regarding strengths and weaknesses of new teachers. James Stronge’s book *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2007) provided an effective framework for the pre-established codes for this research question. He provided a thorough synthesis of the current literature. It should be recognized, though, that the coding categories established grouped together specific elements and made some assumptions regarding their relationship. This became particularly evident when analyzing possible sub-themes for strengths and weaknesses. Within coding categories, some principals noted specific examples of the same code that were strengths and weaknesses for new teachers. So, while the categories provided a good beginning framework for the study, it should be recognized that there could be
elements of the codes separated to further analyze specific skills as strengths and weaknesses.

A third limitation of the study stems from the lack of secondary data collected from participants. It was intended by the researcher to collect copies of evaluation tools and completed, anonymous evaluations of new teachers. The intent was to explore and highlight the application of strengths and weaknesses in practice, with examples of how they are recognized by principals and communicated to teachers. Consent forms for the teachers, instructions for the principal to collect and remove names from evaluations and an envelope was left with the principals following the interview. It was requested that the principal seek consent of possible participants, remove names from one evaluation and mail it to the researcher. Unfortunately only two were returned. It was recognized by the researcher in planning the study that some people may not feel comfortable providing such examples. This is why it was a secondary piece of data and not necessary for the results to be valuable. It is possible that the lack of response is due to this lack of comfort with the request or due to the required follow through of busy professionals who have already given a portion of their valuable time and did not follow through.

The number of participants represents another limitation. The selection of participants and the number to represent each of the population categories was decided upon for manageability of the study. This number allowed for robust data collected from interviews fitting the qualitative nature of the study. Mean scores were figured simply as a method to identify overall rankings. These did show some differences, but were not used for quantitative purposes. Generalization of the findings to larger populations should be cautioned based on the number of participants.
Suggestions for Further Research

There are several suggestions for further research that can be generated from the results of this study. Three of these come directly from the limitations discussed previously. A similar project could be conducted looking further into possible differences between rural, urban and suburban principals using a different definition. This would give some comparison data to the use of population to define such areas. An additional component could also be added to this study to examine the one area of strengths and weaknesses of new teachers that was identified as having differences. While mean scores were figured, it was done so here as a beginning for comparing data qualitatively. A quantitative comparison of those categories could be to determine if statistically significant differences exist.

Another possible extension of this research could be to examine further into the strengths and weaknesses with more narrowly defined categories or looking into each category separately. This may help explain or deepen understanding of the variance among the principal perceptions noted in this study. This study defined effective instruction with five broad categories. In some cases of data here, participants noted some specific skills within categories and others as weaknesses. This created challenges in identifying categories as strengths or weaknesses. A more detailed definition of effective teaching skills could more specifically target these skills.

The intent of collecting evaluation documents was to gain insight into the practice of addressing strengths and weaknesses and compare their evidence with perceptions of the principals. This collection and comparison could be an extension of the current study. The purpose of this study was not to examine the process of evaluation or to analyze the
value of the evaluation process. As noted, however, the lack of impact of the evaluation process on instruction by participants emerged as a theme. This is another opportunity for additional research. This study was consistent with the beliefs of a separation of evaluation and supervision (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000), but they were separate activities. Exploration of the evaluation process and demonstration of effective evaluation tools and procedures that successfully merge and incorporate supervision would be valuable for educators. Additional benefit would come from any insight that could help school administration and unions come together to eliminate the feeling that contract outlines of evaluation are restrictive and counterproductive to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Implications on Current Practice

Principals understand the need and are eager to support new teachers. This study supports the premise that too much emphasis and reliance is placed on mentor programs and principals in supporting new teachers (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Wong, 2000, 2002). One main implication of this study is that more support for new teachers should come from district level programs and initiatives. The negative cost of teacher attrition and a cycle of new professionals do not stop at the building level. District level officials can concentrate efforts in three areas for significant improvement to the support of new teachers and ease the burden of principals.

First, new teacher induction programs should be expanded and modified to include instructional and achievement focuses recommended in the literature (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Watkins, 2005). This study highlights that current induction programs
for new teachers is primarily limited to district policies and procedures, rather than focus on instruction, curriculum and professional activities. This is a recognized challenge due to contractual and financial restraints. One principal noted specifically that their induction had been recently reduced from three days to one day as a component of the recent contract. Nonetheless, districts have control over such issues if prioritized highly enough.

As a second initiative, and stemming from the induction focus, is more sustained professional development for new teachers at the district level. This can help alleviate some of the reliance placed on principals to support new teachers. One theme that emerged from this study was that principals desired to have more time to help new teachers. Specific participants noted the concern over a lack of on-going professional development. Yee (1996, as cited in Weasmer & Woods, 2000) found that collegiality to be the most valuable of all sources of professional stimulation, and Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin (2006) found that teachers believe the collaboration and networking with other professionals to be the most effective support structure. This study illustrates that principals perceive the mentor to have an effective impact on new teachers, but supportive networks in addition to that was less effective. District level support could provide collegiality outside of the mentor and even building support, to provide opportunities for new teachers to expand their network of support.

The third district level implication from this study revolves around the separation identified between supervision and evaluation. Participants of this study were unsurprisingly restricted by teacher contracts in their methodology of evaluation. A major theme of the study, however, revealed that despite these restrictions, principals
utilize methods of supervision to give instructional feedback to teachers. Districts should work within their administrative teams to make sure all building level administrators are trained in supervisory methods. Even if they are not a component of formal evaluation, principals in this study asserted their value in supporting instruction.

Overall Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses of new teachers, gain understanding of the methods used to supervise and evaluate them and the perceived effectiveness of structures used to support them. This qualitative research adds to the body of literature on new teachers by focusing the topic on the perspective of those who supervise and evaluate new teachers and are ultimately responsible for student learning within a school. Existing focus of literature includes critical analysis of teacher prep programs, advocacy for more pedagogy instruction versus subject area knowledge, and even student and student teacher evaluations of programs. Perspectives of educational leaders is absent.

This research showed a parallel distinction between supervision and evaluation of new teachers, empowering principals to give constructive feedback to new teachers regardless of contractual evaluation restrictions. This supports the current literature that clearly defines and separates the two processes (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Furthermore, it highlights the practical application of a separation. This contrasts the beliefs of Berube and Dexter (2006), who see this separation as a challenge for school administrators. This study shows that not only is it possible, it is necessary for improvement of new teachers.
It was evident through the study that principals are bound by contractual restrictions when it comes to evaluating teachers. Despite these restrictions, they focus their efforts on the supervisory elements of leadership to support and improve the instruction of new teachers, in addition to completing the required contractual obligations of evaluation. So while they felt that evaluation did not impact instruction, they did feel that they could positively influence teaching and learning through a separate supervisory process.

This study also adds to the literature on new teacher support. It supports the research that principals play an important role in the success of a new teacher. It specifically illustrates that principals understand the need for a positive relationship with their new teachers to support and positively impact their success. This research also highlights the advocacy of the literature of appropriately implemented mentor programs, specifically the attention paid to the assignment of the mentor. This study demonstrates that is current and common practice as well as the belief of its positive influence. This study does contrast previous research on the most effective support for new teachers. Andrews, et. al. (2006), found that teachers believe the collaboration and networking with other professionals to be the most effective support structure. From the perspectives of the principals in this study, mentoring and administrative support were both found to be more effective than collaboration and networking. It is noteworthy that principals and teachers have different perspectives of effectiveness.

As noted previously, the current body of research is limited in terms of administrator perspectives of strengths and weaknesses. This study begins to address this. Even without definitive conclusions regarding new teacher skills, clear themes
within the categories of rapport and student relationships as a strength and classroom management as a weakness emerged. Differences existed between urban principals and those from rural and suburban schools. This study complements the existing literature on new teacher preparation from new teacher perspectives and researchers advocating change.
REFERENCES


Locklear, Josephine L. A study of the adequacy of teacher preparation programs as perceived by Initially Certified Teachers in the public schools of Robeson County (North Carolina) (Doctoral dissertation, South Carolina State University, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 62*, 08A.


Appendix A

Codes for Research Question #1 Analysis—
Methods of Supervising and
Evaluating New Teachers
Appendix A

Codes for Research Question #1 Analysis—Methods of Supervising and Evaluating New Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WALK</td>
<td>Classroom Walk Through by Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBSRV</td>
<td>Classroom observations, formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Observation Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Observation Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL</td>
<td>Goal Setting and Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORT</td>
<td>Teacher Portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHV</td>
<td>Student Achievement Data</td>
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<tr>
<td>INPUT</td>
<td>Student and/or Parent Input/Feedback</td>
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Appendix B

Codes for Research Question #2 Analysis—
Effective Instruction/Good Teaching
Appendix B

Codes for Research Question #2 Analysis—Effective Instruction/Good Teaching

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>RPRT</td>
<td>Rapport and Relationship with Students</td>
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<td>• Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fairness &amp; Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interactions with Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enthusiasm and Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attitude Toward Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGMT</td>
<td>Classroom Management and Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom management and student discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSORG</td>
<td>Instructional Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishing and Maintaining High Learning Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lesson planning – time allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Materials organization and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPLEM</td>
<td>Implementing Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Instructional strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Content and expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understanding the complexities of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supporting student engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDBK</td>
<td>Monitors Student Progress and Offers Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Homework – independent practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitors student progress – assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsiveness to student needs and abilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Codes for Research Question #3 Analysis—
*New Teacher Support*
Appendix C

Codes for Research Question #3 Analysis—New Teacher Support

**ADSUP**  Administrative Support
  Scheduling consideration
  Positive relationship with principal
  Access to necessary materials and supplies

**MNTR**  Mentoring
  Formal assignment of a veteran mentor
  Peer coaching and feedback
  Provides planning and instructional assistance
  Individual collaboration and guidance on classroom management and student, parent, colleague interaction

**NTWRK**  Networking and Supportive Environments
  Networking with other new teachers
  Support from veteran teachers, other than the assigned mentor

**INDUC**  Comprehensive Induction Program
  Focus on school/district policies and procedures

**UNIV**  School – University Collaboration
  Assistance for new teachers provided by their teacher training program

**EXPEC**  Curricular and Behavioral Expectations
  Established curricular standards and assessments
  Explanation and support for student behavior support policies and procedures
Appendix D

Interview Questions:

Research Question #1:
- What methods do you use to supervise and evaluate teachers?
- Do you choose these methods or are they dictated by contract?
- How do you think teacher evaluation impacts instruction?

Research Question #2:
- What skills/ability/knowledge do you feel are most important for new teachers to have?
- What skills/ability/knowledge have you seen as strengths in new teachers?
- What have you experienced to be weak skills/ability/knowledge for new teachers?

Research Question #3
- What support structures do you have in place to help ease the burden for new teachers?
- How much of the support for new teachers is maintained at the building level?
  - What support is given by the district or outside resources?
- What do you think are the most effective ways to support new teachers?
- If you could add any support structures for new teachers, what would it be?
  - Why? (as a follow up)
- What are the barriers that exist preventing you from establishing such support?
Appendix E

Human Subjects Institutional Review
Board Approval Letter
Date: November 14, 2008

To: Van Cooley, Principal Investigator
    Scott Merkel, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Chris Cheatham, Ph.D., Vice Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 08-11-01

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “A Look at the Beginning: Strengths and Weaknesses of New Teachers from the Perspective of School Principals” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: November 14, 2009