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Effective Teaching

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A Dissertation

Presented to

Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Karen Pickles Taylor

August 2009

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## ABSTRACT

Effective teaching is the key to school improvement. In this study I examined the characteristics of nine teachers considered effective by their school's administration. The study used a qualitative methodology to examine characteristics of effective teachers in three high schools in Quincy Public Schools, Colorado. I observed and interviewed to collect the data. I selected a qualitative method, Elliot Eisner's method of educational criticism and connoisseurship to organize and categorize my data.

Through in-depth interviews, these effective teachers identified and interpreted experiences that have contributed to them being considered "effective" classroom teachers. They identified personal experiences that contributed to being considered effective, obstacles they faced to become effective, the motivation techniques they use, and the skills they now possess as "effective teachers." This study is relevant to secondary school reform as we continually look for ways to improve practice because effective teaching is key to maximizing student achievement.

My conclusions were as follows: the common characteristics were preparedness, caring, collaboration, and reflection. Each area encompasses several mini-themes. Districts need to continue to work with administrators to make them better instructional leaders. Schools need to structure time for collaboration and reflection to improve teacher effectiveness. Teachers need to work with professional learning communities to

continually improve practice. Pre-service teachers need additional mentoring from teachers considered effective.

Finally, the study has provided pre-service teachers, teachers, and administrators with practical knowledge about teaching that can benefit students.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*The miracle or the power that elevates a few is to be found in their industry, application, and perseverance under the prompting of a brave, determined spirit.*

*-Mark Twain (1835-1910)*

Each school day in the United States more than 53.6 million American public school students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002b) walk into more than 94,000 K-12 schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002a) hoping that the 13 years of education that they will receive will dramatically increase their chances of success and happiness in life. Statistics prove that for those students who follow through with all those years of school, hopes become reality, at least on a basic financial level: the median income of high school graduates is \$26,200 compared with \$19,000 for a student who does not (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2005). This \$7,200 difference is probably only the beginning, considering that many high school graduates continue their education and training, thus further increasing their earning potential. The actual figure is probably higher; as many who could finish high school would later go on for additional education and training, increasing their earning potential.

Over the course of a lifetime, the loss in earning potential between a high school dropout and a student who goes on to finish college is \$1.1 million dollars (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). The responsibility of maximizing the potential of every student in America falls squarely on the shoulders of United States Public School system. It is clear

that the system needs to find better ways to support student success. Raising student achievement increases the likelihood of a student's ability to earn a good living. A decent, living wage is an important indicator that students are contributing members of society and global community.

A major historical benchmark came in 1966 when the Equal Educational Opportunity (EEO) study, also known as the Coleman Report, determined it was the home environment and not the schools that effected student achievement. As a result, Effective School's research looked at various avenues for students to find success. It was determined that one of the ways to help students find their level of success is that a school must operate *effectively*. According to Lezotte (2005), the Effective Schools movement celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006. The history of the Effective Schools movement began with the publication of the Equal Educational Opportunity (EEO) study, also known as the "Coleman Report," in 1966. The now infamous conclusion of that report--that schools do not make a difference--triggered a response that has come to be known as the effective schools research. The EEO conclusion was significant because it suggested that if one wanted to know about the achievement of children, one needed to look at the homes from which they came, not the schools in which they learned. In response to this report, a number of independent researchers set out to find schools where all children -- especially minority and economically disadvantaged children -- were mastering the intended curriculum as evidenced by standardized testing. By finding such schools, it would serve as evidence that the conclusions of the EEO study were not accurate. The conclusion was that some schools make a difference, and this conclusion

led to two new questions; “Why and how do some schools make a difference?” and “Can *more* schools make a difference?” (Lezotte, 2005).

The next phase in the evolution of the effective schools movement focused on why and how these schools made a difference. According to Lezotte, the research set out to isolate and describe the critical factors that set the effective schools apart from schools that had similar demographics but were not nearly as effective in terms of student achievement. These inquiries identified a series of common characteristics that have come to be known as the Correlates of Effective Schools, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations for students, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relations and an opportunity to learn and time on task (Sadker, Sadker, 2008). Initially described in the early 1970s, these seven characteristics have remained remarkably stable across many different studies and levels of schooling. A challenge arose in that though the research identified the components of effective schools, it did not clearly identify how these schools had become effective (DuFour, 2005).

The Seven Correlates of Effective Schools provide school improvement teams with a comprehensive framework for identifying, categorizing, and solving the problems that schools and school districts face when there is no instructional leader in the building, when teachers are not clear about their mission, and when there is no monitoring of student progress to determine on a regular basis if students are achieving. The correlates have been a source of hope and inspiration to schools that are struggling to improve. According to Lezotte, utilizing the collaborative approach of professional learning

communities within this framework will yield a powerful and effective continuous school improvement process leading to increased student achievement for all students.

- Instructional leadership
- Clear and focused mission
- Safe and orderly environment
- Climate of high expectations for success
- Frequent monitoring of student progress
- Positive home-school relations
- Opportunity to learn and time on task

([www.mes.org/correlates.html](http://www.mes.org/correlates.html),1996)

Glaringly absent to this researcher is the fact that characteristics of Effective Schools do not address the effective teacher. In *Conversations that Matter, Ideas about Education I Can't Wait to Share* (2001), Dennis Sparks talks to Mr. Lezotte who has this to say about the effective teacher:

Monitoring someone's behavior against a standard of performance implies a level of precision that we don't yet possess. If we're going to use results with students as our primary basis of judgment regarding effectiveness, than we have to tolerate diversity about how people get there. If some teachers are able to get to the educational goals we have for our students in some rather unorthodox ways, we ought not to discourage those teachers because their methods don't meet our performance standard of what good teaching looks like. If kids are not experiencing success, then we have to look at teachers' performances.

It's very hard to defend a particular model of teaching as being right for all teachers, grade levels, and content areas in the school district. Years ago, I ran into trouble in an eastern state that wanted to add an eighth characteristic of an effective school called "effective teaching," which they operationally defined as Hunter's (Madeline) essential elements of effective teaching. Teachers were then evaluated on whether every element was in every lesson. Now, as good as that model is, it's not the only way to teach, and it may not be the best way to teach for a given teacher in a given situation and for particular objectives. (p. 37)

For nearly three decades, America's schools have been the center of a major reform effort to improve student learning. The nation is in what might be called a "third wave" (Woolfolk, 2004) of the educational reform movement initiated in the 1980s. The first wave of reform centered on establishing higher and more rigorous academic standards for students and new curriculum and assessments aligned with those standards. This first wave was decades after the Coleman Report, but came immediately after *A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform*, was released in 1983 in a report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. These reforms focused on what students were learning, but assumed educators could improve student learning by doing what they had always done: only redoubling efforts as more scrutiny was placed on standards and the teachers ability to teach to those standards as evidenced by increasing standardized tests. The results of the additional scrutiny did not improve performance on standardized tests. Education critics pointed out low scores by American students on

international tests, especially in math and science, as they made their case that schools were not meeting the nation's economic and technical needs.

The second wave in the mid-to-late 1980s brought structural reforms including raising teachers' salaries and giving them more decision making authority. TheodoreSizer (1992) and John Goodlad (1984) led the reform citing the superficial curriculum as the central weakness and the need to go into more depth as opposed to breath as a recommendation. Again, student achievement did not improve as evidenced by standardized exams. In this third wave, policy focus is on improving the quality of teaching. Reforms are looking at teacher preparation, certification, and continuing professional development. This wave of reform recognizes that capable teachers are the most critical factor in improving student achievement.

Improving the quality of teachers was ignited with the release of *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, the 1996 report of the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future. The report says, "What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn" (p. 12). In light of this, the Commission asserts that their report offers "the single most important strategy for achieving America's education goals:--a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, supporting, and rewarding excellent educators" (p. 12). The Commission believes that teacher training needs to be revamped in order for educators to possess the qualities that ensure optimum learning for all children.

When it comes to preparing teachers, the Commission identified the following five changes that overlap in implementation:

- Serious standards for students and teachers
- Reinvention of teacher preparation and professional development
- Overhaul teacher recruitment
- Encourage and reward teaching knowledge and skill
- Create schools organized for teacher/student success

Although the Commission's recommendations are comprehensive and challenging, there are no suggestions for implementation, which leave educators here in 2009 at the same quandary they were in 13 years ago when the report was published. The report, which espoused a call to action with a quality teacher in every classroom by 2006, has not really been able to make a difference in improving teaching and motivating students to high ideals. While the recommendations are an admirable challenge, there are many teachers who would argue that they have been improving their teaching and motivational skills since they began their careers, in spite of systemic roadblocks. Many educators are proud of their accomplishments and the jobs they do everyday. Many individual instructors have found successful techniques that have improved student learning. What can these proud and determined teachers teach other educators about their success with students?

#### *Statement of the Problem*

The relationship of a teacher and a student that affects individual learner success in the classroom and in the life of an individual is an indication of the impact that a teacher can have on student behaviors and achievement. What does it take as a teacher to provide a motivating environment? What does it take to become an *effective* teacher? It is

widely known that teacher preparation programs do not prepare effective teachers. School induction programs do not finish the job. Effective teachers are made in the classroom with the help of mentors and the reinforcement that students provide the teachers in terms of the success which students' experience.

Before the mid-1980s, studies of effective schooling tended to look at school-level factors only; that is, the school as having a unitary and consistent impact on student achievement. Good and Brophy (2003) warned of the consequences of this perspective:

Studies of large samples of schools yield important profiles of more and less successful schools, but these are *group* [original emphasis] averages that may or may not describe how a single effective teacher actually behaves in a particular effective school. Persons who use research to guide practice sometimes expect all teachers' behavior to reflect the group average. Such simplistic thinking is apt to lead the literature to be too broadly and inappropriately applied. (p. 588)

A useful question, then, for anyone wishing to understand those factors that enhance student achievement is this: what influence does an individual teacher have apart from what the school does? What does an effective teacher do to motivate students? How do teachers sustain that over time?

Almost every educator would agree that teacher quality is the most important factor in determining school quality. But what factors determine teacher quality? According to Robert E. Glenn and R. Ladson Berry, (2007) founders of *Teaching for Excellence*, there are fifteen key characteristics that administrators look for in their teachers. Principals and personnel directors may differ somewhat in their priorities for

teacher selection, but Glenn (2007) believes that the following characteristics are qualities that benefit students, improve instruction, and help an organization to run much more smoothly. The following list of fifteen admirable teaching traits is an excellent synopsis of the qualities of effective teachers.

- Exhibit enthusiasm
- Know your content
- Be organized
- Teach actively
- Show a good attitude
- Establish successful classroom management
- Pace instruction
- Maintain good people skills
- Communicate clearly
- Question effectively
- Differentiate instruction
- Build success into your class
- Hold high expectations
- Create a pleasant atmosphere
- Be flexible (Glenn, 2007, p. 1-2)

Excellent teachers exhibit these characteristics their classrooms, making learning engaging for students and outside observers during classroom visits. Many of these qualities overlap with others on the list, but if these traits are in place you can be assured

that there is good learning going on. Most importantly, students are engaged and that makes learning fun.

Exhibiting enthusiasm about teaching and motivating students is what makes a difference. Building teamwork will make a difference in the learning of students.

Effective teachers need to know their content, continuing to grow professionally by subscribing to or reading journals where they can keep up with our ever changing world. Classes are available at the district level and good teachers take advantage of these resources. Local colleges and universities aggressively market classes that are sensitive to teachers time constraints so there is plenty of opportunity for them to practice life long learning.

Efficient organization that helps teachers spend more time with students is important. The point was made earlier that opportunity to learn and time on task is one of the characteristics of effective schools. Communicating the class objective contributes to quality instruction and student learning (Docan-Morgan, 2007), letting students know the agenda, collecting and handing out materials, posting grades, and establishing routines keeps the class on track and gives the teacher more time for teaching and engaging students.

Principals and department chairs appreciate teachers who move around and monitor and facilitate work. Interacting with students during the classroom instruction is important. Teachers who are active are more likely to be helping students.

A good attitude is essential for teachers to model in the classroom. Not only does it provide a positive role model to students, but it displays care, concern, and respect.

Tone of voice and eye contact can convey these essential components of a good attitude.

Establishing a good classroom management , enforcing the rules, and articulating expectations in the classroom is very important to the effective teacher. Discipline and reasonable rules are of paramount importance to effective instruction in a classroom. Consistency and fairness, as well as avoiding rules that cannot be enforced, are important, too.

The pace of instruction and providing hands-on activities help students learn. Most students learn better by doing, not by watching, not by standing in line, and not by passively listening. Planning an instructional timeline for each class session ensures that essential learning can take place. One of the biggest challenges to teaching is working with students of varying learning styles, personalities, and levels. Teachers need to take into consideration the different learning styles, using differentiation in the classroom, to meet the needs of a wider variety of learners.

Collegiality is important to the school community. Maintaining good people skills so that teachers as a team in their department and throughout the school will help teachers be more successful in the classroom.

Effective communication includes being able to give instruction clearly and concisely, and demonstrating as well as explaining also helps students learn the material more efficiently. Too often students do not know what they are learning or why they are learning it. Teachers can unknowingly communicate a range of attitudes about the

students abilities and their expectations for individual students through their instructional practices (Graham, 1990).

Questioning is a powerful teaching technique. Through effective questioning productive thinking occurs. Questions can be asked of the whole class, small groups, or individuals. Questions should follow Bloom's Taxonomy (1968) and be both knowledge-based and require critical thinking skills. Knowledge-based questions requiring factual answers use who, where, define, identify and specify where higher level skills of synthesis and evaluation would expect students to combine elements into a pattern not clearly there before, using vocabulary such as adapt, invent, create, and propose. Wait time should be given before expecting a response. No suggested time period, but a pause of more than a few seconds to allow students to gather their thoughts before answering. Questioning students allows them to demonstrate their learning and allows the teacher an opportunity to monitor student progress.

Success rate is very important too. Students need to feel as if they can accomplish what the teacher is asking. Frustration deters learning. Students need to have further instruction and/or the task simplified until they can reach mastery. Students need to be challenged so this assistive scaffolding is eventually removed once they are performing tasks self-sufficiently. It is important that students feel successful.

High teacher expectations, without being unpleasant or mean, challenges students to perform at that level of expectation. In fact, students respect teachers who expect them to do their best. Principals, too, expect their teachers to hold students accountable for their learning.

A pleasant atmosphere in the classroom will stimulate learning. Dismal, drab, and dreary classroom spaces will decrease learning, while cheerful and happy classrooms will stimulate learning. Students will feel comfortable and relaxed in a nice atmosphere and will be more productive.

A flexible teacher is a valuable teacher. The ability to adjust lesson plans to feature timely topics, being sensitive to students needs, and providing alternatives will create teacher-student trust. The French philosopher Voltaire said, “the flexible shall not be bent out of shape.”

Good educational administrators want to insure the academic success of all students. To run effective schools they have a responsibility to develop teachers with the qualities that provide sound instruction. Education is not an exact science; these teacher qualities vary between schools and school settings. Overall, however, there are general teacher characteristics (as noted by Glenn) that are associated with student success. Good administrators will seek out employees with those qualities, finding them in new hires and developing them in their veteran teaching force. How does one “make” effective teachers?

Effective teaching is much more than an intuitive process. A teacher must continually make decisions and act on them. To do this effectively, the teacher must have knowledge—both theoretical knowledge about learning and human behavior and specific knowledge about the subject matter being taught. A teacher also must demonstrate a variety of teaching skills that are believed to facilitate student learning and must display attitudes that foster learning and genuine human relationships.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to describe, interpret, and analyze the experiences of nine secondary level teachers with ten-plus years of experience whose employing principals describe as “effective” teachers. This study gave these teachers a voice in identifying and interpreting the experiences which have contributed to their being considered effective classroom instructors. It also contributed to the identification of specific instructional practices that create effective students. The effective teacher study provided teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators with practical knowledge regarding the effectiveness of teachers.

### *Research Questions*

To attain these goals I conducted this study around the overarching question of “What characteristics were essential in order for a teacher to be considered effective?” In order to answer this question the following questions were investigated through teacher interviews:

- What prior personal or professional experiences contributed to these general education classroom teachers being considered “effective” in working with students?
- Second, what obstacles did these “effective” teachers have to overcome in their prior experiences to work effectively with students?
- Third, what motivation techniques do identified effective teachers employ to enhance instruction?
- Lastly, what skills do these “effective” teachers now possess to be effective in working with students?

## *Research and Design*

My research design was grounded in the qualitative study based on the perspective that a naturalistic approach based on human experience has value (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Human experience is important because, as the researcher, I am able to observe and record experiences and actions of everyday school-life as played out through the experiences of the “effective teacher” study participants.

Using an interview research design questions provided an in-depth look at effective teachers. Sideman (1998) posits:

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get the answers to questions, not to test hypotheses, and not to ‘evaluate’ as the term is normally used...At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (p. 3)

Regardless of a phenomenon’s particular variations, the same phenomenon is seen as:

having the same essential meaning when it is perceived over time in many different situations...Only after seeing different reflections and varied appearances on repeated occasions does the constant unchanging structure become known to us. (Valle & King, 1978, p.15)

In his book, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (2006), Irving Seidman addressed a structure for in-depth, phenomenological interviewing during I used interviewing as my research instrument with Elliott Eisner’s methodology to determine the characteristics of effective teachers. Mears (in progress) posits that an “interview offers the most direct access to the content of people’s memories and the meaning that

they construct from their life experiences” (p. 8). My own interest in learning what teachers have encountered to become effective leads me to believe that asking the questions and listening to their stories will be the best avenue to determine what makes them effective.

Talking with teachers and looking firsthand at their classroom instruction gave me a chance to go deeper into understanding effectiveness at the grassroots level because, “Interviewing provides access to the content of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (Sideman, 1998, p. 4).

### *Definitions*

For the purpose of this paper, the following definitions were provided for the readers understanding. Webster’s dictionary (1970) was sourced.

- *Motivation to learn*--A student tendency to find academic activities meaningful and worthwhile and try to derive the intended academic benefits from them” (Brophy, 1988, p. 205-206). Motivation to learn involves more than wanting or intending to learn. It includes the quality of the student’s mental efforts. For example, reading the text 11 times may indicate persistence, but motivation to learn implies more thoughtful, active study strategies, such as summarizing, elaborating the basic ideas, outlining in your own words, drawing graphs of the key relationships, and so on (Brophy, 1988).
- *Self-determination*--“If it’s to be, it’s up to me.”
- *Efficacy*--Effectiveness
- *Teacher efficacy*--A teacher who has the power to produce the desired effect.

- *Professional development*--the efforts by a school or school district to improve the professional skills and competencies of its professional staff; also called *in-service training* in education; also called *staff development*.
- *Standards* – Teacher expectations, what a teacher should know and be able to do.
- *Effectiveness* –producing the desired effect.

### *Organization of the Study*

This study described and interpreted the characteristics of effective teachers at the high school level. Evaluating the effectiveness of teachers and determining the characteristics that make teachers effective encouraged improvement in teaching, placing learning as the primary focus of the classroom. Chapter One begins with a brief overview of education and the need for effective schools. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature, and discusses effective teachers and how having effective teachers can increase opportunities for student success. Then, I examined instructional skill and practices that look at student interest as a factor. Next, I looked at motivation, and, lastly, examined what effective teachers should know and be able to do. Even a cursory review of the literature of secondary school reform makes a compelling case for why high schools need to look at effective teaching as they seek to improve student success.

Chapter Three described the research process. This chapter reviews the research method--a qualitative method using interviewing as an instrument and educational criticism and connoisseurship for interpretation. Chapter Four illustrates the high schools in the study and the effective teachers who make a difference for students. Using in-depth interviews, teachers have a voice in describing student success and the role they play in

that process. Observation of the teachers' classroom practices was used only for the purpose of affirming what has been said in the interview. The observations were not meant in any way to be evaluative. I provided a participant summation and discussed the themes that evolved. In Chapter Five I evaluated my data, provided answers to the research questions, discussed implications in regard to their impact on student success, and provided recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*I have spent my life stringing and unstringing my instrument while the song I came to sing remains unsung.*

*-Tagore (1861-1941)*

Most people have something in life they dream of accomplishing. Interestingly, some people realize their dreams, while others seem to spend their days “stringing and unstringing their instruments.” Why do some people realize their dreams and others do not? Why is it that some, maybe most people, never even try to accomplish their dreams? Is it that those who accomplish their goals believe that they will succeed if they try hard enough? Is it the belief that they have the skills and resources necessary to accomplish their dreams? Is it because there is someone along the way who inspires them or encourages them to take the first step? (Marzano et al. p. 1)

Does teacher effectiveness influence motivation in adolescence? We can look at different attempts to answer this question, but researchers agree that the impact of decisions made by individual teachers is far greater than the impact of decisions made at the school level. Reporting on their analysis of achievement scores from five core content areas (mathematics, reading, language arts, social studies, and science) for some 60,000 students across grades three through five, S. Paul Wright, Sandra Horn, and William Sanders (1997) note that:

the results of this study will document that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. In addition, the results show wide variation in effectiveness among teachers. The immediate and clear implication of this finding is that seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor. Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels regardless of the levels of heterogeneity in their classes. If the teacher is ineffective, students under that teacher's tutelage will achieve inadequate progress academically, regardless of how similar or different they are regarding their academic achievement. (p. 63)

School reform takes time. With the high stakes of student achievement, schools cannot afford to take a lot of time. Change needs to be made quickly and effectively because many students are facing the potential of failing futures. While reform can take place at different levels, all reform eventually boils down to the classroom teachers and what happens in their classrooms. Sander's study (2003) confirms that teachers are the "single largest factor affecting academic growth of populations of students." It is at the classroom level where students are either granted or denied the privilege of increasing their human capital, a right that every child should be afforded.

Robert Marzano (2001) has looked at research to come up with nine instructional strategies that work in increasing student achievement. According to Marzano, in *Classroom Instruction that Works*, an effective or expert teacher is one who "has more strategies at her disposal than the ineffective teacher" (2001, p. 158). After presenting lists of instructional strategies, I recommend one action step to successfully implement

research-based instructional strategies: to provide teachers with an instructional framework for units that uses research-based strategies” (p. 87).

The following is a summary of Marzano’s nine instructional categories with specific behaviors for teachers to initiate:

1. Identifying similarities and differences
  - 1.1. Assigning in-class and homework tasks that involve comparison and classification
  - 1.2. Assigning in-class and homework tasks that involve metaphors and analogies
2. Summarizing and note taking
  - 2.1. Asking students to generate verbal summaries
  - 2.2. Asking students to generate written summaries
  - 2.3. Asking students to take notes
  - 2.4. Asking students to revise their notes, correcting errors and adding information
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
  - 3.1. Recognizing and celebrating progress toward learning goals throughout a unit
  - 3.2. Recognizing and reinforcing the importance of effort
  - 3.3. Recognizing and celebrating progress toward learning goals at the end of a unit
4. Homework and practice

- 4.1. Providing specific feedback on all assigned homework
- 4.2. Assigning homework for the purpose of students practicing skills and procedures that have been the focus of instruction
5. Nonlinguistic representations
  - 5.1. Asking students to generate mental images representing content
  - 5.2. Asking students to draw pictures or pictographs representing content
  - 5.3. Asking students to construct graphic organizers representing content
  - 5.4. Asking students to act out content
  - 5.5. Asking students to make physical models of content
  - 5.6. Asking students to make revisions in their mental images, pictures, pictographs, graphic organizers, and physical models
6. Cooperative learning
  - 6.1. Organizing students in cooperative groups when appropriate
  - 6.2. Organizing students in ability groups when appropriate
7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
  - 7.1. Setting specific learning goals at the beginning of a unit
  - 7.2. Asking students to set their own learning goals at the beginning of a unit
  - 7.3. Providing feedback on learning goals throughout the unit
  - 7.4. Asking students to keep track of their progress on the learning goals providing summative feedback at the end of a unit
  - 7.5. Asking students to assess themselves at the end of a unit
8. Generating and testing hypotheses

- 8.1. Engaging students in projects that involve generating and testing hypotheses through problem solving tasks
- 8.2. Engaging students in projects that involve generating and testing hypotheses through decision making tasks
- 8.3. Engaging students in projects that involve generating and testing hypotheses through investigation tasks
- 8.4. Engaging students in projects that involve generating and testing hypotheses through experimental inquiry tasks
- 8.5. Engaging students in projects that involve generating and testing hypotheses through systems analysis tasks
- 8.6. Engaging students in projects that involve generating and testing hypotheses through invention tasks
9. Questions, cues, and advance organizers
  - 9.1. Prior to presenting new content, asking questions that help students recall what they might already know about the content
  - 9.2. Prior to presenting new content, providing students with direct links with what they have studied previously
  - 9.3. Prior to presenting new content, providing ways for students to organize or think about the content.

*What Are the Characteristics of Effective Teachers?*

Over the years, education research has created many definitions of what it means to be an effective teacher, along with lists of characteristics of the effectiveness. Some of

these characteristics were conveyed in Chapter One. I have found that some definitions focus on personal traits of teachers; others focus on teaching methods. It seems that more current models of teacher effectiveness are based on standards set by professional organizations that give guidance concerning the knowledge, dispositions (attitudes and beliefs), and performances that lead to and exemplify effective teaching. Standards, in this paper, are defined as teacher expectations: what teachers should know and be able to accomplish. All teacher education standards address teacher effectiveness. The ten standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) describe what teachers should know and be able to do.

1. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.
3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
7. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, student, the community, and curriculum goals.
8. The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual and social development of the learner.
9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being ("Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model Standards").

The five principals of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) also address teacher effectiveness. They are:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, n.d.)

One thing is for sure: effective teachers make a difference in the lives of students. “Substantial research evidence suggests that well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 7). This is not to say that other factors do not significantly influence student learning; however, Linda Darling-Hammond and others believe that an effective teacher can overcome many of the circumstances in students lives and positively impact student learning. When the outside influences on student learning result in an achievement gap, Kati Haycock (2003) tells us, “If we insist on quality teachers for every student, we can dramatically improve the achievement of poor and minority students and substantially narrow the achievement gap” (p. 11). Researchers are finding that strong teachers make a huge difference for our most educationally vulnerable kids, but the students who most need good teachers don’t have them. Despite studies that document the tremendous power that great teachers have to help students overcome the burdens of poverty and racism, we persist in providing those who need the most from their teachers with teachers who have the very least to

offer them (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Reiterating the need for effective teachers, James Stronge (2002) writes,

Teachers have a powerful, long-lasting influence on their students. They directly affect how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and the ways they interact with one another, and the world around them. (p. vii)

In the age of accountability, emphasis has shifted from the teacher to the pupil as the focal point for defining teacher effectiveness. Simply stated, the “ultimate proof of teacher effectiveness is student results” (Strong, 2002, p. 65). But what exactly are these “results”? What seems like a simple statement has complicated nuances because accurately assessing student learning is very complex. Can we judge the effectiveness of a teacher solely by the standardized test scores of students? A two-week snapshot of a student's learning? Of course, all of this would be easy if standardized tests told the whole story. That's not to say they don't tell a story. It would be interesting to look at what we believe defines an effective teacher then examine standardized test results to see if the two intersect and create an important correlation in educational research. However, it was determined by this researcher that the correlation will not be a part of this study.

Since student success is considered the primary measure of teacher effectiveness, it would be remiss not to look at what students say about an effective teacher. In a survey of about 400 urban, low-income middle and high school students conducted by Corbett and Wilson (2002), all of them identified their teachers as the main factor in determining how much they learned. They listed a variety of characteristics of the many teachers most

effective in helping them learn, all of which fit into the following six categories. Effective teachers:

- Push their students to learn;
- Maintain order;
- Are willing to help;
- Explain until everyone understands;
- Vary classroom activities; and,
- Try to understand students (p. 19-20).

When students feel in control of their learning, it seems to be related to choosing more difficult academic tasks, putting out more effort, using better strategies, and persisting longer in school work (Schunk, 2000). Good teachers motivate, according to Mary Renck Jalongo (2007), effective teaching transcends merely imparting knowledge and relies, to a considerable extent, on educators' ability to motivate students to learn. "Any characterization of learning that disregards the role of motivation and interest is shortsighted at best and destructive at worst" (p. 395).

#### *What is Motivation?*

According to Woolfolk (2004), motivation is usually defined as an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior. Psychologists studying motivation have focused on five basic questions:

1. *What choices do people make about their behavior?* Why do some students, for example, focus on their homework and others watch television?

2. *How long does it take to get started?* Why do some students start their homework right away, while others procrastinate?
3. *What is the intensity or level of involvement in the chosen activity?* Once the book bag is opened, is the student absorbed and focused or just going through the motions?
4. *What causes a person to persist or to give up?* Will a student read the entire Shakespeare assignment or just a few pages?
5. *What is the individual thinking and feeling while engaged in the activity?* Is the student enjoying Shakespeare, feeling competent, or worrying about an upcoming test (Graham & Weiner, 1996; Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993)?

#### *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation*

Where does motivation come from—from within or from outside the individual? Why do we raise our hand in class – because we're interested in the subject or because we want to earn a good grade? The answer is more complicated than either alternative. We all know how it feels to be motivated, to move energetically toward a goal or to work hard, even if we are bored by the task. What energizes and directs our behavior? Woolfolk (2004) thinks the explanation could be drives, needs, incentives, fears, goals, social pressure, self-confidence, interests, curiosity, beliefs, values, expectation, and more. Some psychologists have explained motivation in terms of personal *traits* or individual characteristics. Certain people, so the theory goes, have a strong *need* to achieve, or an enduring *interest* in the art, so they work hard to achieve. Again,

according to Woolfolk (2004), other psychologists see motivation more as a *state*, a temporary situation that arises because of the situation in which we find ourselves.

As a result, some explanations of motivation rely on internal, personal factors such as needs, interests, and curiosity. Other explanations point to external, environmental factors--rewards, social pressure, punishment, and so on. A classic distinction in motivation is between extrinsic and intrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the natural tendency to seek out and conquer challenges as we pursue personal interests and exercise capabilities (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When we are intrinsically motivated, we do not need incentives or punishments, because the activity itself is rewarding.

In contrast, when we do something in order to earn a grade, avoid punishment, please the teacher, or for some other reason that has very little to do with the task itself, we experience extrinsic motivation. We are not really interested in the activity for its own sake; we care only about what it will gain us.

According to psychologists who adopt the intrinsic/extrinsic concept of motivation, it is impossible to tell just by looking if a behavior is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. The essential difference between the two types of motivation is the student's reason for acting, that is, whether the locus of causality for the action (the location of the cause) is internal or external--inside or outside the person. Students who read or practice their backstroke or paint may be reading, swimming, or painting because they freely chose the activity based on personal interests (*internal locus of*

causality/intrinsic motivation) or because someone or something else outside is influencing them (*external locus* of causality/extrinsic motivation) (Reeve, 1996).

Recently, the notion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as two ends of a continuum has been challenged. An alternative explanation is that just as motivation can include both trait and state factors, it can also include both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic and extrinsic tendencies are two independent possibilities, and, at any given time, we can be motivated by some of each (Covington & Mueller, 2001). This makes sense because in school, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are useful. Teachers can create intrinsic motivation by connecting to students' interests and supporting growing competence. However, if teachers count on intrinsic motivation to energize all their students all the time, they will be disappointed. There are situations where incentives and external supports are necessary. Teachers must encourage and nurture intrinsic motivation, while making sure that extrinsic motivation supports learning (Brophy, 1988; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 1996). To do this, teachers need to know about the factors that influence motivation. Motivation is a vast and complicated subject that encompasses many theories. I looked at how teachers who are effective make use of motivation.

### *Teacher Effectiveness*

Given the complex job of a teacher, defining teacher effectiveness can be challenging. Some teachers determine effectiveness based on opinions from students, administrators, colleagues, and/or the community (Walls, 2002). Others correlate teacher effectiveness with high performance evaluations from administration. In today's era of

high stakes testing, still others correlate teacher effectiveness to their students' performance on standardized tests (Haycock, 2003).

Researchers generally share a consensus that effective teachers make a remarkable and long lasting impression of the lives of their students. As the education system continues to move towards accountability for student outcomes, more research is needed to determine the variables involved in increasing student achievement. There are limitless opportunities in which a teacher can potentially influence students; it is challenging to identify all the possible variables that are related to effective teaching. Despite this challenge, some specific teacher characteristics and practices that positively influence teacher effectiveness have been noted by researchers. One of the more obvious is the "New Three R's": Rigor, Relevance and Relationships put out by the National Council on Secondary School reform.

Rigor is heralded over and over these days as one of the most important things that a high school, (and thereby a high school teacher) must provide to ensure that students stay in school and are well prepared to face and find success in their post-secondary career opportunities. The No Child Left Behind law (2002) called for states to ensure that all teachers in core academic subjects are "highly qualified" to help students succeed. Michael Chandler of the *Washington Post* (2007) says that "meeting the standards of quality is more about shuffling paper than achieving two vital goals one of which is ensuring that teachers are prepared to help students succeed." Chandler posits that when discussing an extension of No Child Left Behind there will be Congressional debate over teacher quality, shifting the emphasis from "highly qualified" to "highly

effective” teachers. This would require states to look not just at credentials, but how well individual teacher’s help students learn and perform on tests based on the research of the qualities of an effective teacher: For the purpose of this study, I have broken down the overlapping teacher qualities from the National Board standards, Interstate New Teacher standards and the qualities listed by the high school students in Corbett’s (2002) study and placed them under rigor, relevance, and relationships.

- Rigor
  - Strong content knowledge
  - Organized
  - Differentiates instruction
- Relevance
  - Questions effectively
  - Flexibility
- Relationships
  - Pleasant atmosphere in their classroom
  - Positive attitude

All of the characteristics discussed in this review of literature are related to one another or effective teaching in some way. Since effective teaching is being redefined in light of learning outcomes (Haycock, 2004), educators must continue to investigate what teacher characteristics provide the best achievement possibilities for students

### Chapter 3: Methodology

*“Praise does wonders for our sense of hearing.”*

*-Arnold H. Glasgow*

#### *Methodology and Procedures*

This study was designed to understand the phenomenon of teacher efficacy through qualitative research methods. Creswell (1998) has defined qualitative research in the following way:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

My investigation focused on the understanding of teacher efficacy and how it relates to being perceived as an effective teacher. This information, as part of a qualitative study of particular teachers in particular schools, can make “it possible to provide feedback to teachers that is fundamentally different from the kind of information that they are given in in-service programs or through journal publications” (Eisner, 1998, p. 11).

I wanted to capture the voice of these teachers as they related their past and present experiences, discussed their skills and educational practices, and identified barriers, if any, they have overcome in the process of becoming an “effective” classroom

teacher. Schofield (1990) suggests that qualitative research on education can be used to study not only “what is” or “what may be,” but also to explore “what could be.” By studying “what could be” and locating situations that we know or expect to be ideal, we can find out what seems to be working in the lives of effective teachers.

Educational Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation; it is the art of paying close attention to the subtleties of qualitative experiences. It is the ability to make fine grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities in the areas of character, situations, and performances in educational practice (1998, p. 63). “Connoisseurship is aimed at understanding what is going on. According to Eisner, “any source of data that can contribute to that end is an appropriate resource” (Eisner, 1998, p. 82). Connoisseurship includes everything that is relevant either for satisfying a specific educational aim or for illumination the educational state of affairs in general. Since connoisseurship is perception, Eisner (1998) suggests that the environmental character of a school is shaped by the intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative dimensions of schooling. These dimensions provide me with a structure for my perceptions. By various means I made these discriminations and appreciated these differences in the experiences of each teacher studied here.

### *The Five Dimensions*

Educational Connoisseurship attends to many things in the field of education, not just the teacher. “One way to think about the subject matters of educational connoisseurship is to consider the following five dimensions that I believe contribute to what I have called the ecology of schooling” (Eisner, 1998 p. 72). These dimensions are:

(1) the intentional, (2) the structural, (3) the curricular, (4) the pedagogical, and (5) the evaluative. I further explain the dimensions and how they pertain to the school system.

The *intentional dimension* recounts goals or aims that are explicitly advocated and publicly announced by individual schools and entire school systems as well as those that are actually used in the classroom. Educational connoisseurs recognize that there is often a disparity between what educators want to achieve and what they actually achieve with students. The same would be true for teacher effectiveness. Examining the intentional goals that are explicitly stated for teachers by the district and the school were included in my study. Examining district policies and school procedures were considered when asking what is explicitly communicated by the district, school and teacher in the intentional dimension.

The *structural dimension* relates to how schools and teachers are organized and prepared to teach. Prompts by the interviewer in this dimension were around how time, space, objects, energy, and events are structured within the school, the classroom, and in the teachers' preparation for instruction. An applicable prompt by the researcher during an interview might be: What things do you do in your classroom to make your instruction better?

The *curricular dimension* focuses upon the quality of the content as well as the goals and activities that are used to engage teachers and improve their success. Prompts include, "What role do you play in the planning of your curriculum?" and "What best prepared you to teach your content and what strategies are used to present the curriculum?"

The *pedagogical dimension* refers to whether or the teacher presents viable instruction. The pedagogical dimension asks whether or not the instruction provided by the teacher is presented in a quality format. Questions asked of the teachers in my study included: “Have you ever struggled to motivate a student?” and “How are students rewarded and encouraged?” Clearly, no two teachers deliver content in the exact same way, even to the exact same students. Teachers have varying interests, ideas, levels of creativity, and attitudes that affect their teaching styles and pedagogy. This study examined how those individual teacher styles and how those styles have shifted over the course of their careers.

The last dimension is *evaluative dimension*. This dimension focuses on how teachers assess student learning and how they are evaluated. The researchers prompt “how do your students provide you with feedback?” will be guided the additional prompts in this dimension. Included in this dimension are informal conversations with staff and administration.

### *Educational Criticism*

“For connoisseurship to have a public presence, we must turn to criticism, for criticism provides connoisseurship with a public face” (Eisner, 1998, p. 85). Criticism is the art of reconstructing and revelation. The job of the critic is to provide the data through which the reader’s perception is increased and understanding deepened. This is obtained through carefully written narratives and observations. Critics recognize that perception is selective. They understand that their portrayals can be influenced by many

sources, so they avoid obvious interpretations in favor of digging deeper into the reconstructed experience through carefully written narratives and observations.

Educational critics relate their observations through four interrelated features: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematic (Eisner, 1998). These four areas are not treated solely in isolation but are linked with each other to provide a richer understanding of the entire school. The descriptive section captures the atmosphere of the classroom. Observing a teacher's instruction, the critic describes things like the layout of the room, teacher interactions, and students' attention and focus. The critic paints a picture for the reader and helps them visualize a place or process. It helps the reader "see" the teacher and helps them understand what it's like to be a student in that classroom.

The interpretation section allows the critic to explain the meaning of the activities/atmosphere observed. In this section, the critic explains the meaning of what was observed. The critic describes and suggests possible outcomes and explanations of what is happening in the classroom and delves deeper into the meaning of what was observed. Eisner (1998, p. 98) offers the example of interpretation of the difference between a smile and a smirk, "The lips in each case might have the same concave form, yet we read one as a smile, the other as a smirk." Interpretation is more than describing the action as a concave form of the lips, which is description; it is the understanding the implied message and the justification for identifying it as smile and not a smirk. Examining instruction, interviews with teachers, conversations with the principal, and

correlating these to the stated research questions allowed for interpretation and accounted for similarities and differences in the success of the teacher.

In the evaluation section, the critic appraises what was seen according to certain criteria including whether or not the information was useful in the teacher being seen as effective. This interpretation can be surmised using classroom observations and teacher interviews. “There can be no evaluations without value judgments” (Eisner, 1998, p. 100). How the effective teacher uses the feedback from students, colleagues and administration was interpreted and summarized by the researcher, essentially teasing out the important themes that begin to emerge through the interpretations in the evaluation section.

In the thematic section, the critic summarizes the essential elements of the observed situation. This section provides the reader with features that should be examined in similar situations and illuminates possible themes. After interviewing the nine effective teachers mentioned the researcher examined features observed in two or more interviews and in two or more classrooms the features that were similar and illuminated possible themes.

Every classroom, school, teacher, student, book, or building displays not only itself, but features it has in common with other classrooms, schools, teachers, book, and building. That is, every particular is also a sample of a larger class. (p. 103)

Eisner describes themes as “the dominant features of the situation or person, those qualities of place, person, or object that define or describe identity:” (p.104). Themes

provide a summary of the essential features and provide clues as to why teachers are successful. Identifying the themes and similarities between schools and teachers will make clear the techniques that should pervade instruction and unify teachers in efficacy.

Educational criticism requires the researcher to describe, interpret, appraise, and outline themes that emerge from the data. The data are presented around the structure of the interview and observation in a way that provides an overview of the five dimensions—evaluations and theme areas that have emerged—so that the reader is given a rich understanding of the complex situations being studied.

Because qualitative research, and specifically educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, also address the processes of teaching, the researcher can study experiences through the intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative dimensions (Eisner, 1998), I chose for this study. Although educational connoisseurship and criticism have typically been used to study classroom observations, other researchers have used these methods to capture student experiences (Mooney, 1997). I saw the dimensions of experience in relating the experiences of effective teachers. In the case of this study, narrative accounts of incidents meaningful to teachers' professional growth were elicited from subjects who had previously been identified as effective teachers through a process using principal nomination. The accounts elicited from teachers included narratives of experiences prior to, during, and parallel with their teaching careers. In eliciting accounts from teachers themselves, this study sought to learn from the "wisdom of practice" (Shulman, 1987) through teachers' experiences.

According to Eisner (1998), interviews with teachers can be a very rich source of information. Educational connoisseurs not only watch and see; they talk to others and listen to what they have to say. The interview is a powerful resource for learning how people perceive the situations in which they work. It is important to remember that connoisseurship is aimed at understanding what is going on. Any source of data that can contribute to that end is an appropriate resource. (p. 81-82)

The quest to connect those who have the discrete knowledge drawn from experience with those who do not creates a fundamental dilemma: “How do we recreate [an] event so that it can be known by those who weren’t there?” (Eisner, 1998, p. 2). Interviewing teachers gave some excellent insight into the common threads of what characteristics make them effective. The purpose of observing the classroom teachers who participated in the interview process was to confirm, affirm or disconfirm findings discovered during the interview process.

According to Mears (in progress), successful in-depth interviewing requires that the researcher possesses a disposition to carry out the research as well as the skills and knowledge to serve as the primary mechanism for the collection of data. Interviewing requires that the researcher play an active role, in fact, using “the self as an instrument” (Eisner, 1998, p. 49).

It was this researcher’s intent in this study to provide an open ended, three interview series recommended by Sideman (2006) for this study.

*Interview One:* Focused life history

*Interview Two:* The details of effective teaching

### *Interview Three: Reflection on the meaning*

The researcher used Eisner's model of connoisseurship and criticism to examine and identify common threads of information gathered through in-depth interviews with effective teachers. Through these interviews the researcher gained more insight into what makes a teacher effective and answers to the question, "Does a teacher's effectiveness influence what is happening in the classroom?"

By analyzing the experiences of experienced secondary level teachers considered effective by their building administrators, teachers had a voice in identifying and interpreting the experiences which have contributed to their effectiveness. This study provides teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators with practical knowledge regarding the effectiveness of teachers.

In order to attain these goals, this study was built around the question "What characteristics are essential in order for a teacher to be considered effective?" Throughout the interview process, I employed the following prompts:

- What prior personal or professional experiences contributed to you being considered "effective" in working with students?
- What barriers have you overcome to become a teacher
- What motivation techniques enhance your teaching?
- What skills do you now possess that make you effective working with students?

### *The Setting*

Quincy County Public School District serves the North Metro-Denver Area suburbs. The southern portion of the district is older and established, where as, due to new construction, the northern portion of the county remains in high growth status according to the standards set forth by the Colorado Department of Education. The

following statistics were made available on the website of the Colorado Department of Education.

Three of the six high schools in the district will be used in this study: O'Hara High School, Kent High School, and Vista High School. The three schools include a wide range of demographics in regard to the ethnic populations and neighborhoods they serve.

The first school examined here is O'Hara High School. 2044 students attended O'Hara High School in the 2007-2008 school year. O'Hara is rated average and stable according to the Colorado State Accountability Report. The following statistics are from the 2004-2005 school year. Attendance at all of the three schools is declining due to the addition of a new high school in the district. At O'Hara High School there were 117 teachers on staff, giving O'Hara High School a student-teacher ratio of 19.1. They had 663 students in grade nine, 616 students in grade ten, 481 students in grade eleven, and 473 students in grade twelve. O'Hara was the most diverse of the three high schools in my study, 45.3% of the students were Caucasian, 44.2% of the student body were Latino, 3.4% were Black, 6% were of Asian decent and 1% were Native American.

Kent High School was also included in my study. Kent is considered to be one of the highest performing schools in the district, with 81% of its students performing proficient or advanced in reading of the Colorado state assessment (CSAP).

In the 2004-2005 school year 2082 students attended Kent High School. There were 104 teachers on staff, giving Kent a student-teacher ratio of 20.1. They had 572 ninth graders, 557 tenth graders, 554 eleventh graders, and 399 twelfth grade students.

78% of the student body were Caucasian, 12.9 percent were Latino, 1.8% Black, 6.4% Asian, and .8% Native American.

The third high school included in the study is Vista High School. Vista's overall academic performance on the 2004-2005 state assessments was average with stable growth of students. In the 2004-2005 school year there were 108 teachers on staff, giving Vista High School a student-teacher ratio of 21.0. Vista High School served 671 ninth graders, 587 tenth graders, 542 eleventh graders and 469 twelfth grade students.

### *Research Participants*

The selections of nine secondary classroom teachers were obtained using the recommendations of high school principals in a north metro public school district in Colorado. The number of classroom teachers interviewed was determined based on sufficiency and saturation of information (Seidman, 2006) as well as the number of available teachers who met the criteria of "effective." One school district was represented, and three separate school principals were engaged in nominating effective teachers in an effort to minimize the possible bias of any one individual. Only teachers of ninth and tenth grade students were considered so that state assessment data could be used to look at this area of effectiveness. It was determined at a later date that standardized test scores would not be used in this study as a measure of effectiveness due to the breadth of information being examined.

Qualitative research allows the researcher more latitude when designing phenomenon being investigated than some other methodologies (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). The carefully selected nine teachers were nominated by building principals. I

visited all three high schools, met the principal and assistant principal overseeing curriculum, and asked them for their definition of an effective teacher. They were then asked to generate a list of teachers they considered effective using the above criteria. The teachers who appeared on both lists were asked to consider becoming a participant in this study of effective teaching.

For the purpose of this study, teachers were considered “effective” based on several descriptors. The principals’ criteria for nominating teachers was:

- 10+ years of experience
- Teach one or more sections of ninth and/or tenth grade

From those teachers who met the initial criteria, the principals then had to select teachers who exhibited the following qualities:

- Strong content knowledge;
- Organization;
- Positive attitude;
- Differentiates instruction;
- Questions effectively;
- Pleasant atmosphere in their classroom; and,
- Flexibility.

These qualities were selected because they were the overlapping qualities from National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, the INTACS standards, and the results from the survey of 400 students conducted by Corbett and Wilson (2002) listing the characteristics of teachers most effective in helping them learn.

The purpose of this researcher's in-depth interviewing was not to answer questions, nor to test hypotheses, nor to "evaluate" as the term is normally used (Seideman, 2006 p. 9). The researcher wanted to understand the lived experiences that have helped these teachers to become effective. Although this study consists of a narrow sampling a small number of individuals who were identified as effective teachers, they were carefully chosen to represent effective teachers and were willing to articulate their experiences about the phenomenon of being effective.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The phenomenological ideal of listening without prejudice, as described in Kvale (1996), allows the interviewees' descriptions of their experiences to evolve without interruptions from the interviewer's questions and presuppositions. To refine and develop the best sequence of questions for the interviews, the researcher conducted a pilot interview. Based on that interview, the researcher determined if any modification of the interview questions was necessary. Changes were necessary to ensure that the interview questions were very specific in order to develop a clearer picture of what supports the growth of effective teachers as well as to ensure a smooth and organized interview process.

At the beginning of the interview, the teacher signed a formal consent to be interviewed (Appendix C) as well as permission to audiotape the interview. Each interview was scheduled for one and a half hours and was based on an open-ended question protocol (Appendix A). The interviewer's role during the interview was as an observer. Even though the researcher had developed the interview questions and used

them as a guideline, the main method of recording the insights and experiences was through the use of audio-taping and the transcription of the stories. The researchers reflective and descriptive notes after each visit were reviewed and used to organize insights. All interviews with the nine teachers were conducted over a twelve-week period in consideration of the scheduling constraints of the teachers.

I expected that each teacher had diverse experiences which have resulted in their becoming good teachers. In this study I was interested in documenting the meaning of these experiences for the teachers so they could examine and reflect how they impact the lives of their students. All the interviews took place in the teacher's classrooms or a teacher work room.

The questions were answered, with prompts from the interviewer as needed, for the large open-ended questions. I gave the teachers plenty of time and space to reflect on the how and why they entered the teaching profession and the experiences they have had that contribute to the teacher they are today.

Using Eisner's' model of criticism and connoisseurship, I determined the common threads among the individual case studies, seen as a unit of analysis: a study of life stories from which I attempted to draw analytical categories with relationships among them. Once these cases were analyzed individually, and their experiences studied as a group, the researcher had an overview of essential characteristics of the effective teacher.

Using Eisner's model, the interviewer incorporated an observation of the teacher in the classroom setting. Observing the teacher in action affirmed the information gathered and validated the techniques the teacher identified during the interviews. After

the observation the researcher described what she saw, how the teachers handled the class and validated findings with published research. The classroom observation helped the teachers to tell their stories and contributed to the biographical sketch of the participants. Observing the students' reactions contributed to their stories.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The major limitation of this method of data collection is that much of the information was filtered through the researcher's personal biases. Using the Gateway methodology, the verification of the study lies mainly in the perceptions and interpretations of the researcher. The researcher attempted to portray accurate information from the tapes and record any personal influences in brachiating (Mears, in progress, Creswell, 1998).

Another limitation is that the study took place in the state of Colorado and other states may have different policies or structures in place that could skew the results. In addition it needs to be noted that, in keeping with the standards of qualitative research, a convenient sample was used.

The fact that all of the participants, as noted earlier, were Caucasian limits the validity of the study. The lack of diversity, which is not reflective the diversity of the student body populations, was a serious limitation that was unavoidable due to the way the participants were nominated.

The researcher's biases as seen in the study were affected by her personal educational experiences. As a person who evaluates instruction in her role as the assistant principal in charge of curriculum and instruction in a similar school setting as the

participating Quincy Public Schools, I have the opportunity to see both outstanding and poor classroom instruction on a weekly basis. It is a passion of mine to be able to look at effective teachers and find out what makes them so effective. What lies behind their seemingly effortless ability to engage students? Providing some insight to pre-service teachers, as well as those currently in the classroom looking to improve their craft would be extremely rewarding for me, not to mention the benefits for the students these teachers reach. I was diligent in asking for feedback to see that I interpreted the data I collected carefully. I worked hard to precisely and clearly present both the positive and negative aspects of what I saw happening in the classroom.

#### *The Researcher*

I have been considered by several principals to be an effective teacher. I received excellent evaluations from my evaluating principals during the period I was a classroom teacher. I have taught teacher candidates for the past six years as an affiliate faculty member at Metropolitan State College of Denver, where I continually receive above average evaluations from the students who attend my classes. To understand the researchers biased attitudes, it is important to note that I am currently an administrator in a Quincy Public High School. I evaluate teachers and instruction as part of my job duties. Because I am not in an evaluative position that oversees any of the participants in the study, this is not an issue. I believe that I used my background knowledge to an advantage during the study. I submitted the narratives that I wrote for each individuals interviewed to him or her for feedback on accuracy in the writing and my interpretations.

## Chapter 4: Data Collection and Results of Findings

*“Compared to the assessment of teaching, even the judgment of Olympic diving performances is simple.”*

*-Elliot W. Eisner*

### *Summary of Eisner’s Dimensions*

According to Eisner, teaching is clearly a prime focus for educational connoisseurship. One way to think about the subject matters of educational connoisseurship is to consider the following five dimensions:

1. Intentional;
2. Structural;
3. Curricular;
4. Pedagogical; and,
5. Evaluative.

I used Eisner’s model to provide a framework for sorting and making sense of the data collection and as a structure for my teacher interviews. Because some of my evidence crossed categories, a description and summary of each dimension with examples of how it was evident in the collection of data is appropriate.

### *The Intentional*

The term “intention” designates aims or goals that are explicitly advocated and publicly announced as well as those that are actually employed in the classroom (Eisner,

1998). In this dimension, I looked for the teachers to describe the role of a teacher in their school. What was their understanding of the expectations of their jobs? Of course all the teachers mentioned delivery of instruction: “The role of a teacher is to facilitate learning.” When asked next, “Does this fit with what you do?” every teacher said yes. Whatever an effective teacher believes to be the role of a teacher, s/he intentionally fills that role. Across the district teachers agreed on the role of a teacher.

I also looked at how the teachers motivate students in their classrooms as an intentional aim. Many of them talked about the intentions of the class period--“To be able to provide instruction so students are able to learn the math standards” (Astair). Most of them alluded to a relational piece --“I connect on some level with every kid that comes into my classroom, every day” (Woods).

When teachers were asked about their intentions in selecting continuing education activities, teachers overwhelmingly replied that, at this point in their careers, they were very selective in choosing things that would enhance their classroom and apply to improving their daily classroom instruction: “Learning about teaching the English language learner, classroom management, or looking at something that would give me information on alternative programs for kids” (Nunez).

The final question in the intentional dimension looked at how the effective teachers implemented district and school goals in their daily work. Again, I heard overwhelmingly that these teachers were on board with school and district goals from both teachers and administrators.

### *Structural*

Eisner's second dimension is the structural dimension, which provided the framework for my question, "In what ways does the structure of the schools and classroom facilitate how education occurs, and is the structure conducive to the attainment of educational goals?" Eisner posits that the educational connoisseur considers the organizational forms of schools, division of class time, topics of student study, and, in the case of this research study, teacher preparedness for both his/her plans and for preparing students to learn. Educational connoisseurs focus on the structural aspects of schooling and note how the organizational envelopes we have designed affect how education occurs. In what ways does the organizational structure of our schools and classrooms facilitate how education occurs (Eisner, 1998)? The questions asked of teachers in this dimension (Tell me about how your undergraduate program prepared you to teach your content area? What additional classes, workshops, or seminars have you take that have helped? Share with me things in your classroom that you do that make your classroom instruction better?) helped me to know what structures are impacted in the effective teacher's classroom. I asked the teachers how much time they spend planning and grading, and, lastly, I asked them to tell me about barriers they had to overcome to become effective teachers. The structural dimension provided a framework to look at the question, "In what ways does the structure of the schools and classroom facilitate how education occurs, and is the structure conducive to the attainment of educational goals?"

### *Curricular*

The third dimension is curricular. According to Eisner, one of the most important aspects of connoisseurship focuses upon the quality of the curriculum's content and goals and the activities employed to engage students in it. Some questions that Eisner raises are, "Is the content up-to-date? Is it important from a disciplinary perspective? Do the activities engage students? Do they elicit higher order thinking? And is the content being taught and learned in ways that enable students to apply it or to perceive its relevance to matters outside the subject?" Eisner would also have us look at the manner in which learning is fostered. Do students travel alone on their learning journey or do they have the opportunity to work with others? Are the activities ones that foster learning cooperatively? Eisner doesn't suggest which, if any, of these values should be embraced in the choice of the delivery of the curriculum. Another important note that Eisner (p. 77) makes about the curricular dimension is that learning to see *what we have learned not to notice* is one of the most critical and difficult tasks of the educational connoisseur. To find some of these answers, I asked the teachers what role they play in the planning of their curriculum. I also wanted to know what training the teacher had received in order to effectively deliver curriculum.

### *Pedagogical*

The pedagogical dimension was very important to this research. According to Eisner (p. 77), virtually all curricula are mediated by a teacher. How that mediation occurs has a substantial bearing on what is being taught and learned. Eisner writes:

Teachers teach by example, by cover cues, by emphasizing some aspects of content more than others, by rewarding students directly and indirectly, by the animation and excitement they display in class, by the level of affection they provide to students, by the clarity of their explanations, and more. (p.77)

Educational connoisseurship and the pedagogical dimension can address the qualities of teaching that cannot be assessed through standardized testing. What students learn in a classroom is never limited to the curriculum content. In my interviews with teachers, I asked them to define pedagogy and to give me what they would say is their pedagogical style. I asked them to tell me what shifts had occurred in their teaching over time. I asked them to tell me how they reported students' progress to them and also how they dealt with students who didn't show progress. I also wanted to know how they dealt with students who were not motivated and what they did to motivate them. It was important to note what other teachers, parents, community members, or students shared with them about the impact that their teaching has had on them.

#### *Evaluative*

The fifth and final dimension is evaluative. Eisner again asks "how evaluation practices are employed, what they address and what they neglect, and the form in which they occur" (p. 81). For the purposes of this study, it is this researcher's opinion that how teachers are evaluated influences what the teachers believe is important. I was interested in hearing from the teachers about the feedback they get from their administrators and people who provide support at central administration. I wanted to know how students provide feedback and what information these teachers use to determine a successful year.

### *Administrative Interviews*

The interviews with the school administration were very interesting because they all had remarkably similar comments and opinions of what make a teacher effective. All the principals enjoyed the activity and the chance to reflect on who the effective teachers in their buildings were as well as what they believed are the characteristics of effective teachers. They were also interested in seeing who the other administrator in their building chose as effective teachers and were pleasantly surprised to learn where their choices matched. Unfortunately, some of the matching teachers were eliminated because they did not meet the length of employment requirement. I felt that including that piece in this study was important because teachers come out of required coursework with a great deal of energy and passion for their work. It is the phenomenon of sustaining that passion for seven-plus years that is a part of my investigation into effective teaching. The wisdom and experience gained as a result of time spent teaching can contribute to a teacher's effectiveness, as opposed to the "burnout" that currently causes fifty percent of teachers, some who may very well have been effective, to leave the profession in their first five years (*Washington Post*, 2006).

At O'Hara High I spoke with Ilene Pitts, principal, and Flora Dotts, assistant principal in charge of curriculum and instruction. I asked them, "What in your opinion is an effective teacher?" Pitts said,

I would say a couple of things: you know they have that rigor piece- they are real content specialists, but can always answer the question that kids ask, "Why is this important?" ...effective teachers have a way of communicating that to kids:

where kids kind of embrace their particular content. They have the ability to relate to kids on their level rather than on the teacher level, that it's more of getting to know the kids so you structure your teaching in a way that is reflective of that. I also think really good teachers are really reflective of their practice, they are never satisfied and I think when teachers give homework, present the whole unit, then when it's assessment time and half the kids fail, good teachers will take responsibility for that. The assessment is, what kind of quality instruction and quality teaching did I give the kids so that they can learn. That's what I see is a really good teacher – having rigor, relationships, and relevance and are being reflective of their practice.

Dotts agreed with Pitts on all counts, and in addition to what Pitts said, Dotts added, Effective teachers have an ability to establish a positive rapport with students and an ability to develop a positive relationship with kids. An effective teacher utilizes those relationships to maintain high expectation and get those kids to meet those high expectations.

She also said that effective teaching involves a vast tool kit of strategies that meet all the different needs in the room. Along with federally mandated assessments that are now an inextricable piece of American public schools, good instructors see assessment as an important review of student learning as well as their teaching abilities. Effective teachers take the time to reflect on the process of teaching: Did they really *teach* what they want students to know and be able to do? They examine the question, “What do I need to do differently to be more effective?” According to Dotts, effective teachers have

an ability to establish relevancy: “Why are we learning this? When will I ever have to use this?” They not only work effectively with the students in their classroom but also with the parents, communicating with them regularly. Effective teachers also interact with colleagues in order to move their departments forward. Lastly, they are lifelong learners – continually seeking out ways to improve their teaching.

Over at Kent High School, a totally different aesthetic environment from O’Hara (a more modern building and newer construction), the administrations’ comments were remarkable similar. Principal Jennifer O’Neal replied that empathy is a high priority in effective teaching because she believes strongly in the relationship between the teacher and his/her students that are behind a successful classroom. She also remarked that teachers who are reflective of their practices, including looking at data and reflecting on what works, are effective teachers. It is her belief that teachers need a good understanding of a differentiated classroom and must have the ability to meet each student’s needs to be effective. She noted, “Teachers need to know a lot about best practices and what research says about the classroom instruction ...and [must] be very passionate.” She said that she believes the teachers she and the other administrator at Kent selected to participate in the study *are* passionate about their subject area and believe they teaching for a purpose.

Assistant Principal Michael Herrera oversees curriculum and instruction at Kent High. He had noted five effective teacher traits in preparation for the interview:

The one that probably stands out to me the most is definitely the passion, and I know that Jennifer mentioned passion, and to me the students really get a feel for teachers who have passion and they know when teachers are excited to teach

something and it helps them to get excited to learn and be involved with the class and to participate in the class. So, when you get those teachers who have a passion for what they are teaching, to me that stands out the most. Then probably is knowledge of the subject and the more knowledge they have and being able to lead conversations in any direction that they might go I think is important. The next one is the understanding of others. I think Jennifer had mentioned that as well, and just understanding the different learning styles of students and just understanding what students may be going through, understanding the times we might be living in or the community they might be living in, I think that helps them to teach effectively. I also noted organized/planner/visionary. Just having everything ready to go, understanding where they are going to go with their content, understanding what the end product they're hoping for, so that way if they have to make adjustments along the way that can adjust and then always steer back to what they are going for or their goal or what their purpose is. And lastly, I put hard work. It is always nice to have a person who is willing to work hard and go that extra step and to work outside the normal day and just go the extra steps.

O'Neil added,

One thing we didn't really talk about, but is huge, is classroom management. If you're organized, like Michael said, and have done effective planning, know where you are going. If you're passionate and if you are excited, then the kids will be grabbed and you will have the classroom management, along with the people

piece, to interact with the kids. Having all those other things, classroom management then come naturally.

Over at Vista High the comments were much the same. I spoke with Maria Taylor, the principal, first. She said,

A teacher is effective if students learn from them while in their classes, and I think building relationships with students is an absolute first must. Kids need to know that a teacher cares about them personally, because then I think they are more willing to learn, and do assignments they may find not particularly appealing. I also think they need to have great content knowledge and they need to be learners themselves. I think they have to believe in their own efficacy and that they can make a difference in kids' lives, and that kids can learn from them and that they have an obligation to make sure that that happens for every student in their classroom and every student under their tutelage. It's not okay to write off anyone. It doesn't mean that you are going to be a great success with every student, but that is our job to attempt to be a good teacher to everyone in the class.

Assistant principal Jo Allen agreed, saying,

I think one of the most important things is creating a caring classroom environment for students so that they feel welcomed, and building that rapport so that students are wanting to learn and thrive in the environment. I think it is really important that effective teachers set high expectations and rigor in their classrooms, and that they are also putting in the supports necessary so that those students who are struggling will have the supports available to meet the

expectations. Effective teachers are flexible in meeting the needs of all learners. I think that is important to be an effective teacher that you are willing to look at your own practices and to evaluate and take risks and try new things to make you a better teacher.

### *Participant Interviews*

*Meet the Participants.* There were 12 teachers whose names appeared on both administrators' lists of effective teachers at the three participating high schools. Nine teachers identified as effective agreed to participate in the study. I will introduce them to you and not associate them with a high school for confidentiality purposes. Remember, each teacher has selected a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes as well as the schools and the district. It is significant to note that all the teachers are Caucasian, though one selected a Hispanic pseudonym. A human resource representative from Quincy gave me the following percentages for the participating school district from October 2008. Quincy Public Schools has a teacher ethnicity breakdown of 91% Caucasian and 9% other ethnicities.

Contrary to the similarities between ethnicity in the study participants and district teachers at large, gender divisions did not follow expected patterns. My research indicates that, in October 2008, males made up about 27% and females made up 73% of the total teacher population of Quincy Public Schools. In this study, five of the nine participants in this study were male, creating a 56-44 male to female percentage split. I begin with the females:

*Frederica Astair.* Astair teaches mathematics. She has been teaching for 16 years and holds a degree in math and is a certified actuary. After working for a short time as an actuary, she found the math job very boring and stagnating, so she decided to move out of it. She went back to a state college to obtain her teaching license and began teaching in 1993, and she feels her undergraduate work prepared her well for her career in mathematics. Astair teaches all grades (9-12) and levels of math, from the lowest level of math offered at her high school to AP Calculus, which she has been teaching for years. She received a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, and she reports no intentions of leaving the classroom for administration. Last year she took a sabbatical leave, during which she wanted to know more about the science behind the math, and at the end became highly qualified for the State of Colorado in physics. This evidences Astair's statement that she is a life long learner. Astair has taken advantage of additional training in teaching the prescribed math program and in incorporating technology into the classroom. She thinks her principals consider her to be effective because she gets very few parent complaints, her test scores are "decent," and "very few students *don't* like her." I found her to be very personable and likable myself.

In Eisner's intentional dimension he talks about aims or goals that are explicitly advocated and publicly announced as well as those that are actually employed in the classroom. In this dimension I wanted teachers to describe their role in the schools. When asked to describe the role of a teacher in her school, she clearly stated that it was to "provide curriculum and instruction so that students are able to understand the standards of learning, not only in math, but in English, reading, science and social studies." It is

every administrator's dream that teachers take the responsibility for student learning beyond their immediate content area and understand their intention should be to educate the whole child, as Astair indicates. When I repeated her reply back to her she added, "Deliver and promote learning and also to be a friend sometimes." I believe that Astair is very intentional about her expectations for students as well as for herself; she embodies her beliefs in effective teaching.

In the intentional dimension I looked at how teachers motivate students. Astair said she puts a carrot in front of their faces and says, "What do you want? I will help you if you help yourself. You've got to meet me halfway. If you don't meet me halfway, I can't do much for you." She prefaced this by saying she knows "every kid is different, and every kid needs something different," so she is well aware that she must treat each student as an individual. When I observed Astair's class, she used a break from school work as a motivator ("You will not go on break until you have five done."). Her intentions are that students will do what they need to do in order to be successful in her classes. Astair feels she is well qualified and well prepared to teach the math courses she teaches.

Astair definitely has structures in place to help students find success. During my observation, I noted that all 25 students reported to class and were in their seats *on time*. Her objectives were posted. She used a warm-up where students use a quarter sheet of scrap paper that they grab before they sit down. The warm-up on the projector was titled "Brain Warmer." At the beginning of class, she went over the objective with the class, gave feedback for the warm-ups on the overhead graphing calculator, and did *not* approve

a bathroom request. I could practically “see” the structures in place on a regular basis, as well as Astair’s high expectations for her students.

In the curricular dimension, I looked at the role the teachers play in the curriculum. Frederica doesn’t play much of a role in planning her curriculum since the district uses a prescribed math program. She “does what her bosses tell her to do,” and that is to teach the program. When asked about the skills she possesses to make the delivery of her instruction effective, she replied,

Humor is absolute... (pause)... I like people. I like my students. I like to hear stories about my students and where they are coming from. But, I also like math...a lot, so I think that’s another key... I am passionate about my subject areas.

She looks at the goals of her school and how they impact her teaching, and she does what she can to support them, but I got the feeling she thinks it’s a losing battle. She tries to do her part and comply with expectations, such as calling the family, making sure students are wearing IDs, and upholding the dress code policy; however, I am all too familiar with the fact that it takes total commitment from the whole staff before you can establish these protocols as norms, and that can be frustrating for those faculty members who make the effort and don’t see the results.

When asked about supporting district goals, Astair replied,

If I believe in them, I do... is that bad? You know, somebody asked me a question the other day. How do you like the program? Do you think the program is effective or not? I like it sometimes... but today... I think this problem we were

working on is way over their head. I think it is too much. The kids were, half of them...no, not half... 25 percent can get through and the 75 couldn't. So, do I think that is an effective way of teaching? No, not necessarily. So, I don't know. At times I do a good job, and at times, if I don't believe in what the district is doing... it's hard to get into what is fair for students.

District goals and the teachers' job of implementing what is believed to be best for students is sometimes difficult at the classroom level in meeting the students individual needs. There is pressure on teachers to follow protocol, but teachers who persevere in providing curriculum they believe to be effective and in the best interest of student learning has been shown to increase student achievement (Haberman, 2003).

Astair defines pedagogy at the "art of teaching." She considers herself to be very relaxed and "into it" her students; she wants them to do well. But she has "high expectations" and makes that very clear in the tone of her voice. Over time, Astair has seen her classroom become more structured than it used to be. She breaks things down a lot more than she ever used to, although it is much more difficult for her using the new math program, and that's just come with the "art of teaching." Astair issues progress reports to students every week and speaks personally to students who are falling behind. She stays on top of what is happening with students. Her personal touch keeps students motivated. She tells students,

"You need to ask me more questions when you are working in a group. If you are struggling, and your group is not explaining to you, you need to call me so I can talk to you." If students are still failing, they can take re-takes, but I don't offer

that as a blanket statement. I offer that to specific kids that could have done better with extra help.

To me, this is a perfect example of how a teacher makes decisions based on individual student needs in order to help them succeed. This “sixth sense” a teacher has is part of the innate talent that makes up the art of teaching. Astair demonstrated that art over and over as I watched her in the classroom, identifying students who needed help, and as she answered my questions.

In the evaluative dimension, I looked for how the students were evaluated by their teacher (Astair) during my observation and I then asked Astair how she received feedback from her students, families, and administration when we spoke in Interview B. In mathematics, evaluation for understanding is not that difficult to ascertain. As an instructor you can check answers and then check work to determine accuracy. If students don't finish their work, it is easy to determine a lack of progress. During the observation Ms. Astair asked students to call her over for consultation when they had completed problems four and five. She was available for questions and then had the students pass their assignments forward at the end of the period for her to provide feedback and check progress. According to Astair, she checks for accuracy, provides timely feedback, and then meets with the students who are “not getting it.” She uses various forms of remediation that includes one-on-one help after school and peer assistance. These methods work for Astair as well as other effective math teachers.

Evaluation of the instructor of math is much more difficult, especially since most administrators are not knowledgeable about the content. Feedback is almost non-existent

for this effective teacher. The new prescribed program has fractured the department and collegiality, and collaboration of the math department has suffered from the former days of algebra and geometry instruction when teachers were on the same page. Effective teachers do what they do everyday to serve students, including novel technological means (Astair talked about creating a Google survey to get additional feedback on her instruction from students). Teachers need to look for intrinsic rewards because extrinsic rewards (compliments or help from administration) are few and far between. That much was evident in all my interviews.

*Susie Bunch.* Next is Susie Bunch. Bunch has a bachelor's degree in history, a master's degree in literacy, as well as a principal license. Susie spends half her day in social studies, teaching world history. The class I observed is integrated (same students for a blocked back-to-back class) with world literature, so Susie co-teaches this class with an English teacher. The other half of her day is in the English department teaching literacy skills to ninth and tenth grade students with special needs. Bunch always wanted to be a teacher. She is the oldest of four children and her brothers and sisters were forced to "play school--of course, I was the teacher." She went to Quincy Public Schools for elementary, middle school, and high school and had great experiences. It reaffirmed for her that teaching was the profession she wanted to be a part of. She thinks her principals consider her to be effective because she tries to put herself in the place of her students and thinks, "What would be engaging for a high school kid? What would get and gather their attention?" She understands that she has content standards to meet and there is material that she needs to cover in terms of world history, but she believes it is her

responsibility to present it in a way that makes it accessible to students. She believes using technology and 21st century skills engages students, which is why she is considered effective. Bunch was extremely personable.

When asked what the role of the teacher is in her school (looking at the intentional dimension), Bunch replied,

I think the role of the teacher is to look at the content standards and, as professional educators, decide the best instructional practices in order to impart those standards to your students and to give that information to your students.

Also important, the role of the teacher is to decide and collaborate with other staff members so that you develop the best practices in order to present that information to kids. But there most definitely is a focus on making sure that you meet the standards and you're following the curriculum maps and scope and sequence that's set forth by our school district and by our building.

Bunch's intention is that this fits with what she does 100%. "What do I need to teach, and how does that best work for my students in my individual classrooms? And what type of differentiation would be most appropriate depending on the students?"

The way Bunch motivates the students in her classroom is by "making a personal connection with kids." Her best experiences in the classroom have been when she feels like she's done team building and worked individually with the students and they know she's a part of the learning experience, too. She doesn't want to be viewed as the person who's assessing the learning and not the person who is imparting information to them.

She wants to be “part of the learning process and be engaged in the learning process with them.” Another way she intentionally motivates students is to have very clear expectations. She believes that if she is clear about what she is expecting from an assignment, then the students know what they need to do to “rise to that occasion.”

Bunch said,

In the past when I was unclear, then the kids aren't motivated because they don't really know what to do and how to be successful. So, the more concise and clear I can be, then the more success the students have and more confidence they have and then they're willing to try and experiment with new things the next time.

Bunch experiments with new things herself, intentionally returning to continuing education where she is reflective of her practice and looks for areas she needs to improve. There she finds the information or resources to get the information she wants, and she believes the district is supportive of her needs. When collaborating with her co-teacher, Bunch uses the district curriculum maps and, using a weekly calendar, she makes sure the students are aware of what they are learning and what standards they are meeting. She even writes a daily objective on the board that matches how the students are meeting specific standards. “But then I also will admit that sometimes there is a day when you're doing an activity that's fun and doesn't have a direct correlation with a district standard.” Bunch knows how to make learning fun for students. I will tell you the activity I observed was seriously engaging for students, and I was there the Friday before spring break, the last period of the day, and the lesson engages everyone. Bunch kept an eye on the clock and made sure she left time for closure and good-byes to students.

As far as the structures in place, Bunch doesn't think her undergraduate program taught her much about being a good teacher. She had classes on pedagogy and instruction, but she felt like they were philosophical in nature and she needed more hands-on experience. While she believes student teaching is one of the hardest things we ask our future teachers to do, she thinks it's the most valuable of all the experiences because "you're experiencing real life and what this job really is and you're playing with instructional practices, and what you're teaching style is and figuring it all out." While she appreciated the philosophical discussion, the practicality of student teaching was much more valuable for her.

According to Bunch, her master's degree in literacy has been very helpful as a social studies teacher because most of what her students do in class is reading and writing. She is correct in her assumption that, until recently, content area teachers didn't have to learn the skills and strategies that one would need in order to be able to teach instruction in reading and writing. For her, it opened a whole new world that she had not even thought about when she assigned students reading from the text. She said her attendance at several workshops on differentiation have been helpful, mostly around multiple intelligences. It was eye opening for her that she needs to approach the classroom in a different way for different students. Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training offered by the district, to make instruction more inclusive to the non-English, has been valuable professional development, and she reported that she is being thoughtful in using the strategies, not only with ELL students, but with all her students because "they're just best instructional practices."

Bunch uses experimentation to make her classroom instruction better. She believes that you have to experiment with presenting information as well as having the students present information in new ways to demonstrate learning. She is able to take risks and try new strategies with students and then reflect on the process. Another structure she has in place is to continually reflect on her instruction and delivery. She continues to implement strategies that work for her use over and over, and when an activity doesn't work, like the multiple intelligences theory of kinesthetic learning, she says, "I won't do that again ...maybe you wanted a different type of thinking so, you go through that reflective process. I won't use it again here... maybe later somewhere else." She has learned even with the most thoughtful structures in place that she can "do something one year and it works out brilliantly, and then you have a different group of students the next year or even a different class period ...and it doesn't work." This is a typical scenario for teachers as every student is unique as are student groupings, how students interact with one another.

Bunch reported that "the whole process of becoming an educator is an arduous process." She remembers "thinking, wow, thank God that's done" when she completed all the appropriate paperwork for licensure through the Colorado Department of Education. Then she turned around and started a masters program. Bunch voiced what a challenge it is to grow personally and continue to teach, while finding a balance in life. This is a structure of the teaching profession that must be taken into consideration when looking at how an effective teacher manages finding that balance, especially considering that Bunch reports spending ten hours a week planning and five to seven hours grading.

As part of the curricular dimension, Bunch plays what she considers to be a unique role in her school as she is the curriculum representative for her department. Her school has a curriculum committee within her building, and the role of the committee is to decide what content and courses they need to provide their students. She feels she has a voice in communicating needs at the district level and then collaborating with other teachers from her building to determine the in common assessments. Because of her involvement, she knows how to plan her time to “make sure that I meet all the things that I want to do in my individual classrooms.”

When asked what skills she possesses that makes the delivery of her instruction effective she replied,

I think having a sense of humor and being relatable probably helps because I think those are just people skills that help. I tend to be a big picture kind of thinker and so I try to always start with my students by giving them the big picture or giving them the goal or giving them the end product and then working back in the steps from there, and I’ve found that to be really helpful in the classroom. I think being flexible, personable, all the things that make you approachable to students. You have to be open and be a good communicator and be very clear, like I mentioned earlier as to what your expectations are. But the more you are approachable to your students, I think the more effective your instruction is.

These are profound words--it seems so simple--yet many educators do not share the same beliefs. During my observation I noticed a great deal of interesting discussion around the points the student presenters were trying to support. Students were asked to work with a

group of two to three classmates in order to teach the class about an enlightenment maxim. The presentations required a brief explanation of the maxim and three pieces of evidence showing how the maxim is true today. She asked critical thinking questions such as, “tell me about a situation where people did not have the power” to support and understand the maxim, *the power rests with the people*. To me there was evidence that she was open, approachable, and that her lesson challenged the students thinking, all effective teaching qualities.

As far as training Bunch received that enabled her to effectively deliver curriculum, she believes she has figured most of it out on her own, but she did say that the SIOP training used with English language learners has been helpful in teaching her to break information down into parts that are accessible to them and really think about the pieces rather than just the whole. She also believes that the multiple intelligence training has pushed her personally to present information in new ways. Because she is a big picture, verbally linguistic, visual learner, she has to remember that that’s not the way many students learn. As a result, she has learned to use more gestures and to be more bodily kinesthetic and get the students to be more kinesthetically involved. “It’s just, you have to challenge yourself, I think, to do those things that aren’t kind of your normal area.” This is evidence that she is reaching out to meet the needs of the learners to deliver curriculum first and foremost. She admits the goals of the school are always “floating around in the back of my mind,” but she does not intentionally plan her instruction with them in mind.

Bunch defines pedagogy as “your personal belief about teaching and your personal understanding of the way teaching and learning works.” She believes that all students can learn and that teachers have to find ways in which to approach students to make that learning accessible. She does not think there are *any* students out there who don’t want to learn and that no one is trying to sabotage him or herself. She said,

Depending on circumstances or situations or what’s going on in the outside world, we have to find ways to get kids engaged in the learning process. The role of the teacher is to be that person who’s observing behavior and observing what’s going on with kids and talking with them and figuring out, okay, what can I do to best meet your needs. And I know as an educator you don’t meet everybody’s needs everyday, but you have to be conscientious of that in order to get your class engaged and to have them motivated to do the work that you want them to do.

As a young teacher Bunch was very afraid of having people come in and observe her classroom, no matter who it was, but as she has gained confidence in her abilities, she has opened her door and welcomed people into her classroom. She was young teacher consumed by getting it all done, so much so that she had very little time to stop and think, did that work, did that go the way she wanted it to go? She just remembers being overwhelmed. Now, with more experience, she reflects and evaluates the situation to determine if what she is doing is working, and if it is not, she plans something for the next day that rectifies the situation. More importantly, Bunch now has the confidence to know that she can make those adjustments. The last shift she experienced was learning to see teaching as an interactive kind of work. In her early years as an educator she saw

herself as solitary, besides the interaction with students. “Inviting people into your classroom, getting feedback from other people, talking and planning lessons together,” and other valuable collaborations she feels have improved her teaching.

In regards to the evaluative dimension, “with most of the assignments, I try to give the kids a rubric or a way for them to get feedback on individual assignments.” During the student presentations for which I was present, she wrote comments and provided feedback immediately. She posts grades every week and also emails home progress reports to both parents and students. When students are not doing well, she has a personal conference, calls home, or gets a counselor involved.

She, like almost every educator, has students she struggles to motivate. She told me she can usually find *something* that peaks the interest of an unmotivated student, but at three quarters of the way through the year, she is still at a loss with one of them. “So, it’s just - keep trying, and keep brainstorming, and keep hoping there’ll be something” that reaches them. This demonstrates the persistence that an effective teacher must have in striving to find a way to reach students.

Bunch learns about how her teaching impacts students when they return to school to share their success: “One of the most gratifying things is when you have kids come back... and tell you that they’re successful in college because of the work that they did in your class.” She also commented on the rewards she gets from having the kind of reputation that she as a teacher worked “really hard to build.” Students wanting to take her class and sons and daughters of educators or school board members that seek her out and request her as a teacher are affirmations that “you are a good teacher.”

*Chelsea Nunez.* The third participant was Ms. Chelsea Nunez. Nunez has a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. This is her 15<sup>th</sup> year teaching English. She teaches newspaper, American literature, and intermediate composition for juniors, accelerated reading, a reading intervention class for ninth grade girls, and English for the college bound a college preparation class for seniors. Nunez was a resident advisor in her dormitory in college; she compared it to a camp counselor position. It was here where she first began working with people and setting up programs. She thought she would be an elementary teacher, but after spending time in a nursery school, she was so exhausted she determined high school a better fit. Her own high school experience was "pretty positive." After college she began to working retail and moved up the ladder quickly to assistant manager then manager. After being transferred to Denver from Atlanta as a store manager, she really didn't care for retail any longer and began a teacher licensure program here in Denver. Nunez thinks her principals consider her to be effective because she is well respected in the building; she is resourceful and much invested outside of school in best practices (as an adjunct professor at a university she stays up on top of current best practices for instruction). She "changes up what she is doing in the classroom based on the kids she is teaching and the type of class and what she is learning outside of school." She is willing to keep changing her curriculum to meet the needs of the different groups with whom she works. "So," she says, "I am not a stick in the mud."

I work hard and I get success... I have some good data on my CSAP scores and my ACT scores... And while I am not, like, the favorite teacher... and I tell kids I

don't want to hear you say, 'Oh, I like Ms. Nunez, she's nice.' That is not a compliment to me. I'd rather hear, 'Oh, she makes you work really hard.' So, I think the relationship I set up with the kids is that I make it clear that I am there to teach, not to be their friend.

In talking and observing Nunez, I got the feeling that she is her students' number one fan. She believes that being reflective most contributes to her success with students. She reflects on her practice, thinks about the lessons, and then is willing to do what it takes to do it better. I liked her.

In the intentional dimension, it was clear to me that Nunez takes on the role of the teacher to encompass all aspects of school, from getting the students to class, making them comfortable, giving them emotional support, to "instructing and supporting how the kids show growth academically," which she sees as her "main job." Nunez intentionally differentiates how she motivates her students. She motivates her freshman class of struggling readers, not by reminding them how far behind they are, but by helping them to see that "reading is fun, and there are many cool things about it." She tries to obtain books that connect to them and "hook you personally. I want you to feel that this is your personal time to try to become a stronger reader." With her college prep students she tries to make the connection that what they are doing here will apply later in their lives, again helping to make the material relevant for students

Nunez is committed to continuing education and is a life long learner. For her it is not a question of whether or not she will continue her education but a question of what she needs right now to be the most effective teacher she can be. She looks at how to

further her education the same way she decides what to teach. “What are the needs, what are the standards, what do I need to be able to do?” Currently, she is focusing on technology, which for her is a personal interest as well as something that will benefit her professionally. Another intentional piece for Nunez is that fact that she is very committed to supporting school and district goals, ever changing though they seem to be to her. The school has focused on trying to target instruction to the eleventh graders, using ACT data as a gauge of learning, so students can succeed on the practice ACT in November (ACT exams are given in April). Nunez is helping coordinate this strategy at her school. She also personally supports district and school mandates by grouping students by ability level to also target instruction (e.g. “These four girls did not understand theme. We are going to have them read the story together and talk about the theme.”).

The structures Nunez has in place are not due to the training she received in her undergraduate work as she doesn't feel it prepared her very well to teach her content area; rather, it was self taught, much like Bunch. She does feel, however, that her masters program was more beneficial, saying that 50% of the classes were relevant and useful. Favorite courses included a composition class she described as “excellent, very influential in how I teach writing” and a young adult literature class that “very influential in my strategies for connecting to kids.” Structures Nunez has in place include being “super organized... but very flexible and go with the flow.” She teaches study skills, time management, reading strategies, test taking strategies in addition to content. This is another example of providing relevant curriculum for students. She also tries “to read my students” needs in the first hour. If the class seems sluggish, she has them do calisthenics

for two or three minutes to wake them up. She did this the morning of my visit, and I overheard one of the boys say to another, “I love this class.” When there was no response from his classmate, the boy said, “No, I *really mean* it.” My understanding of this was that he really appreciated the physical activity to wake up his thinking. It appeared that the whole class was happy about the movement, as least there were no moans of disapproval, and those are not uncommon when students feel comfortable in their surroundings. How effective to have a teacher that responds to the needs of the class. This truly provides a personal touch.

Nunez tries to use best practice and is very aware of mixing up instructional strategies as a tool for student engagement. When working with student teachers or observing other classes, she realized that teachers talk too much: “Eighty percent of the class is done by the teacher and twenty percent are the kids.” She would like to see those numbers reversed. Nunez uses project-based learning and higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, such as synthesizing, to provide more rigorous classroom instruction. She spends eight to nine hours grading and three hours planning each week. Some barriers she has had to overcome include her struggle to make decisions based on what was best instructionally, instead of what the students liked and didn’t like because she wanted the students to like her. Another struggle has been working with teachers who don’t have what she termed “academic integrity in terms of professionalism... I had to come to terms with the fact that I cannot fix the world and I cannot change people.” She wanted everyone to have her passion and work ethic, and that was not the case. She had to let it go because “teaching is not the kind of career where someone who is ineffective in their

job is going to be fired, and that was hard for me. That was really hard for me.” It’s hard for me, too. I know right where she is coming from; it is just one of the structures in place in education today. This is an area that is being looked at very closely on a state level, though teacher union in Quincy Public Schools is very strong.

Nunez has a lot of freedom in planning her curriculum. This is typical of teachers who work with their common course teams in developing strategies and lessons to meet the state and district standards. She works with her Professional Learning Communities (PLC -- common content instructors) each week to decide on how to meet state and district benchmarks. She said she has never had to teach something she didn’t want to, and then she remembered: “Macbeth...two years ago.” When asked what skills she has to make the delivery of her instruction effective, she replied, “I am sarcastic, which sometimes can get me in trouble.” Sarcasm is a type of humor, and sometimes sarcasm does not cross cultures well and can seem harsh or rude. Nunez does not intend it to be either of those, it is just a part of her culture. She tries to introduce new concepts with energy and is very cognizant of how she is delivering those new concepts. She makes every effort to see that less than a third of her energy goes toward “doing the instruction.” She uses a lot of anecdotes that relate to kids, and she models learning for her students. She feels she is clear in the way that she explains things and is very open to having her students taking an active role in teaching the material (e.g. “You get it, Cody. Why don’t you explain it to the class?”). Teaching is twice learning. When asked to teach a recently learned concept it reinforces the learning. As far as training to deliver curriculum, Nunez defers to her training in retail and thinks of her students as clients: “I am here to serve

them; really I am not here to serve me.” She supports the school’s goals and can quote the school’s mission statement--Total Commitment, High Expectations, and Success for All.” She considers herself to be “one of those kinds of people that feel like ... it [the mission statement] impacts, but it’s a natural fit.” She doesn’t look at the new standards from the state and the new standards based curriculum as having that big of an effect on her, except to “help me have a stronger structure for what I am already doing well.” This shows me that Nunez has a very positive attitude when it comes to change and is very respectful of “the system,” but she also recognizes that the day she cannot support what Quincy Public Schools is asking of her, she has the right to leave. Or at least to “make it very clear to people, here is why I am not on board, and please listen to me and let me try to convince you. I either have to say [what I believe] and make a change or live with it because if I am going to complain, I am out.”

Nunez defines pedagogy as instructional style, or teaching philosophy and style, and then pauses to reflect. “What is my style? A mixed bag... sometimes a constructivist, student-centered... and also I am realistic.” Looking at shifts that have occurred in her teaching over time, she re-visits the fact that she is a lot more aware of her role as instructor and not friend. She limits how much information she needs to know about a student’s personal life. First, she doesn’t think she needs to be involved in all the drama, and second, she believes keeping a more professional relationship helps with student learning. Another shift has been how much work she will bring home because it used to dominate her life and affect relationships, health, and happiness. Now, she is happy to do work at home, but she draws the line and is more aware of keeping the focus on herself.

As the years have passed, Nunez thinks she is a much better facilitator. She has learned to facilitate rather than lead in meetings with her peers. She believes over the years she has become better at listening to all voices rather than her feeling she has to be in charge of changes.

Students are kept apprised of how they are doing in class as Nunez posts and emails grades weekly. She has different policies with different classes. With her college prep classes, for example, she won't take late work from students unless they ask for a meeting. This is a new policy and she said it has been "pretty effective." She is happy to offer extensions for extenuating circumstances, but the request must come twenty-four hours in advance. "I'm really not into excuses. I just expect honesty, and I try to teach the kids that honesty is most important." As far as motivating students, "I am acutely aware that I don't motivate all of them all the time, but I really try to get that one-on-one" time if a student is not motivated. Feedback from parents and students about the impact she has had on them consists mostly of students who return to the school or email her to say, "I know you kept saying this would be useful, but I didn't believe you, but I now know what I learned is really helping me in college," and that has been so rewarding." Nunez doesn't feel that she needs ego stroking; she gets "super complimentary" evaluations from the administration. She wishes she got more feedback on her work overseeing the school newspaper class but is resolved that she "gets what she needs." This showed me evidence of her self-direction in spite of outside feedback.

*Betty Youklis.* The last of the female participants is Betty Youklis who has a BA in English. She took all the courses for a MA degree but did not sit for her exams due to

time constraints. She teaches two sections of AP literature and compositions, which is a senior level advanced placement class. She teaches a section of the integrated world studies class that combines world literature and world history and is co-taught with a social studies teacher. She also teaches a section of freshman English (a component that deals with research), writing, and public speaking, which, according to Youklis, “shocks” many of them. She teaches all grade levels 9-12 and has been teaching for 13 years. Youklis’ mom was a teacher for 50 years and was always an inspiration to her. Youklis always knew she wanted to be a teacher. She believes “there are so many more intrinsic rewards that go with teaching that make it so much more worthwhile than just a job.”

Youklis believes that her principals consider her to be effective because of the rapport she has with students. She is able to “deal with things that may come up in a manner that doesn’t become a distraction” and the class is able to move on. On one hand, she believes the teaching piece is easier because she doesn’t have discipline problems. On the other hand, she has experienced times where students were “a little too friendly, and I’ve had to go, ‘Okay, just because I have good rapport doesn’t mean that we can walk over boundaries.’” She has had to find a balance in her relationships with students.

Another reason Youklis believes her administration finds her effective is because she is “super organized,” a fact of which she is proud. She believes that over the years teaching has gotten easier. Lastly, Youklis is transparent in her job as a teacher. She is clear in stating her goals and the skills she expects the students to know. She wants them to know what the point of every lesson is: “I tell them more than once if you’re not sure why we are doing something, feel free to ask, I will not be insulted.” Youklis believes

that she is effective with students because they fully believe that she cares about them. After speaking and observing a class I second that opinion.

Intentionally, Youklis believes the role of a teacher at her school is to be a member of the professional learning community. “It’s not the teacher who is the sole source of knowledge and the person who pours forth the information, and students just suck it all up.” She believes teachers are part of a united team of teachers, administrators, counselors and students, with everybody on an equal playing field, she believes they are all working hard for students and to improve student achievement. This fits totally with what she does. “Whether it’s the intervention program that we’re running, or the 101 interactions I have with students in conferencing, or the role that I have in helping out with various IEP meetings or those types of things with other staff members.” She says there is definitely this “we’re all in it together” mentality, and she believes it does take everybody to make it be successful. Since the professional learning community model came to her school, she is seeing better results and seeing a network that is being provided to help students and to help them succeed, and it’s not just one person trying to do it all.

According to Youklis she motivates students in many different ways. For her high achieving advanced placement (AP) students, the “grade” is a big motivator. One of the more subtle motivations she finds to be successful is having students show growth and that is the area she addresses in discussions:

I try to conference with my AP students at least once a month, and we look at goal setting and we look at grades and we talk about growth and whatnot. And that’s

an area where we talk about that and those conferences end up being almost like little pep talks and that motivates them to try more and push themselves. I definitely have seen that shift as far as in my own teaching methods, the use of conferencing as a way to connect with kids and let them know they don't just get lost in the crowd...and that's so important with our integrated class because we have 56 students in that class.

In looking at what continuing education activities Youklis uses, she again referred to goals she has set for herself or discussed with her administration. This indicated to me that she is goal driven. She looks at where she has the greatest need, what would make her a stronger teacher, and what can she bring back that's going to help her school, department, and students. She really got a lot out of attending the AP conference for teachers on how to teach and believes that the "ideas that were *so* helpful." I was impressed the way the school and district goals were enmeshed into her everyday intent. Agendas were posted, she was prepared for the lesson, when students were unprepared she was able to recite policy. She reiterated that she is very transparent about the skills she wants her students to be proficient or advanced in by the end of the year. She posts the standards on every assignment that her students get, so they know, "Hey, this is where this is coming from, and this is why we're doing it."

Youklis' classroom structure was influenced by her undergraduate program. Many of the classes she took at California State University had practical applications. She interned at a high school with a reading tutor. She felt it was good preparation going into the teaching credential program. Additional helpful training that she received include her

Masters program, specifically because she could tailor it to some of her favorite areas such as American literature. Taking the AP training was helpful, and she just completed the district English language learner (ELL) training and found a lot of value in the training, drawing immediate connections and parallels into what she was seeing in her own classroom. She put specific structures in place to make her classroom instruction better revolve around organization. She organizes the layout of the room differently for different purposes. This helps facilitate discussion, depending on her activity, or a testing environment to mimic the experiences students will have later. Youklis uses an agenda everyday that she writes on the board. She has an agenda folder for students who are absent so they know right where to go so there are no distractions that can interrupt instructional time. Other structures she uses are warm-ups, typically grammar-based, which give her time to take attendance. The students then get up and move while they check with their peers for correctness, and then the class moves forward with the day's lesson. Youklis spends twenty hours a week planning and grading; most of it is grading. "In fact, I still have 50 essays in my bag that I need to grade, and I've had them for two weeks now." I need to make a note here that this is *not* an effective policy (Marzano, 2003). Youklis has two young boys at home and she has to find balance. She does something called "homework help e-mail," and if students email her by 7:00 p.m., they can ask for points of clarification. She said it takes more of her time than planning or grading. It is a portion of what she considers planning and grading. She receives emails from students everyday, and they are time consuming to answer, but she sees great benefit in it because their writing is stronger. She is not always available right after

school, and many students are not either due to outside obligations, so she is able to give them feedback on their writing before they turn it in. She also believes it to be a timesaver on the grading side because it makes grading easier.

When asked about barriers that she has overcome to become an effective teacher, she said learning to say no to things has been an adjustment. Trying to balance her time and obligations has been difficult, but she is much more willing to try new lessons and different strategies to present lessons for learning, and if it's not perfect she can tweak it before the next class. This flexibility and risk taking has helped her balance her time.

“How we teach the standards and skills is ultimately up to us,” says Youklis, acknowledging that her role in the curriculum is to teach predetermined standards and skills. Her common course teams (groups of teachers who teach the same course such as ninth grade English) meet weekly to talk about what in common assignments they will have, how they will measure the skills, and what sort of assessments they will be giving their classes. The rest is up to her, and she likes that because it allows for her personal way of delivering curriculum that she deems effective. She uses the required curriculum and reports, “There’s a lot of area for supplemental pieces,” that she addresses on her own.

Youklis states that organization is a key skill to effective curriculum delivery. She is also a big fan of humor: “Even if my students don’t necessarily think it’s funny, I’ll laugh and then they’ll giggle.” She shows students that school doesn’t have to be so serious. Youklis believes that her students have enough pressure placed on them, and if she can ease some of that with humor, despite the fact it’s a high stakes class, it makes

her more effective. Youklis credits her methods classes at California State for teaching her these skills, but she admits that the most useful training curriculum delivery has been through the school and the common course teams that are part of the schools professional learning communities (PLCs). School and department members all work well together to support one another in designing and delivering quality instruction that works for students. Youklis is confident that she is effective in supporting the school's goals, remarking that the school's philosophy of supporting student achievement is similar to her own. She can't remember the last time she had a student or parent question what she is doing. She feels supported and appreciated by the neighboring community.

When I asked Youklis what she would say is her pedagogical style, she said she didn't know how to describe it. She was having a "metaphorical block." What I observed were high expectations for students--the way she described her high expectations for what was going to happen that day. Students were comfortable raising their hands to answer questions and wanting to volunteer information. I felt the welcoming and open classroom environment.

Over time Youklis has improved her involvement with parents and knows now that parents are her best allies. She facilitates that relationship by emailing families their student's grades every week, along with a synopsis of "what we did this week. Here's what your student's homework is over the week-end, and here's what is coming up that you need to be aware of." She also tells them "when she is available to meet with their child, and let me know if you have any questions." It has proven very helpful at parent/teacher conferences. The school requires teachers to maintain personal classroom

web pages, and Youklis keeps hers up-to-date so students and parents are able to look at information they can access outside of class. She again referred to the PLC model that is so supportive of newer teachers on one hand, yet it is so overwhelming that teachers are so accountable to all their peers. If members of the common course team are ready to give an exam and the end of the quarter, and one of the teachers has not yet covered a specific skill set being assessed, it can be very stressful when this is the only way your class, and the schools learning is measured. What she values most about the PLC time is the best practices conversations that they have where she can see the growth students are showing. She believes it improves instruction across the board as well as improving the student's experience. When students are failing, they are assigned intervention. She has very few students fail, and most of them take advantage of the opportunities given them to come in and get help. Like all teachers she struggles to motivate some students. She shared with me a current example of a student she is was currently working with:

I have a young man in my AP class who failed first semester, and he came up to me the second day of school and said, "I don't think I can do this. I think I want to drop." And I said, "You can't drop; it's AP." And he's, like, "Oh..." And he is a big Red Sox fan, I'm a big Red Sox fan, and I said to him, "You're my one Red Sox fan at the school. We've got to stick together." He's the nicest kid... I've enlisted his parents and the counselor, and we had a meeting at my request that was really insightful. He's feeling very overwhelmed, he feels a lot of pressure, he's very unmotivated- -it's one of the things that we discovered at that meeting. It's not an issue of ability... he goes home and he doesn't know why, but he

doesn't work. He'll [play the video game] Rock Band, he'll goof off, he'll get on the computer, but he is not motivated. He comes to see me every day during his teacher assistant period, because that's the only time he has off, and he's working on his missing assignments. I think there is some depression there. He is seeing a counselor, but it is so frustrating, because he's the sweetest kid. He'll smile right away to my face and say, "Yep, I'll work on it... no, I didn't do it," so I just keep after him and keep after him.

I share this quote to show first hand how Youklis uses the Red Sox to connect with this student, then takes the time to organize a meeting to see the big picture of what is causing his struggles, works to involve family's support, works with him one-on-one during the school day, and *doesn't give up*. It's the persistence piece that is evident in good teachers, *effective* teachers. Finding a balance that does not take away from the class of motivated students yet allows struggling students to succeed, is one of the characteristics of an effective teacher. It's not all right to let students fail. However, some students do fail. And there is learning in failure. The point is, the pedagogy of a good teacher takes into account more than delivering curriculum.

As part of the evaluative lens, Youklis gets feedback from parents, most of it complimentary. She had one parent talk about how, when watching a movie with their student, the student said they had to view it through their *AP lens* and do a literary analysis. The parent thought Youklis would appreciate seeing the far reaching effects and positive impact she had had on their child. Feedback from her building administration comes in a variety of ways: random walk-throughs (a quick glimpse of the class during a

four-minute observation), conversations in meetings and hallways, and formal evaluations every three years. Also, this past year her class was selected for a State representative's visit. She was honored to be selected as an effective teacher for this study and interpreted it as effective feedback from administration. The district provided her with feedback when she was going through the AP training, and she was able to network with other AP teachers in the district. She felt the district valued what they were doing as teachers. Youklis, unlike the other participants in the study, was able to mention several ways she is provided feedback from her school and at the district level. Youklis collects feedback on her effectiveness in delivering curriculum from her students by performing random informal comprehension checks. She'll say, "Tell me everything you know about this," and then use that as a way to see what re-teaching she needs to do or decide if the students are ready to move on. She does give students exit surveys at semester to assess how the class worked for them, and it helps her to direct her instruction for the following semester or year.

For Youklis a successful year is really about looking at student growth. She cares more about growth than how many As or Bs students earn. She considers how exhausted (that is a given) she is along with CSAP scores and the results of the AP exams when evaluating success, and, for the most part, she believes that if her students leave with more confidence and determination, the year has been a success.

*Edward Malone.* Edward Malone has a BA and an MA degree in history. He teaches AP US history, American studies (a block class of US history and American literature and composition for tenth grade), and AP Language, primarily to seniors. He is

highly qualified to teach both social studies and English and, I soon learned, science as well. He said he'd been teaching "since his hair wasn't grey" and believes this to be his 26th year teaching.

After more than a quarter century in the profession, it's hard to imagine that Malone's family discouraged his going into education, due to its low pay and pitiful job prospects in the late '70s and early '80s. He began college in a chemical engineering program and struggled, and then he took a world history survey course and just loved it. So he stayed at CU, got his history degree, and continued with the professional year and student teaching.

When I asked Malone why his principals consider him to be effective he said, "I have no idea... because I survived? Longevity?" Upon further prompts I determined that, basically, *he* loves to learn; he loves what he does and is inspired by students and maybe because they notice his work ethic. He believes he is effective with students because of his deep content knowledge and his ability to transfer that his knowledge to students. He has a deep level of empathy and compassion for students, and he thinks that his sense of humor helps him relate to students.

Malone sees the intentional role of a teacher in his school to be an educator in his/her area of content knowledge (in his case, history) but also to teach students to care about being citizens, to care about their city, their State, their country--its environment, its traditions, and its values and beliefs, along with the ability to value progressive change. Malone sees this is very much what he does. As a history teacher, he tells students, the present is a snap. It's here and it's gone. The future? We don't know. All

we know is the past. “So I see specifically history as an essential tool to know and understand” the world which prepares students for life “outside of the workplace.”

“The idealistic teacher that still survives after 26 years” believes that if students know he cares, that caring becomes a motivator. He thinks he makes a difference for students because he “took the extra time” or he talked to students as people and not as student or student numbers. He cites his enthusiasm as a motivational factor, too. Malone chooses content classes to continue his education activities. He recently became credentialed in English and also spent the last few summers in AP training which he found to be valuable not only in teaching AP courses but for all his classes.

When talking with Malone about how he intentionally implements district and school goals into his daily work, he remarked that when he began teaching “we didn’t have standards or common assessment... One of my most significant and long lasting contributions in the district is the development of district assessments in U.S. history, and common assessments here at school.” As a result, he has had a voice in deciding what he wants kids to know and be able to do on a daily basis.

The additional training that helped him the most was Barbara McCarthy and format learning styles that explored all the different learners and approaches to meeting student needs. She appears to me to be a predecessor to Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory. Mainly, it made him realize all students don’t learn the way he does and he began to reach out to meet those different learners. It changed the way he delivered instruction. He mentioned the computer “revolution” in the district and the training involved. Malone said that the AP training and the PLC approach was a wonderful way to work with “some

fine, fine teachers, being able to observe them, be influenced by them and then influence them... It's a wonderful way to become a more effective teacher." He recently completed the ELL training offered through the district. He felt this was another training that impacted how he delivers instruction. Malone's years of experience have proved that his instruction is more effective if he spends time first semester working on reading strategies. Those turn into note taking strategies and then study strategies. It really helps, he says, because he has learned students "can't read the textbook." He has found students struggle to decode and comprehend the material. Students complain because it is so much work, but it sure does pay off for him. He has found improved skills since he has taken the time to remediate. I noticed during my observation that he had good questioning techniques; he said there have been some phenomenal folks on staff who have provided training in seminar techniques and questioning. He credits other teachers on staff, resident experts if you will, who have provided professional development in literacy that includes how to implement writing strategies for improved written language.

Malone spends fewer hours planning and grading than he used to. He has a family life that he has to balance. He guesses he spends about seven hours planning and seven hours grading each week. His experience is valuable in keeping planning and grading at a manageable level. I heard him tell the class how he struggles to be organized which was not typical of the participants in this study.

The biggest barrier that Malone faced in becoming effective was the fact that he loves a good lecture and learns well by listening, so it was difficult to come to realize that it doesn't work well for all learners, and it certainly doesn't work well with eighth

through twelfth graders. So he has had to become much more right-brained, implementing the arts and other kinds of expression, rather than just relying on the essay or lecture to demonstrate learning. “I’ve always had a bit of a sarcastic wit and teaching irony, and sarcasm can be effective, but not terribly effective with 15-year olds.” He said aging has helped, having his own children has helped, and working with some wonderful people has helped him become an effective teacher. He now recognizes that time and the clock and deadlines have their place, but they are not the end-all. He had a wonderful instructor at DU in graduate school who said, “Life happens, so that has to be more important than history happens or school happens.” These are the structures he brings to his classroom.

As stated earlier Malone played a very active role in the creation of the common assessments that shape his curriculum. He feels he is in control of what happens in his classroom, “what I choose to emphasize or de-emphasize, where we pause and dig versus where we skim and go.” The district standards and curriculum guides steer him, and the common assessments are ever present, but he feels in control and he ultimately makes the personal choices that all teachers make of what to teach, and that affects his delivery of the curriculum.

I read constantly, and... I work really hard. Selling history to sophomores in high school is a dang tough sell. And while I see myself as never being successful as a salesman out there, I keep reminding myself I do it everyday. And part of that is finding the contemporary, the Supreme Court cases, the laws, the events that reflect oftentimes similar situations to the past. So I make it relevant to their

world and do enough of that to make it meaningful. I do make sacrifices somewhere, so that I can make connections to the present, which I think helps the delivery of instruction.

Malone's ability to make the curriculum relevant to his students creates a high level of student engagement. He also credits humor, understanding, and quality instructional strategies supported by the district in helping him be an effective teachers.

The goals of the school and district impact his teaching because he spends more time on skills rather than content, and that makes it difficult for history teachers. Sometimes he doesn't think he is effective at all in implementing the goals of the school and district but immediately retracted his statement.

I know that's not true. CSAP is not the be-all and end-all, and so there is no social studies on there. While talking at the district level, part of us think that's good. We're also reminded we are not at the table. I look at my fourth grade son...finally getting into his classroom with the teacher and looking at how they spend their day, and I said, "Where's the social studies?" They don't have it because it's not on CSAP.

After 26 years in the system, Malone says its difficult to endure the societal changes within the school and it is hard not to become jaded. He understands the dilemma; the "other stuff" being assessed on standardized tests is really important, too. This became painfully clear when his school began requiring 30 minutes of silent reading every Wednesday. Malone initially thought that time could be better spend on instruction, but when he asked one of his classes how many of them just "sit down and read," only

four out of thirty-one hands went up. When he dug deeper, asking, “How about watching your parents? How many of you see your parents read?” about the same four hands went up. So he understands the school’s decision and supports it because “kids don’t read.”

Malone reiterated his love of talking when asked about his pedagogy. He said he’s learned a lot and he likes to share that with his students, but he also has a good ability to read the needs of a class. Though his first love is lecture, “recognizing the adage that the one who talks the most will probably learn the most, the talking has got to shift from me to them.” I noticed that he checked for understanding with every student during class, and not in a clockwise manner, meaning he didn’t appear to make it methodical or seem mechanical, yet he accomplished his objective of touching base with all students. I observed good relationships with the students. He professed to being “touchy feely” and enjoys giving students a pat on the back. I hesitated including this because of the inappropriate teacher/student situations that have attracted media attention, and cause educators to cringe. In the end, I felt it important to include, because we can’t negate the professional personal touch that can validate a job well done.

As far as evaluation, Malone completes the weekly progress report and emails parents to keep them up-to-date on student progress. He professes to be “one of the slower ones to get on board with this.” I appreciate his honesty. He uses phone calls and parent conferencing, encouraging students to come in for extra help. He has re-evaluated what pass and fail mean these past few years and finds he has significantly fewer failures. He recognizes that learning is not all about the test. He’s had more than a handful of students choose education, and specifically history education as their career, come back

to say, “This was because of you.” Malone says, “It helps keep me going.” He really doesn’t get much feedback from the building administration and was pleasantly surprised when he was asked to participate in this study. When asked how students provide him with feedback, I commented on how I saw one student stay back after class to continue a conversation with Malone. Malone said, “Yeah, they stick around.” He mentioned a very nice letter he recently received from a former student who is now in a PhD program at USC who, out of the blue, wanted to update Malone know and say hello. The student was in Malone’s very first AP U.S. history class. That was very rewarding.

A successful year for Malone is one without crazy parents, if that’s possible, and good scores when the AP exam results come in. He never feels like he covers enough “stuff.” He says, if “I can still say I love what I do, feel like I’m still worthy, or I’m still effective and enjoy doing it,” that’s a successful year.

*Mike Patton.* Patton has a BS in Math, and he teaches all grade levels—9-12. He teaches Math 1, 2, and 3, and trigonometry-pre-calculus. He also teaches a class on math and science research, which is project oriented. This is his 14<sup>th</sup> year teaching. He doesn’t remember teaching being a life-long dream. Although his mother was a teacher growing up, Patton went to college with an undeclared major. While in college he started tutoring math and enjoyed helping people “understand the stuff.” He felt that especially in math he had an area of strength in the content knowledge, and he liked trying to get it across to other people and ended up loving teaching.

Patton believes that his principals consider him to be effective because of the data. The math exams are common assessments, and though they are not evaluative, his data

showing student growth is “pretty good.” The fact that he is willing to look at that data and has taken a leadership role on some of the common course teams in his building (PLC’s), he believes, has showed administration the ways in which he is effective. He goes a step further in proving his efficacy by facilitating team data discussions that look at how to improve teaching and learning.

Patton states that it is his attitude that most contributes to his success with students. He tries “really hard to never have a bad day in the classroom, to always be positive.” He believes his demeanor in the classroom is the driving force behind student success. By demeanor he means “giving kids the message, that, I believe in you, that what we’re doing is important, and that I’m not going to give up on you.” He approaches each day with a fresh start and never holds anything against students. He always strives his and his students’ performances, never complacent with what he’s currently got. He believes there is always room for improvement in both arenas.

Patton believes the role of a teacher at his school is to be a team member. “We really focus explicitly on common course teachers (those instructors teaching the same course, i.e. math 2) and try to have those teachers on the teams to have the same end goal with as much consistency as possible... The common goal is student success in whatever class you are teaching.” Patton sees the teacher as the facilitator of that learning. The school where Patton works asks that teachers be familiar with many technical aspects of data collection and review. They meet weekly to discuss data. They use a district approved data sorting base to collect and analyze their assessments and inform instruction.

This year he has a SMART board, an interactive “chalk” board in his room that interfaces with his computer and an LCD projector. It’s been a great deal of learning for him. When he came to this school, he had 11 years of teaching under his belt, but the team work expectations at this school were so different from his last school that they made him feel like a first year teacher. It was a big change, all the collegiality among staff members and the amount of time spent to prepare students for assessments. It is the school’s intention that its teachers are to have discussions that promote student growth by using the data to inform instruction for better achievement results. Patton’s school has had steady marked increases in their standardized test results. This really fits with what Patton already does in the classroom. “I thought I always enjoyed teaching, but finally here at my school it all makes sense.” He is proud to be a part of a group of nine professionals who meet weekly with the intent of promoting student achievement. At their meetings they talk about everything from “what is working to here is where I’m having trouble [and] really taking the time to look at how to promote student growth.” Patton has found his niche with the intentions in place at his school.

The intentions he puts into place in his classroom start the first day of school. He tells his students what they need to do to succeed: pay attention, ask questions, listen, pay attention, do your homework, think, read carefully, have a good attitude, and believe in yourself. He motivates students through humor, sometimes through creativity by telling jokes or...maybe bringing cookies but he doesn’t like to use material things. He tries to be creative with the presentation of topics. He believes students are motivated by the feeling that they have a chance to be successful. “I tell them that it is never to late to start

having success.” He tells them, “You should be learning this because you want to get smarter... and if nothing else, because you want to pass this class. Those of you who hate it the most should be my hardest workers... because you don’t want to do this again!”

Structures in place for Patton have changed with the different districts he has worked in. He felt his undergraduate work prepared him content wise, but he really floundered the first couple years. The majority of the additional training he has received has all been based on new curriculum that has come down from the district level. There is so much involved in changing the traditional math curriculum that includes educating parents and the community, and he has been through it twice, instituting two different programs. He has gotten some benefit from the training the school has provided through their PLCs. The PLC discussions are around excused and unexcused absences—how that should be handled and also the impact of zero’s on the grade. Patton also has attended some conferences on grading practices to stay one step ahead of Quincy’s recent move towards standards-based instruction. School and district goals are infused into his daily work. The common course goals drive their team: “the overriding school goal is student achievement... and student growth... that is very explicit and very surface level. It is just inherently in what we do.”

Patton uses technology to make his classroom instruction better. Patton has had a SMART board in his room for the past two years. It has “taken so many things that I wished I could do as a teacher, and made it all of the magically possible... it’s really revolutionary, what it’s done... I haven’t turned on my overhead projector in two years.” This is evidence of the challenge Patton has taken on, committing to using the most of the

technology available to him to support his lessons. He shares everything with his teammates so he is highly collaborative. He is extremely committed and an outlier when compared to the other effective teachers in my study as far as the time he spends outside the school day planning and grading. He spends 12 hours per week grading and 20 hours per week planning.

The last of the structures Patton brings to his workplace are the barriers that he faced in order to become an effective teacher. Right out of college he was placed with a full schedule of ninth grade students who struggled with math. Still a policy in many schools, the teachers with the most longevity teach the upper level classes and new teachers are given the “leftover” classes that no one wants to teach. He said to himself, “I’ll do this for a couple years and then... start hunting for something else.” When the opportunity came up two years later to begin training for a new math program approach, he remembered why he loved math. He made a conscious decision at that early point in his career and he tries to hold himself to it.

If I find myself coasting, or dreading coming to school, or counting down the days to summer, then I am going to find something else. I do not want to be a teacher who is counting down my last five to ten years ‘til retirement. I will not participate in negative teacher talk and not participate in as much as possible “can’t wait for the weekend” when it’s only Monday morning. It’s a mind set that carries over into how you act in the classroom and how you come across to students and I think it impacts their performance.

We lose 50% of our teachers in the first five years (*Washington Post*, 2006). How sad to think the teaching profession could have lost such an effective teacher due to intentional archaic practices that are most likely still occurring in many schools. Luckily, participating in the training for the new program re-energized Patton as to the possibility of what makes a good math teacher and he was able to move past the barrier of his first years of teaching.

Patton's common course team makes the decisions as to what big ideas are taught when planning the curriculum. The team understands that they can't teach everything, so they have to look at what students need in order to do well on the district common assessments. His role in curricular planning is deciding how he is going to spend that hour-and-a-half in the classroom with his students. He also shares ideas he has or new ways of doing things with other team members as well as being open to other peoples' new ideas.

Some of the skills Patton possesses that make the delivery of his instruction effective are that he is very good in math, he likes technology and new challenges. He supports the goals of the school and it impacts his teaching because his team decides "what's best for student achievement." Personal feelings come in during the teams discussion, but if they are "what's best for me as the person who has to grade this or what's best for me to make my life easier," the teachers in his PLC are comfortable calling each other out on it and ultimately making a decision with student improvement as the end goal.

Patton defines pedagogy as the science and art of teaching. His style is mostly about positive attitude and about being very transparent with students expectations. He works at breaking down any communication barriers between the teacher and the student. Shifts that have occurred over time revolve around the different styles of curriculum, going from traditional math to a reform based program, and the fact that he has moved to teaching upper level math. He currently team teaches a class for students with special needs. I have noticed in my career that the best teachers are comfortable and *good* at teaching both upper level as well as lower level coursework.

Students' progress is reported weekly, both emailed to families and hard copies to students. Patton likes giving students immediate feedback and not waiting three, six, or eight weeks until it is too late to do anything about it. Failing students are assigned intervention where there are three or four math teachers available to help students "fix their grade, by fixing their understanding." Patton addressed the fact that his department needs to look at how to deal with the intentional non-learner who is failing because s/he is not doing anything. In dealing with the motivation piece for a student who is struggling, Patton returns to his philosophy that it is never too late to get back on track. He does not let his frustration show or act negatively. He is matter-of-fact in his approach that it is not all right to fail, and he can still have a good relationship with students, even though they are failing. He lets them know, "I am not going to give up on you... As soon as you try to fix it is the day that it starts to get fixed." He expressed the hope that he never ignores a student who just sits in the back and doesn't do anything "because we

both agree... that's just not going to happen." This is a common trait among the participants.

Patton gives students surveys to evaluate his instruction at the end of every quarter, chances to "share with me how do you think things are going," that encourage feedback. Some of the student feedback is constructive; some is "Don't give homework." Patton lets them know that he hears their voices. He has students return to visit or Google him to say hello and thanks. His administration provides feedback in the form of a data packet that he appreciates and looks forward to getting. He appreciates the tough decisions his administration makes and acknowledges that change is challenging. It seems he has a high regard for the job they do and feels his efforts are validated.

Generally, Patton determines a successful year to be one that is based on the success of his students. He doesn't want a bell curve of As, Bs, Cs, Ds, and Fs. He hopes it's "skewed to the left with a high bump in the As and Bs." He reads the student feedback after he turns in grades, and that gives him information whether or not he has been effective with the classes as a whole. "I'm not looking to be the most popular teacher, but I am looking for comments that say, 'I learned a lot.'" That is success.

*Bob Roberts.* Bob Roberts has a BA in history and a masters degree in curriculum with an emphasis in American constitutional history. He teaches American history for ninth graders and economics for eleventh graders and has been teaching for ten years. Roberts was inspired by an incredible social studies teacher who Roberts says "taught him how to think" and opened up a whole world for him. Roberts thinks this teacher is a hero and has modeled his profession after him. In his senior year of high school, Roberts

thought he might like to be a teacher. Robert's family went to Washington, DC when he was a sophomore and he believes going to Washington really awoke him to democracy. He "saw Congress." So between his interest in politics and the passion he got from his teacher, he decided education would be his path when he went to college. He went to four different colleges to complete his undergraduate work. Immediately following his graduation he worked in politics in the general assembly. That next fall he returned to Metro to get his teaching credential. He spent time at Lookout Mountain Prison working with students, teaching criminals below the age of 18. He said it was a "great experience." He always knew what he wanted to do; it just "took me awhile to get there, but in the same point, I am a richer person and more diversified because of that background knowledge." He knows "how to survive on ramen noodles and baked potatoes" and he knows how to take a risk, and he believes that makes him more pragmatic than if had he taken a more traditional path to teaching.

Roberts believes his principals selected him as effective because he gets good test scores, but he is adamant about the fact that he is about *much more* than test scores. He believes test scores to be a very narrow measure of learning.

Roberts believes he is successful with students because he is himself. He believes you cannot just be about the rules and you can't just be about being cool with the kids.

Bottom line--you have to wear your heart on your sleeve. You have to be yourself and you have to develop a sense of trust with young people, and you do that by just being yourself. Also--I can't state this enough--that a sense of humor is

crucial. The point is if you can't find humor in people, in circumstances, in yourself, and in your subject matter, then you are missing the boat.

He believes he is effective because he is real and doesn't try to be something he is not. He doesn't try to be their friend or try to be authoritarian. "I just try to be myself, and I try to take them as themselves." After meeting and speaking with Roberts, I found him to be a very interesting person from which to learn about history. He has a real passion for his subject matter.

In his school Roberts believes the role of a teacher to be a "facilitator of ideas." "My job is to entertain them, to stimulate them, to criticize them, and it's also a free market of ideas." According to Roberts that idea absolutely fits with what he does. He is a very dynamic speaker. He didn't voice it, but after watching his class and speaking with him, I believe he motivates students through his passion for the topics.

How can you not find certain things interesting? How can you not find this economy, right now in terms of how it's tanking, how can you not find that interesting? And it's sad because, I mean, it's affecting a lot of students and their parents. I've taught for the last 10 years. So, I started my teaching career in '98. And just off the top of my head: Clinton's impeachment, Gore's election, the election of 2000, the Supreme Court controversy, September 11, Bush's administration, the Iraq War, everything that's gone on, the first black president of the United States. How can you not be interested? I motivate my students by trying to show them the natural idealism we have in this country, the

opportunities, the connections to the real world, just the great things that we are as Americans.

Can you feel his passion for his topic? Notice the relevance piece that keeps showing up among the effective teachers. It's not surprising that for continuing education Roberts is drawn to the content area "stuff." He thinks that teaching is an art not a science. He doesn't believe that you can script it or put it on a checklist and say, here, implement this. He thinks it's gut: it's being responsive, it's leadership, and it's thinking on your feet. It's mixing up how you present things. His point on choosing the "content" continuing education is that a teacher has to be very strong in content knowledge, very well read, and very informed on a variety of issues. He believes he is very good on the content, but in terms of his interest and passion, "quite frankly formal education types of professional development things just don't do it for me."

He implements district and school goals by being familiar with them first of all. The lesson I observed wasn't designed to meet a district goals, standards, or curriculum, but he assured me that it had comparative learning, group learning, primary source documents, source analysis, critical thinking, reading for content, non-fiction reading, and note taking skills. Wow! The point is being aware of them. He thinks just comes with "good teaching, whatever that is. That's how I implement them."

The structures Roberts bring with him from his undergraduate work are from the history classes he took. He felt his methods classes were:

relatively worthless... an utter waste of time, and here's why, and it made me angry. Because I felt it was simplistic, I felt it was syrupy, I felt it was watered

down, and I felt it was so egalitarian to the point of being inefficient. And nobody goes into teaching for the stock options. The point is we're here for the right reasons and the right motives, and it was just this incessant, ongoing, you had to make sure you love kids and care for kids, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's like, OK, I get it, I'm here, you know, in this very low wage profession, in a booming economy, in the late 1990s, and I felt it was just unpractical... And so my intolerance and frustration with the ineptitude of a lot of teacher training programs made me throw it away so much to where it was like, OK, here's how I'm going to do it. I want to thrive. I want to run. I want to do this fast. And actually, my repulsion of it is what helped me [finish the program].

Additional training that has helped Roberts become an effective teacher includes a fellowship he won, the James Madison Memorial fellowship for Teachers to Teach the Constitution, as part of his master's degree. As a result, he was able to study in Georgetown, a great opportunity that really helped his constitutional knowledge. He's taken reading seminars and writing seminars offered through the district and the school. He thinks one of the most valuable training is watching other teachers teach.

When he shared with me the things he does to make his instruction better, he credits his colleague and co-teacher from his American studies class. He said that watching good teachers, looking for great methods, and looking for thought provoking articles all help him in finding different ways to present curriculum. "You think, OK, I've done this before. How can I diversify this so it's something new for the students and new for me? When I complimented his use of technology in the class, he again credited his

co-teacher and agreed how great the pictures are for making history come alive for the students. Roberts spends about 15 hours per week with classroom preparation, roughly half the time grading and half of it planning.

The barriers Roberts talked about in becoming an effective teacher went back to his frustrations with the teacher education programs. He shared with me that he thinks the teaching profession has a “complex” that we’ve been on the bottom end of things and must go out of our way to even show that it’s a profession. “And so the idea is that not anybody can walk in and be a good teacher.” He had more to say on the subject:

My frustration... is the idea it’s not pragmatic, and you’re doing it just for the sake of doing it, so you could say, hold on. As a teacher you do have to be credentialed and you have to go through these steps. But the steps aren’t meritorious, the steps are hoops. And that is what was frustrating, because you can see the end goal, and you know you’re good at something.

As evidence that he is good, Roberts began his teaching career in Albuquerque as a social studies teacher, moved to Virginia, and then back to Colorado, and he has never had a problem getting hired in a high school where both English and social studies positions typically draw over 100 applicants.

In terms of curriculum, Roberts is “100%” in charge of planning the curriculum in terms of what he wants to do and how he wants to get there. He makes judgment calls, seeing himself as “a general on the battlefield.” He adds a disclaimer that he didn’t mean to sound arrogant. Then he gave me an example of a lesson where he connected September 11 to his current lesson on Pearl Harbor, even though that was not part of the

“scope and sequence” for social studies. This is an example of how he infuses the relevance piece into his lessons.

When reflecting on the skills he has that make his instruction effective, Roberts lists passion, humor, and a loud voice: “You’ve got to take command of the room, you’ve got to engage people on purpose... you’ve got to hold students accountable and it’s an interactive discussion. If someone says something unique and funny you’ve got to be able to laugh, it’s that simple.” He believes teaching is a talent and cites the fact that when he looks out at his class and can see they’re bored, can see they are not connected, then he knows he needs to change something. He doesn’t think that takes a lot of formal training. “It’s just a gut thing.” His ideas don’t always merge with the school and district goals, not that he doesn’t think academic excellence and student growth are important. On the contrary, he just doesn’t put a lot of stock into standardized tests or scores. He shared with me that two years ago he was the number-one ranked history teacher in Quincy based on his scores, but that’s not his measure of success.

Roberts defines his pedagogical style as “interactiveness”: passion, interactive, and engaged. He thinks focused discussion, group work, and lecture describe his style. “There is a difference between a boring lecture and an interactive discussion lecture.” I agree with him on this--there is a difference. His class was engaged, and I liked listening to what Roberts had to say.

In response to how his teaching has shifted over time, Roberts said that he is afraid we’ve lost sight of looking at students as a whole because everybody’s scared to death about their data and their CSAP scores. “I’m not discounting becoming a data

analyst, but I have 150 students a day. Give me half those numbers, and I'll have the time to go over all the data. You won't have educated kids, but I'll give you all the data you want." The second major change Roberts sees is around the parents. He believes they have gotten much more aggressive in terms of their disdain of teachers and grades, and it makes him feel "more like a doorman than a professional."

Students progress is sent home weekly by email; students come in when they are struggling. The way he deals with motivation is "you're persistent, you don't give up."

He has high expectations for his students:

You set that expectation and you say, you know what? You're going to participate. You don't know the answer, it's not the end of the world, but the point is, you're going to be engaged. This is your education, not mine. *I have* a high school degree. This is whatever you want. If you think school sucks, if you think it's boring, then that changes right now. What questions do you have? Everything is fair game. This is your community, this is your world, and this is your school. So you set that [bar], you try to be so encompassing, so inclusive to students, and you just hope that works.

What have other teachers, parents, or students shared with him about the impact of his teaching? Roberts gets much praise from parents and students. At the end of the year, he said he gets letters and things that share "you are the teacher that changed my life." Parents tell him at conferences that students and their families' dinner conversations revolve around what was discussed in class. "I have so many students coming up to me and saying I want to study history and be a teacher." It's humbling for him. He knows

he's a good teacher, and he is grateful for that, and he feels very lucky that the majority of people enjoy his class.

As with the majority of the previous participants, Robert does not get feedback from the administration or the district about his work. How does Roberts determine a successful year?

You know, if you've dogged it, and you know if you've done well, and you know if you've done the best you can. And I think if you see your kids have an interest in learning and if you see that school hasn't beaten them down and they want more, and they like what you're giving them, to the point where they will go out and become lifelong learners. If you've instilled curiousness and curiosity... not just in June, but now... you see it all year. Then you can go and say, wow, I did a good thing.

*Al Smith.* Al Smith grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago. Mr. Smith has a BS degree in physical education and health. He teaches physical education, grades 9-12, including classes in volleyball, weight training, and recreation sports, which incorporates table tennis, archery, and bowling. In addition, he has class for students with special needs who work with their general education peers. They learn from one another and enjoy physical education at the same time.

Mr. Smith has been teaching for 29 years. He got into teaching because of the positive impact his former teacher and track coach had on him. This coach had such an influence on Smith's life, "I wanted to do what he did." Smith went to CSU in Fort Collins and began working for Quincy Public Schools right out of college. He spent four

years at the elementary level, then went to the middle school for 17 years, and is now enjoying his eighth year at the high school.

Mr. Smith believes his principals think he is effective because he relates well with students, and students respond. He thinks he is organized and well prepared, and he believes that to be a big attribute to be a good teacher.

You have to be organized and prepared... it makes things so much easier... Each day, each period, I have a great interest in what the kids are doing and where they need to go... I have such a passion for PE in general and fitness that...

particularly with our decline of health and fitness... we need to set an example and develop habits to do that. The principals see me doing that.

He also thinks the fact that he is very active in the school (as chairperson of the faculty advisory council, he attends various committee meetings), leads his administration to consider him effective.

Smith contributes his success with students to the fact that students see him as genuine and honest. He considers himself to be a soft spoken person, but when he does say something, students pay attention. He is direct, to the point, and very honest. He believes that's one of the things kids look for. "And I am a disciplinarian... I believe kids need appropriate discipline, and I'm consistent with that discipline." He'll "discipline the 'jock' the same way I'll discipline a 'skater dude.' It's very fair, very consistent, very, outlined... the students know where I'm coming from, my classroom expectations are very clear." His style is a result of experience, and he voiced concern when he sees young

teachers shying away from confrontation and discipline. After 29 years, it is still evident that he loves what he does, that he is still passionate about teaching.

Smith believes the role of a teacher in his school is to help facilitate learning; his job is to facilitate learning in PE with fitness as the goal, learning some skills and having fun, whether through a team sport or an individual sport. Most often he motivates students by setting an example, being an example and showing “that I can do it.” He models the appropriate behavior and appropriate humor in the classroom. “We have lots of fun.” While observing one of his classes, a student kicked the ball and his shoe came flying off. Smith commented with a grin, “Your shoe went further than the ball!” He wants the class to be fun. Sometimes the students have good days and bad days, Smith understands that, but bottom line--he wants students to like fitness.

Smith attends workshops that discuss assessments and current professional development. It is important to him that the PE department keeps up with current educational practices, terms, and knowledge around common assessments so that the academic areas understand the PE department is working just as hard as they are in developing goals and essential learnings. Much of his continuing education is around fitness activities, learning about “the new fitness crazes going on out there.” I would say his focus is content knowledge.

As far as implementing district and school goals in his daily work, Smith finds it easy to incorporate the expectations of the administration into his classes. He starts every class communicating to students, “This is what we are working on today; this is how we

are going to do it.” Whether it is large group, or small group, or individual, he tells them up front before class starts, these are my expectations, and everything is “crystal clear.”

Smith attended CSU and he feels he was very well prepared to teach after receiving his training there. This was in the 70s, but, looking back, some of it seems pretty archaic. He has kept up in his field taking course from a PE teacher in the Cherry Creek area and recently implemented many of the things he learned. He said he learned how to make it fun so that students don’t even know they are exercising. One thing he did feel ill-prepared to deal with were discipline issues and also dealing with students who have special needs. There wasn’t enough “hands-on” training. Smith felt he needed more classroom experience before he was given a class of his own. Training around working with students who have special needs would have been helpful. Since then, Smith had been involved in developing a Positive PE, special needs class. He found a real passion for students with special needs, and developing a class for them was fun for him. I want to make sure to note that Smith was pretty passionate about continuing education in PE particularly. He said:

Some PE teachers tend to kind of sit back and say, “Why we are doing this? This has nothing to do with PE.” But you know what? Reading writing, arithmetic, even the science components we talk about with our common form of assessment. They are all part of PE, and I believe it is our job to implement them.

Some of the things he does to make his classroom instruction better is a result of being highly organized. He comes in and sets up before class starts so that his students can “get right to it.” He doesn’t rely on students to set up equipment because he doesn’t

want to waste class time. He thinks it's cheating students out of their fitness time.

Another thing he does begins the first day of school, is talking to students about his expectations for them, day to day expectations, like the rules, and he will take role and explain how they will warm up. Everything is communicated from the start. Good communication is paramount for Smith in providing an effective education. That includes communication with parents for Smith, too. He even calls parents of students who are doing well. "I appreciate Susan in class, who is doing an awesome job and I think you want to know about that. It's very powerful." For the student it means, "This guy cares."

He uses all his allotted planning hours and several hours on the weekends to plan. He teaches five different courses, which means five different preps. "Being a veteran teacher I can rely on expertise, but again, class sizes are getting larger. Each student is different from another, it's a bit of a challenge."

The one barrier to being an effective teacher that comes to mind for Smith is the stigma of being a PE teacher. He wants to be the best he can be, as far as being involved in school, not only in the PE department but in other activities as well. He believes some school staff had bad experiences in the PE classes and they look down on PE teachers. "They pull kids out of my class to make up tests, thinking that my program is not important, and that is one of the biggest barriers I have had to overcome.

Smith has been very actively involved at the district level in planning the district's high school PE curriculum, so it is easy to plan and implement a curriculum that he took part in creating. He is also the instructional leader for his department (formerly known as department chair) and works at getting other teachers involved and implementing some of

the great ideas that come from the district and state level. Some of the skills he possesses that makes his curriculum effective is the ability to “break down those skills. You start with small and you build up until you develop it into the big picture.” I had him give me an example so I could better understand what he was saying. He was very clear in explaining how he breaks down the skill of playing volleyball so that students have good technique and are in good technique positions. I was very impressed and could see how that could make such a difference instead of letting all the students play and saying, “Try this with your arms.” He talks to them, asking reflective questions such as, “How do you feel? What did you think? Did you get into that superman position? This is what I saw...”

He looks at supporting school goals for the reasons previously mentioned and implements reading and, in particular, writing. Students use math to calculate heart rates and target heart rates and then has them write a summary. He stresses to me that the goals of the school are very important to PE and “we are going to do everything in our power to support the goals.”

Smith’s pedagogical style is “to show students that you care.” He makes an effort to know his students, to learn their names. With over 200 names to learn each semester that is no small task. He asks them how they are doing and inquires what their plans are for the weekend. He wants his students to know that he is there for *them*, not for a paycheck. He admits it’s a hard business to stay in; this is his 29th year, and if he didn’t enjoy teaching, the job would be “drudgery.”

The shift that has occurred for him over time is the fact that when he came to work for Quincy there was no mentorship, no one to help him out. It was a learn-as-you-

go mentality. The person he worked with right out of college did not respect students, and he had to take a step back and say, “That’s not who I want to be.” That’s not how he wanted to teach. He has learned that students are respectful when they in turn are respected. He is glad for the collegiality and collaboration that exists today.

Smith keeps students apprised of their progress by posting grades weekly and emailing progress reports home. He believes every student in his class has a lot of potential. Every semester he has students that he struggles to motivate; they come to class but don’t want to participate. He gives them some space and usually after he gets the class going, he talks to them and finds that it is something going on outside of school, whether it’s home or work. So he gives them an opportunity to talk about it, “air it,” and he would say 90% of the time they get up and get involved. “You have to show you care, interpret what is bothering them. You don’t just yell, ‘Get up here and let’s go,’ because it serves no purpose.”

When I asked him what teachers, administrators, parents, and students have shared about his impact on them, he replied, “the principals who recommended me to you, that’s a golden star right there, I’ll just tell you that right now.” He’s had many parents in his career both as a teacher and a coach who have thanked him for all he’s done for their son or daughter. He loves when students come back for a visit, or give him a phone call to say thanks. “That’s the biggest pat on the back you can ever get.”

Smith believes that he gets a lot of positive feedback from the administration about the PE program and about the health program. They are pleased with the direction it is headed and the steps they are taking to meet the needs of students. They tell him he is

servicing students in a positive and effective way. He believes they have a vested interest in the success of the PE department. He does not get feedback from the district.

Feedback from the students comes via honest conversation. He asks them “What is not working? What do we need to do to make it more successful?” He believes he is here to service the students and meet their needs and is more than happy to make changes. A successful year for Smith: “The kids enjoyed it, I enjoyed it... and we leave with a big old smile.”

*Kevin Woods.* Kevin Woods is a math teacher; he entered teaching as a second career. Although he always wanted to be a teacher, “because of cultural and familial influences, I was kind of pushed away from it to the business world and came out of college and went into finance.” He followed that path and earned two degrees; a BA in business from Fort Lewis College and an MBA in finance from University of Denver.

When his children “appeared” and he was traveling excessively, the pent up demand to do what he wanted to do just “overcame me,” and he began graduate courses to get his teaching degree. He received licensure through the teacher in residence (TIR) program at Metropolitan State College of Denver. Because of his background, he is highly qualified to teach both math and business classes, and when he began teaching, he taught a combination of math and business courses but has since transitioned to full-time math. Woods has been teaching ten years all at the same high school. He teaches math to grades 9-12.

Woods believes his principals consider him to be effective because he has an ability to connect with kids and get them to invest in the coursework. According to

Woods, students seem to trust him, they seem to know that he has their best interests at heart; and he helps students believe that they need an understanding of the math they are learning to give themselves options down the road. “Initially as ninth or tenth graders, they’ll connect with me and work for me, and then ultimately they end up working for themselves.” As well as his connection to students, he believes he has a lower failure rate and historically higher CSAP and ACT scores. His principal verified this statement.

Woods relates to students. He thinks that his real world experience contributes to his success with students. He is able to explain things in a “pretty simple way.” One of his favorite quotes, that he attributed to Samuel Gutter is, “The essence of mathematics is not to make simple things complicated but complicated things simple.” As a former business person he looks at math as “nuts and bolts,” how it affects us as opposed to mathematical theory. He believes he is able to explain math simply enough “so the students can understand it to get a grasp of it and then build up.” In speaking with Woods it was easy to see how he connects with students. His easy manner and laid-back disposition belied the fact that he is the first teacher at work each morning (5:30 a.m.) to effectively prepare for the day’s instruction.

Woods believes the role of a teacher has multiple facets. On one level it is educating students, providing information to students to help them build skills to be successful and contributing members of society down the road. In his school he thinks he is also there to provide a positive adult model for students so they have belief that there are options open to them. As a teacher he wants to help them believe in their future potential and have the skills to use down the road. He reminded me that mathematics is

everywhere in this world, and being able to manage your finances at a reasonable level is crucial. This fits with what he does and at times departs from the curriculum in order to practice that. He believes that by giving students the relevance piece he can return to the curriculum and move more quickly because he has 95% commitment from the students as opposed to 50%. This is evidence of the relational piece.

Woods motivates students by connecting on some level with every student who comes into his classroom everyday. “It’s not that hard to do.” He also uses humor extensively. He thinks part of being a teacher is being a performer, and so he tries to keep them entertained. Also, he doesn’t make success unattainable. “This is not Harvard PhD; this is not MIT engineering. This is about learning some of the basic skills to do what you need to do the rest of your life.”

Now that Woods is at a MA+80 hours on the teacher salary schedule, he is very selective about how he decides on continuing education activities. He wants to know that what he spends his time on is really going to benefit him in the classroom. He is interested in the ELL training and maybe more ideas around classroom management. He would also like to learn more about alternative programs for students who struggle in the traditional school setting. It is easy for Woods to implement district and school goals into his daily work:

I come from the business world where when my employer tells me to do something, I do it. It makes it very easy. I’ve noticed with a lot of educators that when they are told to do something, they have to test it out, usually argue with it, then complain about it, and then whine while they do it. Boss tells me to do

something, I do it. I come from a world where if you don't do what your job is, then you are no longer employed there, which is one of my issues around education. As far as district goals for the curriculum, the content standards that we have in our district, in our State, they're good math standards. They are very desirable for every student to have. There is no reason not to attempt to do that, so I just do them. The school goals align quite well with mine, no struggle with that at all.

He makes it sound so easy, but schools and districts are challenged getting teachers on board as they put practices into place to benefit student achievement.

He felt the mathematics classes he took in his undergraduate courses prepared him to pass the place test in mathematics, which he shared, was quite difficult. Additional training he received: his masters program refined his math skills; he puts his students through a couple day training on "How to do your banking." He feels Metro's TIR program was valuable in teaching him classroom management techniques. He also went through Rick DuFour's PLC training. He received an understanding of the essential learnings and how to apply that in his classroom.

Things Woods does in his classroom to make his instruction better: he uses a daily opener and really works at implementing the math program. He is committed to it and continues to ask for help to assist him in improving his methods. He models; he thinks math modeling is "huge." He works as many examples as he needs to get everybody proficient. He enjoys watching students drop off from watching him into doing their own

work. He ends every class with a quote of the day. Woods spends five to seven hours planning, and two to five hours grading per week.

The barrier that Woods had to overcome to become an effective teacher is similar to the other participants: “The licensure process was the most daunting.” After six years of education when he went to look at licensure, he heard, “Well, that’s a nice degree you have, but you would need two to three more years of school to get an education degree and then be qualified to teach.” The second time he looked at teaching he got the same response. He said, “To become a teacher, the commitment has to be massive.” Luckily, he heard about the Teacher in Residence program that allowed him to teach and get paid while he worked on licensure. Another hurdle he faces is “not being a math geek and working with some math geeks—sometimes it’s a little challenging when they get into math geek speak.” He takes a higher level math class online every summer to keep up on his math skills.

Woods served on the district committee that researched the “math program” is now being used district wide. He has a role in planning and implementing the curriculum; the ball is in his court. He keeps the pacing of the curriculum; he keeps the basic content of it. He is clear on the time and the need to supplement, and he “cuts and pares the excess to give him time to remediate.”

Skills Woods has to make the delivery of his instruction effective are plainspokenness, humor, and loudness, I have a loud teacher voice. Probably brevity so I don’t go on and on and on and on. I keep it simple. A lot of its just

intuition, what's going to work today, am I going to work at the board, am I going to throw a student up at the board? What's going to be most effective?

The intuitive comment keeps retuning among the effective teachers. It's talked about in the pre-service teacher textbooks. Woolfolk calls it "withitness." They can't really verbalize how they just "know." Malcom Gladwell (2008) wrote an article for the New Yorker Magazine that discusses how effective teachers "have a gift for noticing" and notes how difficult it is to hire effective teachers when we don't know how they will perform until they are in front of a class. When studying teacher performances, it's not so much how they stop misbehavior, it's about the ability to stop misbehavior before it ever gets started.

Additional training that Woods has received brought a response that working with the district math coach really helped him. Every time the math coach came to the school, he would turn the class over to him and watch what he did. They would take turns working together and he felt that was "very beneficial." He also remarked on peer observations, he believes you can gain a lot by watching other teachers. As the instructional leader, he spends a couple hours a week in other people's classrooms.

The goals of the school impact his teaching. He is focused on improving student achievement in math and with the impending CSAP test he is working on preparing students for the exam. As far as implementing school and district goals he described it as an "ebb and flow." He said that if he could have the students for a couple hours every day and three hours on a Saturday, he could nail the goals. He feels limited by time constraints, attendance, background, and the skills the students bring with them to high

school. He considers himself “moderately effective—not as effective as I would like to be, or hope to be” as he continues to learn.

Woods defines his pedagogical style as “humanistic.” He said that in educating children, he wants to connect with the human person within that child as opposed to a belief in the theoretical value of the curriculum. I think he does that. When a student walked into his class late with two coffee drinks, I thought she might get chastised for food and drink in the classroom. Instead, he said, “Oh, one for me?” When she told him it was for her boyfriend, he offered to keep it cold for her in his fridge till the end of class. That’s humanistic.

Shifts that have occurred over time for Woods were mostly around the comfort level he has in maintaining a classroom and connecting with students. “Classroom management becomes a lot easier when the connection has been established.” He talked about his experience overseas last year:

I got a rude awakening... thinking I’m a vet... walked into the classroom and was just absolutely battered for the first four months. I was a brand new teacher again. I had no reputation. I had no established rapport; I was basically a substitute teacher to them for a number of months. It was a brutal four months. I’d cry my way back home on my bike.

The other shift is that he is probably more “seeking now.” He reflects more on his practice continuing to look for ways to meet their needs. “What is really going to work for our kids—not believing that I have any set way that is going to work. I believe that we’ve got to find one, we’ve got to keep looking at least to try and find one.”

Students' progress is reported weekly via computer. The school limits participation in extracurricular activities based on grades. He works with students one-on-one when they are failing. He just keeping prodding and poking to motivate the struggling student. He goes to boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, and parents to "try to find the hook to do it. Math seems to challenge more than many subjects, but there seems to always be a hook that we can find to help."

Student feedback comes in the way of one or two thank-you notes a year, saying things like, "I would never have graduated without you." Sometimes students show up two or three years down the road and tell him that he had a positive influence on him. Those are extremely meaningful to him. As far as other teachers, he thinks some of them look at him as a bit of a freak that he cares so much about students. He wishes he could "get some of our wonderful mathematician teachers to care a little bit more about kids and less about math," but he knows he can't change that.

Woods feels his administration provides an incredibly supportive environment. He gets positive feedback and said that the mistakes he has made have been dealt with in a kind and appropriate way. He's had mixed experiences with the district, from the curricular standpoint he's had positive, professional communication. He had complete support from the district with his teaching exchange last year.

The students in Woods' class give him feedback with their attendance. He takes it personally if they don't come. He wants the class to be a good time, "one that they enjoy coming to."

Woods said every year is a successful year. “You get different classes each year and different levels of success.” He does not base a successful year on test scores. “So, every year’s a successful year.”

### *Participant Summation*

The participants have a few things in common that were noticeable. Just over half of them have other teachers in their families. They *all* claim teaching surfaced as a natural fit for them. It’s almost as if they were responding to a mission that calls them to teaching. Though three of the participants were discouraged from becoming teachers because parents thought they could “do better,” it was something they were passionate about doing-- and ended up pursuing the teaching profession despite the lack of encouragement. They love teaching because it brings them real joy. And they believe that learning can be just as enjoyable for their students. They set high standards for their students as well as for themselves. They expect their students to succeed and feel responsible for their students. They are persistent in finding answers to the barriers that prevent their students from being successful.

All of the participants possess a drive to build positive, caring relationships with students. They want their students to see them as human and imperfect. One participant said to his class, “you know I have to work at being organized.” This makes him real, and role models for students who have to work at this as well.

These teachers see their students outside of teaching. They take part in student activities, attend events, and know about student interests.

The two most common characteristics extrapolated from the effective teacher study were preparedness and caring. These themes emerged over and over as I talked with the nine effective teachers. It is important to note that the relational piece that was discussed in the literature review seems to be an overarching theme that crosses every area of Eisner's five dimensions and specifically the two most common characteristics among the study participants. It figured prominently in the descriptions given by all the teachers. Caring about the students, having a caring relationship with students, was particularly prevalent in the descriptions given by the effective teachers.

### *Preparedness*

It has been recognized in previous research studies that effective teachers work in an effective learning environment (Walls, 2002). In the category of teacher skill, effective teachers know how to create an effective learning environment. They are organized, prepared, and clear. Confidence and knowledge in their content area being taught is strongly supported by the current literature and is why in the *No Child Left Behind* reauthorization in 2004 the "highly qualified teacher" was added as a federal mandate so that students in the public schools are assured teachers who have the background knowledge to teach in their content areas. It was evident in all nine classrooms that the participants were not only experts in their content areas but passionate about their subject areas as well. Passion was a characteristic noted by all the administrators as important for a teacher to be considered effective. During the interviews I discovered that the teachers I spoke with spent an average of seven hours per week planning his lessons. There was one outlier (Patton) who spent 20 hours per week planning, and this was partially due to the

way the lessons were presented with the technological tools available to him and the use of a SMART board (a white “chalkboard” that interfaces with a computer for touch screen interactive teaching).

One teacher noted that some teachers, who have reputations for being ineffective, use the weight room during their planning periods, and he wonders how they find the time to do it when he himself, with over 20 years of experience, still must work weekends in order to plan effective instruction. “I think to myself, “How can you guys do that? I have been doing this for a long time, yet I am still grading my stuff and still thinking, what do I need to do tomorrow? What do I need to do next week?”

Effective teachers are always looking at preparedness. It was evident during my observations that teachers had the classrooms maximized for instruction. In all the classes I observed, instruction was “bell to bell.” There was no wasted time where students had nothing to do or were completing busy work. The layout of the classroom facilitated small group or circle conversation grouping. During two of the observations, the teachers directed the students to change up the desk configuration to better facilitate the activity. Due to a district philosophy and the way the school buildings were constructed, all of the teachers shared their classrooms with other instructors and had an office, which makes planning for necessary materials in the classroom even more important. Relevant current daily objectives were posted on the board in each classroom I visited. Nunez noted, “I try to put my objectives on the board every day. I am not always successful, but students know why I do something. If someone comes into the room and asks, “Why are you doing this, I want kids to know why.”

## *Caring*

Caring is a theme that encompasses several different mini-themes. It was obviously a factor of effectiveness in all my interviews and with every teacher I met. Nodding (2001) explained that caring is exemplified in a multitude of ways including being attentive and receptive. As educators, we are responsive to the needs and feelings of our students. Nodding writes, “A caring teacher is someone who has demonstrated that she can establish, more or less regularly, relations of care in a wide variety of situations” (p. 100-101). Students recognize caring in teachers who are prepared and organized. This philosophy of caring permeates the actions of teachers that students remember best. Bunch, social studies and English teacher, expresses perfectly actions of a caring teacher-making a personal connection:

My best experiences in the classroom have been when I feel like I’ve done team building and worked individually with kids, and they know you’re a part of the learning experience, too. You’re not just viewed as the person who’s assessing the learning, and you’re not the person who’s imparting the information to them. You’re part of the learning process, and you’re engaged in the learning process with them.

Two students in her classroom volunteered this information when they asked me why I was there visiting and I replied, “I heard she’s a good teacher and I am here to observe her teach.” They said, “She’s awesome, knows how to relate the things we do to what we need, has a good sense of humor, too... knows how to bring us back together without making us feel bad about ourselves.” Bunch believes that being flexible and

personable make her approachable for students. She knows that the more approachable she is, the more effective her instruction is.

Nunez talked about a student who came to class that day after five months of absences. Rumor had it that she was in jail. Nunez told me that her need that day was not to understand the protagonist of the story. The student's need was emotional. Nunez doesn't for a minute think her job is to play counselor. She has learned over time that if students need emotional support, she sends them to the counselor's office. She focuses on instruction and supporting student learning, yet realizes she must have a handle on individual student needs. Switching up the activities and including pieces that look at Gardner's multiple intelligences, such as the area of kinesthetic learning, shows students that you care about their engagement. Students may not recognize this as differentiation but appreciate the variety and diversity of material and how it is learned.

Caring crosses all of Eisner's five dimensions of connoisseurship. The personal touch that teachers bring to the classroom is evidenced in the fact that they see their role as a teacher as someone who wears many hats. Some of the answers I heard about the role of the teacher were to be a friend, a mother, a cheerleader, a supporter, a confidant, a tutor, and a life skills coach. Others answered a facilitator of ideas, an entertainer, a stimulator, a facilitator of learning, an example of good habits. Teachers supported and used the content standards and felt they were desirable goals for every student to strive toward.

Students know teachers care when teachers come to class prepared with the materials they need and an effective, engaging lesson to facilitate learning. One of the big

themes here was that they brought passion for teaching with them as a structure of the class. Topics that students studied included an additional relevance piece to increase students' level of engagement. Teachers were able to relate what was being studied to the students' lives. Teachers used additional supplemental instruction outside the curriculum to teach study skills, time management, and test taking strategies (Nunez). The study participants voiced that learners are more important than the content (Malone). Teachers made time outside the content delivery to remediate for those students who need additional help to facilitate learning. It is crucial that teachers care and "like" their students in order for them to be effective.

Along with preparedness and caring two other characteristics were across the board and indicative of all the participants in the study. Those characteristics were collaborative and reflective.

#### *Collaborative*

All of the teachers in my study were collaborative and collegial and efficacious. They were all about working together as a team to best meet the needs of their students. Most of them co-taught and all of those teachers had an extremely good relationship with their partnering teacher. Quincy Public Schools is an advocate for DuFour's (1998) Professional Learning Community (PLC) philosophy and that was very evident across all the high schools. The teachers I interviewed appeared to be entrenched in the philosophy. This could be one reason they were selected by their administration, even though it was not a prerequisite, and administration may not have been aware of it explicitly, that fact that the teachers learned and worked well with others could very well have been a factor.

There has been professional development through the district around the benefit of professional learning communities and their value behind creating a school culture of continuous improvement (DuFour, 1998).

Most people assume self efficacy is the same as self-concept or self-esteem, but it is not, self-efficacy is future-oriented, “a content-specific assessment of competence to perform a specific task” (Pajares, 1997, p.15). All of the teachers were efficacious, have worked well on teams and they all served on committees that recommended, created or assessed curriculum they use and felt very competent to do so. They were all personable and collaborative. We need to look at the structures to see if the organizational structures in place supports the attainment of collaboration (Eisner, 1998), as this time was very valuable to teachers and was credited to much of their success in the interviews. As administrators, we need to support the structures, evaluate how we work in our professional learning communities to maximize the collaborative time available. Progress monitoring the PLC’s work can help us look at what forms of continuing professional development needs to take place to support collaboration.

### *Reflective*

Reflective teachers examine the art and science of teaching to become more thoughtful practitioners. Reflective teachers are students of teaching, with a strong, sustained interest in learning about the art and science of teaching and about themselves as teachers (Cruickshank & Metcalf, 2003). Reflective teachers are introspective, examining their own practice of teaching and seeking a greater understanding of teaching by reading scholarly and professional journals and books. They constantly monitor their

teaching. These effective teachers were all reflective of their practices. Evaluation occurs everywhere (Eisner, 1998), and these teachers were all extremely cognizant of the end goal to improve student achievement. All the teachers looked at designing a curriculum that was consistent in fostering evaluation practices that would improve student performance on assessments. These teachers took responsibility for engaging the learners and motivation for learning. In their empirical study of the effects of classroom activities on student cognitive engagement, Shernoff et al, (1999) pointed out that, “the repetitive, passive, and routinized nature of activities may contribute to the feeling that schooling is something to be endured rather than something that is stimulating or in any way pleasurable” (p. 44). If teachers are to understand strategies to motivate students, teachers need to be able to reflect and change their practices depending on student response.

Tables 1-5 give evidence of the specifics in how each major themes cross Eisner’s themes for each participant.

Table 1.  
*Intentional*

	<b>Preparedness</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>Collaborative</b>	<b>Reflective</b>
<b>Astair</b>	Well qualified to teach Help students with standard of math and more	Be their friend Treat student as individual	“What do you want?” I will help you get there.	Uses best practice to impart standard

<b>Bunch</b>	Clear expectations	Differentiation “Be a part of the learning process”		To decide on continuing education Uses best practices Makes learning fun Reflects on what engages kids
<b>Nunez</b>	Commits to school and district goals Uses data to support how kids show growth	Strong personal connection Differentiation Picks books kids enjoy		Reflective- most contributes to success Mixes it up
<b>Youklis</b>	Transparent about expectations Standards posted on all assignments	Grades are motivator Individual conferences for goal setting Humor	PLC “United team”	Sets goals for self-life long learner
<b>Malone</b>	Teaches content and character Deep content knowledge Ill prepared out of college	Connects with kids Humor Talks to them as a person Takes extra time	Implements goals he helped create	Enthusiastic
<b>Patton</b>	Clear expectations for success Facilitator of learning	Humor	Collaboration big piece for him PLC	Students feel they have a chance for success
<b>Roberts</b>	Familiar with standards, curriculum, best practice/good teaching	Entertain Stimulate Likes teaching		Continuing education around content Passion for subject
<b>Smith</b>	Facilitator of learning Good role model	Makes learning fun Passion for students with special needs	Learn-as-you-go Easy to implement school goals	



<b>Roberts</b>	Poor training Strong content knowledge		7Grading 7Planning PLC Co-teacher	Mix-it-up Passion for content and so continues to learn
<b>Smith</b>	Well prepared for content Clear expectations	“This guy cares”	PLC 7Planning 5Grading	Passion for content And so continues to learn
<b>Woods</b>	Prescribed content Clear agenda Modeling Asks for help	Needs more time with students	PLC 7Planning 5Grading	

Table 3.  
*Curricular*

	<b>Preparedness</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Reflective</b>
<b>Astair</b>	Prescribed math program addresses all standard benchmarks - Strong content knowledge	Humor	Able to break skills down PLC	Supports goals she believes in
<b>Bunch</b>	Excellent quality curriculum addressing state, district, school goals	Humor Flexible Approachable	Part of committee that decides what to teach Good communicator PLC	Supports goals Critical thinking
<b>Nunez</b>	Quality curriculum Quality instruction Effective implementing goals	I am here to serve you Humor	PLC to design quality curriculum Doesn't agree- Will leave work	Best practice Students do most of the work
<b>Youklis</b>	Organized- “super” Supports goals- philosophy similar to own, Standards on all assignments	100% behind student success Humor	PLC- common assignments and assessments	PLC- common assignments Mix-it-up What works for different students
<b>Malone</b>	Uses district/state standards Strong content knowledge	Understands where students are coming from	Helped create common assessments that shaped curriculum Co-teaches	‘Withitness’ Spends more time on skills

<b>Patton</b>	Prescribed curriculum School goals infused in work	“It’s not okay to fail” Humor	Highly collaborative PLC	Technology
<b>Roberts</b>	Strong content knowledge Supports goals by knowing them “Gut thing” Loud voice	High expectations Humor Relevance Loud	Co-teaches PLC	‘Withitness’ Read the Room Mix-it-up
<b>Smith</b>	Organized for maximized instruction Totally supports school goals and state standards	“This guy cares” Students first	Actively involved in district planning of curriculum Able to break skills into small parts	Mix-it-up
<b>Woods</b>	Ebb and flow implementing goals Believes standards are “excellent” Loud leader voice	Plain spoken Humor	Served on district committee to select program	Feels limited by time constraints ‘Withitness’

Table 4.  
*Pedagogical*

	<b>Preparedness</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
<b>Astair</b>	More structured	Stays on top of students’ performance	Individualized remediation	High expectations
<b>Bunch</b>	Confident she has the ability to adjust curriculum for learning	Don’t give up! All kids want to be successful	Get kids engaged in learning process	Surveys
<b>Nunez</b>	Student centered	Individualized policies regarding late Works one-on-one with strugglers	Constructivist	Balance personal and professional

<b>Youklis</b>	Web page	Welcoming environment Don't give up!	Improved parent involvement PLC	High expectations
<b>Malone</b>	Love of lecture Reached out to learn - how to reach different learners	"Touchy feely" - Pat on back Good student relationships		High expectations Persistence
<b>Patton</b>	Shifts in learning Different curriculum Very transparent with students about high expectations	"It's not okay to fail" Positive attitude		High expectations "Don't give up"
<b>Roberts</b>	Passion Interactive Engaged	Don't lose sight of students amidst data Don't give up		High expectations Parents too Aggressive Persistent
<b>Smith</b>	Gym set up Ready to go	Show students you care	Better collegiality a good shift	Show respect <input type="checkbox"/> get respect
<b>Woods</b>	Humanistic	Connects with students	Find a hook	Don't give up

Table 5.  
*Evaluative*

	<b>Preparedness</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
<b>Astair</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly			Creates survey for feedback
<b>Bunch</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly Sons and daughters of teachers/school board members in class	Students return and are of successful		Provides rubrics for student feedback
<b>Nunez</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly	Students return "You really helped me"	"Super complimentary evaluations from administration"	Reads the class to determine next steps in content delivery

<b>Youklis</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly Random Informal Comprehension checks Student growth data		Feedback from parents mostly complimentary	Students' leaving with more confidence and determination constitutes success.
<b>Malone</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly	Students return doing well	Not much from administration	Still loves what he does
<b>Patton</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly Gives students immediate feedback Student surveys Values data	Has good relationship with students even if they are failing		Hears them say "I learned a lot"
<b>Roberts</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly		No feedback from administration Much feedback (praise) from parents/students	
<b>Smith</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly		Good feedback and support from administration	Feedback from students are honest conversations: "What is not working?"
<b>Woods</b>	Post grades Send emails weekly	Thank-you from students	Administration incredibly supportive	Every year a success

## Chapter 5: Summary

*“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.*

*-William Arthur Ward*

This study used a qualitative methodology to examine characteristics of effective teachers in three high schools in Quincy Public Schools, Colorado. The researcher took the role of observer and interviewer in order to collect the data. I selected a qualitative method, Elliot Eisner’s method of educational criticism and connoisseurship, to find out more about these teachers.

This research study was designed to describe, analyze, and interpret the experiences of high school teachers who were described as “effective teachers” by the school’s principal, and the assistant principal who oversees curriculum and instruction. Through in-depth interviews, these effective teachers were had a voice in identifying and interpreting experiences that have contributed to them being considered “effective classroom teachers. They identified personal experiences that contributed to being considered effective, obstacles they faced to become effective, the motivation techniques they use, and the skills they now possess as “effective teachers.” Finally, the study has provided pre-service teachers, teachers, and administrators with practical knowledge about teaching that can benefit students.

The effective teacher was examined through the lens of several research questions:

1. What prior personal or professional experiences contributed to these general education classroom teachers being considered “effective” in working with students?
2. Second, what obstacles did these “effective” teachers have to overcome in their prior experiences to work effectively with students?
3. Third, what motivation techniques do identified effective teachers employ to enhance instruction?
4. Lastly, what skills do these “effective” teachers now possess to be effective in working with students?

Nine classroom teachers, four females and five males, participated in the study.

The teachers represented three high schools in one suburban public school district in the State of Colorado. The school district represents diverse populations of students with varying socio-economic levels. The nine teachers represented all grade levels, nine through twelve; however each one of them taught at least one section of grade nine or ten.

Each teacher participated in a series of three interviews conducted in January, February, March and April of 2009. Prior to the start of the interview process, written informed consent was obtained from each participant. The participants in the study, their schools, and the district were all identified by pseudonyms in order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

The four research questions were addressed through in-depth interviews, and a classroom observation, as described by Seidman (2006) in Chapter Three. Elliot Eisner's dimensions of experience were used to organize the teacher's skills, values, and beliefs. The interviews were transcribed, and each teacher participant was provided the opportunity to review the transcript to clarify information and assure the accuracy and fairness of the interview data.

The interview data was then reduced using an inductive process described by Seidman (2006). Initially, I marked the interview passages that were reflected Eisner's dimensions and were stated by more than one participant. Examples of highlighted passage included personal touch, reflection, caring, differentiation, and organization. The passages were then categorized and organized into characteristics or themes. Throughout the interviews with these nine teachers, the following themes emerged in answer to my research questions.

#### *Discussion of the Research Questions*

Question One --What prior personal or professional experiences contributed to these general education classroom teachers being considered "effective" in working with students?

First, the study participants all cited positive experiences in their own school, and they all had a strong desire to become a teacher, despite the fact that, in fact in three cases, their families discouraged that choice. Two-thirds of the teachers have earned advanced degrees in their content areas. All were passionate about their content areas. Four of the nine teachers came from families of teachers. These teachers focused on

students as individuals and took ownership over educating the “whole child.” (See Table 6).

In her article, *Keeping Good Teachers*, Darling-Hammond (2003), maintains that well-prepared capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning. Teachers from the study brought a variety of personal experiences that contributed to being considered effective. Some felt very prepared by their teacher training. Some attributed their prior work before teaching giving them more depth of knowledge in what they could bring to students. The teacher all had a strong desire to be a teacher and so were very motivated (Woolfolk, 2004). In writing the literature review, I had the students in mind; yet, upon reflection it was the teachers that had a *trait* that energized and directed their behavior towards the teaching profession, in some cases, despite going against family wishes. This brings me another theme that emerged: the teachers felt a responsibility to impart a love of school and life long learning to their students, as exemplified by their own life long learning pursuits. The teachers felt their role to be more than imparting instruction of their specific content area. This desire to share with students their love of learning is not addressed in any of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

Question two; what obstacles did these “effective” teachers have to overcome in their prior experiences to work effectively with students?

The obstacles that teachers faced to become effective were around the difficult licensure process in place to become a teacher (one-third). I thought it ironic that the second most common obstacle was the difficult first year because it’s clear that even with all the requirements in place for teacher certification; teachers are not prepared for the

real world classroom dynamic (Gladwell, 2008). More than half of the teachers would have liked more hands-on experience in their preparation programs (See Table 7). Despite the disappointment in the arduous process for licensure, difficulty balancing the profession, and difficult first years, these teachers *all* had acquired mastery knowledge of effective instructional practices (Marzano, 2001). They had all overcome their obstacles to become effective teachers. “An effective teacher has more strategies available than the ineffective teacher” (Marzano, 2001 p.158) In the classes I observed I saw the following instructional categories addressed: identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, reinforcing effort, and providing recognition, homework and practice, cooperative learning, questions, cues and advance organizers. Marzano (2001) recognizes all these practices as effective classroom instruction and though I was in classrooms for approximately twelve hours I *saw* seven of the nine being used and heard in the interviews how the other two, setting objectives and generating and testing hypotheses, were used. So, the participants employed all the techniques recommended in Marzano’s book *Classroom Instruction that Works*.

Question three, what motivation techniques do identified effective teachers employ to enhance instruction?

The motivation techniques that teachers used varied. Clearly, differentiated learning and an individualized approach to connect with what was meaningful to the students informed the participants teaching styles. They valued, respected, and made efforts to understand where students were coming from and made their instruction

relevant to their student's lives. They used patience, were *persistent* in finding a way to reach students, and most importantly they *did not give up*. (See Table 8).

Woolfolk (2004) defines motivation as an internal state that arouses, maintains, and directs behavior. None of the participants take that definition into account when they plan a lesson to engage students. Yet this is just what they unknowingly accomplished. What they did look for was a way to intrinsically and extrinsically motivate (Ryan and Deci, 2000). There were a few incentives that were extrinsic: one teacher had donuts for first hour and another held break over the students to complete an assigned task, but for the most part teachers tried to find the connection to help the student understand the importance of learning the task --to their future success. Teachers created motivation by connecting to students interests and supporting growing competence. More than one of the teachers talked about the fact that when students experience success, it is a great motivator. One of the high schools, Kent, had more students that were motivated by grades. Kent has students from a higher socio-economic community than the other high schools. Grades did not have to have the same effect at O'Hara. All the teachers did encourage and nurture motivation.

Lastly, question four; what skills do these "effective" teachers now possess to be effective in working with students?

The teachers in this study were convincing about having high expectations for all students. They clearly imparted their expectations for students in their classes, whether it was for the year, semester, the week, or the day. Some of the most frequent skills that the teachers believe they now possess in being effective were sense of humor (most

frequent), organization, patience, rapport with students, positive attitude, strong content knowledge, ability to scaffold instruction, reflective of their practice (not complacent with performance), and caring (see Table 9).

All of the participants in the study had all the characteristics listed by the students in the study conducted by Corbett and Wilson (2002). These are:

- Push their students to learn;
- Maintain order;
- Are willing to help;
- Explain until everyone understands;
- Vary classroom activities; and,
- Try to understand students (p. 19-20).

I observed first hand and heard from all the participants that high expectations for students were in place across the board. They pushed the students in their classes to do their best. All of the classes were orderly, and the teachers were all willing to provide the help students needed to achieve. Several of the teachers talked about “understanding where students were coming from” as being important to them. Again, teachers mentioned “mixing up” the way instructional material was delivered to maximize student engagement.

Glenn’s (2007) list of admirable teaching traits were also part of the skill set for the participants, exhibit enthusiasm, know the content, be organized, teach actively, show good attitude, successful classroom management are just some of the characteristics that

could be descriptors used by the administration that selected the teachers. The participants all had these admirable teaching traits.

One quality that was overarching with all the participants was sense of humor. This was not addressed in the literature review and was my biggest 'ah ha' of the study. Every teacher talked about humor as a skill that they possessed that makes them effective with students. One study (McDermott, P., & Rothenberg, J. ,2000), lists *teachers are funny* as a characteristic of children's favorite teachers but it was not addressed in the literature to the degree that it should be considering all the participants relied the skill of humor. Another mini-theme possibly crosses categories and encompass humor is another of Glenn's (2007) trait creates a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom.

Table 6.  
*Personal Experiences that Contributed to Being Considered Effective*

<b>Astair</b>	<b>Bunch</b>	<b>Nunez</b>	<b>Youklis</b>	<b>Malone</b>	<b>Patton</b>	<b>Roberts</b>	<b>Smith</b>	<b>Woods</b>
Family had higher expectations than teaching, got into it when she did not find math career satisfying; Passionate about her content area.	Always wanted to be a teacher (practiced on brothers and sisters); great educational experiences.	Had a very positive school experience; Worked in retail for three years out of college: brought additional experience to the classroom; Protestant work ethic	Had a mom who taught for 49 years and was so inspiring; Always wanted to teach; So many intrinsic rewards for her – not just a job- a career	Mom teacher; number of teachers in family	Mom teacher; began tutoring in college and felt it was a natural fit	Always wanted to teach; Detoured by four colleges, ski instructor; Believes he is a better teacher due to experiences; Student taught in juvenal prison.	Former teacher and coach, big influence: “I wanted to do what he did”; Got a job right out of college	Always wanted to be a teacher; Second career; Family of teachers

Table 7.  
*Obstacles Faced in Becoming Effective*

<b>Astair</b>	<b>Bunch</b>	<b>Nunez</b>	<b>Youklis</b>	<b>Malone</b>	<b>Patton</b>	<b>Roberts</b>	<b>Smith</b>	<b>Woods</b>
	Process of becoming a teacher is arduous; MA degree a challenge too.	It was hard to learn to make decisions based on what is good for the kids rather than what they want. Also, tough to deal with teachers who don't do their job	Doesn't know if barrier but once children a big shift; learned balance and it's ok to say no. Eased up on it has to be perfect the first time.	Finding out listening doesn't work well for all learners and learning to find other ways to reach students.	First year of teaching very difficult; Disillusioned With the curriculum; Tough kids; Had all the freshman pre algebra classes.	Frustration around the teacher education programs; The profession has a complex that not just anybody can come in and be a good teacher	Very difficult to be respected by colleagues due to content area.	Licensure process; Commitment has to be massive, heartfelt; Also, working with math geeks

Table 8.  
*Motivation Techniques Used*

<b>Astair</b>	<b>Bunch</b>	<b>Nunez</b>	<b>Youklis</b>	<b>Malone</b>	<b>Patton</b>	<b>Roberts</b>	<b>Smith</b>	<b>Woods</b>
Put a carrot in front of their face and say, “What do you want? I will help you if you help yourself.”	Make a personal connection; Become engaged in the learning process - a part of the learning process; Clear expectations.	Individualized; Freshman vs. seniors; Show them that reading is fun. Obtain books that connect to them; Find a hook, make it positive; Personal connection; Motivate by finding the connection about the importance of what they are learning	Structured, transparent expectations; Don’t give up; Collaborate	Talk to the student as a person; Enthusiastic	Get the students to start feeling success and get them addicted to that; Worker; You don’t want to do this again; Don’t show frustration; I’m not going to give up on you; Give the message – it’s never too late; Creative lessons; Humor	Persistent, don’t give up; Nobody puts their head down in my class; Set expectation you will participate. If you think school sucks then change that right now. This is your school, your community, your world; Be so encompassing and inclusive to students and hope it works	Believe every student has a lot of potential; Talk to them; Problem usually outside of school, let them air it; Show you care; Go to parents; Want students to know where I am coming from	Prodding, poking, and trying to find a way to reach them; Go to friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, parents looking for a hook. Can usually find one...

Table 9.  
*Skills Possessed*

<b>Astair</b>	<b>Bunch</b>	<b>Nunez</b>	<b>Youklis</b>	<b>Malone</b>	<b>Patton</b>	<b>Roberts</b>	<b>Smith</b>	<b>Woods</b>
Sense of humor; Patience; Kindness; Empathy, Sympathy; Being able to accept kids for who they are.	Content knowledge; Instructional practices; The ability to connect with kids (Building good relationships with kids makes them work harder for you); Care about kids	Super organized; Very flexible; Go with the flow; Read the needs of the class	Organization; Humor	Content knowledge; Masters degree; Ability to transfer that into the classroom; Commitment Passion; Empathy; Compassion; Sense of humor	Positive attitude; Always striving to be better; Reflective; Not complacent with performance or student performance; Fresh start every day	Loud voice; You have to be yourself; Develop a sense of trust; Passionate person; Sense of humor; Take them as themselves	Clear expectations; Humor Scaffolding; Breaking down into small skills to develop the big picture	Loud teacher voice; Plainspokenness; Humor; Brevity

### *Implications of Study*

From the interviews with the nine teacher participants and the analysis of the interview data, it is evident that teacher preparation programs and school districts have major responsibilities in shaping the experiences and knowledge of classroom teachers. Right now these programs don't effectively prepare teachers. How do teacher preparation programs ensure more effective teachers graduate? The million dollar question.

First, teacher preparation programs must provide their students with a wide range of experiences during the teacher preparation process. Students in teacher preparation programs need to observe and have hands-on experience with students from diverse backgrounds, and programs such as special education, gifted and talented as well as alternative or charter environments, *throughout* their teacher preparation programs. This means much more classroom experience than student teaching can provide. To accomplish this, students in teacher preparation programs need to have access to classroom teachers considered effective. Smith, the PE teacher considered effective, has never had a student teacher. In one year he will retire, and his 30 years of expertise will be lost. He is willing to share that knowledge with a young teacher, but it seems that teacher training programs at universities and colleges aren't working with school districts to place student teachers with experts like Smith.

Effectiveness is not the main consideration before student teacher placement. Universities and school districts need to form true partnerships where students in teacher preparation programs have access to the teachers considered effective and school districts have access to the current research that students would bring with them to the schools.

Right now there is no 'list' of effective teachers with whom student teachers should be placed. We hesitate to label teachers' effectiveness because what comes with that is labeling teachers' ineffectiveness. Teacher unions are resistant to even the slightest move away from the current teacher evaluation/tenure arrangement.

In Malcom Gladwell's (2008) article he talks about *lowering* the standards of the teaching profession. He suggests we open the profession to anyone with a college degree and then teachers should be judged after they have started their jobs. Using an apprenticeship system that allows candidates to be rigorously evaluated he believes we would find effective teachers with the ability to teach a year and a half's worth of material in one year. This makes sense to me and it seems this would make sense to the teachers in my study who struggled with the teacher preparation programs and still had a difficult first year in the classroom feeling ill prepared. Certainly, adding additional requirements to teach is not currently producing more effective teachers.

Recommendations for the schools, district, administration and teachers of Quincy Public Schools: let me reiterate what is already understood, teacher quality is the key to improved schools. And though the common characteristics of preparedness, caring, collaboration and reflection were found during the course of my study, teacher effectiveness can not be readily linked to these four characteristics. What did surface was that the professional learning community work and teacher collaboration in schools is credited by teachers as most contributing to their effectiveness. Policies aimed at student performance and a structure that values PLC time to work in common content teams, with accountability built in, will improve student performance.

In each school a good accountability system needs to be in place. Nobody understands the rigor of the work we do as administrators more than I do. That is why as much as school administrators expect teachers to progress monitor their student performance, we *must* do the same for teachers. They deserve more feedback for the work they do, it was evident that most of the participants did not get that from their building administrators. Once every three years is not enough to be formally observed and walk-throughs can not be counted on to provide the kind of feedback teachers deserve for their work.

Administrators need a better understanding of the curricular and pedagogical issues that teachers face and professional development should be provided by the district using teachers as the resident experts. The positives as well as the gentle nudges to use best practice need to be offered to teachers on a regular basis. We can not shirk our duty—for there is no one else who can this important work. The use of instructional coaches is highly recommended and can help. But ultimately, teachers need to hear from administrators and they need a good understanding of what is happening in the classroom. How that accountability system is set up and followed should be up in each school—but its details need to be a part of the school accountability plan and well understood by each member of the administrative teams.

Teachers need to be held accountable to use all the time given to them for collaboration wisely. A few folks who abuse the system give everybody a bad name. Collaborating and the ability to participate in peer observations were valuable and useful to the teachers in this study. Setting up partnerships by pairing new teachers with

effective teachers will improve everyone's skill set. And, last but not least, teachers and administrators must build time into the school year to reflect on their work in order to improve performance and create a more effective teaching staff.

Students, the center of the effective teacher conversation, have a great deal at stake here. Because of this, they too need to have a voice in declaring what they feel is effective instruction. Because, as Csikszentmihalyi (1993) indicates, "Despite our relatively heavy investment in education as a nation, we still don't seem to realize that teaching, which does not consider the student's priorities, is useless. It is wasteful to teach someone who is not interested and so is not motivated (p. 9).

#### *Recommendations for Further Study*

Many qualitative studies rely on interviews, which risks confusing rhetoric with reality due to self reporting. More work needs to be done with students, interviewing them and finding success stories, because ultimately that's the evidence of success. The 'information age' is changing the nature of how the children of our nation learn and as a society we must keep up as an educational system to meet their needs. True longitudinal studies requiring immersion with in the school could help overcome these issues. Overall, it is clear that there is an urgent need for research that goes beyond this study and looks at teaching as a multidimensional role. Further study would be advised that includes the student achievement piece as that appears to be the direction we are headed in determining teacher effectiveness. We seem to be putting more and more expectations on teachers (data management). We must very careful not to lose sight of the core goal of

schooling, student learning, and the key role teachers play. I don't know how many times I've heard, "if they (meaning admin, district state) would just let us teach" and I empathize with what teachers are saying. Teachers' job descriptions are simply amazing in depth and breath. In fostering the question of what exactly makes teachers effective in different areas and whether there are teachers who are effective in all or who are more or less effective in different factors, is one that needs exploring both from a research and a professional development point of view. As well as this, there is a clear need for society and government to consider whether increased demands can be made of teachers without providing additional resources in terms of time, professional development, and salary. As we know, decisions made at that level are years in the making. It is time to begin.

### *Personal Reflection*

As a high school assistant principal and an instructor of pre-service teachers, it is my responsibility to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of what constitutes an effective teacher. I am accountable to teachers, the community, and most importantly, the students to understand effectiveness and have the ability to coach the ineffective in a positive and knowledgeable manner that improves teacher performance. It was a great opportunity to sit in these teachers classroom, one after the other, inspired and awed by the job that they do. The experience has given me the courage and the confidence to no longer accept the mediocre and do a better job to help teachers learn the skills they need to be effective. I am more cognizant of providing positive feedback to the teachers whose work I admire. My work with pre-service teachers will from this day forward include the characteristics of these teachers in hopes that my learning will filter down so

that students for many years to come will have the opportunity to benefit from these nine educators beliefs. Hirsh & Killian (2007, p. 13) has this to say about these beliefs in *The Learning Educator: A New Era for Professional Learning*:

While an educator's belief system may be called by different names – mental model, paradigm, worldview – that belief system exerts considerable influence on teaching and leadership.

As I move forward in implementing secondary school reform, I will make sure the teaching influences in our classrooms are effective in meeting the needs of students.

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## Appendix A

### *Questions for the Principals Surrounding Effective Teacher Selection*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please be open and honest in your responses. Your responses will be kept confidential. Even though I am a former teacher and current assistant principal, I am entering this study as an objective researcher with no preconceptions and no judgments. I would like you to select three teachers from your building which you believe to be effective based on the following criteria determined by INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model Standards), NBPTS (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards,

The principals' criterion for nominating teachers is:

- 10+ years of experience
- Teach one or more sections of ninth and/or tenth grade

The teacher should exhibit some of the following qualities:

- Strong content knowledge
- Organized
- Positive attitude
- Differentiates instruction
- Questions effectively
- Pleasant atmosphere in their classroom, and last but not least
- Flexible

Thank you for agreeing to answer the following question to better understand the schools influence on the effective teacher.

In your opinion what makes a teacher effective?

#### Interview Guide for Effective Teachers

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Please be open and honest in your responses. Your responses will be kept confidential. Even though I am a former teacher and current assistant principal, I am entering this study as an objective researcher with no preconceptions and no judgments.

#### Interview A + classroom observation

General – tell me about yourself, how did you get into teaching?

What degrees do you hold, and are you teaching in your content area?

What do you teach? What grade levels? How long have you been teaching?

Tell me about yourself. How did you get into teaching?

Why do you think your principals consider you to be effective?

What do you believe most contributes to your success with students?

#### Interview B

##### Intentional

What is the role of a teacher in your school

Does this fit with what you do?

Can you give me an example of how you motivate the students in your classroom?

Share with me how you decide on continuing education activities?

How do you implement district and school goals in your daily work?

### Structural

1. Tell me about how your undergraduate program prepared you to teach your content area?
2. What additional classes, workshops, or seminars have you taken that have helped?
3. Share with me things in your classroom that you do that make your classroom instruction better?
4. How many hours a week do you spend planning and grading?
5. Can you tell me about any barriers that you have overcome to become a teacher?

### Curricular

1. What role do you play in the planning of your curriculum?
2. Can you reflect on what skills you possess that makes the delivery of your instruction effective?
3. What training have you received in order to effectively deliver curriculum?
4. How do the goals of your school impact your teaching?
5. How effective do you feel you are at implementing district and school goals?

### Pedagogical

1. Define pedagogy? What would you say is your pedagogical style?
2. What shifts have occurred in your in your teaching over time?
3. How are your students' progress reported? What is the outcome of the progress or lack there of?

4. Have you struggled to motivate a student? How did you deal with that?
5. What have other teachers, parents, community members, or students shared with you about the impact that your teaching has had on them?

#### Evaluative

1. Tell me about the feedback you get from your administration and the educational support center?
2. How do your students provide feedback?
3. What information do you use to determine a successful year?

#### Interview C – Member Check

- What else would you like to share with me regarding teaching in general?
- This is what I interpreted you as saying...
- When I looked at the transcripts, this is what I interpreted as being important to you...
- Did I get your meaning? What did this feel like for you – what did you take away from the experience?
- I can't include it all; what would you be most disappointed in if I was not able to include?

## Appendix B

### *Invitation to Participate in Research*

#### *Principals and Teachers*

I, Karen P. Taylor, am conducting a study to explore the characteristics of effective teachers at the high school level. I would appreciate your help by participating in an interview that will take approximately forty-five minutes of the principals' time, and three hours, at three intervals during an eight week period, for the teachers. Dr. Ellie Katz, of the University of Denver is supervising, the research in conjunction with Adams 12 public schools.

The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics of effective teachers at the high school level. Principals and teachers will be interviewed at three different high schools in Adams 12 Public Schools. The results of the interviews will be compiled and main themes will be identified.

The risks of this study appear to be minimal. Some of the questions asked will involve personal opinions about your perspectives about the teaching profession. You will have the option to participate or not in the answering of any question. If you become upset, I as the researcher will offer to discontinue the interview. If you agree to participate in the interview, I will keep your opinions, thoughts, and responses confidential.

The information and opinions that you provide to the interview questions are private and will be used for research purposes only. In fact, your name will not appear on any response forms. Instead, all responses will be recorded under a pseudonym. Only

group responses and general trends will be reported so that you cannot be identified. The data and information that is gathered in this study might help to provide individual schools with information that will impact hiring and/or instruction. It may also help schools with future decisions regarding professional development at your school.

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation will not affect you in any foreseeable manner. You have the right not to answer any question asked. If I have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects by calling 303-871-2431, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of “The Characteristics of Effective Teachers.” I appreciate your time and opinions. You are a valuable part of this study!

Sincerely,

Karen P. Taylor

## Appendix C

### *Informed Consent Form*

#### *Effective Teaching: A Study to Determine the Characteristics of An Effective Teacher*

You are invited to participate in a study that will examine effective teachers and look at the characteristics of the teachers to determine what makes them effective. Furthermore, data will be gathered to view all aspects of what makes a teacher effective. Specifically, the researcher is interested in determining what characteristics must be present in teachers to be considered effective. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of a class in the PhD program, course CRN 2403. The study is conducted by Karen P. Taylor. Results will be used to complete the PhD program requirements and to receive a grade in the course. Karen P. Taylor can be reached at (720) 972-4606, karen.p.taylor@adams12.org. This project is supervised by the course instructor, Dr. Elinor Katz, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, ekatz@du.edu.

Participation in this study will include a pre-determined observation during classroom instructional time. It will additionally involve 75-90 minutes of your time on 2 different occasions. Participation will involve responding to 28 questions about your teaching.

Goals for the observation process are as follows: The purpose of observing the classroom teachers that participate in the interview process is to confirm, affirm or disconfirm findings discovered during the interview process.

The researcher will be observing the instructor during classes for the specific purposes of observing instructional practices that confirm/affirm information received in the interview process. The researcher will only observe in classrooms where there has been specific permission given and an invitation extended. No student names or any identifying information referencing students will be made. The purpose is only to acknowledge practices in place that have been gleaned from the interview process.

Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by a pseudonym and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will use only group averages and paraphrased wording. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair International Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you may have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called Effective Teaching: A study to determine the characteristics of an effective teacher. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be audiotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to be audiotaped.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to met the following postal address or e-mail address: